

IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

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OXFAM

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WARMEST GREETINGS FROM OXFAM IN CAMBODIA!



I hope this message finds you well. As we close another transformative year, I am filled with gratitude and a deep sense of pride for the incredible journey we have undertaken together.

On behalf of Oxfam in Cambodia, I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to all the donors, partners and allies and colleagues, and Oxfam's leaders who have played a pivotal role in our shared mission of creating lasting impact in the lives of vulnerable communities.

The **Impact Spotlight** has been a beacon of light, illuminating the remarkable achievements we have accomplished as a collective. Starting from January 2024, we will issue the **Impact Spotlight** on a quarterly basis. This is a platform where we can celebrate the achievements, both big and small, and acknowledge the unwavering dedication and tireless efforts of everyone involved. From communities, partners, and allies to local authorities and government agencies, each individual has contributed their unique strengths, expertise, and passion to drive positive change.

Our donors have been the pillars of support, providing the necessary resources and trust to implement our programs effectively. Their unwavering commitment to our cause has made it possible for Oxfam in Cambodia to reach new heights and touch countless lives. We are immensely grateful for their generosity, which has enabled us to respond swiftly to emergencies, empower communities, and advocate for lasting systemic change.

To my esteemed colleagues, I extend my deepest appreciation for your unwavering dedication and relentless pursuit of justice. Your hard work, resilience, and innovative thinking have been the driving force behind our achievements. Together, we have faced challenges head-on, adapted to new realities, and emerged stronger than ever. Your unwavering commitment to our mission is truly inspiring.

I would also like to acknowledge the exceptional leadership and guidance provided by the management team at Oxfam. Their strategic vision, strong support, and commitment to transparency have created an environment where ideas can flourish, and impact can be maximized. Their belief in the power of collaboration and collective action has shaped our journey towards a more equitable and just society.

As we move forward into the new year, let us continue to build upon the successes of the past. Let the **Impact Spotlight** shine brightly, illuminating the stories of change, resilience, and hope that lie at the heart of our work. Together, we will forge ahead, driven by our shared vision of a world free from poverty and injustice.

Thank you once again to our donors, colleagues, management teams at Oxfam, friends here and there for your unwavering support and dedication. Your contributions have made a tangible difference in the lives of those we serve. I am honored to be part of such an extraordinary team and look forward to the continued impact we will create together.

With sincere appreciation,

Sophoan Phean
National Director, Oxfam in Cambodia

PROPELLING INCLUSIVE BUSINESS TO NEW HEIGHTS



Distinguished guests, organizers, and winners gathered for a group photo during the Pitching and Awarding Ceremony, 18 December 2023.

Inclusive businesses offer commercially viable goods, services, and livelihoods to individuals at the base of pyramid. By integrating them into the value chain as suppliers, distributors, retailers, or customers. IBs address challenges related to income inequality and decent work.

The Superstar Inclusive Business Competition in Cambodia, initiated by Oxfam in partnership with government agencies like the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MISTI) and Khmer Enterprise, plays a crucial role in promoting inclusive business (IB) models and supporting the development of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the country. The competition aims to accelerate the impact of IBs in Cambodia by promoting best practices and providing financial support and advisory services to selected "Superstars."

Launched on October 10, 2023, the competition was open to enterprises certified as IBs by MISTI or SMEs in Oxfam's and Khmer Enterprise's SME Development programs. The selection process involved a three-month application period, evaluation, shortlisting, and final

pitching sessions. The winners of the competition were honored with the title of **"Superstars"** at the *Superstar Inclusive Business Competition: Pitching and Awarding Ceremony* held in Phnom Penh on December 18, 2023.

The first winner, Solar Green Energy, founded by **Ms. Thida Kheav**, focuses on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and providing clean energy for farmers. Their Solar Irrigation Service, which received a \$20,000 grant, aims to expand solar irrigation capacity and establish a solar water draining system. This initiative will benefit 300 farmers by providing year-round access to water for cultivation and preventing flooding.

The second winner, MUCH Mobile Healthcare, founded by **Ms. Phirum Dyphan**, is centered around professional home healthcare in Cambodia. They received a \$15,000

grant to provide caregiving training to women in rural areas, offering them job opportunities as nurses or caregivers. This initiative not only improves the quality of life for the elderly but also reduces the burden of unpaid care on women.

H.E. Dr. Nhim Khemara, Permanent Secretary of States of MISTI, emphasizes the positive impact of IB models on society and the economy, leading to sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction. He expresses the commitment of MISTI to support the vision of Cambodia's transformation into a high-income and robust economy, with employment, equity, efficiency, and sustainability as the key objectives. The promotion of IB, including the implementation of the Superstar Inclusive Business Competition, is an integral part of achieving these goals.



The winners of the Superstar Award, Ms. Kheav Thida (left), Founder of Solar Green Energy Cambodia, and Ms. Dyphan Phirum, Founder of MUCH Mobile Healthcare.

CAMBODIA TAKES BOLD STEPS TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE WITH 'BLUE SKIES & NET ZERO 2050' CAMPAIGN



High level panel discussion on "Cambodia 2050: Net Zero Ambition, Progress, and after Reflection" during the launching of the campaign.

