

IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

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OXFAM

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A WORD FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR



Greetings!

As 2024 draws to a close, we would like to share with you highlights of community empowerment initiatives over the course of the year that reiterate Oxfam's core mission to address inequality and injustice while upholding the rights of especially vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Let us ride with Rachna to school! Rachna's story reminds us once again that "leaving no one behind" goes beyond verbal discourse to specific actions that address barriers and challenges preventing, in this case, girls from accessing education. For Rachna, a bicycle can increase her accessibility not just to education but also to safety and opportunities for a brighter future.

Economic empowerment has proven to have a positive impact on environmental protection and conservation, as seen in the integration of beekeeping and floating fish hubs into fishery communities.

We are also proud to profile two young female leaders who are passionate and have dedicated their efforts to upholding the rights of factory workers, youth, and elderly people to social protection despite setbacks and intimidation. Through the heart-touching stories of Chanthorn and Sivmey, we see their resilience and dedication.

Furthermore, we are inspired by the actions of youth tackling climate change and advocating for climate and environmental justice at the community, national, and regional levels. We will also glimpse the struggles of street vendors and domestic workers in the rubber and banana supply chains and the efforts being made to address these challenges to ensure their rights and protection.

While we are working hard to address the challenges facing the communities we serve, we believe it is equally important to pay attention to the wellbeing of our staff. Cultivating a caring working environment and promoting self-care has become an integral part of our organization's culture.

I invite you to dive into this issue of Impact Spotlight, where you will discover inspiring stories and remarkable achievements that are transforming lives and communities in Cambodia. Together, we aspire to tackle the inequality experienced by those we serve and work towards a more just, equitable, resilient, and sustainable future.

A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Sophoan Phean

National Director, Oxfam in Cambodia

RACHNA'S RIDE TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Text & photo: Sopheak Srey/AEA

At Korsang Thmey Primary School in Banteay Meanchey, Cambodia, the school bell rings at noon, signaling the end of classes. Students rush out, eager to ride their bicycles home. Among them is third-grader Rachna Chhay, who walks her bicycle with a flat tire to a repair shop under the scorching 39°C sun. This is her first visit since receiving the bicycle in late 2023, part of the Fisher Folks Making Circular Economy Work for the Western Tonle Sap Lake (FOSTER) project, funded by the European Union and led by Oxfam and Action Education. For Rachna, this bicycle symbolizes independence and opportunity.

"Before having a bicycle, I used to walk about an hour to and from school if my mother couldn't take me on her motorbike. With the bicycle, I can get home in about half an hour after class," said Rachna.

Rachna, 11, is the second of four siblings. Her brother joined monkhood to access education but left due to illness. Her eldest brother, 13, has brittle bones and wears braces to assist with walking. Her two younger sisters are in preschool and first grade. Their father, disabled by polio, supports the family by sewing fishnets and working as a barber. Their mother is a homemaker. The family was identified as a Rank 1 ID-poor household.

"My parents always support my study, and when they encounter financial challenges, they seek assistance of 1,500 riels (\$0.35) from neighbors to fund my schooling daily," said Rachna.

After repairing her bicycle for \$0.50, Rachna returns home to find lunch ready. Her daily routine includes dishwashing, organizing pots, completing homework, and collecting recyclables to earn extra money. She can make between 1,500 riels (\$0.35) and 5,000 riels (\$1.25) per trip.



Rachna, 11, third grader at Korsang Thmey Primary School, Banteay Meanchey province.



Rachna at repair shop to have her bicycle fixed.

"My leisure after school is picking up scrap metal to earn money to buy school cakes. When I received my bicycle, I enjoyed cycling with friends and could help buy groceries locally. I could explore further and enjoy riding with my siblings," Rachna added.

Sieb Bo, Rachna's 36-year-old mother, lives in Kuy Meng commune, Angkor Borei district. Most residents are rice farmers who struggle to provide education for their children due to difficult living conditions.

"I am happy that my daughter was given a bicycle, allowing her to travel to school. I worry that without the scholarship, Rachna might have faced challenges attending school," Sieb said. Sieb also worries about their housing situation, as they are currently house-sitting for an owner working in Thailand.

Sokly You, a 34-year-old grade 3 teacher at Korsang Thmey Primary School, nominated Rachna for the scholarship bicycle. She noticed that



Rachna, 11 on her bicycle back home.



Rachna's mother and her brother.



