

SPECIAL EDITION

IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

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A WORD FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR



Greetings!

It is with immense pride and gratitude that I welcome you to Issue 6 of Oxfam in Cambodia's Impact Spotlight. This edition celebrates the inspiring strides we have made together in the past year, championing equitable, inclusive, and sustainable development.

The articles featured in this issue highlight extraordinary achievements, collaborative efforts, and innovative initiatives that reflect our unwavering commitment to transforming lives and empowering communities. From celebrating leadership and youth advocacy to advancing environmental conservation, sustainable agriculture, and gender equality, these stories exemplify the resilience and strength of individuals and communities we work alongside.

Notable highlights include the launch of a solar irrigation project funded by Irish government, the recognition of Takong Community Forestry's 30-year journey, and groundbreaking projects like My Dream Home, which is turning waste into construction materials. These achievements, among many others, underscore our vision of a just and sustainable future for Cambodia.

I am humbled by the tireless efforts of our teams, partners, and supporters, whose dedication continues to drive our mission. This edition not only reflects our collective impact but also serves as a reminder of the work that lies ahead.

Thank you for your continued engagement and belief in Oxfam's work. Together, let us carry forward the momentum of these successes to create a brighter, more equitable future for all.

In the spirit of Cambodia's Sangkrant celebrations, I extend my heartfelt wishes to all Oxfam partners, supporters, communities, and our dedicated staff. May this festive occasion bring you and your loved ones continued success, good health, happiness, and prosperity. Let us embrace the new year with hope, unity, and strength as we continue working together to create a more just and sustainable future.

Warm wishes,

Sophoan Phean

National Director, Oxfam in Cambodia

CELEBRATING OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP: SOPHOAN PHEAN HONORED WITH COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARD!

The Australian Alumni Awards reception in Phnom Penh on March 28th was abuzz with energy as it celebrated the remarkable achievements of Cambodian graduates from Australian universities. The event showcased the transformative impact these individuals are making in Cambodia, emphasizing their dedication to advancing economic development as well as social and environmental justice across communities.

Among the distinguished awardees was Ms. Sophoan Phean, National Director of Oxfam in Cambodia, who received the prestigious **Community Leadership Award**.

Taking the stage to accept the honor, Sophoan expressed heartfelt gratitude to those who have supported her journey. "This recognition fills me with immense gratitude, as it highlights a journey made possible by the contributions of many," she said. She expressed her thanks to the Australian Government for its steadfast support and acknowledged the pivotal role of her colleagues, family, and friends. She reserved special appreciation for her husband, whom she described as her unwavering source of strength, his share of care responsibilities have enabled her to take up demanding leadership roles to make a difference in people's lives.

"This recognition reinvigorates my commitment to building a Cambodian society that is inclusive, just, and resilient. Together, I believe we can make a difference," she added.

Sophoan's journey has been marked by excellence and passion. Her time at the Australian National University, where she earned a Master's Degree in Public Policy specializing in Policy Analysis, enhanced her understanding of government structures and her ability to influence policy. Building on that

foundation, she has taken on impactful roles, including serving as Southeast Asia Regional Advisor for Oxfam. From leading advocacy campaigns on climate action and gender equality to championing indigenous rights and promoting good governance, Sophoan has consistently demonstrated her dedication to driving meaningful change.

"I accept this award on behalf of the alumni who tirelessly contribute to Cambodia's development. I hope my story inspires an 'I can do' attitude

among girls and women, encouraging them to invest in themselves and pursue missions that are fulfilling and empowering," she said.

As the current National Director of Oxfam in Cambodia, Sophoan continues to provide strategic oversight for Oxfam's programs in Cambodia, ensuring the organization's initiatives align with its mission to empower communities and create lasting, equitable change. Her leadership shines as a beacon of hope and inspiration for future generations.



Standing tall on stage, Ms. Sophoan Phean shared her heartfelt remarks, just moments before accepting the prestigious Community Leadership Award.



Oxfam and Ministry of Environment held a youth camping event at Koh Han Island to celebrate key environmental and women's initiatives.

OXFAM AND MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT UNITE YOUTH FOR MEKONG RIVER CONSERVATION

Oxfam in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment organized a two-day youth camping event on March 18–19, 2025, at Koh Han Island, Stung Treng province. The event marked the International Day of Action for Rivers, Women and Water Day, and International Women's Day, fostering stronger connections with rivers and inspiring collective action to protect the Mekong River.

The event brought together 60 participants, including government officials, youth groups, fishers, women leaders and local authorities. Activities included camping, roundtable discussion, and a boat tour to the Mekong flooded forest. The Mekong River plays a vital role in agriculture, fisheries, and biodiversity, while also holding immense cultural and historical significance for the Mekong Basin communities.

Ms. Sophoan Phean, Oxfam National Director, said, "The voices of indigenous women, person with disabilities and

other vulnerable groups must be prioritized in shaping water resources policies that inclusively address diverse challenges and needs."

In his opening remarks, H.E. Vathana Kol, Deputy Secretary General, Cambodia National Mekong Committee, said, "In the Lower Mekong Basin, upstream development and climate change are affecting water levels, ecosystems, and agriculture, threatening communities in the lower Mekong basin. Protecting the river needs collaboration among youth, communities, authorities, and policymakers. Together, we can secure the Mekong's future and sustain its ecosystems."

H.E. Lina Ngin, Secretary of State and Chair of Gender Working Group, Ministry of Environment, called the event a vital step in uniting communities and fostering sustainable environmental practices. These practices align with Cambodia's Pentagonal Strategy Phase 1, which prioritizes "People, Road,

Water, Electricity, and Technology."

The fifth angle emphasizes sustainable socio-economic development and climate resilience, including promoting gender equality and sustainable development.

"Water is life," she said. The event's theme, "*Our River, Our Future*," reflects the vital role of healthy rivers in providing fresh water, supporting biodiversity, and preserving cultural heritage. She called for collective action to protect rivers and ensure their sustainability for future generations.

Participants explored the Ramsar-designated Mekong flooded forest, gaining firsthand insights into the environmental challenges facing this unique ecosystem and the urgent need for collaboration to preserve it.

Youth participant Ms. Sokleap Heng said, "I was amazed to see the unique Mekong flooded forest and its cultural connection to local livelihoods. This event truly underscored the importance of safeguarding these ecosystems."



Mr. Emvayu Keat, another youth participant, said, "It was an immense honor to represent The ASEAN Youth Organization (AYO) Cambodia at such an important event. This project has not only deepened my knowledge of environmental issues but also highlighted the importance of collaboration and community engagement in building a more sustainable future. I'm grateful for the connections made and the lessons learned during this experience. A heartfelt thank you to all those

involved for organizing such a valuable, impactful, and transformative event. I'm looking forward to continuing the journey towards a more sustainable future."

Through Oxfam's Mekong Inclusion project and in partnership with My Village Organization and the Culture and Environment Preservation Association, is empowering communities, particularly women, to manage and preserve their water resources. By collaborating with civil society

organizations, government agencies, and inter-governmental bodies, Oxfam is bolstering water governance and strengthening community resilience against human-induced and climate-related changes.

This event highlighted a collective dedication to a sustainable Mekong River, ensuring its vitality for future generations.

Photos: Oxfam





"I truly hope everyone will take part in protecting the river."
Sranh Lanch, Community Women Leader,
Stung Treng province.



"I will use the insights to continue sharing with other youths in Phnom Penh and those around me, so they can better understand the significance of this priceless Ramsar site in Stung Treng province." Sokleap Heng, Youth.





H.E. Lina Ngin, Secretary of State and Chair of Gender Working Group, Ministry of Environment.



