

IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

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OXFAM

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“Across Cambodia, we witness every day that when communities are empowered, women and youth lead, rights are protected, and partnerships flourish, people transform challenges into opportunities, strengthen resilience, and build a more just, inclusive, and hopeful future together for all.”

A WORD FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR

Greetings,

The eleventh issue of *Impact Spotlight* reflects the people, partnerships, and communities that inspire Oxfam in Cambodia’s work every day. This edition brings together stories of courage, innovation, and collective action from across the country, highlighting the voices of women, youth, workers, Indigenous communities, and local leaders who are driving meaningful change in their lives and communities.

At the heart of this issue are women whose leadership often goes unseen. From women in the agri-food sector overcoming long working hours, unsafe conditions, and insecure incomes, to advocating for safer workplaces and stronger labor protections, these stories remind us that resilience is not simply about enduring hardship—it is about creating opportunities for lasting change. We also celebrate women like Romzan, whose access to social protection through the National Social Security Fund demonstrates the transformative impact of people-centered policies.

This edition also highlights the power of partnership in building a more inclusive Cambodia. The Memorandum of Understanding between Oxfam and the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training marks an important step toward advancing social protection, labor rights, and gender equality. Our collaboration with partners further demonstrates how civic engagement, digital innovation, and youth leadership can strengthen public financial management and foster transparent and responsive governance.

As Cambodia undergoes rapid economic and technological transformation, important questions emerge about digital trade, civic space, and citizen participation. Through research, dialogue, and advocacy, Oxfam remains committed to ensuring that digital progress contributes to an open, inclusive, and equitable future.

The climate crisis remains one of the defining challenges of our time, yet communities continue to lead inspiring solutions. From Indigenous communities adapting to harsher dry seasons, to women strengthening climate resilience planning, and young people championing a clean energy future, locally led action remains essential.

Together, the stories in this issue show what is possible when communities are empowered, rights are protected, and people remain at the center of development. We are deeply grateful to our partners, supporters, and communities for their trust and commitment to building a more just, resilient, and equal Cambodia.

SOPHOAN PHEAN
National Director, Oxfam in Cambodia

CELEBRATING WOMEN LEADERS IN THE AGRI-FOOD SECTOR

By Naratevy Kek

Oxfam hosted a special event at its office in May featuring four film screenings and the launch of a photo booklet, both highlights the stories of 12 remarkable women leaders in the agri-food sector.

The films and photo booklet capture the unseen labor behind the food that supports our communities including women working in rice field, markets, restaurant, community, and small businesses. They reveal not only the challenges these women face, long hours, unsafe conditions, and unstable incomes, but also their resilience and leadership.

The photo booklet is more than a collection of images, it is a tribute to women who balance caregiving with leadership, who mentor their peers, and who change workplaces and communities into safer, fairer, and more dignified spaces. Each page tells a story of strength, and determination, reminding us that women in the agri-food sector are not only workers but also organizers, leaders, and community builders.

"It is important to tell these stories. While we know that women face many challenges, many organizations take time to document their experiences. I believe that these stories can inspire other women to keep advocating for their own rights and well-being of their communities," said Ms. Ramy Chan, Executive Director of Youth Resource Development Program (YRDP).



Participants explore the photo gallery at Oxfam's special event, where films and images honor 12 remarkable women leaders in the agri-food sector. Photo: Oxfam



Group photo after the film screening and photo booklet launching. Photo: Oxfam

Ms. Samit Chun, Project Officer of Banteay Srei, who has attended the film screening on the day, said, "Over the past five years, we've achieved key results. The project strengthened knowledge among community and youth groups, helping them better understand their rights to decent work and social protection. Once communities are aware of these services, they can access solutions whenever problems arise."

Women leaders who were featured in the film and the photo booklet also joined this event. They expressed their appreciation and shared heartfelt impression.

This launch marks a milestone in the project *"Improved Social Protection and Labour Rights for Women Workers in ASEAN's Agri-Food Sector (2022 to 2026)"* supported by the Belgium Development Cooperation (DGD). The program aims to empower



"I'm so happy to be here seeing myself in the video the first time. I've shared my knowledge to the community encouraging them to speak about their concerns in public discussions. When women speak up, they can influence decisions and bring solution."

SOPHAT CHHOEM, Community Leader and Strong Advocate for Social Protection and Farmer's Rights, Kratie Province



"Working as a beer promoter for almost six years taught me how to best serve others, but the training and workshops from Cambodian Food and Service Workers Federation (CFSWF) on labor rights, sexual harassment and social protection taught me how to stand up for myself. These experiences shaped me into a supervisor who values not only women's work, but also their worth."

CHENDA POV, Restaurant Supervisor, Kandal Province

women in the agri-food sector to have access to adequate labor rights and social protection through the promotion of three pillars of Decent Work including labor rights at work, social protection and social dialogues for all. One of the core activities of this project is focusing on capturing stories of women leaders.

Over the last four years, the initiative has empowered 1,471 women leaders, organized 408 local groups and unions, and delivered direct benefits to 41,564 community members, exceeding the original plan of 34,700 by nearly 20 percent. This achievement does not yet include the data for 2026. Among the 41,564 beneficiaries, 26,035 are women. Compared to the target of 34,700, the number of women beneficiaries represents about 75 percent.

Oxfam extends heartfelt gratitude to its partners, Banteay Srei (BS), Coalition of Cambodian Farmers Community Association (CCFC), Cambodian Food and Service Workers Federation (CFSWF), Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA), Cambodian Labour Confederation (CLC), Youth Resource Development Program (YRDP) whose collaboration has been vital in reaching women across communities and workplaces.