In a groundbreaking initiative supported by Oxfam and Agence Française de Développement, the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) launched the 'Blue Skies & Net Zero 2050' campaign, with Cambodia becoming the first GGGI member country in Southeast Asia to endorse this global endeavor. The campaign's primary goal is to raise awareness about Cambodia's climate actions and garner support to achieve a net-zero emission target by 2050.

The campaign's official launch event, held at the Ministry of Environment, saw the participation of high-level officials and stakeholders. **H.E. Dr. Eang Sophalleth**, Minister of the Ministry of Environment, expressed his commitment to promoting a clean, green, and sustainable future for Cambodia, aligning with the campaign's vision. He emphasized the importance of engaging all stakeholders, including the youth, in building awareness around climate change and resilience.

During the event, a range of crucial topics were discussed in a high-level panel session and youth debate. Key areas of focus included the urgent need to transform Cambodia's transportation and industry sectors to mitigate their adverse effects on air

quality, the necessity of investment, and the evolving landscape of green finance in the country. These discussions underscored the significance of transitioning towards sustainable practices and technologies to combat climate change in Cambodia.

Ms. Sophoan Phean, Oxfam National Director, applauded Cambodia's commitment to the 'Blue Skies & Net Zero 2050' campaign, recognizing it as a significant step towards addressing climate change and building a sustainable future. She stressed the importance of inclusive and equitable climate action, particularly in vulnerable communities, with the involvement of those most impacted by climate change and the youth.

Ms. Shomi Kim, GGGI Country Representative in Cambodia, expressed her pleasure at witnessing the enthusiasm and collaboration among government stakeholders, development partners, the private sector, and the youth in discussing and reflecting on Cambodia's journey towards achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

Further discussions explored the strategic involvement of the private sector and highlighted youth-led

initiatives focused on sustainability. The 'Blue Skies & Net Zero 2050' campaign aims to raise awareness of climate actions that align with the priorities set by the Royal Government of Cambodia in its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Long-Term Strategy for Carbon Neutrality (LTS4CN), and other national policies and targets.

Launched in 2020 by GGGI and the Climate Change Center of the Republic of Korea, the 'Blue Skies & Net Zero 2050' Campaign serves as a platform that brings together governments, businesses, civil society groups, youth groups, and the public sector to enhance public awareness of air pollution and promote Cambodia's commitment to carbon neutrality. The campaign provides a crucial opportunity to foster collaboration and drive sustainable development in the country.

Cambodia's endorsement of the 'Blue Skies & Net Zero 2050' campaign marks a momentous stride towards a sustainable future. With concerted efforts from all stakeholders, Cambodia is poised to become a model for climate action, demonstrating its commitment to building a greener, cleaner, and more resilient nation.

CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL STREET VENDORS' DAY: PROMOTING INCLUSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION



Street vendors presented their challenges and needs during the 11th International Street Vendors' Day in Phnom Penh. ©Oxfam

Oxfam and its partner, the Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA), came together to commemorate the 11th International Street Vendors' Day on November 15, 2023. This year's theme, "*Social protection system for street vendors in Cambodia*," aimed to celebrate the global event while advocating for increased access to social protection systems for street vendors in the country. The event provided a platform for street vendors to engage in discussions, share their working conditions, and shed light on the challenges they face.

Street vendors, who are informal economic workers or self-employed individuals, have made significant contributions to the national economy while providing employment opportunities and mitigating the risks associated with migration. Just like any other workers, street vendors deserve comprehensive social protection.

Oxfam, in collaboration with partners and national and international institutions, has been working to enhance and strengthen the economic conditions of all vulnerable workers, both formal and informal, through recommendations and initiatives.

Mr. Pao Vorn, President of IDEA, emphasized the significant contribution of street vendors to the national economy and urged the Royal Government to provide full protection and support for street vendors, particularly women, without leaving anyone behind. IDEA has compiled data, provided training, conducted outreach activities, and launched social protection campaigns to enhance the social security system and improve social assistance for street vendors. Currently, IDEA has compiled 22 groups of street vendors, consisting of 2,994 members, including 2,378 female vendors, in Phnom Penh and six provinces.

Oxfam commended the Royal Government's intervention in responding to the needs of self-employed and informal economy workers through the implementation of Social Security Schemes on the Health Care System, which allows for voluntary contributions. While this scheme provides a certain level of protection, Oxfam called on the government to expedite legal recognition and safeguards to ensure the welfare and economic well-being of street vendors, especially women. **Ms. Sophoan Phean**, Oxfam National Director, expressed Oxfam's

commitment to continue working with the Royal Government of Cambodia and other stakeholders to promote and ensure the effective implementation of inclusive social protection measures.

Ms. Chenda Chap, a food vendor, expressed her gratitude for receiving the NSSF card, which granted her access to healthcare services. However, she voiced her desire for the card to encompass the entire social protection system, including maternity protection, coverage for occupational accidents, and pensions.

Ms. Chenda highlighted the importance of extending these benefits to both existing beneficiaries and street vendors like herself. Her remarks were made during the 11th International Street Vendors' Day in Phnom Penh, where street vendors presented their challenges and needs. This statement underscores the aspirations of street vendors to have comprehensive social protection that addresses their various needs beyond healthcare. Their voices contribute to the ongoing dialogue about improving social protection for informal workers and ensuring a more inclusive and supportive environment for street vendors in Cambodia.