Koh Han, Stung Treng province, stands as a serene haven along the Mekong River. With its pristine natural beauty, vibrant ecosystems, and cultural significance, Koh Han invites visitors to connect with nature and discover the vital role of preserving this unique treasure for generations to come.

DONORS WITNESS COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS IN THE MEKONG FLOODED FOREST

Text by: Soknak Por & Kimheang Tuon

Oxfam is honored to host our longstanding donors—the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC)—to the Inclusion Project’s site nestled in the breathtaking Mekong flooded forest in Stung Treng province. The visit focused on deepening understanding of the project’s implementation and its impact on local communities, particularly the voices of community leaders and inspiring women river defenders who shared their stories, and their vision standing up to protect the river and sustainable future.

The donors engaged directly with local partners such as My Village Organization (MVi) and the Culture and Environmental Preservation Association (CEPA), witnessing firsthand how the project has empowered and strengthened community ownership and leadership to safeguard natural resources and secure sustainable livelihoods.

Ms. Chanthida Ponn, a dedicated woman river defender and community researcher from Preah Romkel village, Stung Treng province, has been at the forefront of efforts to protect the Mekong’s ecosystems through her work in community-based action research. She played a crucial role in raising awareness about environmental challenges facing her community.

“Participating in community-based action research has shown me how critical our river ecosystems are to our lives. I make it a priority to share these insights with policymakers at every level, and I remain committed to amplifying our collective voice to drive meaningful change,” said Chanthida.

In the 3S region (Sesan, Sre Pok, and Sekong Rivers), tributaries of the



DFAT and SDC donors visit the Mekong Flooded Forest (Ramsar) site in Stung Treng province, observing ecological changes from climate change and upstream development.

“Our water and ecosystems are the foundation of our livelihoods and must be safeguarded for the sake of future generations.” //

CHANY DUK, WOMAN LEADER

Mekong, living along Srepok River, Ms. Chany Duk, a prominent woman leader from Sangkum village, Ratanakiri province, has been leading efforts to protect her community and stand up for the river’s future and her community.

“I have worked closely with local authorities and my community to defend our precious water resources. I stood up to a banana plantation company that was illegally pumping water from Boeung Santhov for irrigation—resulting in pollution of the Srepok River, a lifeline that sustains critical ecosystems essential for regional biodiversity and our community’s well-being,” Chany said.

After listening and learning from the community, the donors had heard about

their experiences and challenges they face. Amid enlightening exchanges and observing changes in the riverine ecosystem—like the decreasing fish populations and the drying of water due to upstream water infrastructure and impacts of climate change, the experience offered vital insights that will inform the strategic priorities and next phase of the Mekong Inclusion Project. This reflection reinforced our shared commitment to an inclusive, resilient, and sustainable future for riverine communities in the Mekong.

Building on these insights, the next phase of the project will focus on enhancing community-led conservation efforts, strengthening policy advocacy, and expanding partnerships to ensure long-term environmental sustainability and equitable development in the region.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES: REFLECTING ON A YEAR OF CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Text & photo by: Ratha Ra

The Climate Resilience for All project marked the end of its transformative first year in January 2025. To celebrate progress and plan the way forward, Oxfam organized a reflection and learning workshop on January 23, 2025. This event brought together 106 participants, including partners and community members, to showcase their achievements, address challenges, and strengthen their commitment to resilience and sustainable growth.

The workshop emphasized the tangible impacts of community efforts. Vibrant product displays, including traditional medicines, non-timber forest products, wild honey, rice wines, vegetables, fruits, dried fish, and handicrafts, reflected the ingenuity and resources of the participating communities. These exchanges not only highlighted accomplishments but also facilitated knowledge-sharing and collaboration around forest protection, production challenges, and community-based solutions.

Oxfam's focus on fostering income opportunities was evident through the inclusion of local eco-tourism agencies and microfinance institutions. By connecting communities with green loans and resources for eco-tourism, the workshop provided pathways for sustainable livelihoods that also contribute to conservation efforts.

Significant interest from communities centered on innovations with direct impact on resilience. Areas such as solar irrigation, smart agriculture, tree planting, budget management, environmental protection, and non-timber forest product management emerged as priorities, demonstrating a commitment to adapting to climate challenges while enhancing productivity.

The workshop served as a powerful platform to recognize and celebrate



Community shared about their achievement and challenges over the year.

the unwavering dedication of community members and partners. This acknowledgment not only reinforced motivation but also set the stage for deeper collaboration in combating climate change and promoting sustainability.

Looking ahead, communities expressed a need for additional support, particularly in building capacity for their committees, adapting structures, and

integrating smart agricultural practices. Oxfam and its partners pledged to work collectively to empower community forestry, safeguard communal areas, and enhance farmers' climate resilience—laying the foundation for a more sustainable and independent future.

IRELAND ANNOUNCES €800,000 IN FUNDING FOR OXFAM CLIMATE PROGRAMME; LAUNCHES SOLAR IRRIGATION PROJECT IN WATTAMIN COMMUNE

Ireland's Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Mr. Noel Grealish TD, announced funding of €800,000 in 2025 for a climate programme to be implemented by Oxfam in Cambodia on March 19, 2025 in Wattamin commune, Battambang province. This programme will support rural communities in northern Cambodia with climate-smart agriculture, renewable energy, climate resilience, and rural development. The programme team will also work closely with the Government of Cambodia to develop and enhance climate policies.

Minister Grealish, who visited Cambodia, made the funding announcement at the launch of an Irish-funded solar irrigation project in Wattamin commune, aimed at improving agricultural productivity and climate resilience for rural farmers in Cambodia.

In addition to the installation of the solar irrigation infrastructure, the project will provide training for farmers on sustainable water management and use. Through funding provided by the Embassy of Ireland in Hanoi, Ireland has contributed €84,000 to the project in Wattamin commune, ensuring a year-round water supply for the local community. Over 220 households will benefit through the irrigation of 234 hectares of land. The launch event included a demonstration of the solar-powered irrigation system, with local farmers sharing their experiences of the project's impact.

Speaking at the launch ceremony, Minister Grealish said, "The agri-food sector is a crucial part of Ireland's economy, with 135,000 family farms producing high quality food. Ireland has prioritized using technology and innovation to add value, build competitiveness and address key challenges such as environmental sustainability. Similarly, in Cambodia, smallholder farmers are the backbone



Launching solar irrigation project in Wattamin commune. Photo: Oxfam

of the agricultural and central to its future. This solar project is a perfect example of an investment in technology – but it is also an investment in Cambodian farmers and sustainable agriculture.

The shared experiences of Ireland and Cambodia in agriculture present valuable opportunities for cooperation. As part of Ireland's growing engagement in Cambodia, we are delighted to have increased our funding for programmes like the one launched, and to seek new opportunities to work together in rural development, sustainable agriculture and tackling climate change."

H.E. Sithy Pheng, Deputy Provincial Governor of Battambang province, thanked Ireland for its support of the project, "Battambang is known widely as the rice bowl of Cambodia and reliable irrigation is critical for our farmers. This solar irrigation project increases productivity and supports our Province's greener, more sustainable practices. We deeply appreciate the partnership between Ireland, Oxfam, SOGE, and our local communities in making this initiative a reality."

Ms. Sophoan Phean, Oxfam National Director, thanked the Minister and Deputy Provincial Governor for their support for the programme, "Through this programme, we are working to address climate change in some of Cambodia's poorest regions. The collaboration with Ireland, local Government, our partners, and the community underscores the importance of working together on climate action and delivering sustainable development in Cambodia. The project that the Minister launched highlighted the importance of addressing poverty and climate challenges together and we know it will have a major impact on the lives of many families in this area."