Scan here to access the full publication of the photo booklet

BANANA WORKER STRUGGLES FOR HER RIGHTS

After eight years working on a banana plantation, 46 years old Ra knows firsthand the challenges faced by agricultural workers. Long hours under the scorching sun, exposure to hazardous chemicals, and relentless pressure to meet production targets have become part of her daily routine. The hardship she endured in the plantation has motivated her to advocate for safer workplace and stronger protection for workers.

Over the past three years, Ra took some time to attend workshops and training sessions organized by the Cambodian Labour Confederation (CLC), despite the demands of her job and concerns raised by the employer. The training helped Ra have a better understanding of workers' rights, social protection and occupational safety and health, which she now shares with fellow workers in the plantation.

"Even though my employer questions my participation, I continue to attend and bring that knowledge back to share with other workers, even when it doesn't always feel safe," she said.

Ra acknowledges that speaking out can carry risks. She has faced intimidation for discussing workers' rights and encouraging colleagues to join the union. Yet those experiences have only made her more determined.

"At times, I feel threatened for sharing information about workers' rights and encouraging them to join the union," she said. "But I cannot stop. Women need to understand their rights and demand proper leave, National Social Security Fund cards, and adequate protective equipment to keep us safe from chemicals and other dangers."

Her efforts have already had a tangible impact. More than 100 workers at her company have joined the union, creating a stronger collective voice to advocate for improved working conditions.

Today, Ra continues to campaign for greater protection for plantation workers, including maternity benefits, safer workplaces, and stronger social protection measures. She believes that lasting change can only be achieved when workers stand together and support one another.



A MOTHER'S HOPE FOR STREET VENDOR RIGHTS

For 33 years old Romzan, everyday begins before sunrise. As a mother of three and soon to welcome her fourth child, she balances the demands of running a small business with the responsibility of supporting her family and ensuring her children stay in school.

During the week, Romzan sells cookies at Chroy Changva market. On weekends, she and her husband prepare and sell pickles, meatballs and chicken wings along Phnom Penh's popular Walk Street. The work is demanding and the income is uncertain, but it has become the foundation of her family's livelihood.

"My work may look small to others, but it means a lot to me and my family," she said.

Like many informal workers, Romzan initially struggled to navigate the realities of working on the street. Adapting to the fast-paced market environment and dealing with interactions with local authorities were among the challenges she faced when starting her business.

Her understanding of her rights began to change two years ago after she joined the Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA) and participated in training sessions on labor rights and social protection.

"When I first started, I didn't know street vendors had rights or access to social protection," Romzan said. "IDEA's training taught me I could register for a National Social Security Fund (NSSF) card and operate without paying extra informal fees. These training sessions opened my eyes and gave me confidence."

The knowledge she gained through the training not only strengthened her confidence as a vendor but also encouraged her to support others facing similar challenges. After registering for her NSSF card, she began sharing information with fellow street vendors about social protection and their rights.

"Empowering others has become as important to me as earning a living," said Romzan

Today, Romzan is widely respected among vendors in her community. Many turn to her for advice and guidance, seeing her as a trusted source of information and support.

Despite the long hours and daily pressures of informal work, her focus remains on her family and the future she hopes to build for her children.

"Every day, I wake up before dawn and it is not because I have to but because I want my children to have opportunities I never had. Every hour of work is an investment in their future," she said.

As she prepares for the birth of her fourth child in five months, Romzan says one of the most meaningful outcomes of her journey has been gaining access to social protection through the NSSF.

"This small card means something big," she said. "It means I can have a safe delivery at zero cost."



OXFAM AND MOLVT SIGN MOU TO ADVANCE DECENT WORK, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND WOMEN'S ECONOMY



Oxfam and MoLVT signed a three-year MoU to advance labour rights and social protection in Cambodia. Photo: MoLVT

By Naratevy Kek

Oxfam signed a three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT) at the Ministry's office on 26 June 2026, marking a significant milestone in advancing labour rights and social protection in Cambodia.

The agreement comes at a crucial time as Cambodia works to expand social protection coverage and support vulnerable groups, including women, youth and informal economy workers. The partnership aims to ensure that no one is left behind by promoting entrepreneurship and strengthening labour systems.

The MoU reaffirms both parties' commitment to the *2024 to 2035 National Social Protection Policy Framework* and aligns with

Cambodia participation in the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions. It reflects shared values of decent work, social justice, and inclusive growth.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Oxfam National Director, Ms. Sophoan Phean, said, "This partnership represents a shared commitment to promoting social protection, labor rights, and gender equality, and collectively we are moving toward building a more resilient and inclusive economy in Cambodia."

H.E. Sour Heng, MoLVT Minister thanking Oxfam for its financial and technical support and highlighted the strong cooperation between the Ministry and Oxfam. He described the MoU as a foundation for deeper cooperation and emphasized efforts to expand social security coverage and support informal economy workers' access to benefits including healthcare and pensions.

Looking ahead, the partnership will focus on capacity development,

policy collaboration, resource mobilization, and stakeholder engagement. Between 2026 and 2028, Oxfam and MoLVT will continue to strengthen labour and social protection systems through forums, policy dialogues, training programs, and awareness campaigns. The program will establish and support at least ten women led enterprises, advance social protection for informal economy workers through policy recommendations and enroll 5,000 individuals into formal systems, and build the capacity of professional organizations, civil society groups, and at least 2,000 workers on decent work agenda.