EXPLORING COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT POLICIES FOR THE ELDERLY IN CAMBODIA



The third National Older People Forum under the theme “Older People and Support Policies in Cambodia,” Battambang province. ©Oxfam

Over 225 individuals representing more than 30,000 older people from 25 provinces and capitals gathered at the Battambang City Hall for the third National Older People Forum on October 27, 2023. The forum, organized by HelpAge Cambodia in collaboration with Oxfam, the United Nations Development Program, and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation, aimed to facilitate engagement between older people and the government. It focused on understanding the challenges and needs of older people in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, providing a platform to learn about the progress made in implementing the National Policy for the Elderly and other support policies.

As Cambodia gradually becomes an aging society, with the number of older people aged 69 and above projected to reach 1.5 million by 2025 and double by 2050, it becomes crucial to address the challenges they face. These challenges include livelihoods, income, health, and the lack of regular caregivers, especially for elderly women.

Oxfam is committed to collaborating with HelpAge Cambodia and other institutions to support and empower

older people. The joint efforts aim to amplify their voices and enable them to access decent employment opportunities and comprehensive social care and protection. This support is particularly crucial during times of income insecurity, illnesses, shocks, and emergencies.

Mr. Vira Tum, Executive Director of HelpAge Cambodia, acknowledged the value Cambodia places on older people and their knowledge. Efforts have been made to support them through policies and social assistance programs, but there are still gaps that need to be addressed. Additional support programs and the promotion of inter-generational associations should be prioritized. Feedback from older people will guide future programs through the Cambodian National Committee for the Elderly.

During a previous gathering in Battambang province in October 2022, representatives from nearly 30,000 older people and stakeholders discussed topics such as “*Social Protection and Association of the Elderly in Cambodia*” and “*Social Pension for the Elderly in Cambodia*.” The forum highlighted three priority needs: social pensions for all older people, equity cards for all older

people, and budget allocation to support local older people’s associations. While there have been no specific responses from the government regarding these requests, a dissemination workshop conducted by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation in August 2023 shared action plans, the National Policy on the Elderly Phase 2 for 2021–2025, and various legal instruments. This included the establishment of a working group association to develop the Elderly Policy and a decision to establish a technical working group to develop guidelines for the establishment of the Intergenerational Elderly Association.

These studies shed light on the financial challenges and socio-economic circumstances faced by older people in Cambodia, emphasizing the urgent need for comprehensive social protection measures to address their vulnerabilities and ensure their well-being. The collaboration between organizations like HelpAge Cambodia, Oxfam, and the Cambodian government plays a crucial role in advocating for and implementing policies that support and protect older people, enabling them to lead dignified lives as valued members of society.



NSSF AND OXFAM INITIATES ANNUAL FORUM TO IMPROVE SOCIAL SECURITY GOVERNANCE AND DIALOGUE

The National Social Security Fund (NSSF) and Oxfam have initiated an annual forum aimed at improving social security governance and promoting dialogue. The forum brings together social security regulators, operators, health service providers, local leaders, and workers’ representatives from across Cambodia.

and those in the informal economy. Oxfam emphasize the importance of inclusive, gender-responsive, and universal social security in Cambodia to ensure the well-being of workers and their families and reduce vulnerability to global disasters and epidemics.

The NSSF, under the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, has been actively working to develop the social security system, improve management capacities, expand coverage, and ensure that no one is left behind. The forum aligns with the NSSF’s efforts to achieve comprehensive social security

The joint initiative, titled “Towards Inclusive, Gender-Responsive, and Universal Social Security in Cambodia,” seeks to enhance access to social security coverage and benefits, with a particular focus on quality healthcare services. By providing a platform for policy dialogue and public consultation, the forum facilitates discussions on immediate challenges, limitations, opportunities for improvement, and collaborative solutions in the social security sector.

Oxfam, with its mission to combat poverty and injustice, is committed to collaborating with the government and relevant stakeholders to address poverty and inequality, especially among vulnerable groups such as garment workers, smallholder farmers,



A representative of Indigenous community, Por, requests for Indigenous languages on IEC materials to ensure easy access to social protection information and healthcare services amongst indigenous community. ©Oxfam

and make progress towards universal health coverage in Cambodia.

The annual forum consists of roundtable discussions on strengthening inclusive and gender-responsive social security systems in the country. Panels include representatives from the NSSF, the General Secretariat of the National Social Protection Council, the Ministry of Health, industry associations, employer associations, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, social security regulators, researchers, union leaders, and the Social Protection for All (SP4ALL) coalition.

Prior to the annual forum, three

regional forums were held in different economic centers across Cambodia. These regional forums provided an opportunity for local leaders and workers' representatives to voice their concerns and make specific requests related to social security. The requests included improving the registration and payment process for worker contributions, ensuring maternity and pregnancy protection, and enhancing the quality of healthcare services provided by the NSSF.