Mr. Svang Im, the Head of the local Water User Cooperative, thanked Ireland, Oxfam and SOGE for the project, "Access to water is key for our farming community. This project ensures that farmers have year-round access to a sustainable and affordable water supply. With solar-powered irrigation, we can expand our farming seasons, increase our crop yields, improve our incomes and have a better future for our families."

TAKONG COMMUNITY FORESTRY: A 30-YEAR JOURNEY TO OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

Text by: Phanith Yip & Sokhan Sin | Edited: Ratha Ra



The new committee election process for Takong Community Forestry organized by Provincial Department of Forestry and Fisheries. Photo: Phoeuk Kongden/VSG

Takong Community Forestry, covering 18 hectares, is in Nam Tav commune, Phnom Srok district, Banteay Meanchey province. This Community Forestry was established in 1993 by the commune administration, villagers, monks, and elders with the support from a local not-for-profit organization and served 735 members from three villages: Khnang, Thnong khang Tboung and Takong vallges in Nam Tav commune.

The primary goal of Takong Community Forestry was to protect and preserve natural resources, including forests, non-timber forest products, and wildlife. However, the management committee—comprising nine members, including one woman—was appointed by the commune chief without formal election or official recognition, registration, or regulatory framework from the Provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the Forestry Administration Cantonment. This lack of formal governance and recognition hindered the committee's ability to address issues like forest land encroachment and illegal logging, relying mostly on occasional support from the commune authorities.

In 2024, with funding from the Government of Ireland through Oxfam in Cambodia, the Village Support Group began implementing the Climate Resilience for All project. The initiative supports seven communities in Banteay Meanchey and Oddar Meanchey provinces, including Takong Community Forestry. This project aims to strengthen community engagement and build capacity, allowing management committees to connect with government institutions.

Through quarterly stakeholder meetings facilitated by the Village Support Group, relevant government institutions, communes, districts administrations and management committees met to discuss community issues and project progress. Through this platform, Takong Community Forestry management committees advocated for official registration and recognition. They consistently requested community registration from district authorities and the Provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries. In November 2024, they submitted official documents, including boundary demarcation, bylaws, and new committee elections, to the

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. After numerous follow-ups, these were approved and formally recognized on February 18, 2025.

Mr. Sakhorn Chim, the Committee Chief, said that this official registration and recognition empowers the community to protect and enhance their natural resources, benefiting both members and the poorer villagers who rely on seasonal harvesting. He expressed gratitude to the Government of Ireland and the Village Support Group for their support. He noted that the newly recognized management committee now consist of nine members, including five new members and 743 total members, 47% women. With bylaws and regulations in place, illegal activities have ceased in their community.

"We have waited over 30 years for our community to be officially registered and recognized by law. This official acknowledgment from government institutions truly inspires and empowers us to continue safeguarding, protecting, conserving and enhancing our natural resources. These efforts benefit both community members and non-members, particularly poorer villagers who rely on seasonal harvesting of non-timber forest products for their livelihoods. We are deeply grateful to the Government of Ireland and Village Support Group for their valuable contributions and support," said Mr. Sakhorn Chim.

To further assist Takong Community Forestry, the Village Support Group, as part of the Climate Resilient for All project, will continue supporting the community. This includes capacity-building initiatives in areas such as management planning, climate change awareness, gender integration, carbon measurement, tree planting, agroforestry, and opportunities for income generation for the community committee and its members.

FROM ORDINARY STUDENT TO A YOUTH CLIMATE ADVOCATE

Text by: Chum Seedeth/LLC | Edited: Ratha Ra

Tonle Sap Lake in Cambodia is not only an ecological treasure but also home to countless families, including Vonn Chenda's. At just 18 years old, Chenda is the youngest in her family and a 12th-grade high school student from the Kampong Khleang community, Siem Reap province. For much of her life, she spent her day studying and playing with friends, without clear goals for the future. Although she occasionally joined tree-planting events and other volunteer activities in her community, she remained unaware of her potential to make a meaningful impact. This lack of inspiration and confidence left her feeling like an ordinary student.

However, everything changed when Chenda embarked on a five-month volunteering journey with Live & Learn Cambodia as part of the Climate Resilience for All (CREFA) project, funded by the Government of Ireland and led by Oxfam. As part of this initiative, Live & Learn Cambodia selected 12 young individuals, including Chenda, to strengthen their capacity in organizing and facilitating the Youth-Climate Forum in Siem Reap province. Live & Learn Cambodia empowered these youths with hands-on experience to excel in their roles.

During that experience, she learned the importance of teamwork, gained a deeper understanding of climate change, and engaged in planning development activities. Determined to step beyond her comfort zone, she traveled long distances, embraced new experiences, and immersed herself in the rich diverse cultures and lifestyles, all of which shaped her growth.

At the end of the program, Chenda recognized how her newfound teamwork and communication skills had evolved, enabling her to become an indispensable member of her community. She began actively sharing her knowledge about climate change and applying her new skills



Chenda (far left) is presenting on the skills she gained during her time volunteering with Live & Learn Cambodia, Siem Reap province. Photo: Chum Seedeth/LLC



Chenda and her friend discussed how young people can better understand the challenges their community faces and find ways to contribute toward creating a positive impact. Photo: Chum Seedeth/LLC

in her school. Setting personal goals and engaging with her community in meaningful ways. She earned admiration from her friends and family. Her leadership shone particularly brightly at a youth climate change forum in Siem Reap province, where she inspired her peers with her ability to create a significant impact on their

community.

Looking ahead, Chenda remains dedicated to strengthening her community's understanding of climate change and inspiring her friends to join projects and events that promote resilience and sustainable development.

BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM

Text by: Ratha Ra | Photos: Oxfam

Many Community Forestry and Community Protected Areas possess immense potential to transform under Oxfam's Climate Resilient for All project into Community-based Ecotourism (CBET) ventures. This shift offers communities opportunities to generate income by hosting local and international tourists and reinvesting earnings into forest conservation for a sustainable future.

Despite CBET's promise, challenges hinder its development. Insufficient promotion, remote locations, and limited infrastructure poses significant obstacles in attracting visitors. While poor internet access complicates outreach efforts, it appeals to travelers seeking solitude and escape from the digital world.

To assist communities transitioning to CBET models, Oxfam collaborated with sustainable tour agencies such as Solo Landscapes, Khmer Travel and Tour, and Malay Journey. These agencies offer expertise in resource management, CBET guidance, and strategies to boost tourism.

To further this effort, Oxfam conducted a three-day field visit to Phnom Preah Community Protected Area in Banteay Meanchey province and the Sang Rukhavorn Community Protected Area and Phnom Dangrek Samrek Preysros Community Forestry in Oddar Meanchey province. The visit assessed these sites' potential for CBET initiatives, which could generate revenue for local projects.

The visit yielded several key recommendations to strengthen CBET efforts. Developing detailed community maps with clearly marked start and end points to guide visitors on where to begin, explore, and conclude their journeys. Another suggestion was to install signposts within the community and along main roads to attract visitors and improve



Captured by drone, the Phnom Preah Community Protected Area in Banteay Meanchey province showcases its breathtaking and unique beauty.

visibility. By showcasing the distinctive features of each community—such as local cuisine, handmade products, and unique wildlife—visitors could select destinations matching their interests. Connecting these various attractions also became a priority, as it would offer visitors a richer, more diverse experience. Collaborating with neighboring communities was deemed essential for identifying and emphasizing unique local attractions.

The trip emphasized the importance of storytelling. Providing brief histories and images of each site could offer visitors a deeper understanding of the area. Communities were encouraged to clearly define roles within their communities, covering tasks like cooking, customer service, and guiding, to ensure smooth operation.

