

# CONTENTS

- **Oxfam Launch New Climate Resilience Project**
- 2 New Project on Unpaid Care and Domestic Work
- Social Protection Week 2024: Building 3 a Resilience and Sustainable Social **Protection System**
- 4 From a Worker to a
  - Workers' Representative
- 5 Oxfam Launches a Region First GEDSI **Capital Readiness Studio**
- 6 **Exploring Circular Business Solutions** for an Inclusive and Green Economy
- Veasna's Inspiring Journey
- Library Boat Fostering Learning on Tonle Sap

International Women's Day: **Empowering Women and** Celebrating Their Achievement

Investing in Women, Accelerate Progress towards Sustainable Rivers

Empowering Women in Energy Through Capacity Building on Solar **Rooftop Operations and Maintenance** 

Male Champions for Promoting Women's Leadership in Water Resource Governance

Community Voice! "Mother"

A Story of Rady

11

12

13

14

15

17

18

- New Royal Decree for Efficient Conflict Resolution
- Recognizing Excellence in Social Security Journalism: NSSF Best **Reporter Awards**

#### A WORD FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR



Greetings,

I trust this message finds you in good health and spirits.

The year 2024 has commenced with a palpable sense of renewed vigor, hope, and unwavering dedication as we reflect on the accomplishments of 2023 and forge ahead in our tireless pursuit to eradicate poverty and injustice. It is with great pleasure that we present the second issue of the Impact Spotlight, in a special edition to commemorate the new year and celebrate the remarkable milestones achieved during this quarter, shedding light on the profound impact our work has had on the lives of the individuals we serve.

This edition is filled with heartwarming narratives that exemplify our commitment to addressing the resilience of the most vulnerable groups through social protection, fostering adaptive capacity, and embracing a sustainable, green transition. We commemorated International Women's Day under the theme "Her Money Matters," advocating for financial and digital inclusion, as well as inclusive social protection for women and girls. Additionally, Oxfam played an active role in the Social Protection Week 2024, centered around the theme "Building a Resilient and Sustainable Social Protection System." We led discussions on expanding social protection coverage in Cambodia, shedding light on the pivotal role of inclusive and shock-responsive social protection.

Moreover, we bore witness to the transformative journey of a young indigenous woman, whose life was profoundly impacted by her participation in filmmaking training. She now utilizes her newfound skills to shed light on the often-overlooked issue of violence against women, demanding attention to gender-based violence and the preservation of positive cultural practices.

Women, who have consistently emerged as guardians of our natural resources — be it rivers, forests, or land — continue to make headlines, serving as key change agents in our collective fight against climate change and the pursuit of renewable energy solutions.

More importantly, our quest to promote inclusive business and a circular economy has borne fruit in transforming the operations of MSMEs and improving the lives of people. We have witnessed the profound impact of our project FOSTER on the lives of girls in the Tonle Sap region through enhanced access to education and improved educational facilities.

Furthermore, we have embarked on two groundbreaking partnerships with the Irish government: "Accelerating Gender Equality through Care Responsiveness (AGENT-CARE)" and "Climate Resilience for All (CREFA)." These initiatives aim to cultivate a supportive environment in Cambodia that fosters the development of a care economy while bolstering our capacity to address the impacts of climate change, enhance community resilience, and facilitate Cambodia's transition to a sustainable, green economy. We are profoundly humbled by the trust placed in us and deeply grateful for the support extended by the government of Ireland, as they expand their development investment portfolio in Oxfam.

May the year of the Dragon bestow upon each of you safety, success, happiness, and prosperity. With warm regards,

#### Sophoan Phean

National Director, Oxfam in Cambodia

#### **OXFAM LAUNCH NEW CLIMATE RESILIENCE PROJECT**

Oxfam, together with a consortium of nine organizations, launched the *"Climate Resilience for All"* (CREFA) project on April 1, 2024, in Siem Reap province wit financial support from the Embassy of Ireland. The project aims to address climate change vulnerabilities in Cambodia by enhancing mitigation and adaptation capabilities.

The project engages both the government and private sectors, focusing on policy dialogue, capacities building, and sustainable development aligned with the SDGs. The project places significant emphasis on inclusivity, with a Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) analysis, guiding project activities.

**Ms. Sophoan Phean**, Oxfam National Director highlighted CREFA's alignment with Irish and Cambodia priorities, contributing to gender equality, climate action, governance, carbon neutrality, circular strategies, national development plans, climate change strategic plans, policies on green growth, and international commitments. This emphasizes CREFA's significance in addressing climate change and promoting sustainable development in Cambodia.

The project launching workshop prioritized information sharing, guidance, and participatory engagement. It brought together project partners, key stakeholders, experts, and representatives from Embassy of Ireland in Vietnam.

Mr. Seán Farrell, Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Ireland, said, "Supporting Climate programmes is an integral part of Ireland's development strategy. Ireland has committed to doubling our climate finance globally to at least €225 million per year by 2025. Climate change affects everyone, but not equally. The poorest people in the world face the worst impacts. Ireland believes in supporting the most vulnerable people to meet the challenges posed by climate change and we are delighted to be launching this programme with Oxfam and all of the local



H.E. Lina Ngin, Secretary of State and Chair of Gender Mainstreaming Working Group of Ministry of Environment and Seán Farrell, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Ireland.

organisations here today as part of our commitment to Climate, to Cambodia and to those most affected."

The nine consortium partners include Cambodia Microfinance Association, Development and Partnership in Action, Farmer Livelihood Development, Human Resource and Rural Economic Development Organization, Live & Learn Cambodia, Solar Green Energy Cambodia, and Village Support Group, as well as government bodies including the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. The project also involve provincial, district, commune, community forestry, and community protected areas in the five targeted provinces, Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Oddor Meanchey, Siem Reap, and Preah Vihear.

Cambodia is highly vulnerable to the impact of climate change, experiencing more frequent and severe floods, droughts and windstorms in recent year. These natural disasters have posed serious challenges to socio-economic development and affected many rural and urban poor communities. Oxfam, with over four decades of support in Cambodia, is committed to empowering Cambodians, especially women, youth and other marginalized groups by enhancing their resilience and capacities to cope with these challenges.