The joint initiative between the NSSF and Oxfam demonstrates their commitment to improving social security governance and fostering dialogue among stakeholders. The

concerns and requests raised during the forums will be documented, analyzed, and presented to the NSSF, the General Secretariat of the National Social Protection Council, the Ministry of Health, and other relevant stakeholders for policy interventions.

Moving forward, NSSF and Oxfam will continue to support this initiative to improve social security governance and dialogue. The concerns and requests raised during the forums will be documented, analyzed, and presented to NSSF, the General Secretariat of the National Social Protection Council, the Ministry of Health, and other relevant stakeholders for policy interventions.



Panel discussion on "Maternity and pregnancy protection for women workers and mothers." ©Oxfam



Distinguished guests and local leaders and workers' representative post for a group picture in the first annual forum between NSSF with Local Leaders and Workers' Representatives to improve social security governance and dialogue.

Phnom Penh, 18 December 2023. ©Oxfam



STREET VENDORS: UNSUNG HEROES OF OUR DAILY MEALS

Cambodia is famous for its street food snacks. If you walk along Street 271 towards Samdach Sothearos Blvd, you will find a long line of delicious and affordable street food. There, you will find food carts and stalls offering a wide range of options, from Khmer fried noodles and Bai Sach Chrouk (pork and rice) to Yakitori chicken skewers. Nowadays, you can find almost anything on the street food menu. One of my favorites is fried crickets, not only because of its rich nutrition but also because it is more environmentally friendly. However, I have yet to try fried spiders, but I am definitely open to the idea. How about you?

Nevertheless, I am not here to provide street food reviews. I am here to share with you the challenges faced by many brave street vendors and discuss what we can do to improve their livelihoods and economic well-being.

The street vending population in Cambodia is substantial, and a majority of them are women. In 2016, researchers from Yamaguchi University in Japan estimated, using Cambodia's economic census, that 8.3% of all Cambodian enterprises are street businesses, and 76.6% of the people

running them are women. Street vending businesses continue to grow.

Although there is little evidence explaining why street vending is predominantly female-dominated, it is an undeniable fact that Cambodian women still face cultural norms and social stigma. Many of them are engaged in unpaid domestic work, such as taking care of children, the elderly, and households. Despite improvements in women's status over the years, those with limited education often end up working in the informal sector, including street vending.

Street vending plays a critical role in the commercial urban ecosystems of cities by providing employment and revenue for the least marginalized population groups. Despite women accounting for almost 52% of the total Cambodian population, according to the 2019 population census by the Ministry of Planning, available support for female street vendors and mothers is limited.

One immediate challenge faced by street vendors, especially in urban areas like Battambang, Siem Reap, and Phnom Penh, is access to childcare centers. You may have noticed street

vendors putting their children in food carts, stalls, or even on motorbikes while they sell their goods along the streets. This situation is growing, and it poses significant risks to the children's safety and their ability to attend classes and enjoy their childhood.

The lack of legal status and protection also exposes street vendors to abuses and harassment. If you talk to street vendors, many of them, if not all, will tell you that they have to pay for vending spots and protection. This has become a lucrative business for rogue police officers and security guards. While there is no recent statistical evidence to confirm these claims, cases of harassment against street vendors in the Kingdom often make headlines in both traditional and social media. A few years ago, a chief of a health center in Chamkarmon district and his associates were reported to have demanded a monthly \$90 fee from food vendors around the facility. Another incident in March 2021 in Preah Sihanouk province sparked public outcry when a security guard overcharged a female vendor for taxes and later destroyed her goods after a heated exchange. These are not isolated incidents, and the absence

of legal status means that street vendors, particularly women and mothers, remain vulnerable to ongoing abuse and harassment.

Food safety is a growing concern among street vendors in Cambodia. Street foods, being cooked and ready-to-eat, are linked to various bacteria and pathogens that cause nausea, vomiting, stomach cramp, diarrhea and cholera. These risks often arise from prolonged exposure to traffic pollution, unsanitary surroundings, and lack of access to clean water and proper sanitation facilities, which can be attributed to the absence of appropriate vending spots. Some countries, like China and Thailand, even regard this as a national security issue to some extent.

Research findings suggest that street foods are the primary sources of food safety issues in many developing countries. Cambodia took a step forward by passing the food safety law in July 2022. However, the absence of proper vending spots continues to hinder efforts to strengthen food safety in the Kingdom, posing risks to public health. Policy interventions are needed to address this issue. As the majority of street vendors are women, they face enormous challenges every day, including harassment, lack of childcare centers, and limited access to social protection benefits.

Fortunately, these issues can be

addressed. Prime Minister Hun Manet and his administration have the means and resources to improve the situation. Providing legal recognition and protection would safeguard the welfare and economic well-being of street vendors. It would also hold subnational and local governments responsible for protecting and supporting the economic well-being of street vendors, while preventing harassment by opportunistic individuals.

The Phnom Penh municipality and subnational authorities should consider implementing a system to provide safe and designated vending spots for street vendors. These spots should have access to clean water, proper sanitation facilities, and be away from traffic pollution to ensure food safety and public health.