Offering diverse tour packages was another critical recommendation, giving visitors varied experience. Engaging the community's youth became a focal point, as their involvement in tourism promotion through platforms like Facebook, Telegram, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube could significantly

broaden outreach.

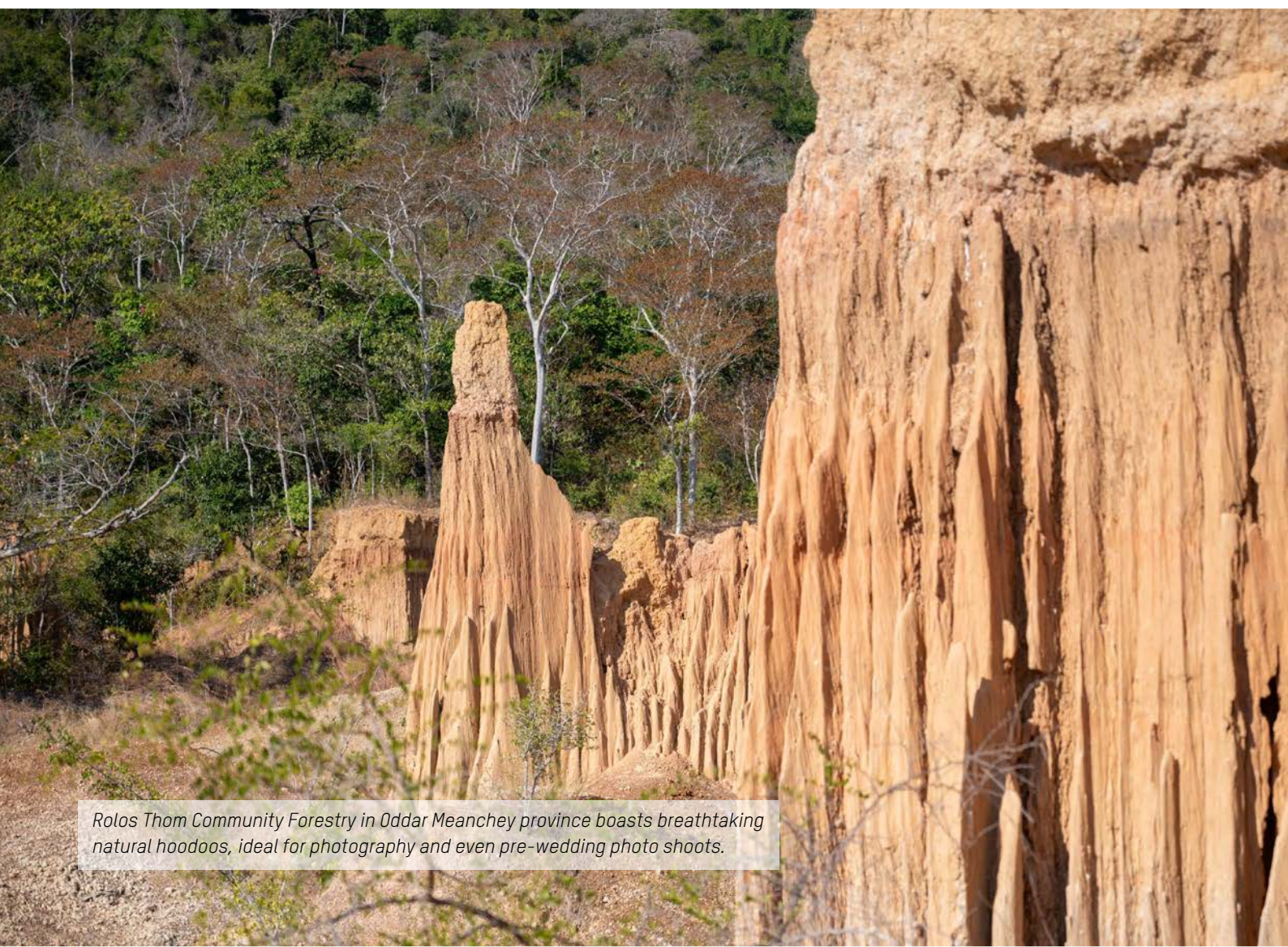
Maintaining cleanliness and upkeep was highlighted as crucial for attracting and retaining visitors. To support these initiatives, Oxfam and its partners proposed capacity-building sessions focusing on photography, videography techniques, and ethics. These skills empower communities to produce compelling communications and marketing materials. Additionally, study tours for communities to learn from successful CBET initiatives in Cambodia were recommended to inspire and guide further development.

Through these initiatives, communities can harness eco-tourism's benefits while safeguarding their resources for future generations. Oxfam remains committed to working with these sustainable tour agencies while seeking new partnerships with local agencies to help communities gain recognition as CBET destinations.

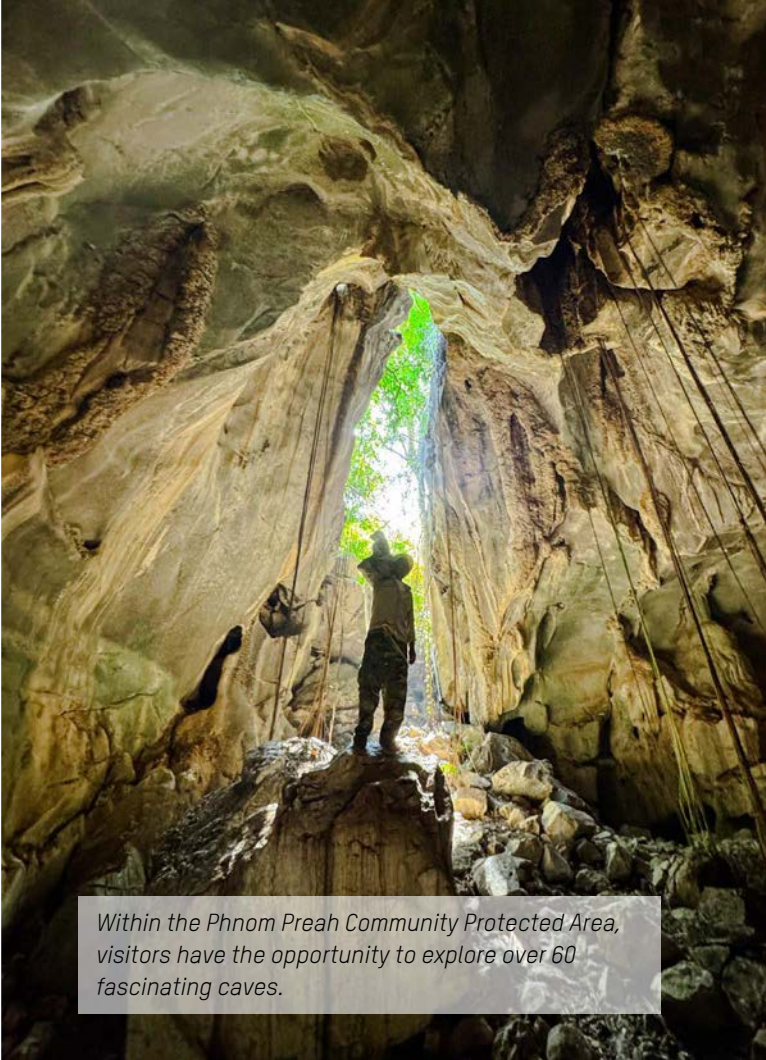
Through these efforts, Oxfam envisions a future where communities thrive as independent, self-sufficient entities, sustaining themselves through income generated by CBET initiatives.