Oxfam has worked for nearly two decades with government institutions, civil society, and communities to strengthen social protection in Cambodia. While Oxfam and MoLVT have collaborated previously, this MoU marks their first formal cooperation framework, reinforcing joint efforts on social protection, women's economic empowerment and just transition in Cambodia.

ADVANCING GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING THROUGH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN CAMBODIA

By Menghain Hok

Budgets have often been seen as technical documents, far from everyday concerns of citizens. Yet behind every line are decisions that shaped schools, health, public services, environment, and climate change. For women and marginalized groups, these decisions often determine whether their needs are met or overlooked. Gender-responsive budgeting ensures public resources reflect the realities of all citizens.

The *Strengthening Civic Engagement and Oversight in Public Financial Management (SCOPE-PFM)* project, funded by the European Union and led by Oxfam with implementation by SILAKA Cambodia, is changing how communities connect with public financial management. The project combines digital innovation, youth leadership and civic participation to contributing making budgeting more transparent, inclusive and responsive to citizens needs.

A standout achievement is the **"Budget Corner"** podcast, launched in June 2025 to simplify complex financial policies. In just eight episodes, it has reached 24,000 listeners, 55 percent of them women. The engagement highlights



Series of presentation by representatives of the Commune Council and Commune Committee for Women and Children's on 2026 Commune Budget Package covering commune fund revenue sources, budget expenditure allocations, and priority activities and action plans. The presentation took place during a Budget Corner Forum co-organized by the commune council and youth people under SCOPE-PFM project implemented by SILAKA as part of a broader series held across 12 communes in Kampong Chhnang, Tbong Khmum, and Kampong Thom provinces. Photo: Sreyroth Nim/SILAKA

growing women engagement in financial governance. With 56 more episodes planned by May 2028, the podcast is set to deepen public understanding of how resources are allocated and how citizens can influence decisions.

"I realized that gender budgeting is the budget for everyone according to their needs. It is not a separate budget for girls only," said Sreynong Poun, Youth from Tboung Khnom province.

Youth empowerment is another key pillar. Thirty four young leaders, including 21 women from Thboung Khmum and Kampong Thom, have been trained to actively participate in commune council meetings. Equipped with knowledge and

advocacy skills, they now raise community concerns and advocate for more responsive budgeting.

Through digital platforms, grassroots participation, and multi stakeholder collaboration, SCOPE-PFM is embedding citizen voices into Cambodia's broader public financial management reforms. By translating technical public finance concepts into practical knowledge, the podcast has empowered citizens across communes and Sangkats to better understand how public resources are allocated and how they can actively contribute to decision-making processes. This alignment ensures that citizen participation is not symbolic but integral to how budgets are planned and delivered.

CAMBODIA AT THE CROSSROADS OF DIGITAL TRADE AND CIVIC SPACE

By Ritthy Ou

Cambodia's digital future is being shaped by competing global influences and regional integration efforts, presenting both opportunities and risks for its citizens.

China remains Cambodia's largest source of imports, valued at 19 billion USD or 53 percent of total imports, and accounts for 54 percent of foreign direct investment, amounting to 10 billion USD as of 2025. Chinese companies such as Huawei and ZTE have built and continue to maintain Cambodia's 4G and 5G networks. Nationwide 5G services were officially launched on 1 January 2026 following the expansion of 4G coverage to nearly 95 percent of internet users.

At the same time, Cambodia relies heavily on the United States for market access. The US is the

country's largest export destination, purchasing 11.5 billion USD worth of goods, or 43 percent of total exports, while the European Union accounts for another 15 percent. This reliance has led Cambodia to sign the Agreement on Reciprocal Trade (ART) with the US, aimed at easing tariff concerns and addressing tensions linked to its border conflict with Thailand.

Regionally, Cambodia is part of the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA), which seeks to harmonize rules on data flows, cybersecurity, and digital trade. DEFA is projected to generate up to 2 trillion USD for ASEAN by 2030. However, Cambodia faces a dilemma: it depends on Chinese-built infrastructure while being pressured to adopt US-driven digital trade rules, and it is not yet fully prepared to benefit from regional integration.

Barriers remain significant. Digital literacy is estimated at 32 percent, nearly 40 percent of the population remains offline, and rural internet access is slow. Data protection and security systems are weak, while

online harms such as misinformation, AI-generated content, scams, hate speech, digital nationalism, and gender-based violence are increasing.

For Oxfam in Cambodia, these dynamics matter because they directly affect civic space and citizens' ability to participate in shaping the country's digital future. Weak digital literacy and rising online harms limit inclusive participation, while dependence on external powers risks undermining national resilience. Strengthening civic engagement and ensuring that citizens are informed about both the opportunities of ASEAN's digital integration and the risks of over-reliance on external actors are critical steps toward a more balanced and inclusive digital path.

This article was written by Ritthy Ou after joining as a panelist in the ASEAN in the Middle: Trade, Tech, and What It Means for People" during the fourth Digital Rights in Asia Pacific Assembly 2026 in Manila, the Philippines, in June, a regional gathering of more than 500 digital rights stakeholders.



Panel discussion on ASEAN in the Middle: Trade, Tech, and What It Means for People in Manila. Photo supplied.

OPINION

WHAT CAMBODIA CAN LEARN FROM SRI LANKA'S SOCIAL PROTECTION JOURNEY

By Ritthy Ou

In Cambodia, proposals to expand social protection coverage or increase contributions are often met with the same concern: Can the country afford it? Yet a recent learning visit to Sri Lanka suggests a more important question: **Can Cambodia afford not to invest more in protecting workers and their families from illness, injury, unemployment, and old-age poverty?**

A delegation of civil society representatives, trade unions, informal workers' groups, farmers' associations, and government officials from Laos and Cambodia visited Sri Lanka from 1 to 6 June 2026, to learn about its experience in labor rights and social protection. Organized by Oxfam, the visit offered an opportunity to examine how another developing country has built and sustained social protection systems over time.