Sokly You grade 3 teacher at Korsang Thmey Primary School who nominated Rachna for the scholarship bicycle.

the bicycle significantly reduced Rachna's commute, giving her more time for studying and relaxation, and improving her safety.

"Since receiving a bicycle, Rachna's school attendance has notably improved. Her academic record, where she achieved 5th place, showcases her excellent knowledge. The scholarship seems to be a perfect fit for her," Sokly said.

Principal Morn Mao mentions that the school, which accommodates 175 students, often floods during the rainy season, requiring boat travel. Most students come from underprivileged backgrounds, with 80% of villagers involved in rice farming.

During the current academic year, Rachna received a bicycle, school bag, uniform, and study materials. "I trust that the consortium will support Rachna for an extended period, considering her family circumstances. Without this support, she might risk discontinuing her education," the principal said.

"Scholarships, including bicycles, can make a big difference for Rachna's school attendance and learning. It's not just about reducing the physical distance; it's about increasing accessibility to education, safety, and opportunities for a better future," said Samphors Vorn, Country Director of Action Education Cambodia.

Rachna is committed to completing her education. "I strive to educate myself because I am hesitant to take on demanding tasks as a construction worker without the required skills," she said. Inspired by a photo of a doctor on a notebook cover provided by Action Education, Rachna aspires to become a doctor to care for her parents when they fall ill.

Rachna's journey exemplifies the profound impact of small acts of kindness and the support provided by the FOSTER project. Her scholarship bicycle is more than a mode of transportation; it is a vehicle of hope, propelling her toward a brighter future.



Kapok honey harvesting, Kampong Cham province. Photo: Kimheang Tuon/Oxfam

NEW BEEKEEPING INITIATIVE YIELDS SWEET SUCCESS

Text by: Phalluy Vy/CEPA & Chong Ear

A beekeeping group in Battambang province is buzzing with success! Formed in 2022 under the Community Green Business Hub (CGBH) initiative, supported by the EU-CAPFISH/FOSTER project, this group of five members, including one woman, has transformed beekeeping into a thriving business.

The initiative, which runs from March 2021 to June 2025, aims to enhance community fisheries and promote sustainable livelihoods. It has empowered local farmers to adopt beekeeping as a viable source of income, integrating it into environmental conservation and community development efforts.

Samnang Nov, a 34-year-old member of the Sdey Kraom Rohal Soun community fishery, manages the beekeeping operations. Under his guidance, the group has achieved remarkable success, harvesting 750 liters

of honey from 2022 to September 2024.

Of the 750 liters harvested, 315 liters were sold, generating an impressive income of 10,080,000 riels (2,520\$). The revenue has been reinvested into the business, allowing for the purchase of essential equipment, expansion of operations, and improvement of honey processing techniques.

“Previously, the community could collect only a few liters of honey for household consumption—around 5 to 10 liters per year. However, after the project’s intervention, our community has increased production to between 500 and 1,000 liters per month, although we still face challenges in accessing markets,” said Samnang. The beekeeping initiative exemplifies a successful model for sustainable development in Cambodia. By combining economic opportunity

with environmental responsibility and community engagement, the project not only enhances livelihoods but also contributes to a resilient and sustainable future.

Bee raising is just one of the activities under the Green Business Hub initiative. Across 10 communes in 3 provinces, 29 groups operate 11 types of businesses, involving 1,942 members, including 1,365 women. These activities are implemented by four project partners including Fisheries Action Coalition Team, Culture and Environment Preservation Association, Sansom Mlup Prey, and Okra Solar.

This beekeeping business model serves as an inspiring example for similar initiatives across the country, demonstrating the impact of targeted support and community-driven efforts in fostering sustainable practices.



The Culture and Environment Preservation Association team conducted a training on hospitality to CBET community members. Photo: CEPA

FLOATING FISH HUT BOOSTS ECO-TOURISM AND CONSERVATION

Text by: Phalluy Vy/CEPA & Chong Ear

In March 2024, the floating fish feeding hut was fully installed, replacing the old, broken one, thanks to the support of the EU-CAPFISH/Foster project. Located in Pneat Kohpong Satt, Preah Ang village, this new hut offers visitors a comfortable space to observe various natural fish species in the conservation deep pool along the Serei Sophoan River, which flows into Tonle Sap.

The hut has become a magnet for visitors drawn to the area's natural beauty and biodiversity, generating additional income streams that enhance local livelihoods. By April 2024, it was generating up to 320,000 riels (\$80) in income, with a maximum of 200,000 riels (\$50) per month.