H.E. Lina Ngin, Secretary of State and Chair of Gender Mainstreaming Working Group of Ministry of Environment, expressed her delight in announcing the launch of CREFA. She highlighted the Ministry's circular strategy on environment for 2023-2028 aiming to ensure environmental sustainability, respond to climate change, promote a green economy and achieve the carbon neutrality and forest cover goals for 60% in 2050. The Ministry is committed to provide cooperation and collaboration to support the successful implementation of the project, particularly in promoting gender equity and sustainable livelihoods in protected areas. The collaboration with relevant ministries, private sector underscores the importance of inclusivity, gender equality, climate action and sustainable development in Cambodia."

**Mr. Sambath Mam**, Executive Director of Development and Partnership in Action, expressed his honor in being part of CREFA as an implementing partner in Preah Vihear province. "Through collective efforts, the project will empower community forestry and protected areas, strengthen local capacities, and build resilience for Cambodians. My gratitude to Oxfam, the Embassy of Ireland, as well as the ministries and sub-national and commune authorities for their commitment and support in this transformative endeavor," he said.

#### **NEW PROJECT ON UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK**

Text by: Natacha Anne Kim

Oxfam kicked-off a new project called "Accelerating Gender Equality through Care Responsiveness" (AGENT-Care) with the support of the Embassy of Ireland (Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam) to stimulate public conversation and policy dialogue on Unpaid Care and Domestic Work (UCDW) in Cambodia.

The kick-off meeting was held on 19 January 2024 at Oxfam to introduce the project to key government stakeholders and civil society partners, whose participation in the project's activities will be crucial to achieve its goal. The project aims to create an increasingly enabling environment that supports the development of a care economy, where women's care responsibilities are recognized, valued, and fairly shared. To contribute to this goal, evidencebased data will be generated and used to support policy making processes, raise awareness and foster public dialogue.

Key project interventions include the conduct of a Household Care Survey pilot, the development of a contextualized training package on UCDW for policymakers and civil society, support to Gender-Mainstreaming Action Groups coordination, and a public campaign on UCDW in close collaboration with the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA).

**Mr. Seán Farrell**, Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Ireland via Zoom interlink, welcomed the project as the start of a new relationship for Ireland, which specifically identified Cambodia as a country in which to grow and develop its program portfolio over the next five years. In particular, Ireland's context-specific support in Cambodia will focus on the impact of UCDW on gender equality.

"We would like to thank Oxfam for developing a very strong program of work, and particularly looking at the situation of those who are caregivers, in comparison to their male counterparts," he said.



*Mr. Seán Farrell, Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Ireland, during his speech via Zoom interlink.* 



H.E. Chhun Hak The, Director General of the General Directorate of Gender Equality and Economic Development, MoWA, delivering a speech during kick-off meeting.



Stakeholders and participants during the kick-off meeting.

H.E. Chhun Hak The, Director General of the General Directorate of Gender Equality and Economic Development at MoWA, highlighted that the AGENT-Care project is in line with the Ministry's priority to develop and implement a Framework and Action Plan on Care and a key example of the collaborative work with Oxfam. Thanks to the active participation of key government institutions, such as the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and civil society partners, the kick-off meeting identified common areas of interests and future collaboration opportunities during the life of the project.

## SOCIAL PROTECTION WEEK 2024: BUILDING A RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM

#### Text by: Sopharith Sin

Social Protection Week is Cambodia's annual flagship event for policy discussions, knowledge sharing, and raising awareness about social protection advancements. Initially launched in 2022 by the National Social Protection Council, it has gathered contributions from government entities, development allies, and civil society organisations. The 2023 edition focused on "Strengthening Transparency and Accountability for Social Protection in Cambodia," highlighting progress and fostering partnerships. Social protection is recognized globally as a vital policy instrument, particularly in response to recent challenges.

To achieve Cambodia's 2030 vision and enhance the social protection system, *Social Protection Week 2024* aims to broaden its scope to a regional level. National and regional specialists and practitioners engaged in discussions, shared insights, lessons learned, and best practices, and innovative strategies. The goal is to cultivate a robust and sustainable social protection framework under the theme *"Building a Resilience and Sustainable Social Protection System."* 

Social Protection Week 2024 is the third edition and Oxfam is so grateful to support this initiative. The event brings together relevant government institutions, UN agencies, development partners, regional bodies, private sector, Social Protection for All (SP4ALL) members. Collaboration among stakeholders will be fostered to expand and strengthen the social protection system in Cambodia. The event also welcomes national and regional experts to discuss best practices, innovations and knowledge exchange, further enhancing comprehensive and resilient system.

This year's Social Protection Week aims to raise awareness among government ministries, employer organizations, civil society, and the public about the critical role of social protection in driving social and economic growth. It serves as a collaborative forum for exchanging insights on crafting and implementing social protection initiatives and frameworks within Cambodia and the region. The event aims to promote mutual learning and shared advancements in social protection strategies and best practices, fostering cooperative effort among multiple countries.

Roundtable discussions focused on inclusive social protection, universal health coverages, expanding and strengthening social protection, and shock responsive social protection. Diverse panellists from organizations such as National Social Security Fund (NSSF), General Secretariat of the National Social Protection Council (GS-NSPC), Ministry of Health, ASEAN Secretariat, World Bank, think tanks, Oxfam, and other institutions contributed to the dialogue, enriching the social security framework in Cambodia.

Oxfam has consistently prioritized the development of inclusive, gender-responsive and universal social protection systems. Through collaboration with partner organizations and government stakeholders, Oxfam has engaged in various social protection projects, campaigns, and policy dialogue forums. These efforts align with the Royal Government of Cambodia's goals of expanding social protection coverage and benefits while enhancing inclusivity, gender responsiveness and social account ability within the country's social protection frameworks.