The most important lesson was not that Sri Lanka is wealthier or more advanced than Cambodia. Rather, it was that strong social protection is the result of long-term political commitment and public investment.

For more than seven decades, Sri Lanka has maintained universal free public healthcare. Since 1951, citizens have had access to healthcare services regardless of income. The country has achieved notable progress in maternal and child health and disease control despite economic constraints, political transitions, and periods of crisis. This experience demonstrates that social protection is not simply a product of economic prosperity; it can also be a driver of human

development and social resilience. The visit also challenged a common argument often raised in Cambodia that stronger social protection would place unsustainable burden on employers and undermine investment. Sri Lanka's experience shows that stronger social protection and economic growth can go hand in hand.

Sri Lankan workers contribute 8 percent of their monthly salary to the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF), while employers contribute 12 percent. Employers also add a further 3 percent to the Employees' Trust Fund (ETF). These rates are higher than current social security contributions in Cambodia for health care, work injury, and pensions. Despite Sri Lanka's political change and economic stress, the system has remained stable, widely recognized as an investment in workers' security and long-term national development.

This does not mean Cambodia should apply Sri Lanka's model. Every country must design social protection systems that reflect its own economic conditions and institutional capacity. However, Sri Lanka's experience does challenge the assumption that expanding social protection is contrary to economic growth.

Another key lesson is the role of citizen participation. Strong social protection systems are not built by governments alone. In discussions with trade unions, academics, CSOs, political parties, and government officials, delegates observed how public engagement shapes debates on labor rights, social welfare, and

social justice. Universities provide research and evidence, trade unions represent workers' interests, and CSOs ground policy discussion in citizens' realities. This ecosystem of engagement matters. Sustainable social protection reforms require not only government leadership but also informed public participation and social dialogue among workers, employers, and policymakers.

As Cambodia moves toward its long-term development goals, social protection should not be viewed as a welfare program but as public investment. It strengthens human capital, reduces vulnerability, and promotes social stability. Workers protected against illness, workplace injury, and old-age poverty are more productive and better able to contribute to economic growth.

The lesson from Sri Lanka is clear: strong social protection systems are not built overnight, nor by governments alone. They require sustained political commitment, public investment, and active citizen engagement. For Cambodia, the question is no longer whether social protection is desirable, but how quickly and effectively it can be strengthened to meet people's needs.

Beyond core schemes such as the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF), Employees' Trust Fund (ETF), and universal health coverage, Cambodian and Lao delegates shared three key takeaway during the final reflection. They pointed to reform-oriented government agencies, a clean and green environment that reflects a commitment to sustainability, and strong civic engagement driven by active trade unions, CSOs, youth groups and universities contributing research on labor rights, gender equality, and climate action.

WHEN COMMUNITY TRULY LED, THE RESULTS ARE STAGGERING



Srey Ngor, Tompuon Indigenous woman smiling as she fetches water from the pipe. Photo: Aimee Han/Oxfam

By Sereyathanak Suon, Aimee Han

Kaeng San, a medium size village, sits 130 kilometers down a red dirt road from Ratanakiri provincial town, and past it further lies Chak Chap; a sub-village. Here, a community of Tompuon Indigenous Peoples has spent generations adapting to a punishing dry season.

Between dry season, the water holes shrink, there is not enough clean water for drinking, cooking, or washing.

Fetching water costs a household between one to one and a half hours. For women and girls, it was unsafe to go alone, so they had to wait for husbands and fathers to be free, but men already worn down by fieldwork. There was rarely enough water for basic consumption, let alone leftovers for irrigation.

"Before we had the water system, people faced many difficulties," said Voleak, a Chak Chap villager. "We spent at least 2,000 to 3,000 Riels a day on gasoline to pump water, and the water wasn't clean, sometimes animals had died in the pond. We had to wait, because many people came at the same time."

The turning point began not with an outside solution. As part of its Strengthening Climate Resilience project (SCR), 3S Rivers Protection Network (3SPN) conducted a Vulnerability Risk Assessment across Kaeng San. Chak Chap villagers attended too, and though Kaeng San's worry was flooding, the knowledge stayed with Chak Chap, they had learned how to look squarely at their own struggles.

Months later, during the SCR's evaluation, an evaluator simply asked Chak Chap villagers what their challenges were. Something clicked: their real struggle wasn't flooding; it was worsening water scarcity. They

carried that realization to their local authority. August 2025, as 3SPN began fieldwork for its new IP3 project, the community didn't wait to be asked. They raised their hands first, asking directly whether help with the water crisis was possible. 3SPN validated the need and then responded to the villager's proposal for two bore wells, a solar pumping system, and water storage tanks, villagers even built the tank wooden foundations themselves.

Once the system was installed and water tested, 3SPN didn't just hand over the finished system and walked away. Instead, they helped the villagers elected nine-member Clean Water Station committee, including three Indigenous women, and set their own rules: monthly fees, maintenance, waste prevention, and hygiene. They built in fee exemptions for the poorest households, People with Disabilities, and orphaned children. 3SPN then trained the committee to run the station as a small business, including bookkeeping.

The water station is still in its early stage. Each household pays to connect its own pipe, then a modest 2,000 Riel monthly user fee to the elected treasurer. Committees meet monthly to talk about water use, maintenance, and hygiene.