Visitors purchase bread and feed for the fish, and the revenue is shared

among community fishery members, the pagoda, and the person selling the items at the hut.

Most visitors are local people who come during public holidays, with peak seasons being Khmer New Year, Pchum Ben, and the Water Festival, attracting more than 100 people per day. Managed by a sub-committee of the community fishery, the floating fish feeding hut is one of the Community Based Eco-Tourism (CBET) products for the community green business hub.

The income from this hut supports community fishery management, including the improvement of nine deep pool conservation areas and two community fishery refuges.

"I am very proud of this project intervention; we have never received

such full support before, and this is the first project we truly appreciate. We benefit greatly from this initiative, especially the floating fish feeding hut, which serves as a community product for resource mobilization and sustainable financing for our community fishery management," said Chort Hol, Chair of the Pneat Koh Pong Satt community fishery.

The floating fish feeding hut project not only provided a new income stream for the community but also played a vital role in fostering sustainable fisheries management. This initiative demonstrates the ultimate potential of community-led projects in promoting environmental conservation and economic resilience.

TIRELESS ADVOCACY FOR THE RIGHTS OF 600 FACTORY WORKERS

Union leader Chanthorn Pen recounted her experience of unfair dismissal, which fueled her passion to fight for her coworkers' rights. Over three dedicated years, Chanthorn Pen successfully registered about 600 factory workers with the National Social Security Fund (NSSF). She actively advocated for greater awareness of NSSF's benefits, urging support from non-governmental organizations and NSSF itself to reach more workers, as only half of the factory workers were aware of their membership rights and entitlements.

Working at a glass manufacturing factory in Siem Reap since 2019, Chanthorn noticed that only a small fraction of the workforce—around 40 of 600 employees—had NSSF memberships. Seeing this gap, in 2021 she formed a union to push for broader NSSF enrolment. After receiving training from the FIRST project implemented by the Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL) and Oxfam with financial support from the European Union, Chanthorn equipped herself with essential knowledge and skills to guide her fellow employees.

Her efforts paid off when she successfully registered all 600 factory workers for NSSF membership, a moment she recalled with a proud smile. Chanthorn soon realized that many workers remained unaware of their rights. Despite the training and awareness raising, Chanthorn believed that there were still many more people who were not aware of social protection.

"Only five out of ten people know about the benefits of NSSF," she said. "When some NSSF members are sick, they spend their own money on medical treatment instead of accessing their NSSF benefits," she added. "Some factory workers reached out to me when they were in need of medical treatment asking how to use NSSF

cards," said Chanthorn. She patiently guided them, explaining how to use their cards for medical expenses rather than paying out of pocket.

Chanthorn found the motivation to demand that the factory register all workers for NSSF memberships once she realized it was the employer's legal responsibility. She first gathered union members to organize a collective request for NSSF enrolment. "I collected the names of employees without NSSF memberships and submitted them to the factory, requesting that they be registered with NSSF," she said.

When this request was ignored, the union members, with support from CENTRAL, filed a formal complaint with the NSSF. The complaint led to a \$10,000 fine for the factory, which angered management. In response, Chanthorn recalled that factory managers began making things difficult for the union. "There have been threats from factory managers and the human resource department since 2022. By 2023, I was fired," she said.

In response, factory workers protested against her firing, leading to negotiations with the factory. Ultimately, she was reinstated, vindicated by her adherence to labor laws. "The company was unsuccessful in trying to expel me from the factory because I did not commit any act in violation of the labor law," she said.

Chanthorn's advocacy also extended to securing fair wages. When she started in 2019, the factory paid her below minimum wage, a situation she fought to change. "I started working in 2019, but it was not until 2021 that the factory paid me the minimum wage," she said. Thanks to union efforts, the factory agreed to pay the garment workers the minimum wage. This change ensured broader benefits, including paid maternity leave at 70% of regular wages.

Looking back, Chanthorn's journey was a story of resilience and dedication to her peers' rights. Her advocacy continued to inspire a stronger sense of unity and awareness among factory workers, one that pushed for fair treatment and rightful access to labor protections.



Union leader Chanthorn Pen fights for workers' rights, registering 600 with NSSF and advocating awareness.