Panel discussion on "Expanding Social Protection Coverage in Cambodia" moderated by Ms. Sok Chan Chhorvy, Oxfam Program Manager. ©Oxfam



H.E. Dr. Aun Pornmoniroth, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the delegation team visiting Oxfam's booth. ©Naratevy Kek/Oxfam

#### FROM A WORKER TO A WORKERS' REPRESENTATIVE

Text by: Sereyroth Phang

Rya, a garment worker since 2007, starts her day at 5am, preparing meals for the busy day ahead. She works 8 to 10 hours daily, earning \$200 plus \$70 from overtime. Rya allocated around \$150 for her family's support and \$100 for rent, groceries, and utilities. When her income falls short, she relies on loans, pay off some of the debt with her subsequent paycheck. Despite facing financial challenges, Rya strives to meet her family's needs while retaining some personal expenses.

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on Rya's life, as she and other workers bear the responsibility of being their family's primary breadwinner. This includes caring for elderly relatives without access to social benefits, putting immense pressure on workers to sacrifice their own well-being to support their families.

When asked about her job, Rya said she's exhausted and frustrated. The constant pressure to meet changing daily production targets is her main struggle. Workers are expected to work long hours and often skip breaks to keep up with the ever-increasing goals. The lack of representation amongst workers and the challenges working conditions and benefits compound these difficulties for Rya and many others.

"A lot of workers, both men and women, come to us for help on belated salaries. Some came to me because they were refused sick leave by the HR. Some come to me because they do not know what is required to access social security [NSSF] benefits. Some supervisors also came to me complaining or alleging that my Constituents do not meet performance expectations and should be fired. Yes, we go through these every day because it's part of our job, and I am overwhelmed," said Rya. Oxfam and our partners have been implementing a project, *Inclusive* National Social Protection Initiatives that Response to the Needs of Apparel Industry Employees (INSPIRE), with the generous financial support of the Laudes Foundation and KLUB. Rya and her fellow workers' representatives have attended several trainings organized by Oxfam and Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions, one of implementing partners. These sessions cover topics on social security benefits, leadership and representation, labour rights and more. Rya and her colleagues have also been given opportunities to represent their Constituents in forums, policy dialogues, and consultative workshops aimed at promoting decent work and inclusive social security in Cambodia's apparel industry

"With the training on social security benefits, leadership and representation, and labour rights, I am more confident to represent my constituents. I can effectively address conflicts between workers and employers, and mediate for their mutual interests," Rya added.

Rya's story sheds lights on the harsh realities and ongoing challenges faced by garment worker in Cambodia. It showcases their determination and resilience as they strive for respect, fairness, and better working conditions within the workplaces.

Oxfam and partners remain committed to collaborating with the Cambodian government to strengthening decent work and inclusive social protection in the country's apparel industry.



Because we're part of the union protecting the workers and their interests are part of our job. Of course, the company doesn't like us. But we are optimistic that somedays workers and employers will get along well, thus improving their working conditions and mutual benefits.

#### OXFAM LAUNCHES A REGION FIRST GEDSI CAPITAL READINESS STUDIO

Text by: San Sor



Oxfam representative, partner from Mekong Inclusive Venture (MIV), and five SMEs during the program Kick-Off. ©MIV

In the entrepreneurial ecosystem, women-led ventures often face challenges when securing capital, partly due to founders devoting most of their time to business operations. Consequently, there is often a lack of attention given to developing next-level management, which is crucial for investors assessing risk during the due diligence phase. However, recognizing and addressing this issue can enhance investment prospects and facilitate the growth and scalability of these ventures. In response to this challenge, Oxfam through its Impact SME Development Program, together with Mekong Inclusive Ventures have introduced the region's first GEDSI Capital Readiness Studio (GCRS).

The GEDSI Capital Readiness Studio is a groundbreaking technical advisory program that aims to empower founders and their management teams. It focuses on integrating Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) strategies to enhance their readiness for various forms of capital investment. By explicitly incorporating a GEDSI perspective into both internal and marketing efforts, the program significantly boosts the likelihood of these ventures to access the necessary capital. Additionally, it addresses the common hurdle of limited capital access among women-led ventures by strengthening management teams through direct technical guidance, insights into gender lens investing, and improving



Ms. San Sar, Oxfam Impact SME Project Manager, introducing the project. ©MIV

their investment readiness.

The launch of the GEDSI Capital Readiness Studio (GCRS) took place on March 21, 2024, at Oxfam office. Five enterprises including SHE Agro Cam, Agri House, Cambodia Knits, Fair Weave and Danish Care Food were selected to be empowered as part of the first cohort.

**Ms. Sothea Mao**, the founder of SHE Agro Cam, is excited about upskilling her management team as she prepares them to raise capital and invest in cashew processing equipment, thereby increasing the value and profitability of their products for export from Cambodia.

Similarly, another Khmer woman founder, **Ms. Lundy Chou** from Agri House, eagerly anticipates receiving support for her team. Lundy expressed frustrations with other programs that sorely focus on the C Suite of enterprises (executive-level manager, leaving her, as a CEO, to train her team independently upon returning to her office. The GCRS offers founders and their managers an opportunity to learn and prepare for capital readiness together.

#### EXPLORING CIRCULAR BUSINESS SOLUTIONS FOR AN INCLUSIVE AND GREEN ECONOMY

Text by: San Sor



Mr.Oskar Haq, Oxfam Program Manager, during his remarks on Sustainable Business Alliance.



Circular Business Match Making Activity

In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, the imperative for sustainability has reached unprecedented levels. Traditional linear models of production and consumption are proving unsustainable, resulting in resource depletion, environmental degradation, and social inequalities. However, circular business models offer a transformative solution by reimagining the way businesses operate, prioritizing resource efficiency, waste reduction, and value retention. As organizations increasingly recognize the importance of circularity in achieving long-term viability and resilience, there is a growing need to foster awareness, share best



Participant engaging in the panel discussion

practices, and facilitate collaboration in this space.

On March 15, 2024, Oxfam and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Cambodia coorganized a workshop on Circular Business Innovation for 70 micro, small and medium enterprises (M/SMEs) and Enterprise Support Organizations (ESOs) to help them innovate their business model by learning from circular economy principles and its best practices.