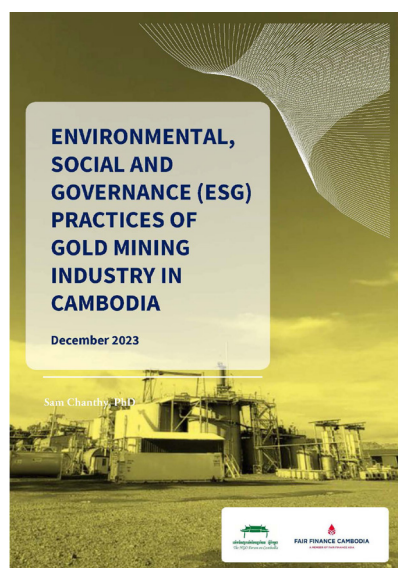
Additionally, creating affordable and accessible childcare centers near vending areas would greatly benefit street vendors who are mothers. This would allow them to work without worrying about their children's safety and education.

Furthermore, awareness campaigns and training programs on food safety and hygiene practices can be organized for street vendors. Providing them with knowledge and tools to ensure the safety of their food would not only protect public health but also enhance their reputation and customer satisfaction.

Support from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international aid agencies can play a crucial role in addressing the challenges faced by street vendors. These organizations can collaborate with the government to provide vocational training, financial literacy programs, and access to microcredit for street vendors, especially women, to help them improve their businesses and livelihoods.

This year, on the 11th International Street Vendors Day, Oxfam, together with our partners and other stakeholders, jointly celebrated the importance of street vendors in social inclusion and the recognition of informal economy workers, their needs, and their contributions to Cambodian society. We aim for an inclusive society in Cambodia, where no one is left behind. To achieve this, we need inclusive and equitable social protection policies for all citizens. It is essential for the government, NGOs, and the community to come together and work towards creating an enabling environment for street vendors to thrive and contribute to the local economy while ensuring food safety and public health. Oxfam and our partners are ready to work with the Royal Government of Cambodia to make social protection a reality for street vendors.

The original op-ed was published on Phnom Penh Post newspaper and the Post Khmer on 16 November 2023.



A study on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) compliance in the Gold Mining Industry in Cambodia: The study aims to enhance understanding of the existing ESG-related policies, regulations, and practices employed by gold mining investments in Cambodia. It further aims to offer practical recommendations for taking appropriate action to address any challenges pertaining to ESG performance in the mining sector.

These challenges include concerns related to human rights, gender, health and safety, and the well-

being of the indigenous people. The study also seeks to identify financial institutions that provide funding for investments in Cambodia's extractive industry.

Launched on December 13, 2023, the study was co-published by the NGO Forum on Cambodia and Fair Finance Cambodia.

DOWNLOAD: <https://shorturl.at/CLRY4>

DISCOVER 'WHITE TEARS'

The book **"White Tears"** shares the true stories of women from small-scale rubber plantations, banana farms, and conservation communities. The title symbolizes the latex or "white" substance that covers the ground in these plantations and represents the women's daily efforts to achieve results for their superiors. "Tears" signifies the sweat, hard work, and difficulties they face in their daily lives.

SILAKA, a partner organization of Oxfam, used the "Feminist Economic Justice Agenda" tool to study these stories, focusing on gender inequality, equal opportunities, violence against women and girls, and ending impunity. The study followed a six-step process that involved understanding the women's situation, collecting their stories, and developing a joint advocacy plan.

During this process, the women's groups actively engaged in discussions, consultations, and validations, collectively deciding how to present their stories. Everyday items from their lives were collected and exhibited, providing a tangible representation of their stories. By doing so, participants, especially policy makers, gained a deeper understanding of their situations, challenges, concerns, and needs.

On December 19, 2023, SILAKA and the three women's groups collaborated to organize a national policy dialogue titled "National Policy in Response to the Needs and Concerns of Women in Trade Value Chains of Rubber and Banana." The dialogue addressed the concerns and needs of women in the banana and rubber production value chain. The event had 77 participants, with 69% being women. Attendees included representatives from government bodies such as the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Women's Affairs, General Directorate of Rubber, and Agricultural and Rural



Ms. Chan Chhorvy Sok, Oxfam Program Manager, during the 'White Tear' exhibition. These are materials and stories from women working at the rubber and banana plantations.

Development Bank. Representatives from national and international civil society organizations, women in small-scale rubber plantations, women from the Natural Resources for Forest and Wildlife Conservation Community, and a youth group also participated.

The policy dialogue resulted in significant outcomes and provided a way forward for SILAKA and the women's groups to continue their pursuit of economic justice. Representatives from the mentioned ministries and state institutions expressed their willingness to address the challenges, concerns, and needs raised by the women's groups. The key points highlighted during the dialogue were:

1. Lack of access to the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) services for workers in banana and rubber plantations, which goes against the agreement between the companies and the Royal Government of Cambodia.
2. Gender-based wage disparity, with female workers earning less than male workers and experiencing discriminatory practices such as male workers leaving their posts earlier.

3. Irresponsible handling of chemical waste by companies, leading to water pollution, poisoning of animals, and adverse effects on the health of people and wildlife dependent on the river.

4. Small-scale rubber plantation families facing debt due to loans taken for investing in rubber plantations and production. Lack of standardized pricing for rubber compounds further compounds their challenges. By forming a community, these families gain collective bargaining power to negotiate prices with middlemen.