Today, 74 households in Chak Chap are early members of the water user group. For them, clean water is now a simple turn of a valve. The hours once spent walking to the water hole are spent instead on farming and household work, which means more cash crops, more vegetables, and better income. Moreover, each household water user saves at least 30USD per month that was once spent on gasoline for pumping.

"Now we don't spend a long-time bringing water home, and we can cook without delay. We only need to

turn on the tap" said Srey Ngor, a Tompuon farmer, smiling.

The impact runs deeper than income. Families have more time to cook and care for each other. Children are cleaner and healthier, and villagers have noticed less diarrhea in the community.

"I am happy because the water is at home. It is easy for me to take showers with my children, wash clothes, and after work I don't feel tired from collecting water for showering," said Chanra, an Indigenous woman, beaming.

More Chak Chap households are now asking to join the water user group. As demand grows, the committee is considering water usage meters to keep consumption fair, that

households using more would pay more, discouraging waste before it starts. It is another decision the community is making on its own terms.

Chak Chap is a testimony to what happens when a community is given the space to name its own problem, trust its own potential, and lead its own solution: the results are staggering.

Funded by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the four-year IP3 project, 2025 to 2029, aims to promote resilient, inclusive, and sustainable development in Cambodia's Mekong basin through women's leadership, stronger civil society engagement, and climate-resilient community development.



The water hole used by Chak Chap villagers before the bore wells installation. ©3SPN



Chanra, an Indigenous Tompuon. Photo: Aimee Han/Oxfam

BUILDING INCLUSIVE CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN CAMBODIA

By Soknak Por

Twenty-six participants joined a five-day training on Inclusive Vulnerability Risk Reduction Assessment from 8 to 12 June 2026. The group included partner staff and community focal points, with strong representation from women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and Persons with Disabilities. Their diversities reflected the training's purpose on inclusive, participatory climate resilience planning.

The training combined conceptual learning and practical exercises. Participants strengthened their understanding of climate change, decentralization and sub-national planning, and took part in Resilient Walk, an activity exploring vulnerabilities and capacities across different groups. They also learned Climate Risk Mapping and Historical Profiling to assess hazards, impacts, coping strategies, barriers and adaptive solutions.

Through facilitation practice and group exercises, participants built confidence, analytical skills, and leadership for climate resilience planning.

Thida Mao, a Woman Youth Leader from Veal Ksach village, Stung Treng province, said, "I learned how to draw Climate Risk Mapping and facilitate Historical Profiling. When I return, I will help my community define climate risks, develop

solutions, and join the commune council to provide suggestions for resource mobilization."

Sovan Sen, Village Assistant and Women Leader from Ou Rai village, said, "The training equipped me with tools and facilitation processes that I can use to help my community define hazards, strengthen coping strategies, and work with local authorities to address climate impacts."

Participants are now better prepared to influence local planning and budgeting processes, helping ensure climate resilience strategies are community-driven and inclusive.

The training was conducted under Oxfam's *Inclusive Water Governance and Climate Resilience Phase 3 (IP3)*,

which strengthens adaptive capacity among riverine communities and empowers women and marginalized groups to lead Vulnerability Risk Reduction Assessments. Findings from these processes inform Disaster Risk Management and Climate Adaptation Plans while supporting greater participation in sub-national planning and budgeting.

Funded by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the four-year IP3 project, 2025 to 2029, aims to promote resilient, inclusive, and sustainable development in Cambodia's Mekong basin through women's leadership, stronger civil society engagement, and climate-resilient community development.



Group discussion to map out climate risk in their village. Photo: Soknak Por

INDIGENOUS WOMAN BRINGS FINANCIAL LITERACY LESSONS BACK HOME

By Asisah Man, Botom Mune

Oxfam, in collaboration with Good Return, 3S Rivers Protection Network (3SPN), Culture and Environment Preservation Association (CEPA), and My Village (MVi), with funding support from Development Bank of the Netherlands (FMO), organized a five-day Training of Trainers in June on Consumer Awareness and Financial Empowerment (CAFE) in Phnom Penh.

The training brought 25 participants from four provinces to strengthen their financial education, build facilitation skills, and increase confidence in using digital tools for monitoring and reporting. Participants also developed practical action plans to deliver financial education within their communities, while promoting inclusion, child protection, and gender equality.

Kamphoeun Nang Nga, a 25 years old Indigenous Lun woman from Vern Sai district, Ratanakiri province, said that CAFE training was an opportunity to gain new experiences, meet new people, and strengthen her understanding of financial management. She was especially interested in learning how people can spend money wisely, manage their finances effectively, and plan for a more secure future.

Before attending the training, Nga had witnessed many financial challenges in her community. As most families rely on farming and earn irregular incomes, managing finances can be difficult. Many households depend on both formal and informal loans, yet often don't understand loan agreements and borrowing conditions, leaving them



Kamphoeun Nang Nga during the training. Photo: Botom Mune/Oxfam

vulnerable to debt and financial stress. Informal lending, with its high interest rates, has become a particularly serious problem. Through the five-day CAFE training, Nga gained valuable knowledge and practical skills that changed the way she thinks about money. She learned that earning money requires hard work and that spending beyond one's means can create difficulties in the future. The training also reinforced the importance of saving and financial planning.

"Money is hard to earn, but if we spend it without thinking and spend more than we earn, it will make life difficult. The CAFE training helped me understand how to manage money, save money, and prepare for the future," she said.