The workshop offered a comprehensive overview of the circular economy and its fundamental principles. Additionally, three enterprises showcased their practical experiences in applying circular design thinking in their business operations, highlighting the advantages gained from these practices. The event concluded with a networking session for participants to connect, collaborate, and exchange ideas.

Joshua Jones, Managing Director of Three Corner Coffee, emphasized the challenges of marketing our product as circular. Currently, there is limited demand, higher costs compared to conventional operations, and consumers often prioritize affordability over sustainability. Increasing awareness is key, but collaboration is equally vital. By partnering with other businesses, we can reduce costs and tap into a larger community of likeminded individuals who value circular products.

This knowledge-sharing workshop is part of the Sustainable Business Alliance, a collaborative platform that fosters holistic partnerships and communication among diverse stakeholders to promote sustainable business practices in Cambodia. Inspired by Oxfam and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) Cambodia, the Alliance welcomes participation from all interested parties dedicated to promoting sustainable business practices.

#### **VEASNA'S INSPIRING JOURNEY**

Text & photo: Sothea Lim/OEC Cambodia

Thy Veasna, an 11-year-old girl, resides in Boeung Toem village in the vicinity of Tonle Sap Lake, Sangker District, Battambang province with her grandmother, mother, and cousin. Veasna faces many challenges in her life including her mother's intellectual disability, which prevents her from working. This situation makes life more difficult for Veasna's family especially considering her grandmother's serious illness, high blood pressure.

Despite these hardships, Veasna, who is the only child in the family, actively contributes to household chores and caregiving. In her free time, she helps her family to do rice harvesting and supporting villagers in need for financial assistance. However, her family's struggles persist, and the support from her aunt is insufficient.

Veasna is a diligent student in 5th grade at Boeng Toem Primary School. However, she faces obstacles due to lack of study materials and the long distance she walks to school, which is approximately 1 kilometer away. The school director acknowledges Veasna's commitment but expresses concern about the possibility of her dropping out due to her family circumstances.

In 2022, Operation Enfants Du Cambodge teamed up with Aide et Action and Education Above All through its Educate A Child program. They collaborated with Fisher Folk Making Circular Economy Work for the Western Tonle Sap Lake (FOSTER) led by Oxfam and funded by the European Union to implement the Cambodia Consortium Out-of-School Children project in Tonle Sap Lake, with Boeng Toem Primary School as one of the targeted schools. This project aims to improve education and prevent student dropouts by providing scholarships and study materials.

Veasna's situation took a positive turn after receiving assistance from the project. Her renewed motivation and dedication led to success, and she



Veasne,11 years old, in her class



Veasne, contributes to household chores and caregiving after class.

progressed to the 5th grade in the last school year. Veasna's grandmother expressed gratitude for the project's support, ensuring her grandchildren have sufficient learning materials.

With newfound determination, Veasna said, "I will work hard to continue my studies, even in difficult situations. My dream is to become a doctor and contribute to helping my grandmother, treating my mother's intellectual disability, and assisting people in the village."



Veasne, and her mother.

FOSTER is a project funded by the European Union, currently in its third year. Its aim is to improve sustainable livelihoods and increase access to essential services (WASH and education) for fishing communities in the West Tone Sap Biosphere (TSBR.) This contributes to the reduction on the environmental pressures on TSBR and the women, men and children who live there.

#### LIBRARY BOAT FOSTERING LEARNING ON TONLE SAP

Text & photo: Sopheak Srey/AEA



The students enjoy reading books on the library boat.

## Welcomes children and adults from communities on the flood plains of the Tonlé Sap lake to the Library boat!

Action Education and its partners launched a mobile library on the Tonle Sap Lake in Battambang province last September 2023 to promote literacy and strengthen a reading culture among children and adults. The library houses hundreds of titles and is equipped with internet connection, connected televisions, fans and a water filter. It is open to students from Monday to Saturday, encouraging them to read and providing the opportunity to borrow books for home reading. Previously, Khum Koh Chivaing Primary School, with over 300 students, had limited resources and only a few books. These books were rotated between classes to allow the students to read.

**Mr. Vuthy Nuon**, Khum Koh Chivaing Primary School Director, expressed his satisfaction with the establishment of the library, saying, "I am extremely pleased that Action Education has set up a library in the school. The library will encourage children to develop a habit of reading from an early age, and after reading in class, they can continue reading in the library. The library offers unique books that stimulate children's curiosity and inspire them to read more. As our school is flooded during the rainy season and no playground, it can be dangerous for students to play outside. With this library, they get into the reading habit." **Ms. Navy Chanthou**, an 8-year-old third-grader at Khum Koh Chivaing Primary School, smiled and said: " I'm glad that the school has a library because there plenty of books to read and learn from. I particularly enjoy books with pictures. Every day I spend at least half an hour reading books in the library. "

Samphors Vorn, Country Director of Action Education in Cambodia, expressed hope that the library would promote educational and health awareness activities. The connected TVs will be used for storytelling sessions and to provide knowledge related to applied science, technology, engineering and maths. The digital library will also serve as a resource for teachers to research pedagogy and career guidance.

The library boat initiative is part of the Fisher Folk Making Circular Economy Work for the Western Tonle Sap Lake (FOSTER) project funded by the European Union and led by Oxfam. Additionally, it involves the Cambodian Consortium for Out-of-School Children managed by Action Education in collaboration with Education Above All through its Educate A Child initiative. Currently, the school library initiative supports over 10 libraries in the Tonle Sap Lake area including nine mobile libraries (tuk-tuk) and a boat library.



Mr. Nuon Vuthy, Khum Koh Chivaing Primary School Director.



*Ms. Chanthou Navy, grade 8, showed a book she was reading.* 

### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY: EMPOWERING WOMEN AND CELEBRATING THEIR ACHIEVEMENT

Text by: Natacha, Chakrya, Sokha, Rith



Oxfam staff come together on International Women's Day for a 10K run, advocating for Financial and Digital Inclusion, and Inclusive Social Protection for women and girls.