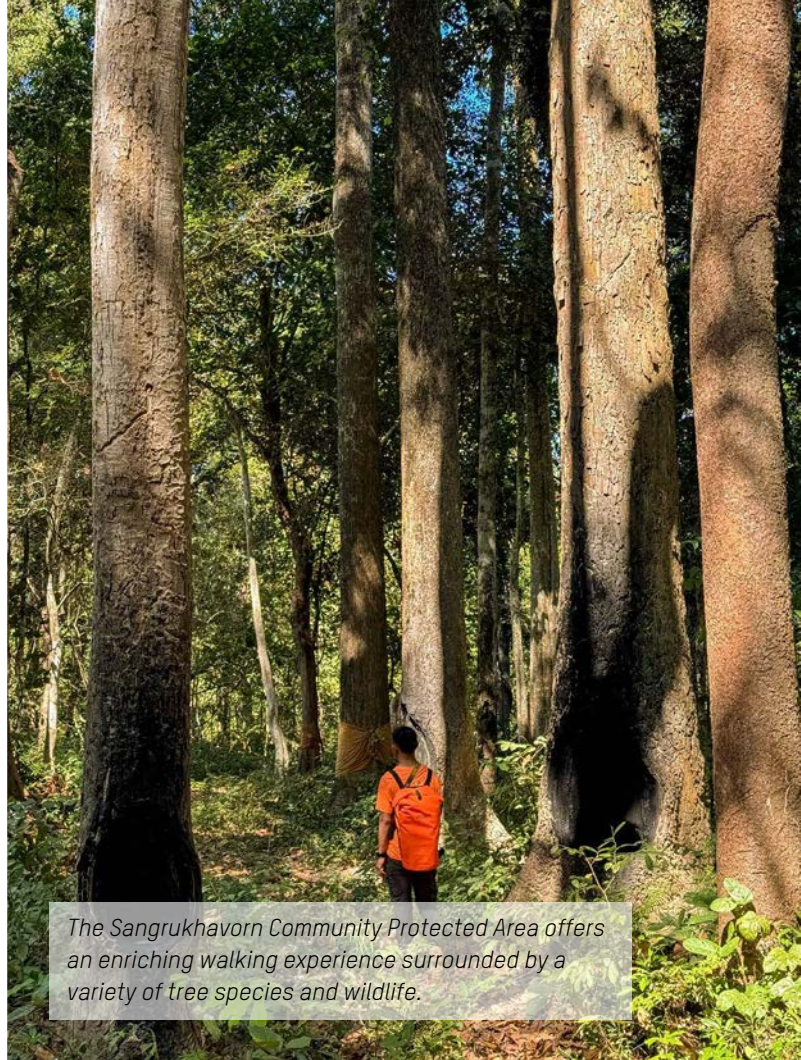
Banteay Torp Temple in Banteay Meanchey province, located near the Phnom Preah Community Protected Area, provides unique opportunities for tourists to connect with the local community.



Rolos Thom Community Forestry in Oddar Meanchey province boasts breathtaking natural hoodoos, ideal for photography and even pre-wedding photo shoots.



Within the Phnom Preah Community Protected Area, visitors have the opportunity to explore over 60 fascinating caves.



The Sangruekhavorn Community Protected Area offers an enriching walking experience surrounded by a variety of tree species and wildlife.

The natural lake in Sangruekhavorn Community Protected Area offers a picturesque setting for visitors to enjoy scenic views, explore biodiversity, and connect with local villagers.





Ms. Kanha Sieng, worker at the rubber farm, Ratanakiri province. Photo: Oxfam

ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE RUBBER TRADE: OXFAM'S ROLE IN EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES AND PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY

Text by: Naratevy Kek

Oxfam is driving transformative change in the rubber trade between Cambodia and Vietnam, focusing on empowering smallholder farmers, fostering community leadership, and advocating for sustainable practices in the natural rubber supply chain. Through collaborative efforts with government agencies, civil society organizations, private sectors, and local communities, Oxfam aims to address challenges posed by stringent new regulations like the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) while promoting inclusivity and resilience.

Oxfam's efforts extend to supporting the mobilization of small-scale rubber producers, empowering them to negotiate fair latex prices with traders, and encouraging solidarity and knowledge sharing among farmers. By amplifying the voices of smallholder farmers and promoting their active participation in the rubber trade, Oxfam helps ensure that marginalized groups,

including women, are not left behind amid evolving market conditions and environmental challenges.

On March 27, 2025, Oxfam co-hosted a workshop in Phnom Penh titled *"Promoting Sustainable Rubber Production, Trade and Investment in Cambodia and Vietnam."* This event brought together rubber companies, government agencies, NGOs, researchers, and smallholders to discuss the interconnected natural rubber supply chains between the two countries. Key discussions addressed legality, sustainability, risks, and opportunities for collaboration. The workshop underscored the importance of community-led approaches and the collective commitment required to safeguard natural resources while securing sustainable livelihoods.

Ms. Sophoan Phean, Oxfam National Director, highlighted the significance of empowering smallholders in the

context of emerging regulations.

"While the implementation of EUDR is likely to drive significant change in how rubber is produced, sourced, and traded, and promote sustainability in the rubber value chain, smallholder rubber farmers risk being marginalized if they lack the capacity to adapt or access adequate support. This requires collective efforts from stakeholders from the government, private sector, and NGOs," Sophoan said.

Through its initiatives, Oxfam is paving the way for a sustainable rubber trade that not only meets international compliance standards but also prioritizes the well-being of communities. By championing inclusivity, promoting equity, and strengthening local capacity, Oxfam's work ensures that the rubber trade contributes to a resilient and sustainable future for both Cambodia and Vietnam.

FAIR FARMS: EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES THROUGH SUSTAINABLE PEPPER FARMING

When Norbert Binot founded Fair Farms in 2014, his vision extended beyond cultivating Kampot pepper. He dreamed of a community where farmers thrived alongside their crops, empowered by sustainable practices and fair opportunities. Over the past decade, his farm has evolved into one of Cambodia's leading producers and exporters of organic, fair-trade Kampot pepper, employing 15 full-time and 110 seasonal staff—69% women. But Fair Farms is more than a pepper exporter; it is a beacon of transformation and hope for local communities.

Norbert's journey began with an epiphany: his farm could be a force for positive change. Through direct engagement with local farmers, he unearthed the core challenges they faced—livelihood insecurity, climate change, and limited access to resources and education. As Norbert put it, "True understanding comes from immersion. It means being uncomfortable and truly listening to the community's needs." Armed with this insight, Norbert



Norbert Binot, Founder of Fair Farms.

developed targeted strategies to enhance farmers' income and empower them to invest in sustainable practices. He understood that poverty extended beyond the fields, impacting access to education, healthcare, clean water, and proper nutrition.

Yet the driving change was no simple task. Convincing farmers to adopt new methods requires patience and trust. "One of the best ways to build trust was to lead by example," Norbert said. By showcasing the success of



Norbert demonstrated sustainable farming on his own land, building trust and inspiring farmers to adopt new methods through example. Photo Fair Farms

sustainable farming on his own land, he inspired others to follow suit.

Fair Farms has also helped farmers navigate the complexities of organic and fair-trade certification. Accessing premium markets comes with steep financial and logistical barriers, but Norbert was determined to bridge this gap. "It is our responsibility to help farmers obtain organic certification so they can reach better markets," he said.

Despite these efforts, climate change remains a formidable challenge. Cambodian farmers are grappling with extreme weather, from scorching heat to declining yields. "This year, our production has dropped, and many farmers are giving up," Norbert lamented. "We are losing out to climate change."