In response to the concerns and needs raised by the women's groups, representatives from state ministries and institutions provided information on relevant laws, policies, and mechanisms that enable women in each community to seek consultation and report their issues. Further planning was undertaken to ensure a response to these concerns and needs, resulting in a report outlining the next steps to be taken with policy makers.

Text by:
Sreynich Khat & Chan Sreyleak Pov / SILAKA

LEVERAGING BLOCKCHAIN FOR TRACEABILITY



H.E. Dr. Peng Hor, Rector of the National University of Management (middle right) and Ms. Sophoan Phean (middle left), Oxfam National Director, and their team after the signing event. ©Kimheang Tuon/Oxfam

Oxfam and the National University of Management (NUM) in Cambodia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in mid-November to collaborate on the development of a traceability system for small-scale producers in Cambodia. The partnership aims to utilize NUM's Faculty of Digital Economy's Blockchain based Web3 application called SrokYeung to create a traceability project in the agriculture value chain in Cambodia.

SrokYeung is a Web3-based agritourism solution aiming to connect tourists with farmers, promote local tourism spots, find markets for farmers, and protect original local products.

This partnership will provide opportunities to professors, young

students at The College of Digital Economics to continue working together, study, research and apply innovative technologies to create data system software to help address the challenges in the supply chain, agricultural products and aquaculture. The development of these applications will enable key actors in the supply chain to be able to provide, access and find transparent and confident information to continue to install Improving their business and increasing business together.

The SrokYeung application will try to use its Blockchain technology for traceability in the organic rice supply chain by leveraging the learning from the implementation of Blockchain for Livelihoods project called "BlocRice", enhancing traceability and promoting

local products, including organic rice.

The MOU between Oxfam Cambodia and the National University of Management serves as a framework for collaboration to develop, prototype, and scale up the traceability system/application for Cambodian small-scale producers. It enables the sharing of expertise and resources to maximize the learning from Oxfam's previous projects and supports the development of innovative solutions like the SrokYeung to benefit local producers in the agriculture value chains. Finally, it also supports a new generation of young people in Cambodia who are passionate about the new digital economy in relation to providing solutions around poverty and inequality.

Here is an experience of a woman documented in the book "White Tears." For their safety and security, we keep the source anonymous.

"I can do various type of work, regardless of whether they are traditionally considered male or female roles. However, I have noticed that men are paid more than women, particularly for jobs like spraying or truck driving. While I am also capable of driving a truck, I only earn 28,000 riel per day, whereas men earn 35,000 riel. This wage disparity persists even though we perform the same work

and achieve the same results for the company. Typically, women earn nearly ten thousand riel less than men.

Currently, the price of latex harvested from rubber tree is decreasing. Moreover, the price of coagulated latex is extremely low compared to the quantity of rubber produced through the block rubber process.

I don't want to sell the block rubber that has gone through the technically specified rubbers (TSRs) process. The chemical used in this process pose health risks, causing flu-

like symptoms and hand irritation. Furthermore, companies located near the conservation community use herbicides and pesticides, which contribute to water pollution in the nearby river.

Without proper waste management and disposal, the chemical waste from herbicide or banana trees end up in the Srepok River, contaminating the water. The river's ecosystem suffers, leading to the death of aquatic life. This contamination significantly affects wildlife and communities that rely on the river for their daily needs."

FAIR FINANCE CAMBODIA RELEASES A REPORT STUDY AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE FINANCE



Mr. Khim Sok, Oxfam Program Manager, during his remarks at the launching of the study.

Fair Finance Cambodia (FFC) released a study on October 27, 2023, that examined the *Asian Development Bank's (ADB) financing of post-COVID-19 economic recovery*. The study specifically focused on the impact of the ADB-funded infrastructure project known as Road #23/312 in Cambodia. Its goal was to identify policy gaps in Cambodia's green and sustainable economies and assess any disparities between policies and practices within institutions.

The study presented seven key recommendations for the ADB and the government. Three recommendations emphasized the importance of conducting the Involuntary Resettlement Policy at the early stage of the project, promoting women's economic empowerment, and enhancing women's access to financial assistance. The remaining recommendations focused on developing a consensus on legal and technical terms related to green economy and sustainable finance, strengthening institutions by integrating long-term institutional knowledge and skills, developing appropriate tools for environmental and social impact assessment, and addressing the limited knowledge and skills of policymakers and practitioners in the field of green economy and sustainable finance.

According to the report, the communities affected by road improvement projects expressed a favorable view towards them. They acknowledged the impact assessment results, recognized the necessity for road improvement projects due to the existing infrastructure conditions in their communities, and identified several benefits that would arise from the road improvement projects. These benefits included improved access to schools, markets, hospitals, and farms, which are essential for their daily activities and economic endeavors. However, the communities also expressed concerns regarding the compensation schemes associated with the projects.

The study received positive feedback from affected communities, indicating that the ADB followed legal and policy frameworks to consider the environmental, social, and economic impacts of the road improvement project in Cambodia. Additionally, the study provided policy recommendations to facilitate policy engagement and influence the policy agenda on green economy and sustainable finance, aiming to enhance inclusivity and maximize positive impacts for the communities.