Oxfam celebrated the *113th* International Women's Day by promoting Financial and Digital Inclusion and Inclusive Social Protection for women and girls. Oxfam partners and teams worked across the country to promote inclusive social protection and gender-responsive social schemes, addressing the challenges faced by women and girls in accessing social benefits.

In Phnom Penh, Oxfam participated in Cambodia's Women Run 10K, an annual running event co-organized by the National Olympic Committee of Cambodia and Sovannaphum Life. Thirty Oxfam colleagues joined the event, advocating for feminist financial inclusion and distributing #IWD2024 towels to running participants and visitors. Oxfam's #HerMoneyMatters and #FairSharesForCare campaign highlighted the importance of financial inclusion for women's empowerment.

Our partners also organized a campaign with the theme *"Protecting Women and Girls for Sustainable Development and Social Justice"* with a total of 1,000 attendees and 60 NGOs and unions. Attendees included workers' and community representatives, Ambassador of the United Kingdom and Australia, and representatives from line ministries. Our partners presented 16 primary requests for policy intervention to elected representatives and government organizations. These requests called for better access to universal social protection, the establishment and enforcement of daycare policy at workplaces, better maternity and child benefits, and emotional support for women and girls who experience abuses.

In addition to Phnom Penh, our partners collaborated with community committees, provincial commissions, associations and unions in Koh Kong, Svay Rieng, Preah Vihear, Kompong Speu, Tbong Khmum, Kampot and Siem Reap provinces to conduct public forums under the theme "Together to Promote Women's Empowerment and Social Protection." More than 2,100 participants, including farmers, street vendors, communities, youth, and women networks, joined these forums. Our partners showcased achievements in promoting and protecting women's rights and identied ongoing needs

related to gender-inclusive policies and livelihoods.

In Rattanakiri, six partners organized a collective campaign in Banlong city emphasizing the equal rights of marginalized women facing intersectionality issues under the message *"No discrimination against people and women living with HIV/AIDs and marginalized groups. We all have equal rights!"* 

In Prasat Balang district, Kampong Thom province, two indigenous organizations organized the firstever theatrical performance called "The Shadow of Chher Teal" in Kui indigenous language to promote and protect their identity, enhance solidarity, and celebrate their culture and language among the young indigenous people. Around 1,000 people, mostly Kui indigenous from 15 communities in Preah Vihea and Kampong Thom provinces, attended the event and visited the exhibition showcasing indigenous products and identity.

In Stung Treng province, we commemorated International Women's

Rights Day and the International Day of Action for Rivers with 113 participants, raising awareness about the vital connection between river conservation and women's rights. Our focus was on investing in women to enhance their inclusion in decision-making processes, believing this will expedite progress towards sustainable water resource management and uplift the livelihoods of riverine communities.

The event concluded with a statement from the Women Leadership Network, represented by women river defenders from the Mekong, 3S, and Tonle Sap. This statement emphasized the pivotal role of women and their active participation in decisionmaking regarding water resource management, stressing the need to invest in women's leadership for sustainable water governance. Additionally, it expressed support for an action plan promoting gender equality and eliminating child labor in the fisheries sector, urging collaboration among stakeholders for successful plan implementation. The statement called on policy makers and program implementers to prioritize gender equality in fisheries and water resource management policies, highlighting the importance of resource allocation and integrating gender considerations. These efforts aimed to construct an inclusive and sustainable future recognizing women's leadership, promoting gender equality, and ensuring responsible river management.

Oxfam is also honored to support again the Ministry of Women's Affairs in conducting its Poster Design competition and social media talk shows to celebrate International Women's Month and promote gender equality. The competition invited young Cambodians, aged 15 to 35, to submit educational posters reflecting the theme of "Women and Girls in Digital Transformation". This digital campaign not only allows Oxfam join MoWA in advocating for a just and gender-transformative society but also encourages the creativity, empowerment, and expression of youth.



Chargé d'affaires Andreas Zurbrugg representative of the Australia Embassy handed a flower to Ms. Samphous Von, Secretary General of IDEA, during the celebration of International Women's Day 2024, Phnom Penh, 2024. ©CCFHR



The winning poster of the Ministry of Women's Affairs' "Digital Poster Competition" for International Women's Day announced on 27 March 2024.

Poster by: Sem Vanna

The daughter of the river can envision a future that transcends her predestined life through digital technology.

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#### INVESTING IN WOMEN, ACCELERATE PROGRESS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE RIVERS

Text by: Soknak Por



Oxfam and partners celebrate IWD and International Day of Action for Rivers in Stung Treng.

In Stung Treng province of Cambodia, a diverse group of 113 participants gathered to celebrate International Women's Rights Day and the International Dav of Action for Rivers. This joint celebration is under the theme "Investing in Women to Accelerate Progress for Sustainability of the Rivers and Communities." The purpose of the event was to raise awareness about the interconnectedness of river conservation and women's rights. We emphasized the importance of investing in women to promote their inclusion in the decisionmaking process. We believe by doing so, we can accelerate progress towards sustainable water resource management and improve livelihoods of riverine communities.

Simultaneously, the International Day of Action for Rivers, commemorating its 27th year on March 14th, dedicated itself to protecting and celebrating the significance of rivers worldwide. It emphasized the unity of riverdependent communities in advocating for the indispensable role of rivers in their way of life.

The joint celebration of these two global observances provided a platform to recognize the vital role and amplify the voices of women who lead efforts to protect rivers and advocate for gender equality. It created a space for women from river-dependent communities, river protection and environmental organizations, and women's rights defenders to share experiences, knowledge, and strategies for sustainable river management.

The event encompassed various activities, including opening remarks by Oxfam representative and the Deputy Provincial Governor of Stung Treng, traditional indigenous peoples' dancing, keynote speeches, roundtable discussions, panel sessions, women defenders' statement, and networking opportunities. Participants exchanged best practices, lessons learned, and success stories, highlighting the critical role of women in river protection and sustainable resource management. It fostered dialogue and collaboration between government representatives, civil society organizations, and women leaders to amplify their voices and advocate for innovative solutions that integrate gender perspectives in river conservation and protection.