SIVMEY RIM: CHAMPIONING SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR YOUTH

“If you don’t know that you have the rights to health insurance and other social assistance, how can you claim it?” asked Sivmey Rim, 22, a founder and leader of a youth club aiming to promote social protection and labour rights.

Born in Siem Reap province, Sivmey moved to Phnom Penh in 2023 to pursue a bachelor’s degree. While at university, she joined the FIRST project and formed a youth group to promote labor rights and social protection among young people.

Sivmey was unaware of the workers’ right to health insurance and other social assistance programs for rural youth until she joined the training programs and activities on social protection and labour rights implemented by Youth Rural Development Program (YRDP) and Oxfam under the FIRST project. With the new knowledge, she knows that many working and rural youth were not registered in the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) schemes by their employers or received social assistance from the government.

“During the training, I learned a lot. It motivated me to help others by giving back to society what I know about the benefits of social protection,” said Sivmey. With knowledge and skills received from the project, Sivmey together with seven active youths formed a youth group called Youth Network for Labor Rights and Social Protection (YNLSP) in 2023, with passion to support new graduates and working youths to access social protection benefits.

With the support from the project, YNLSP conducted awareness raising and building knowledge of youths in Siem Reap province on importance of social protection, including access to grants, accommodation, insurance, and their rights at work. This is when Sivmey transformed herself from a trainee to a trainer of social protection and labor rights.



“Through the FIRST project, we have supported many **RURAL STUDENTS** and **WORKING YOUTH** to be aware of their **RIGHTS TO SOCIAL PROTECTION** and **ACCESSING HEALTH INSURANCE** and **SOCIAL ASSISTANCE**”

- Sivmey

To ensure that young people benefit from social protection, Sivmey led her group to facilitate dialogues with youth working in the cafes, restaurants, and mini-marts. She documented 32 cases of labor violations mostly related to NSSF registration, affecting 150 working youth, and submitted them to the relevant authorities to take action.

Despite her achievements, Sivmey wants to see more changes. She points out that many individuals living

in rural areas remain unaware of the importance of social protection in improving their livelihoods and health. “Universal social protection coverage will complement the principle of leaving no one behind,” she added.

Sivmey’s story is a powerful reminder that informed, passionate young people can ignite meaningful change, inspiring other youth to claim their rights and build a brighter future.



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EMPOWERING CHANGE: STORIES OF EMERGING LEADERS



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YOUTH LEADING CLIMATE ACTION

Text by: Ratha Ra

Involving young individuals is essential for climate resilience. Oxfam recognizes the crucial role youth play in advocating for environmental justice and climate resilience, especially in Cambodia. Recently, Oxfam has supported various youth-led initiatives, including the ASEAN Youth Organization (AYO) Ambassador Program 2024, a youth roundtable at the Cambodia Climate Change Forum 2024, and the Youth Climate Forum 2024.

AYO AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Oxfam supported the ASEAN Youth Organization (AYO) Ambassador Program 2024, engaging 11 youths, including six females, to lead projects on environmental sustainability and climate change. The program aimed to equip these young ambassadors with the knowledge and skills to become agents of change. It included a three-week training course on climate change, climate action, waste management, and clean energy, and a field trip to Siem Reap to share insights with high school students.

Emvayu Keat, one of the AYO ambassadors, shared how the program transformed his life, instilling a sense of responsibility to combat climate change in Cambodia.

Oxfam's National Director, Sophoan Phean, expressed gratitude to the



Youth Climate Forum in Siem Reap province. Photo: LLC

AYO team and ambassadors for their dedication to climate action, emphasizing the importance of equipping young individuals with tools to advocate for environmental justice and shape their careers as future changemakers.

CAMBODIA CLIMATE CHANGE FORUM

Held on October 24-25, 2024, the event gathered around 400 participants, including government officials, youth leaders, and private sector representatives. Oxfam facilitated the participation of young individuals and community members, emphasizing the role of community forest management

in addressing climate change and exploring income opportunities through carbon sales. During a session on “Advocating for Enhanced Community Forest Protection and Climate Finance,” challenges in measuring and marketing carbon credits were discussed. Recommendations included promoting forest management and government support for carbon calculation to bolster community forest protection efforts.

YOUTH CLIMATE FORUM

Live & Learn Cambodia organized a Youth Climate Forum in Siem Reap on November 10, 2024, empowering around 150 young people to actively engage in climate change issues. The forum provided a platform for youth to exchange ideas, collaborate with relevant stakeholders, and drive impactful actions. Ratha Ra, representing Oxfam, highlighted the vital role of youth in shaping the country's future and emphasized the importance of empowering them to drive positive changes. Provincial officials commended the active participation of youths, recognizing them as crucial resources in combating climate change.