Still, Norbert refuses to surrender. With support from Oxfam's Impact SME Program, Fair Farms is pursuing innovative solutions, including advanced irrigation systems, partnerships for local organic production, and diversification into vanilla cultivation to reduce monoculture risks. "We are in a

situation where we need to invest," he said, highlighting the importance of financial backing for long-term resilience.

Oxfam has also connected Norbert with investors and like-minded entrepreneurs, providing the tools and credibility needed for fundraising success. "Oxfam's introduction adds weight to our efforts," he said. Skills like trust-building and impact measurement, gained through the program, are helping Fair Farms secure its future.

For Norbert, growing Kampot pepper is just one part of a bigger picture. His vision for Fair Farms includes soil protection, water conservation, and crop diversification—initiatives designed to shield farmers from the impacts of climate change. "We are not just farming peppers; we are building a sustainable future for our communities," he said.

Through dedication and collaboration, Fair Farms continues to transform livelihoods, proving that sustainable agriculture is not only possible but essential in the fight against climate change.

MY DREAM HOME TURNS WASTE INTO CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS

Kongngy Hav's social enterprise, My Dream Home, is transforming Cambodia's construction sector by producing eco-friendly bricks and building materials from recycled waste such as broken glasses, marble and granite waste. Founded in 2025, the enterprise reflects Kongngy's vision of creating affordable, environmentally friendly homes for Cambodians while promoting sustainability.

Despite challenges in the construction sector – exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and rising material costs – Kongngy persevered. His participation in Oxfam's Impact SME Program marked a pivotal turning point. "The program was life-changing. It opened doors during a challenging time for the construction industry," said Kongngy.

Through the program, Kongngy gained crucial skills in leadership, proposal writing, and investor pitching. "Before, I led the business alone but now I see the value of empowering my team to lead," Kongngy added. "With their support, we can expand to meet the growing demand for sustainable construction materials"

The program's focus on mentorship and networking also inspired Kongngy to strengthen his social impact. "I learned how to run my business not just for profit, but to reduce environmental harm and uplift marginalized communities, especially by encouraging women to participate in construction," he said.

With guidance from the Oxfam's Impact SME Program, Kongngy confidently participated in various investor pitching



Kongngy Hav's My Dream Home creates eco-friendly bricks from recycled waste, making housing in Cambodia affordable and sustainable.

and competition. Notably, he won a \$10,000 grant in the 2022 Superstar Impact Business Competition, which enabled him to build nearly 30 eco-friendly homes and toilets for underserved communities in Siem Reap province.

My Dream Home earned accreditation as an Inclusive Business by Cambodia's Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology, and Innovation and was named one of the UNDP Cambodia's top 10 growth-stage impact venture.

Cambodia relies heavily on imported construction materials, importing goods such as stone, plaster, cement, and mica worth \$69.4 million in 2022, according to the United Nations Comtrade database. Kongngy

envisions a future where businesses reduce these costs by expanding the production of eco-bricks and other green materials. "We can decrease Cambodia's dependence on imports and make a real impact for the economy and the environment," he said.

Despite the current economic slowdown and delays in the construction sector, Kongngy remains optimistic. "We've faced setbacks, but my dream of scaling this business – through more investment and expanded production – keeps me going," he said.

My Dream Home is more than a business; it's a mission to create sustainable solutions for Cambodia's future. With ongoing support, the potential for greater impact is immense.

TRANSFORMING LIVES WITH MEETDOCTOR: ACCESSIBLE HEALTHCARE FOR ALL



Buntongyi Nit founded MeetDoctor in 2018, driven by a vision to use technology to bridge Cambodia's healthcare gap and save lives.

When Buntongyi Nit founded MeetDoctor in 2018, his vision was clear: to bridge the healthcare gap in Cambodia through technology. The idea was born from a deeply personal experience—his father's struggle with inadequate medical care. Frustrated by limited treatment options, Buntongyi recognized the potential of technology to save lives on a larger scale. "If I become a doctor, I can only save one or two patients a day. But with health technology, I can probably save millions," he said.

Originally a medical student at the University of Puthisastra with dreams of becoming an interventional cardiologist, Buntongyi's journey took an unexpected turn after joining the Design Healthcare Challenges accelerator program. Inspired by the ability to connect patients with doctors

remotely, he shifted his path from medicine to entrepreneurship.

The transition wasn't without hurdles. Lacking knowledge of business models, finance, and social impact, Buntongyi initially struggled to balance purpose and sustainability. However, his participation in Oxfam's Impact SME Program proved transformative. The program equipped him with tools to define impact goals, refine his business model, and prioritize inclusivity, including gender and disability considerations.

"We changed our concepts but retained our activities. The tools helped us track the exact impact we're making," he said.

MeetDoctor's success quickly gained momentum. The platform secured

\$250,000, bolstering its online consultation services, strengthening partnerships with local healthcare providers, and ensuring regulatory compliance. Today, it stands as a trusted platform empowering patients to access quality care from the comfort of their homes.

Buntongyi's vision extends beyond Cambodia. While aspiring to expand internationally, he remains focused on building trust locally. This ambition is deeply rooted in his father's story. After suffering a stroke and skin issues, his father struggled to find adequate care until an online consultation with a Japanese specialist turned things around. Within a month, his father's health improved dramatically. This life-changing experience fueled Buntongyi's mission to bring similar solutions to underserved communities in Cambodia.

Through MeetDoctor, Buntongyi hopes to break barriers in healthcare access. "Everyone deserves high-quality care," he said. "We aim to save lives and make families happy." The platform also goes beyond consultations, with a focus on public health education. By creating content on topics like mental health, MeetDoctor is empowering Cambodians to take charge of their well-being.

Looking ahead, Buntongyi envisions MeetDoctor evolving into a comprehensive tool where users can not only consult doctors but also monitor their family's health—a "personal doctor in your pocket." With innovation and compassion at its core, MeetDoctor is transforming lives and setting new benchmarks for accessible healthcare in Cambodia and beyond.

FROM COFFEE BEAN TO PROSPERITY: HOW THREE CORNER COFFEE EMPOWERS MONDULKIRI'S INDIGENOUS FARMERS

As the innovator behind Three Corner Coffee, Cambodia's first international-standard coffee roaster, Josh has partnered with local farmers to enhance their income and preserve the legacy of the country's first coffee plantations. Born in the U.S. but raised in Cambodia, Josh's journey has been anything but traditional. From an early age, he explored various sectors – from landscaper and goldmining to teaching and restaurant management – until his career path converged with his passion for coffee.

Interestingly, Josh's journey with coffee began at a time when he didn't even enjoy drinking it. After helping to co-found Three Corner Coffee in 2010, Josh later took over the business in 2017, which was sourcing Cambodian robusta beans from Bunong farmers in Mondulkiri.

Coffee has deep roots in Indochina, first introduced by the French in the 1800s and cultivated by indigenous Bunong farmers in Mondulkiri and Ratanakiri. Initially sourcing from Ratanakiri, Three Corner Coffee faced challenges due to limited availability and eventually focused its efforts solely on Mondulkiri. "Our goal is to support and grow the industry from the very people who have nurtured it for generations. These farmers have grown coffee for over seven generations, and we want to build on that legacy," Josh explains.

Sustainability wasn't always central to the business, but things began to change after Josh's wife, Sona, who later became the company's 'Sustainability Champion,' introduced him to more eco-conscious practices. The turning point came when Josh and Sona joined Oxfam's Impact SME Program in 2022, which expanded their understanding of sustainability and connected them with a broader network



Joshua Jones is transforming the coffee landscape in Cambodia, working closely with indigenous farmers in Mondulkiri to brew prosperity while uplifting their livelihoods. Photo: Three Corner Coffee

of like-minded entrepreneurs. Under Josh and Sona's leadership, the business has introduced innovative eco-friendly practices, including a jar-refill system at their Phnom Penh café and the use of recyclable materials at events they serve. Their long-term goal is to completely eliminate plastic packaging by switching to fully recyclable aluminium cans. "Our aim is zero plastic waste," he affirms. Among all the opportunities offered by the Impact SME Program, Josh found the Asia Inclusive and Responsible Business Forum 2023 hosted by Oxfam in Bangkok particularly transformative.