One of the most meaningful lessons for Nga was understanding the difference between "necessary and unnecessary spending" and how

people are often tempted to buy things simply because others have them, even when those purchases are not essential. At the beginning of the training, Nga felt nervous and uncertain. Financial education was entirely new to her, and she was concerned about using e-learning tools and applying for the lessons in communities where internet access is limited. However, as the training progressed, her confidence grew.

"Financial education was completely new to me. My fear disappeared because the CAFE App and e-learning lessons were clear and easy to understand," she said.

Today, Nga is determined to use what she learned to help others. She plans to share financial knowledge with young people, women, and families in her community so they understand better the risks of informal loans, encouraging responsible spending, and helping people understanding loan documents.

Looking ahead, Nga hopes that Indigenous communities will gradually change their spending behavior, reduce unnecessary expenses, and build stronger financial futures.

"As an Indigenous person, I am proud and happy because I'll be able to help the people in my community. I want to help them understand their strengths and weaknesses so they can manage money, save for the future, and live a more comfortable life," Nga said.

YOUTH LEADING CAMBODIA'S CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE

By Ratha Ra

When Song Vergenylundy was a student, opportunities to learn about clean energy, connect with industry leaders, or contribute to national discussions on energy policy were rare. Today, he is helping ensure the next generation does not face the same challenge.

With support from Oxfam and the Australian Government, Vergenylundy and a group of passionate young environmental advocates established the Cambodia Energy Transition Youth Network (CETYN), a youth-led platform that equips young people with the knowledge, skills, and networks needed to contribute to Cambodia's clean energy future.

For Oxfam, investing in youth is about much more than preparing future leaders. It is about enabling young people to become changemakers today.

Through training, mentorship, networking opportunities, and engagement with policymakers and industry leaders, CETYN is helping young people move beyond awareness of climate change and become active participants in Cambodia's energy transition.

One of the network's flagship initiatives is the Clean Energy Youth Ambassador Program. Over four weeks, 16 young participants gained practical knowledge of renewable

energy, worked on hands-on projects, engaged with industry professionals, and explored career pathways in the clean energy sector.

For many participants, it was their first opportunity to interact directly with experts and see how their passion for climate action could translate into meaningful careers and leadership roles.

Armed with new skills, confidence, and professional connections, the youth ambassadors returned to their schools, universities, workplaces, and communities as advocates for sustainable energy solutions. They are sharing what they have learned, encouraging their peers to take action, and demonstrating that young people can play a meaningful role in shaping Cambodia's future.

To further strengthen youth engagement, CETYN convened the National Clean Energy Youth Forum 2026 on 27 June, bringing together more than 80 participants from government institutions, the private

sector, academia, development partners, civil society organizations, and youth groups from across the country.

The forum created a space for dialogue and collaboration, ensuring that young people's voices are included in discussions and decisions that will shape Cambodia's energy future.

"We believe investing in young people is one of the most important investments we can make," said Vorn Chanraksmey, Chief Executive Officer and Founder of EGE (Cambodia) Energy Solutions Co., Ltd. "The forum helps youth connect with industry, explore careers, share ideas, and turn ambition into action."

As Cambodia advances its clean energy transition, young people are proving that they are not only the leaders of tomorrow but also essential partners in creating solutions today.



Youths came for the National Clean Energy Youth Forum 2026 on 27 June 2026 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Photo: CETYN

FROM BUILDING ENTERPRISES TO BUILDING A FUND: OXFAM IN CAMBODIA LAUNCHES THE EQUI-GREEN FUND

By San Sar

In early 2026, Oxfam in Cambodia and OBOR Management were selected as one of four awardees under the Indo-Pacific NGO Blended Finance Accelerator, securing a 540,000 USD grant the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Convergence to design the Equi-Green Fund (EGF). The funding will support the design of the EGF, a proposed 20 million USD blended finance vehicle to invest in climate-resilient and gender-responsive SMEs across Cambodia, Indonesia, and Timor-Leste.

This achievement builds on years of enterprise development through Oxfam's Impact SME (I-SME) project, which supported more than 40 enterprises to strengthen their models and become investment-ready. Many of these businesses showed strong growth potential but struggled to access financing, stuck in the "missing middle," too advanced for grants yet too small or impact-focused for commercial finance. The Equi-Green Fund was conceived to bridge this gap.

Developed with OBOR Management, the fund will provide patient and flexible capital to SMEs that are often overlooked by traditional



Panel Discussion on "Blended Finance in Practice: Roles, Experiences and Partnership Models" during the Blended Finance Forum organized by the Sustainable Business Alliance on 13 February 2026. Photo: Oxfam

finance. Oxfam's role is to build a strong pipeline of impact-driven SMEs, manage the Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) to strengthen their investment readiness and business resilience, while ensuring that gender equality, social inclusion, and climate resilience remain at the core of investment decisions.

The Equi-Green Fund is an opportunity to build new pathways for capital to reach enterprises that create social and environmental impact, while positioning Cambodia as a leader in the future of development finance.

Beyond Oxfam, the initiative also signals growing recognition that innovative financing approaches emerging from Cambodia can attract international support and investment. It demonstrates the role

development organizations can play in connecting impact enterprises with the capital they need to grow and scale.

Over the next two years, Oxfam and its partners will design and launch the fund, aiming for first close and initial investments by the end of 2026. More than a single financing vehicle, the initiative demonstrates how blended finance can mobilize resources for impact and encourage collaboration between donors, investors, enterprises, and governments.