“The AYO Ambassador Program has changed my life significantly. It has enabled me to realize my full potential and overcome doubts. It has given me a sense of responsibility and the true importance of life, specifically the responsibility to combat climate change in Cambodia.”

- Emvayu Keat, one of the AYO ambassadors.

SUPPORTING CAMBODIA'S STREET VENDORS IN JUST TRANSITION

As the world transitions to green work, clean energy, and renewable resources, ensuring proper employment and social protection is crucial. This global trend, including in Cambodia, aims to minimize the impact on people as societies develop greener economies.

In Cambodia, the number of street vendors is steadily increasing, providing essential employment and income for families. Street vendors, who sell food, vegetables, and other goods in public places, often lack specific locations and move from place to place. According to the National Institute of Statistics in 2021, 49% of employment is formal, 36% are self-employed (including street vendors), and 15% are unpaid family workers.

The International Street Vendor Day has been celebrated globally since November 14, 2012, and this year marks Cambodia's 10th celebration. In collaboration with relevant ministries, Oxfam, Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association, Solidarity Center, Cambodian Labour Confederation, and ActionAid celebrated the 12th International Street Vendor Day under the theme "Social Protection for Street Vendors for Just Transition and Climate Action in Cambodia" on November 13, 2024.

This event aimed to promote social protection for street vendors, allowing them to discuss and share their working conditions and challenges.

Vanna Yim, a street vendor who attended the event, said, "I am



Performance by street vendors on the challenges of selling near hospital fences and include security concerns, legal hurdles etc. Photo: Oxfam

very pleased to be celebrating and receiving support from stakeholders. We gain knowledge and understanding of the country's national experience and policies and efforts to meet our needs as street vendors."

In 2024, the International Labor Organization published a global study on job safety and health insurance in the context of climate change, highlighting severe impacts on workers' safety and health. The study revealed that female workers, such as farmers and street vendors, are at higher risk due to their roles, including the risk of unsuccessful pregnancies and infertility. Informal workers and self-employed individuals face high risks from climate change, lacking safety and health protection, public services, and support infrastructure. Street vendors play a vital role in

improving the family and national economy. They deserve the same rights as other workers, including support in team building, capacity strengthening, and participatory analysis of their needs. Providing opportunities for social dialogue allows them to contribute to policy design, decision-making, and leadership.

Oxfam and partners committed to work closely with the Royal Government of Cambodia and other stakeholders to ensure that social protection goals are achieved, allowing street vendors to receive benefits they rightfully deserve.

Photo caption: These are 23 asks from street vendors during the International Street Vendor Day this year. Photo: Oxfam





THE SILENT STRUGGLES OF CAMBODIA'S DOMESTIC WORKERS

In Cambodia, both paid and unpaid domestic work is often invisible, yet it is a lifeline for thousands of families. Women shoulder the disproportionate responsibility of running households, raising children, and caring for aging family members, often for low or no pay, without legal protection, and under social stigmatization.

For Channy Ang, a 32-year-old former domestic worker from Battambang province the work is physically and emotionally draining: "I worked as a domestic worker for nine months, losing five kilograms from working morning till night. I had no contract and knew nothing about the National Social Security Fund (NSSF). Promises of a pay raise took months to materialize."

Channy's story is a reflection of a broader societal issue. Traditional values in Cambodia often prioritize sons over daughters, confining women to household duties while men pursue higher education and careers. This unequal dynamic perpetuates the misconception that caregiving and domestic responsibilities are "women's work." Channy believes that men often lack understanding of the domestic duties and childcare responsibilities women handle. She feels that almost all men are ignorant of women's labor. This issue, she says, stems from beliefs and traditions that value men and boys over women and girls and are passed down from one generation to the next.

"Men should share household responsibilities, even after a long day at the office, to ensure family harmony," Channy added.

Channy found an opportunity to share her story through an Oxfam-organized forum theater play. The

highlight was her participation in the theatrical performance "Who Will Care? A Story of Unpaid Caregivers," developed and produced by Lakhon Komnit Organization (LKO). For the first time, she performed on a big stage in Phnom Penh, after spending ten days rehearsing in Battambang with LKO. The event offered a platform for women like her to voice their experiences and challenges as unpaid caregivers or domestic workers, who are often overlooked in society.