"The most valuable part has been building an ecosystem—connecting with people who share our vision and learning practical ways to apply sustainable practices on the ground," he said.

Additionally, inspired by the program, Josh and Sona are now seeking to reinstate a plan that has been more than a decade in the making to have Three Corner Coffee establish a post-harvest processing center in Mondulkiri. This center aims to provide training to indigenous farmers, helping them

enhance the quality of their coffee while also improving their access to agricultural inputs and financing.

With the scaling plan and the program's support, Josh has successfully secured a grant of \$100K+ to acquire additional resources, develop the local market for Cambodian grown coffee and establish a post-harvest center in Mondulkiri.

Three Corner Coffee now exports its products to markets in Germany, Japan, the U.S., Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, though its primary focus remains Cambodia. "One of our biggest milestones came in 2019 when we sourced over 34 tonnes of coffee from indigenous farmers in a single harvest," Josh proudly shares.

In 14 years, Three Corner Coffee has worked with over 60 indigenous farming families, 64% women, who contribute to collecting and processing the beans. Josh's journey illustrates not only the impact of sustainable business on the environment but also how empowering local communities can transform an entire industry.



Three Corner Coffee partners with local farmers to boost incomes and preserve Cambodia's historic coffee legacy. Photo: Three Corner Coffee

BREAKING BARRIERS AND BRINGING SAFE DRINKING WATER: SREYNEAK'S JOURNEY AS A WATER KIOSK ENTREPRENEUR

Text by: Hojin Shin & Kimheang Tuon

In Varin village, where access to safe drinking water was once a daily challenge, a young woman named Sreyneak is leading a remarkable transformation. At just 24 years old, she is not only improving the health of her community but also challenging traditional gender norms.

Growing up in a village where many families relied on groundwater that was often contaminated with E. coli. The daily risks of unsafe drinking water were an unfortunate reality, and boiling water over wood fires was the only way to make it drinkable—a labor intensive and time-consuming process. When she learned about the opportunity to run a water kiosk through Oxfam's initiative of a project called Fostering Inclusive & Sustainable WASH in the Tonle Sap (FoWASH) in partnership with HURREDO and funded by KOICA, she saw it as a chance to make a lasting impact.

"I was very happy to hear that the water kiosk could provide safe drinking water for the villagers," said Sreyneak. "I applied with the hope of making safe water accessible to the community."

Now, together with two other entrepreneurs, Sreyneak operates the Varin Water Kiosk. The kiosk purifies groundwater using advanced filtration systems and distributes it in sanitized 20-liter bottles under the brand name Kuchsar. This name, chosen through a community-led contest, carries deep meaning—Kuchsar, a mythical animal from Angkor Wat, symbolizes strength and wisdom. "We wanted a name that represents the vitality and well-being safe drinking water brings to our village," she said.

NAVIGATING BUSINESS CHALLENGES AND GROWTH

Starting a new business always comes with challenges. One of the initial hurdles was encouraging villagers to choose Kuchsar bottles over



Through Oxfam's FoWASH initiative funded by KOICA, Sreyneak now runs a water kiosk, providing safe drinking water to her village—transforming lives and addressing the risks of contaminated groundwater.

Photo: Hojin Shin/Oxfam

competing brands. "We receive bottles from various companies as part of an exchange system," Sreyneak said. "But we're working on ways to ensure our brand circulates more efficiently."

Despite the early-stage challenges, the business is growing steadily. Currently, the kiosk sells around 30-40 bottles daily and aims to increase sales to 50-60 bottles next month. With positive customer feedback on the water's taste and quality, the long-term goal is to sell 150 bottles daily.

To attract customers, the team introduced a promotional price of 1,500 riel per bottle—lower than competitors who sell 2,000-2,500 riel. A community "tasting event" also highlighted Kuchsar water's superior taste, with many participants preferring it over other brands. "That kind of feedback gives us great confidence," said Sreyneak.

BREAKING GENDER STEREOTYPES

As a female entrepreneur, Sreyneak is challenging traditional gender roles in her village. Traditionally, women in Varin are expected to handle housework, while men take on labor-intensive jobs. Some community members questioned whether a woman could successfully manage a water kiosk.

"My neighbors used to say, 'How can a woman run a water kiosk? Women should stick to housework,'" Sreyneak said. "But I believe these stereotypes can change. Managing a water kiosk involves different roles, and each person can contribute in their own way."

Working alongside two male entrepreneurs, Sreyneak has proven that diverse perspectives strengthen decision-making. She hopes that by leading this business, she can inspire other women in the community to take on entrepreneurial roles and prove that women are just as capable as men in running businesses.

Building a Sustainable Future For Sreyneak, the key to long-term success lies in transparency, responsibility, and trust. The team divides roles to ensure efficient operations and promote their bottled water through village meetings and word-of-mouth.

"I hope more villagers will drink safe water and become healthier," she said. "And I hope my journey shows other women that we can go beyond traditional roles, lead businesses, and create meaningful change."

From providing safe drinking water to challenging societal norms, Sreyneak's journey as a water kiosk entrepreneur is one of resilience, innovation, and impact. Through her efforts, Varin villagers are not only drinking safer water but also witnessing a shift in what's possible for women in business.

ADDRESSING GENDER GAP IN UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK FOR JUST OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

Text by: Natacha Kim

Oxfam launched and disseminated the key findings of its “Household Care Survey Pilot in Cambodia” on 25 February 2025 in Phnom Penh. The major key finding is that women spend on average 5 hours and 2 minutes on Unpaid Care and Domestic Work (UCDW) daily, in contrast to 2 hours and 6 minutes for men, highlighting that gender disparity starts at home.

The survey and analysis were conducted by Analytics and Insights Asia (AI-Asia) from August to November 2024, in close consultation with Oxfam and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs. The survey team interviewed more than 1,100 Cambodians, including women, men, girls, and boys from 447 households in Prey Veng, Siem Reap, Mondulhiri, and Kampot. Respondents reported in detail how they use their daily time, the various impacts UCDW may have on them, their feelings and perceptions about UCDW, their access to essential infrastructures and services, and their support needs.

This Household Care Survey pilot produced a wealth of data and information that can help stakeholders better understand time-use patterns across genders, ages, income levels, and geographic locations, to identify potential factors that influence the distribution of roles within families, and to develop initiatives, programs, or policies that are gender-transformative and address the root causes of gender inequality in UCDW. This survey is part of the initiative funded by the Embassy of Ireland.

Ms. Sophoan Phean, National Director of Oxfam, said, “The heavy responsibilities to care for their families and homes are unfairly imposed on women and girls by gendered societal expectations. A healthy, loving, and harmonious home is essential for family members to go to work and to school in the best conditions. But it is everyone’s responsibility, not just women and girls.”



Women spend 5 hours daily on unpaid care and domestic work, while men contribute just 2 hours—a significant disparity in how this labor is distributed within households.

Ms. Deirdre Ní Fhallúin, Ambassador of Ireland to Cambodia, echoed the need to address the imbalance in unpaid care responsibilities. “Ireland strongly values the role of women in economic development. We believe that recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care work is essential for empowering women and ensuring their full participation in economic and social life,” she said in a video message at the event.