Ultimately, the Equi-Green Fund reflects Oxfam's evolution from supporting enterprises to shaping the financing systems that allow them to grow, scale, and thrive.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES THROUGH THE CLEAN WATER AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

By San Sar, Cheth Phay

As part of International Children's Day celebration, Oxfam in partnership with our partner the Human Resource and Rural Economic Development Organization (HURREDO) and with funding support from the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), launched a five-day in June 2026, Clean Water Awareness Campaign under the Fostering Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (FOWASH) project. The campaign created a fun and interactive learning environment where children, parents, and teachers explored the importance of safe drinking water, hygiene, and sanitation practices together.

Across rural communities in Siem Reap and Battambang provinces, many families rely on standard 20 liter bottled water for their daily needs. However, a hidden challenge persists: while clear water is often assumed to be safe, many consumers remain unaware of its source, treatment, or actual quality. To bridge this critical awareness gap, the campaign was conducted across 10 rural primary and secondary schools, reaching 1,094 participants including 96 teachers, 685 students, and 313 parents.

Each two-hour session was structured to be both educational and actionable. Children engaged in games, quizzes, poster-drawing competitions, and hands-on experiments that reveal how clear water can still contain harmful contaminants. Facilitators led hands-on, do-it-yourself (DIY) water filtration demonstrations showing how untreated surface or rainwater



Ms. Poern Sreyleak (left), the Varin Water Kiosk Operator, explains the 10-step water treatment process, emphasizing its proven safety and quality standards, as verified by the Pasteur Institute of Cambodia. Photo: Oxfam



Parents and community members attend an awareness session at a local school, learning about the health benefits of safe, locally treated Kuchsar water and the importance of clean drinking water for their families. Photo: Oxfam

remains unsafe despite its appearance. Simultaneously, local community-operated water kiosk operators demonstrated the

treatment steps involved in producing Kuchsar, the safe drinking water brand established through the support of FOWASH project. Parents

and teachers interacted directly with kiosk operators to discuss water quality, hygiene management, and bottle cleanliness, while students competed in lively quizzes and creative poster contests.

A core insight from the campaign was the habit-based resistance among villagers. Many families were unfamiliar with the differences between untreated and safely treated drinking water, highlighting the need for continued awareness raising. To address this the campaign reframed Kuchsa water not merely as a product but as a vital community asset. Operator explained that choosing Kuchsar water guarantees certified safe drinking water while sustaining the financial and operational viability of local kiosks.

The FOWASH project has supported 11 community-led Kuchsar water kiosks across Siem Reap and Battambang provinces. With HURREDO's support, local operators are strengthening their business and management skills, changing kiosks into sustainable community enterprises that improve health and build resilience. Community response was overwhelming. Of the 313 parents who participated, 276 registered as new customers, reflecting growing trust in safe, locally produced drinking water.

Photo 2: A water kiosk operator prepared 20 liter bottles of Kuchsar water, providing reliable and safe drinking water to rural communities.

Photo: Oxfam

Photo 3: Community members, including parents, teachers, and students, gather under a large shade tree to participate in the FOWASH clean water campaign.

Photo: Oxfam



Sotha Tham, a student from Romdoul Secondary School, shared her illustration on safe drinking water and hygiene practices during an interactive drawing competition. "Safe water and clean water are different; clean water can be used for cooking or bathing, but safe water can be consumed daily," said Sotha. Photo: Oxfam



WHEN THE SMALL THINGS BECOME EVERYTHING



A month home, Ratana surveys the fragile yard that holds the cart, the chickens, and memories of months that changed everything.

HOW CLEAN WATER, LATRINES, AND A SMALL ENVELOPE OF CASH HELPED ONE FAMILY SURVIVE DISPLACEMENT, AND BEGIN TO REBUILD

It has been a month since Ratana's family came home from New Chong Kal Safety Centre, Oddar Meanchey province. Home, the word still feels fragile. He takes a deep breath, eyes scanning the yard, the packed motorbike cart still sitting by the door, the few chickens that survived. Then, quietly, he begins to talk about the months that changed everything.

When fighting flared along the Cambodia-Thai border and clashes reached Oddar Meanchey province, Hout Ratana and his wife, Pon Oeurn, were not at home. They had taken their nine-year-old son to the clinic for an eye infection. They were on their way back when the first explosions began. Smoke crept along the horizon. The thud of blasts drew closer. They turned the motorbike around and raced back to the village but their twelve-year-old daughter, who had been at school, was nowhere to be found.

With nothing but the clothes on their backs and one motorbike between them, the family joined hundreds of others heading for the nearest safe place. They searched frantically before finding their daughter at a makeshift assembly point near the local pagoda, New Chong Kal, that became a temporary camp almost overnight.

"We came with only what we wore. Everything else was left behind," said Ratana

Tarpaulins replaced rooftops. The hum of drones replaced birdsong. Where rice and cassava fields had once shaped every season, daily life narrowed to the basics: food, safety, and most urgently water and sanitation.

The only nearby water source was a murky pond. Families used it for washing; safe drinking water was almost impossible to find. Latrines were few and overcrowded. For Pon, who worried constantly about her children's health, those shortages brought relentless anxiety. Before relief organizations arrived, Ratana spent hours each day riding his motorbike to collect a single barrel of water, each trip a gamble.

"Every time my husband left to get water, I was devastated," Pon said. "I only felt safe when the four of us were together."

The water they managed to collect from the pond was not safe to drink. They used it for washing and avoided it for cooking when they could. Ratana developed an ear infection from the contaminated water; to this day, his left ear does not hear well.

Their daughter's health added further strain. She had a condition requiring frequent toilet use, but



Pon remembers the murky pond that once served as her family's only water source, each trip for a barrel of water filling her with anxiety until her husband returned safely.

with only a handful of latrines and long queues forming at all hours, Pon would wake the children before dawn, around 4 a.m., just to try to beat the line. Often, it was already long. "She had to queue many times a day," Pon says. "though it was hot and dehydrated, I begged her not to drink too much because going to the toilet was so difficult."