Indigenous community relying on the river for daily life.

Her Excellency Savoeun Keo, Deputy Provincial Governor, acknowledged the vital role of women as river defenders in protecting and managing river resources. She emphasized the importance of preserving rivers for future generations.

**Ms. Kaneka Keo,** Oxfam's Inclusion Project Manager, called for unity in turning challenges into opportunities. She urged the commitment to a better future where gender equality becomes a reality. By investing in women, she believed progress could be accelerated towards a more just and equitable world.

The event concluded with a statement from the Women Leadership Network, represented by women river defenders from the Mekong, 3S, and Tonle Sap. The statement highlighted the importance role of women and their active participation in decisionmaking processes related to water resource management. It emphasized the significance of investing in women's leadership to achieve sustainable water governance.

Furthermore, the statement expressed support for the action plan to promote gender equality and eliminating child labor in the fisheries sector. It called for collaboration among stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of the plan. The statement urged policy makers and program implementers to prioritize gender equality in fisheries and water resource management policies. It emphasized the importance of allocating resources and integrating gender considerations into these initiatives. The goal of these efforts was to build an inclusive and sustainable future that recognizes women's leadership, upholds gender equality, and ensures responsible river management.

Download the statement of women leadership network on fisheries: <u>https://shorturl.at/cerZ5</u>

## EMPOWERING WOMEN IN ENERGY THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING ON SOLAR ROOFTOP OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

#### Text by: Ratha Ra

Kaoh Snaeng, a village on a small island in Stung Treng province, face significant challenges in accessing energy sources and connecting to the national grid. With a population of 270 households, the village is included in Cambodia's Power Development Plan, but the process is costly and poses difficulties for the community.

Previously, the villagers relied heavily on kerosene, batteries, and electricity generators for their energy needs. In 2019, Electricite du Cambodge (EDC) introduced rooftop solar power to the village through a private company. The solar system offered two capacity options, small and medium, with flexible pricing to accommodate the villagers' preferences and financial situations. The solar panels were purchased and installed through a payment plan, with biannual payments over a four-year period and a one-year maintenance warranty.

The household rooftop solar systems are primarily used for lighting, fans, and phone charging. Currently, 144 households use the small capacity system, while 106 households have opted for the medium capacity system. Solar streetlights have also been installed as donations to support the community. However, the community members lack the necessary knowledge and skills to maintain and



Attendees were provided with hands-on instruction on examining solar capacity.



Ms. Bunthor (center) took part in the solar rooftop operation and maintenance training organized by I.M.B Cambodia in Koah Snaeng village. ©Touch Chanthan/MVi

repair the solar rooftops when they break or malfunction. Despite seeking assistance from external suppliers, they have not received the required repairs.

Recognizing the difficulties faced by the villagers, Oxfam worked with I.M.B Cambodia to provide a one-week training in the village to enhance the skills and knowledge of community members in operating and maintaining solar rooftops. Our local partner, My Village Organization, assisted in organizing the training.

Oxfam has targeted Kaoh Snaeng as one of the target areas to promote just energy transition that benefits all stakeholders, especially vulnerable groups including women, girls and indigenous communities.

#### WOMEN IN ENERGY

Women play a crucial role in the energy sector in Cambodia. While the energy industry has traditionally been male dominated, there have been notable efforts to promote gender equality and increase women's participation in this sector. Koah Snaeng serves as an excellent example of Oxfam's efforts to empower women in the energy sector.

The technical training poses challenges for community members, particularly women, who participate. Women face additional burden of care work, but they are determined to overcome these challenges and strive for equal participation in the energy sector.

**Ms. Bunthor Moun**, Community Cashier and trainee said that she initially hesitated to join the training due to her lack of technical knowledge. However, her strong desire to acquire knowledge and support her family motivated her to participate. Despite discouraging comments about her gender, she remained determine and successfully managed the training while taking care of her family.

"I believe in my abilities and aspire to become a female solar maintenance professional in my community," she said.

Oxfam recognizes the importance of building community capacity and continues to support the community through ongoing training on solar operations and maintenance. Trained individuals will become community experts, serving not only Koah Snaeng village but also neighboring areas. Oxfam also plan to establish a women-led group to manage a solar social enterprise to enhance income generation for the betterment of the villagers and wider community.

## MALE CHAMPIONS FOR PROMOTING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN WATER RESOURCE GOVERNANCE

Text by: Lin Hnin Aye

"Promoting women's leadership in water governance is crucial for challenging gender norms, accessing power, creating safe spaces, addressing bias, serving as role models, and fostering collaboration. What can male colleagues contribute?"

Building male alliances and promoting male champions are crucial for supporting women leaders, breaking barriers, promoting equality, and improving water governance. This case study explores the efforts of Vannak, Deputy Director of Culture and **Environment Preservation Association** (CEPA), and Lany, Programme Coordinator of My Village MVi, who are dedicated to fostering gender equality and creating supportive environments for women's active participation in decision-making. They address the gender disparity in community fisheries, where women's involvement in decision-making processes is limited.

Safety and lack awareness are key challenges limiting women's participation in decision-making role in water resource management, as recognized by Vannak and Lany. In community fisheries networks, women's involvement is often associated with risky activities like patrolling but Vannak has clarified that women can contribute in diverse roles.

Vannak highlights the effective of providing gender training for committee members to raise awareness and challenge biases, promoting inclusive platforms. By engaging with local authorities and organizing meetings with the husbands of women leaders, an environment where women's voices are respected and encouraged has been fostered. Building trust with the women he works with has been vital for community acceptance. Vannak emphasized clear communication and understanding the situations of their families as important factors in building strong relationships.



Vannak visiting community program participants including Ms Boukhamtong, who is a former community researcher trained by CEPA. She has since become the District Councillor and continues to advocate for best-practice water governance. ©Patrick Moran

To address safety concern limiting women's participation, Vannak and Lany have implemented safeguarding policies in their organizations to protect the well-being and rights of women involved in their initiatives. Lany emphasized the importance of prioritizing risk management and considering the safety of women and children in all activities. Understanding their specific needs and challenges is crucial in achieving this goal.