However, around 2% of the affected households have concerns about the negative effects of the road

improvement project, despite the majority expressing a positive view. Development projects can adversely impact households in affected areas. Financial losses are projected, ranging from at least US\$200 to US\$5,000 per year, depending on the affected assets. For Example, farmlands may experience an income loss of approximately US\$197 per year, while business may suffer an immediate income loss of around US\$5,123 per year. It is important to note that these are projected losses only and subject to change.

The negative effects may worsen gender disparities, particularly if the affected households primarily consist of women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. There is uncertainty on the extent and timing of compensation for these households.

Although only a small percentage of households (2% or even less), are negatively affected, the impact requires careful attention from the government and the financier (RGC and ADB.) A comprehensive plan for the resettlement and rehabilitation should be in place before the project begins. It is crucial to introduce a safeguarding policy and provide clear information about the timing and extent of compensation (financial and non-financial) to those affected as early as possible before the project begins. Additionally, the government should consider making reasonable adjustment to support women and children, to avoid overlooking their needs. While it may take a longer time, prioritizing efforts to restore or improve their conditions is essential.

For long-term investments in sustainable economic activities and development projects, it is strongly recommended that financier consider environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations when making investment decisions in the financial sector.

EMPOWERING TONLE SAP COMMUNITIES: THE TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT OF THE CAPFISH PROJECT

The fishing communities in the Tonle Sap region in Cambodia face numerous challenges, including limited access to education, environmental degradation, and struggling livelihoods. The EU-funded CAPFISH project, implemented by Oxfam, Save the Children, and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) has transformed the lives of the local communities and paved the way for sustainable development in the fisheries sector.

In late September 2023, a distinguished delegation comprised of representatives from the Fisheries Administration, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), the Delegation of the European Union to Cambodia (EU), and the CAPFISH Steering Committee embarked on a journey to witness the profound impact of the program. Their visit brought to light the remarkable advancements in education, conservation, and the improved livelihoods of the Tonle Sap communities.

Immersing themselves in the local communities, the delegation engaged with preschools, primary and secondary schools, and the local administration in Thnal Chheuteal village and the Prek Toal Ramsar Site, nestled within the heart of the Tonle Sap biosphere. This immersive experience allowed them to witness firsthand the tangible benefits brought about by the CAPFISH program. They marveled at the program's positive influence on natural resource conservation and the flourishing livelihoods of the community members. In unison, they applauded the collaborative efforts of Oxfam, Save the Children, WCS, and other stakeholders who had played an instrumental role in this transformation.

Stretching its reach across ten Cambodian provinces, including six along the Tonle Sap lake and four along the coast, the CAPFISH



The delegation checked the map of the conversation areas, Siem Reap province.

initiative focused on sustainable fisheries, education, access to clean water, hygiene, and sanitation. Its overarching goal was to foster a resilient and inclusive development of Cambodia's fisheries sector, breathing new life into the region.

Mr. Savoeun Khun, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, expressed his delight at witnessing the positive impact of the EU-funded projects implemented by Oxfam, Save the Children, and WCS Cambodia. The visit provided invaluable insights into the projects' profound influence on the local communities and the effective management of natural resources. He extended his heartfelt appreciation to the European Union for their unwavering support, emphasizing that this was the largest program ever to be undertaken in Cambodia's fisheries sector.

Mr. Koen EVERAERT, Deputy Head of Cooperation at the European Union to Cambodia, reaffirmed the EU's commitment to partnering with MAFF and civil society partners to ensure the sustainable development of the fisheries sector and environmental conservation in Cambodia. He hailed the EU-funded projects in Tonle Sap as shining examples of their shared vision, one that encompasses the protection of nature and the improvement of local communities'

living standards. Notably, the CAPFISH project stands as the largest fisheries program funded by the EU globally, setting the stage for similar initiatives around the world.

With the support of the European Union, Oxfam has touched the lives of over 5,833 marginalized children, opening doors to education and a brighter future. The establishment of 14 Community Green Business Hubs has created a ripple effect, positively impacting 1,739 households and fostering economic opportunities. Furthermore, the launch of the Tonle Sap Eco-Tourism Network (TEN) has provided community fisheries with an avenue to generate alternative income through tourism, paving the way for sustainable livelihoods and a thriving economy.

The CAPFISH project has truly transformed the Tonle Sap region, empowering communities, and nurturing a sustainable fisheries sector. Through collaborative efforts, innovative initiatives, and the unwavering support of the European Union, this story serves as an inspiration to all, demonstrating the profound impact that can be achieved by prioritizing education, conservation, and community well-being. As the journey continues, the CAPFISH project stands tall as a beacon of hope, guiding the way toward a brighter and more sustainable future for the Tonle Sap communities.

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE: COLLABORATIVE ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE IN MEKONG AND TONLE SAP

Strengthening Community Resilience: Collaborative Action on Climate Change in Mekong and Tonle Sap.

Oxfam organized a panel discussion during the Cambodia's Climate Change Summit in early November 2023, focusing on *"Community Perspective and Government Commitment to Address Climate Change in the Mekong and Tonle Sap."* The event served as a platform for community women representatives from the Mekong and Tonle Sap regions to share their first-hand experiences of climate change impacts and call for decisive government action to enhance community resilience.