Cambodia has recognized very early the essential value of care and domestic work in Article 36 of the Constitution, which states that “Housework shall have the same value as remunerated work outside the home.” This is a very progressive stance that Cambodia has embedded in the highest law of the country. However, while women and girls spend an excessive amount of time to take care of their homes and families, they do so at the cost of their own personal care, education, development, and professional careers. To develop policies and initiatives that support the reduction, redistribution, and rewarding of women’s and girls’ unpaid care and domestic work responsibilities, updated sex-

disaggregated data and statistics on time spent on UCDW, distribution of roles, and support needs are crucially required for gender-responsive and transformative interventions. In Cambodia, the last national care-related time-use data were collected in 2004, when it was found that women spent 188 minutes (3 hours and 8 minutes) daily on UCDW and men spent just 18 minutes.

Based on Oxfam’s Household Care Survey Pilot, the time spent by women increased, but the gap between women and men significantly narrowed as well. However, it must be noted that the methodologies used in both cases had several important differences, including the sampling sizes, the method of recording time use, and the frequency of time recording. Although recent anecdotal evidence points to a shrinking gap, international multilateral organizations still present Cambodia’s official 2004 time use statistics. This is why it is imperative for Cambodia to include care-related time-use instruments in its national household surveys to reflect current realities and to provide data to support public policies that advance gender equality.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S MONTH: CELEBRATING WOMEN'S STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE

Throughout **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S MONTH**, Oxfam proudly shared **INSPIRING MESSAGES** from our dedicated colleagues. These heartfelt reflections highlighted the **STRENGTH, CREATIVITY, AND DETERMINATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS** who are breaking barriers and creating change. From empowering stories of overcoming obstacles to calls for **GREATER INCLUSION, EQUALITY, AND LEADERSHIP**, these messages celebrated the vital contributions of women everywhere. They painted a vivid picture of collective action and hope for **A FUTURE WHERE ALL VOICES ARE HEARD AND VALUED**.



On behalf of Oxfam and as a wife, mother, sister, I would like to honor the strength and heroism of women and girls who have worked tirelessly to break away from traditional constraints. Overcoming barriers and defying social and economic challenges, they have become a driving force in the country's economy and development—contributing not only to direct participation but also by balancing employment, income generation and care giving responsibilities.

To young people with dreams for the future, I encourage you to believe in yourselves. Work hard, acquire knowledge and skills, embrace technology, and pursue education, as it is the key to success and leadership. You have the power to achieve your goals and become great leaders of tomorrow. At the same time, it is vital for women to understand the laws and rights that protect them from abuse and discrimination. Building connections through team participation or creating women's networks to share experiences and support each other, in particular, women's networks can foster shared experience and mutual support. Women should take in decision-making leadership, and societal advancement to confidently embrace progress, bring about change, and inspire self-belief.

- Sophoan Phean, National Director



Gender equality can be achieved through shifts in individual perceptions and collective efforts. It must go beyond policy documents and translate into real actions. It's not just about words but about walking the talk. It's not merely about positions or recognition but ensuring opportunities in decision-making. It's not solely about leadership, but empowering women economically."

- Soknak Por, Program Coordinator



I am deeply grateful to Oxfam for fostering a supportive system and care policy throughout my pregnancy journey. Their commitment to providing six months of maternity leave ensures that I have the precious time to heal, bond, and breastfeed my little one. This is not just a policy—it is a testament to valuing women, motherhood, and the future we nurture.

- Chakrya, Program Officer who is currently on maternity leave



Inclusion is at the core of Oxfam's work. Through my role supporting the Natural Resource Governance (NRG) program, I have witnessed firsthand how Oxfam applies inclusive approaches to promote sustainable natural resource governance in Cambodia. I am deeply grateful to Oxfam for giving me this opportunity. I truly admire their unwavering commitment to empowering people with disabilities like me in our communities.

- Orm Ngot, Program Finance Officer



Oxfam joined the Ministry of Women's Affairs of Cambodia's Public Open Space Event at K-mall to engage with the public on International Women's Day. This was an insightful opportunity to share about Oxfam's work and test members of the public's knowledge about gender equality barriers.

- Natacha Kim, Gender and Social Inclusion Specialist





Holding my daughter in my arms reminds me why I do what I do. Motherhood has given my work new meaning — empowering women today so our daughters can lead, thrive, and dream without limits tomorrow

- Sar San, I-SME Project Manager.



Empowerment breaks barriers, enabling everyone to lead. Resilience helps communities overcome challenges and innovate. Gender diversity drives better decisions and stronger societies. Let's promote empowerment, diversity, and inclusion to ensure everyone has a voice and choice.

- Ye, Oxfam CLV Institutional Funding Specialist.



Celebrating Women's Month with Self-Care! At Oxfam, we believe in empowering women to take care of their mental health and well-being. Recently, our team joined self-care sessions with the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization, focusing on stress management and mindfulness. Let's prioritize self-care and support one another in our journey towards a healthier and happier life.



When the river flows and washes over the shores, it carves out new pathways. Similarly, a woman, with her strength and resilience, can face challenges and forge her own path forward. Let all women believe in themselves and harness their potential to pursue their dreams, contributing to the betterment of our community, society, and nation.

- Botom Mune, Oxfam Natural Resource Program Assistant





ការតស៊ូមតិលើប្រធានបទពាក់ព័ន្ធនឹងប្រព័ន្ធតំណាងសង្គម
Debate on the Social Protection Related Topic

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Debate Topic "Is Social Protection a Cost that Burdens Economies or an Investment that Drives Long-term Growth?"



ក្រុមស្រប (ដាក់បន្ទុកដល់សេដ្ឋកិច្ច)

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SOCIAL PROTECTION: A COST BURDENS OR A LONG-TERM INVESTMENT?

Text by: Sereyroth Phang

Oxfam in Cambodia supported a dynamic group of young people debating the advantages and disadvantages of social protection—the government's interventions aimed at safeguarding people from risks and addressing emergencies throughout their life cycle.

The debate, titled "Is social Protection a Costly burdens on the Economy or a Long-Term investment?" was held during the Social Protection Week, organized by the National Social Protection Council (NSPC). As the key government institution coordinating social protection strategies and policies in Cambodia, the NSPC brought together approximately 1,000 participants including government officials, development partners, civil society organizations, youths, and substantial virtual attendees.

The proposition team highlighted concerns over the financial sustainability of social protection program. They cited data indicating that, as of late 2024, Cambodia's social protection initiatives had reached 7.5 million citizens, with expenditures exceeding \$4.3 billion. These figures they argues, raised pressing questions about the long-term fiscal sustainability of social assistance programs that rely entirely on tax revenue.

In contrast, the opposition team made the case for social protection as an essential investment in Cambodia's future emphasizing its critical role in fostering economic stability, reducing poverty and inequality, and promoting workforce sustainability. They also highlighted the government's increasing commitment to social

assistance and the importance of establishing robust pension and healthcare systems.

This debate set a platform for dialogue and exchange of views among young people on the government's policies. Oxfam has the honor to support the NSPC in organizing this event, particularly the debate session highlighting the importance of strong social protection in helping vulnerable communities to cope with challenges such as climate impacts, like displacement and job losses.

Since its inception in 2022, the annual Cambodian Social Protection Week has become a cornerstone for advancing social welfare. This year's event was particularly noteworthy, making the launch of the National Social Protection Framework 2024-2035. This framework signifies a strategy shift from a pillar-based approach to one that address life-cycle risks. The altimate aim is to develop a more effective, inclusive, and sustainable social protection system that can cover all life-cycle risks and responding to emergencies or crises.

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Edited by: Naratevy Kek

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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Netherlands



Oxfam has supported Cambodia's development since 1979.

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



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