Over the span of ten years, Vannak's journey in improving inclusive water resource governance has led to personal growth. "In 2017, when a young woman was assigned a leadership role through a women's quota, I initially had concerns about her ability to lead older men who were skeptical of her capabilities. However, she defied all expectations and not only succeeded in the Community Fishery Community but also became part of the Mekong Women leadership. This experience has taught me a valuable lesson: we should never judge someone based on their age or gender. Instead, we should provide them with encouragement, orientation, and training, and then allow them to demonstrate their abilities," he said.

The initiatives led by Vannak and Lany have brought about transformative

change in promoting women's leadership in water resource governance. Women network platforms and the inclusion of women focal persons in fishery committees at various level have created opportunities for women to contribute and advocate for gender equality. Recognition of women's advocacy and negotiation skills has led to increased involvement in meetings at the village and national levels.

Ensuring the sustainability of these inclusive platforms is vital for women leaders to continue making a meaningful impact in their community. Lany emphasizes the identification of new tools such as Female Participatory Action Research (FPAR) to promote women's inclusion and engage the community simultaneously, fostering an empowering environment that recognizes women's contributions. To further advance gender equality and inclusivity in water governance, it is important to encourage more men to become advocates for women leaders. By working together, we can build a future where women's voices are heard, respected, and valued in decision-making processes, leading to more effective and inclusive water governance systems.

#### **COMMUNITY VOICE! "MOTHER"**

Text by: Sokha Srey



Persons living with disabilities & elderly community members performed "Mother," shedding light on the challenges faced by vulnerable groups.

The first performance of 'Mother,' a new play developed and performed by people with disabilities and elderly community members in collaboration with Lakhorn Kumnit Organization (LKO) and community key actors marks a triumph of inclusivity and the courage to directly address sensitive topics.

The "Mother" was created by groups of community key actors who shed light on the challenges faced by vulnerable groups such as the elderly and persons living with disabilities. These groups have shared their common issues on access to free healthcare, financial stability and physical barriers. Through forum theater, the team share issues to engage stakeholders, relevant authorities and local community. By providing a comprehensive exploration of the challenges, the performance provides the audience with a profound understanding of the experiences, perspectives and potential solutions for individuals with disabilities and the elderly.

The "Mother" specifically exposes the hidden burdens faced by elderly people who must care for their grandchildren while the parents are away earning income. While this role maybe perceived as normal within cultural norms, it necessitates change. Unpaid caregiving places additional strain on the elderly, who are already grappling with health issues and financial constraints. The forum provides a platform for elderly participants to voice their concerns, challenging the misconception that intergenerational dialogue is culturally prohibited.

In addition, the narrative highlights the challenges and importance of social protection programs, particularly the accessibility of social assistance, social pensions for the elderly, IDpoor cards, and Disability ID cards for people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

Bonny Coome, Co-founder and Managing Director of LKO shared personal highlights from the event, noting the enthusiastic attendance and active involvement of a significant number of individuals with disabilities—a marginalized groups in Cambodia. Despite prevalent discrimination, it is usually the physical environment that restricts the participation of people with disabilities.

However, on this occasion, that was not the case. Bonny also highlighted the groundbreaking moment when Chief Em Sophal of Ochar Commune assumes a role in the Forum session, marking the first instance of a Cambodian government representative directly participating in the theatrical action. Government representatives usually give comments as themselves from their seats or share their thoughts as part of a formal speech. They don't usually take on a role in the drama.

This unique occurrence exemplified the power of Forum Theater, where a Commune Chief, in the role of a grassroots community member, sought support from a grassroots community member playing the role of a Commune Chief.

This project is a collaborative effort involving various practitioners including WWD-LAN / KHEN and the Older People Association (OPA) supported by the Community of Practice fund facilitated by Live and Learn Cambodia under Oxfam's Voice project. A film by Rady SA

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# **ESHIELO** UNFOTGETTABLE



Scan here to watch the film

#### A STORY OF RADY Text by: Bophana Center

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I want to urge the elder to inspire the younger generation to seek knowledge. Marrying at a young age is not beneficial, only education can bring about a better life for them.

## - Rady determined to make a difference in her community.

Rady Sa, 24, is a Tampuan indigenous woman from Ratanakri province in northeastern Cambodia experience a transformation in life. She graduated from high school in 2017. In 2022, Rady was one of twenty-one trainees selected for the training course with Bophana Center in Ratanakiri province as part of the project *"The Arts of Visibility and Positive Social Change."* The project was co-funded by Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Ford Foundation and Oxfam.

Through her participation in the Bophana Center's film training program, Rady's rural life took a new direction when she received a job offer as a video editor at a prominent Cambodian Television Network (CTN). As the first indigenous woman to join the video editing team, she is thrilled to utilize the skills she acquired during the training program.

Rady is passionate about creating change in her community through education and vocational training.



Rady Sa and her team filming the life of her community to raise awareness about gender-based violence. ©Bophana Center

Despite the prevailing belief in her community that prioritizes early marriage for daughters, Rady firmly believe in the power of education emphasizing that marrying at a young age does not lead to a better future. Rady is committed to overcoming barriers in her own community to pursue education and vocational training.

Rady's documentary film, "Unforgettable," showcased the struggles of the Tampuan indigenous woman, Nhum Pak, who faced domestic abuse while working as a dancer to support her family. The film was screened by the Bophana Center and Cambodia International Film Festival in 2023, bringing attention to issue of gender-based violence and the importance of preserving traditional dance. The documentary serves as a critical tool to raise awareness within the community and ensure the continuation of cultural heritage.

Bophana Center, with support from Oxfam and other donors, has played a crucial role in empowering indigenous youth, particularly young women, in filmmaking and using their production to address concerns such as early marriage, gender-based violence, culture, education, and the environment.

This initiative is part of Oxfam's Voice project that is implementing in the 10 countries. In Cambodia, Oxfam launched Voice project in December 2016 to strengthen the capacity for lobby and advocacy of civil society organizations and representatives of rightsholders and rightsholder groups to empower them and to have their voices heard and respected. The team will celebrate *"The Power of Inclusion,"* the eight-year impact and partnership in April 5, 2024.