The session provided an opportunity for government representatives to highlight their commitment to tackling climate change, as evidenced by Cambodia's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) 2020. In this landmark document, Cambodia pledges to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 27% by 2030 compared to business-as-usual scenarios. This ambitious target reflects the country's vulnerability to climate change and the urgent need for action.

Recognizing the importance of effective financial planning, the Cambodian government launched the Cambodia Climate Change Finance Framework in 2020. This framework serves as a blueprint for allocating climate finance resources effectively. Additionally, the government is currently formulating a climate change investment plan to identify and prioritize specific opportunities, while actively seeking international assistance to achieve its climate objectives.

Ms. Ream Srey Rath, a youth leader from the Mekong region, vividly illustrated the significant impacts of climate change on communities along the Mekong River. She highlighted



Panel discussion on "Community Perspective and Government Commitment to address climate change in the Mekong and Tonle Sap." ©MFI



H.E. Eang Sophalleth, Minister of the Ministry of Environment, during his remarks at Cambodia Climate Change Summit 2023. ©MFI

the altered water flow patterns, diminishing fishery resources, extended dry seasons, and delayed wet seasons that have profoundly affected the river's ecosystem and local livelihoods. The consequences of these changes have been far-reaching and call for urgent action.

Ms. Chhuon Lann, a prominent women leader from Tonle Sap, drew attention to the impact of climate change on the water levels of both the Mekong and Tonle Sap. She emphasized the adverse effects on fishery production and the delicate ecosystems within the lake. The disruption of water levels has upset the natural balance of Tonle Sap, posing challenges to the sustainability of fish populations and the overall well-being of the lake's ecosystems.

In her concluding remarks, **Ms. Chhuon Lann** acknowledged the commendable commitment of the government in addressing climate change. The

country has taken significant steps to reduce emissions and enhance resilience to climate change impacts. However, she stressed the need for intensified efforts and scaled-up initiatives. She urged the government to mobilize international support and prioritize the promotion of more inclusive water governance in the Mekong and Tonle Sap regions. Strengthening community resilience against climate vulnerability should be a top priority, ensuring that no one is left behind in the face of this global challenge.

The panel discussion served as a powerful reminder that collaborative action between communities and government is essential to effectively address climate change. By heeding the voices of those directly affected and implementing inclusive and sustainable strategies, Cambodia can pave the way for a resilient and sustainable future in the Mekong and Tonle Sap regions.

FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIP FOR CAMBODIA'S RUBBER INDUSTRY

Oxfam, in partnership with the General Department of Rubber of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, organized the “*Rubber Business Forum*” on December 22, 2023, in Svay Rieng province. This forum aimed to foster a sustainable and mutually beneficial partnership between small-scale rubber producers, agro-industry companies, manufacturers, policymakers, and development partners. The event brought together various stakeholders, including small-scale rubber producers, family rubber farmers’ associations, manufacturers, and development partners. The objective was to enhance mutual understanding of manufacturers’ requirements and standard demands, thereby building trust among all parties and fostering sustainable partnerships. This forum marked the first time that development partners and stakeholders actively engaged in in-depth discussions to identify joint strategies and address the root causes of problems in the rubber industry.

The manufacturing sector, especially tire factories, has experienced significant growth, with investments in building factories in Svay Rieng, Sihanoukville, and Kratie provinces.



Rubber plantation in Ratanakiri province. ©Asisah Man/Oxfam

However, the rubber supply chain for the manufacturing sector faces challenges, including a lack of comprehensive discussions and interactions regarding information on the source of supply and quality requirements from manufacturers. In addition to the forum, participants had the opportunity to visit RMKH Glove (Cambodia) and CART TIRE to gain insights into the production chain and finished products of these factories.

Oxfam commended the General Department for its exceptional efforts in organizing the forum and providing opportunities for small and medium-sized suppliers and families to actively participate. This engagement enabled them to develop a comprehensive understanding of the manufacturing sector’s requirements and align their rubber production accordingly.

H.E. Pal Sopha, Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, acknowledged the disruption in the rubber production chain caused by the lack of communication between suppliers and producers. He emphasized that

factories have continuously been established and pledged to use 100% local raw materials in the future. However, the absence of information regarding quality standards has created a barrier between producers and processors. Therefore, this forum holds significant importance as the first gathering of its kind in Cambodia’s rubber industry.

Recognizing the existing challenges and the extensive scope of the rubber sub-sector’s needs, H.E. Pal Sopha called for continued cooperation from development partners to comprehensively address this problem and foster stronger connections between suppliers and manufacturers.

Oxfam, in collaboration with partners and stakeholders, has been actively working towards promoting a more efficient, sustainable, and environmentally friendly rubber production chain in Cambodia. As part of these efforts, Oxfam has developed the Sustainable Natural Rubber Guideline for Cambodia, aimed at ensuring responsible practices throughout the industry.



Farmers in Kampot are delighted to have received the Health Equity Fund Card for Poor and Vulnerable Families granting them access to free healthcare services. ©Kimheang Tuon/Oxfam

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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