After the performance the participants were invited to share their thoughts about the meaning of the play. Channy was inspired by the fact that the majority of young participants, both men and women, understood and acknowledged the challenges of unpaid care and domestic work. This gave her hope and motivated her to advocate for more performances and to publicize these stories to the people across Cambodia.

The performance was organized by Oxfam in collaboration with LKO to raise awareness about the authentic realities of unpaid care and domestic workload and to stimulate reflections and discussions about recognizing, valuing and sharing domestic contributions of women and girls at home.

The challenges faced by domestic workers like Channy are part of a global issue highlighting the unfair and disproportionate distribution of unpaid care and domestic work between men and women. In Cambodia, based on a 2004 national survey conducted by the National Institute of Statistics, women allocated a significant 188 minutes daily to care work, in stark contrast to their male counterparts who contribute only 18 minutes. Many women are trapped in informal

economy roles, including domestic, casual, and care work. This dynamic has far-reaching consequences, hindering women's education, limiting skill growth, and marginalizing their presence in public domains. These patterns support occupational divides, the ongoing gender wage gap, and the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions.

Adding to the challenge is the lack of reliable data regarding UCDW, which contributes to uncertainty over informed policymaking and productive investment.

Channy's journey highlights the silent struggles of domestic workers and the need for greater recognition and support for their rights and contributions. Domestic workers and unpaid caregivers play a crucial role in maintaining the fabric of society, yet their efforts often go unnoticed and unappreciated. The lack of legal protection and social security leaves them, mostly women and girls, vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Channy's story is a call to action for better working conditions and legal protections for domestic workers and recognition of unpaid contributions by women to the country's economy and wellbeing. By sharing her experiences through fictional stories and performing arts, Channy hopes to inspire change and encourage others to recognize and support the invaluable work of domestic workers and unpaid women and girls at home.

Caption: Channy (far right) who performed as the fictional character Phalla listens to Phalla's mother exhaustedly after working the whole day. In the scene, Phalla's mother tells her it is her duty to cook, clean, keep the house tidy, and prepare her husband's meal for the family's happiness.

A CALL FOR BETTER PROTECTION FOR WORKERS AND FARMERS IN RUBBER AND BANANA SUPPLY CHAINS

Text by: Naratevy Kek

“WE NEED PROTECTIVE MATERIALS, NSSF CARDS, PROPER TOILETS, AND LEGAL WORKER REGISTRATION”

– Sreyrov Thel, a worker at a banana company, Kratie province.

Sreyrov's day starts at 6:25am and ends at 4:20pm, with a one-hour lunch break. Women earn 28,000 riels (\$7) daily, while men, who finish 20 minutes earlier, earn 33,000 riels (\$8.25). Despite her hard work, Sreyrov struggles to make ends meet, spending 20,000 riels (\$5) on food and 5,000 riels (\$1.25) on protective materials such as mask, spray box, raincoat, boots and gloves.

Living with her parents in a company-provided house just five minutes from work, Sreyrov's father also works at the same company. Both have been employed there since 2019. As non-legal workers, they face job insecurity, with work available only when needed.

Safety is another concern for Sreyrov. “I have to walk about 30 meters to find a suitable place to pee. I always go with a co-worker because I'm afraid of the drug addicts in the area,” she said.

Sreyrov's story highlights the broader challenges faced by workers in the banana and rubber supply chains. During a national dialogue on October 31, 2024, in Phnom Penh on “Better Protection for Workers in Rubber and Banana Value Chains”, Oxfam National Director Ms. Sophoan Phean emphasized the limited access to social protection schemes like the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) and the inadequate living and working conditions in remote areas.

Workers in the banana and rubber industries face significant challenges



Front row from right: Deputy Director General of the General Department of the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training Savuth Khieu, Oxfam Program Manager Khim Sok, Oxfam National Director Sophoan Phean and Srey Pov Thel during the gallery walk, viewing illustrations of challenges faced by workers in the banana and rubber value chains. This was during a national dialogue on “Better Protection for Workers in Rubber and Banana Value Chains,” October 31, 2024, Phnom Penh. Photo: Oxfam

due to limited access to information and participation. Often located in remote areas with poor communication and travel conditions, their work involved constant movement, making it difficult to monitor their activities. The use of agricultural chemicals and fertilizers poses health and environmental risks, potentially leading to occupational diseases if proper protective gear is not provided. Companies must supply appropriate clothing and equipment to safeguard workers.