Then Oxfam and partners arrived with the financial support from the Government of Ireland, Belgium and Australia alongside Oxfam's own emergency relief package. Working with five local partners including Village Support Group (VSG), Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community (CCFC), Live & Learn Cambodia, Development and Partnership in Action (DPA), Human Resource and Rural Economic Development (HURREDO), as well as local authorities, Oxfam began providing emergency humanitarian assistance following the first border clash in July 2025.

Clean water points were established, additional latrines were built, and hygiene kits were distributed. For Ratana and Pon's family, the change was immediate.

"When they built more toilets, life became easier for my daughter," Pon said.

The additional facilities shortened queues and reduced the humiliation and danger that come when women and children are forced to wait in the open or resort to open defecation. Clean water points meant families no longer had to rely on the pond or send a father on a perilous daily journey reducing both risk and fuel costs. It wasn't a solution to everything, but in a place where uncertainty dominated every decision, it was a genuine reprieve.

Water and sanitation rarely make headlines. They are not dramatic in the way a single rescue might be. But for families like Ratana and Pon's, they are foundational to surviving displacement. Clean water reduced the risk of diarrhea. Functioning latrines restored dignity. Fewer dangerous trips meant less exposure to harm. For Pon, the effect was tangible fewer sick days, less fear, one less daily burden to carry.



A water filtration system provided by Oxfam offers displaced families clean, safe drinking water, easing daily struggles and protecting people's health particularly children. Photo: Oxfam



Mobile toilets from Oxfam and partners with the financial support from the Government of Ireland, Belgium and Australia for displaced families due to Cambodia-Thailand border conflict. Photo: Oxfam

"We lost everything," she said, her voice trembling. "At least I hope my children are healthy."

The support did not stop with taps and toilets. Oxfam's cash assistance also reached the family, fifty dollars in an envelope that felt, in that moment, like an improbable gift. They had fled without pots, pans, or even a cooking spoon. The money was modest in the abstract but enormous in practice. They spent it on gasoline, cooking oil, and

medicine. Pon also bought a mango and shared it with the children. It was a small comfort, a moment of sweetness amid trauma. That fifty dollars, managed carefully, carried them through a month.

"It was like a lifeline," Pon said. "We cried when we saw it." Together, these interventions created breathing room. When water flowed and toilets were accessible, parents could sleep a little easier. When cash covered the essentials,

families could think ahead rather than simply react. That window of stability is precisely what enables the next steps of recovery which is returning home, repairing damage, and beginning to rebuild.

When a ceasefire held and the family returned home but brought a new set of problems. Three of the family's cats had died. Most of their chickens were gone. Their five hectares of rice and cassava, the land that had sustained them for years, remained out of reach. Mines and unexploded ordnance had littered fields and homesteads. Landmine clearance teams have fenced off parts of their property, and until the land is declared safe, they cannot plough, sow, or harvest.

With the fields inaccessible and few animals left, Ratana and Pon have adapted again. They are planting vegetables close to the house and raising the few chickens that survived. They dream of rebuilding a small flock, perhaps getting a pig but every new investment carries the weight of uncertainty. The risk of having to flee again makes each decision feel heavy.

In front of their house, a motorbike cart sits packed and ready. The pack includes food, kitchenware, clothes, a water barrel. The family keeps it prepared, just in case.

"We hope we don't have to use it," Ratana said quietly. "We just want to be home and to rebuild."

Ratana still remembers what life used to be. How planting and harvest filled the calendar, how his children went to school without worry. "Life was comfortable before," he said. "We want to work our land and give our children a future. But I am not sure now." For families uprooted by conflict, hope often arrives in modest forms:

a latrine that lets a young girl use the toilet without fear, a water point that saves a father from a perilous daily trip, fifty dollars that keeps a family fed for a month. These are the interventions that steady households in crisis that allow people to come home and try again.

Yet meeting immediate needs is only part of the journey. For Ratana, Pon, and thousands of families like them, the path to a full recovery runs deeper through peaceful fields cleared of landmines, through restored infrastructure, through livelihoods rebuilt from the ground up. That recovery begins with a permanent ceasefire and the conditions that allow economic and social life to return to normal.

It is not a return to what was lost. But it is the direction worth moving toward. Oxfam and its partners remain committed to working closely with authorities and communities mobilizing resources to address urgent humanitarian needs today, while laying the groundwork for the resilience and recovery that displaced families deserve tomorrow.

For Ratana and Pon, that future is still uncertain. But it is what they are working toward, one day, one small step, one rebuilt life at a time.

Photo 1: Fields marked remained inaccessible, forcing Ratana and Pon to plant vegetables near their home and raise the few surviving chickens, each new effort shadowed by uncertainty.

Photo 2: Ratana keeps a motorbike cart packed with essentials, ready in case his family must flee again.

Photo 3: Ratana's modest home stands beside a small chicken coop, where his surviving flock is raised as the family works to rebuild their livelihood. All photos: Oxfam

The story was collected on 28 March 2026, Oddar Meanchey Province.



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We welcome your feedback.

Share your thoughts with our editorial team at

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We appreciate the long-standing support and relationship we have with our partners and donors.

Thank you for being the primary change agents of Oxfam's endeavours to reduce poverty and empower communities. We have come a long way on the road to harnessing peace and ensuring social justice.

We are extremely grateful for the continued support, cooperation and collaboration we have had over the years and we hope to continue this journey for years to come.



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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