## **NEW ROYAL DECREE FOR EFFICIENT CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Text by: Asisah Man



Consultation workshop with CSOs on National Authority Alternative Dispute Resolution. ©MoJ

The Royal Degree on *"The establishment, organization, and functioning of the National Authority for Alternative Dispute Resolution"* came into effect on 2 November 2023 to expedite the resolution of disputes, particularly those affecting local community.

This royal degree is an important legal instrument and a guidance for compiling and making other legal instruments for the development and implementation of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) with effectiveness, equality, and inclusiveness. Oxfam warmly welcomes the ministry of justice under the leadership of His Excellency Deputy Prime Minister who shares far-sighted vision on judicial reforms in Cambodia with the aim to efficiently and timely resolve civil disputes and provide justice to disputants.

In mid-January 2024, in response from the request from Oxfam and other civil society organizations, the Ministry of Justice organized a consultative workshop to clarify the role of the national authorities for the Alternative Dispute Resolution and sought collaboration from all the stakeholders to promote a meaningful ADR in the country.

The consultation workshop had 50 participants including indigenous people organizations, local and

international organizations, lawyers, development partners and youth group from Royal University of Law and Economy. The workshop included presentations on the new established National Authority body, and proposal to pilot ADR for two target groups, the indigenous and rural community. There was a comprehensive plenary discussion on the royal decree and other key areas presented during the day. The discussion was facilitated by H.E. Keut Rith, Deputy Prime Minister, Head of the ADR National Authority and is also the Minister of the Ministry of Justice.

"Cambodia's legal and justice system reform is one of the five priorities of the new government mandate and it will be effectively implemented with the trust from the public," Said **H.E. Rith Keut**. He also expressed appreciation for Oxfam's effort and partnership since the initial phase of collaboration with the Ministry, leading up to the establishment of the national authorities.

Oxfam has been working with the Ministry of Justice since 2020 to bring access to justice services closer to the communities. We hope that the workshop had provided significant and practical inputs to advance a fair society free from poverty and achieve the new government's pentagon strategic goals. In early 2013, with the financial support from the European Union, Oxfam and partners worked on a project called EU-Cambodia Cooperation Facility for Governance and Human Rights-ECCF, which supported 240 villages in Kampong Thom, Preah Vihear, Kratie and Stung Treng provinces. The primary objective was to strengthen the partnership between sub-national authorities and the communities they serve. The project facilitated the establishment of Access to Justice Committees (AJCs) and the provincial-level Cambodia Land and Environment Action Network (CLEAN). The implementation of the project has brought learning and recognition that alternative dispute resolution mechanisms are needed to bring accessible justice services closer to the people.

Oxfam will continue to collaborate with the Ministry of Justice to develop and pilot legal instruments, ensuring gender mainstreaming and meaningful participation from civil society organization in the process. We will actively engage with local and international civil society organizations involved in legal and judicial assistance, and together we will contribute to strengthening, improving quality and effectiveness of justice system in Cambodia.

## **RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE IN SOCIAL SECURITY JOURNALISM: NSSF BEST REPORTER AWARDS**

Text by: Naratevy Kek



From Left: Ms. Sophoan Phean, Oxfam National Director, H.E. Dr. Sophanarith Heng, Deputy Director of NSSF and Spokesperson of the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training, and Mr. Chamrouen Ung, Executive Director at ThmeyThmey during an interview with the media.

Oxfam in collaboration with the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) launched the *NSSF Best Reporter Awards,* the first ever initiative, during the national social security training to forty plus national media on 21 March 2024 in Phnom Penh. The initiative is to raise public awareness about social security, particularly to workers in the apparel industry.

Media applicants including those from traditional and online media as well as bloggers are invited to submit their best Khmer language story published between the launching date to May 31, 2024. The stories shall cover topics on strengthening workers' knowledge of NSSF, employees' perspectives or experiences accessing NSSF benefits and using healthcare services, and the challenges and requests that employees have for NSSF or healthcare service providers. All articled will be accessed and reviewed by the committee, and the top five outstanding articles will be announced on June 28, 2024.

**Mr Bunthoeurn Orm,** a reporter from the Phnom Penh Post and one of the participants in the training said, "I believe that this competition provides valuable opportunity for reporters to produce more in-dept story, particularly focusing on aspect of NSSF that the general public may not be aware of."

The launch of the Award coincided with a training on NSSF to the national media, following a request made by the media last year after similar training to enhance media knowledge on social security. Speakers from NSSF shared their perspectives and presentation on the legal provisions and benefits of social security in Cambodia.

"The training has been instrumental in enhancing the knowledge and effectiveness of media professionals," said **Sopheavatey Lay**, another participant in the training from the ThmeyThmey online media. "I encourage the media to continue reporting on social security and urge the government and civil society organizations to organize NSSF sensitization program for the media in the future," Vatey added.

Deputy Director General of NSSF and Spokesperson of the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training, **H.E. Dr. Sophannarith Heng**, expressed his appreciation for the training and the award initiative. Recently, there are many developments on social security so His Excellency encouraged the media to take the opportunity to ask as many questions as possible to the speakers.

Journalists play an importance role in disseminating information and influencing people. They act as messengers conveying concerns from the public to policy makers for intervention. They facilitate discussion on policies and social issues, including social protection, among the public, which is essential for the country's sustainable development.

Oxfam and NSSF hope that the training will equip journalists with a comprehensive understanding of social security systems, policies, and their impact. We hope the training helps journalists to effectively communicate accurate and complex concepts related to social security, making the information more accessible to a broader audience, thus strengthening social accountability in Cambodia's social security systems.

Ms. Nuk Noy, indigenous Kuy women leader is happy to be part of advocating for sustainable water resource management and better livelihoods for her riverine community.

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All photos by Kimheang Tuon/Oxfam, otherwise mentioned.

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.





Oxfam has supported Cambodia's development for more than four decades. 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.

# OXFAM IN CAMBODIA

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