The dialogue, co-organized by Oxfam and FAIR for ALL partners, celebrated achievements and showcased best practices from key stakeholders in government and the private sector. It also facilitated discussions to find collaborative solutions for ongoing challenges. The event saw participation from around 130 representatives from various sectors.

Cambodia's rubber exports have seen significant growth, reaching \$229 million in the first half of 2024, a 19.83% increase from the same period in 2023. However, banana exports have declined by over 20% due to climate change, earning over \$96 million in the first seven months of 2024.

The primary banana-growing provinces include Ratanakiri, Kratie, Stung Treng, Kampot, Kampong Cham, and Kampong Speu, with a slight increase in harvested land expected in 2023.

Oxfam and our partners are committed to collaborating with the Royal Government of Cambodia and other stakeholders to promote, monitor and provide feedback on the promotion of fair work, social protection and gender equality in the agro-industry, banana and rubber sectors. The commitment extends to both industrial-scale operations and small-holder farmers.



Photo caption: Sreyrov while working in the banana farm. Photo supplied.

FAIR for ALL is a project led by Oxfam in collaboration with 7 partners including SIALKA, Farmer and Nature Net, Nature Life Cambodia, Cambodian Agricultural Workers Federation, Transparency International Cambodia, Cooperation Committee for Cambodia, and NGO Forum on Cambodia. Launched in January 2021 and concluding in December 2025, this global initiative spans 17 countries. In Cambodia, it promotes effective collaboration in social, environmental, and responsible investment within the agro-industry, focusing on bananas and rubber.

CULTIVATING SELF CARE IN OXFAMILY

Text by: Sivchhorn Dy & Naratevy Kek

Oxfam has partnered with the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) to offer two consecutive self-care sessions for its staff, focusing on managing stress at work. These initiatives are crucial for promoting staff well-being and enhancing their ability to handle daily work challenges.

Workplace stress can significantly impact both mental and physical health, leading to decreased productivity and job satisfaction. Recognizing this, Oxfam and TPO have taken proactive steps to address these issues through their self-care sessions. These sessions provided invaluable strategies and tools for stress management, including mindfulness techniques, effective time management skills, and relaxation exercises.

Mindfulness techniques, such as meditation and deep-breathing exercises, were introduced to help staff stay present and focused, reducing anxiety and improving overall mental clarity. Effective time management skills were also emphasized, teaching employees how to prioritize tasks, set realistic goals, and manage their time efficiently to reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed. Additionally, relaxation exercises, such as progressive muscle relaxation and guided imagery, were incorporated to help staff unwind and alleviate physical tension.

Natacha Anne Kim, Gender and Social Inclusion Specialist who attended the two sessions, said, "Thanks to the sessions provided by TPO, I understand better how stress, anxiety and depression relate to different dimensions of wellbeing – physical, mental and social. Recognizing and admitting the issues that I face with regards to my own wellbeing is the first step towards improving my work-life balance."

Sopheap Neang, Program Finance Officer, said, "The self-care sessions were beneficial. They serve as a reminder to know and love ourselves, both physical and mental health. They encouraged us to access the level of stress, anxiety and depression, and we aware where we are now and consider whether we need someone to talk to or if we should engage in some exercise to improve our well-being."

"Another important point shared by the trainer was the importance of calming ourselves down first, as everything else tends to fall into place afterward," Sopheap added.

Fostering a culture of self-care and well-being within the workplace can lead to a more positive and supportive environment. Employees who feel cared for and supported are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and productive. This sense of well-being not only enhances individual performance but also contributes to a more cohesive and collaborative team dynamic.

Promoting self-care practices is an effective way to reduce burnout and turnover. When employees are equipped with the tools and strategies to manage stress, they are less likely to experience the negative effects of chronic stress, such as fatigue, irritability, and disengagement. This ensures that staff remain healthy, committed, and capable of performing their roles effectively.

Self-care sessions is a commendable initiative that reinforce the importance of mental health and well-being in the workplace. By providing staff with the resources and support they need to manage stress, Oxfam is enhancing employees' quality of life and fostering a more resilient and productive workforce. These efforts highlight the critical role that self-care and stress management play in creating a thriving work environment where employees can flourish both personally and professionally.



Participants worked together in a team building problem-solving activity that was called "Boat racing." Photo: TPO

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 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.

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