

COMMUNIQUÉ

WOMEN AND WATER DIALOGUE



Oxfam hosts **“WOMEN AND WATER DIALOGUE”**
“Celebrating the roles of women in leading and managing water resources”
Phnom Penh , 22nd March. 2019

BACKGROUND

In a single day, women and girls across the world spend a total of 152 million hours collecting water for domestic use. This time constrains their ability to participate in local governance structures and educational opportunities according to the UN Food and Agricultural Organization.

The theme of 27th World Water Day this year, March 22nd, is to **“LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND”**. Oxfam together with River Coalition Cambodia, the Institute of Technology Cambodia and the Royal University of Phnom Penh take this opportunity to host “Women and Water Dialogue” at Cambodia-Korea Cooperation Center (CKCC) of the Royal University of Phnom Penh to discuss the role of women

in leading and managing water resources. Water is the foundation to sustainable development -from health, to climate, to industry, to equity, and more.

It is a means of focusing attention on the importance of freshwater and working together for the sustainable management of freshwater resources.

“We wish to share the experience and knowledge of women-led water resource management and governance to wider stakeholders to learn, share ideas, increase awareness and build on personal connections,” said Socheata Sim, Oxfam Mekong Regional Water Governance Manager.

“This will help us all to address the issues of gender inequality in the context of water resources management and conservation.”

OBJECTIVES

- Celebrate the World Water Day and make this occasion to gather people from different aspect together to share ideas and make them grow and to build on personal connections that could help addressing the issue of gender in equality in context of water management.
- Link back the experience and knowledge that have been share at Women congress back to wider stakeholders at the country level and for those women who participate in the conference to build more confidence in transferring their knowledge to others.
- Bring together women from different sectors that have strong influence to policy and practices to have the interaction and discussion regarding to women in water governance sectors.





KEY HIGHLIGHTS

There were approximately 300 representatives from ministries, CSOs, NGOs, researchers, academics, and young people who are working in the fields of gender, women's empowerment and natural resource management. The event was on the topic of "Women and Water" that brought together CSOs, Academia and government ministries, lecturers, youths and students for sharing ideas and discussing water resource management to celebrate World Water day 2019. The event provides opportunity to raise awareness about how critical important of water, what are the key roles of women in managing and accessing safe water, who is not being included in decision making on water.

The gathering provided a chance for key individual who participated in Women and River Congress in Nepal last two weeks to share key learning points and experiences to diverse participants for joint effort for equitable, inclusive and sustainable water resource management for people living without safe water in contribution to achieving SDG with the key message 'leaving no one behind.'

Speaking from their experience and as one of women and women leader living in this country, all of them expressed the same challenging that women is facing in their daily life. In the dialogue, speaker from Oxfam shared an inspiring statement that developed jointly by women and river congress participant, "Water is life. Rivers sustain human life and all of earth's ecosystems and biodiversity. Rivers are our global commons; they belong to us all as well as to future generations. For women, rivers are our soul. As water collectors, peasants, caretakers, and stewards of natural resources, women's relationships with water throughout the life cycle are fundamental, yet too often invisible"

The statement has confirmed by the speaker from community, who experience the real life challenging that women in her community is facing in the context where the water and river has been affected by the development project and hydropower development.



PANEL INTERACTION AND DISCUSSION

HIGHLIGHT OF QUESTIONS FROM THE PLENERY:

- Community along Sesan River experiences itchiness on their skin from using the water. What is the reason and how is the water quality being monitored?
- What are some of the key challenges for women in water resource sector?
- How does Ministry of Environment monitor the Water and Natural Resource quality in accordance with the Environmental Management Plan of Lower Sesan 2 dam?
- How do the government and NGOs promote and build capacity of women in the water resource sector?
- What are some of the measure to encourage women to engage in the leadership role, especially in technology, research and water resource sector?

Women and water dialogue provided an great space for young academic 'student to interact with all the speakers and provided a platform to different stakeholders, especially young women to build their understanding around the issues related to water and it was a great avenue for all participants to hear the work that relevant stakeholders are doing to address those issue and listen to inspiring message from women from different part of the word.

At the end, there was a key note address from CNMC representative and he express his gratitude to all stakeholders and student who dedicated their time to shared their knowledge and experience to young generation who will be the future leader for the country. He believe this passion and commitment toward the issue of women and water that shared by all speaker will continue to inspire all the youth and student who presented in the room today.



MEDIA COVERAGE ON WOMEN AND WATER DIALOGUE

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| The Phnom Penh Post | https://bit.ly/2FrEEr9 | 22 March 2019 |
| CTN Television | https://bit.ly/2Uql3Qs | 27 March 2019 |
| PNN Television | No link | 23 March 2019 |
| Thmey Thmey Newspaper | https://bit.ly/2lizo1h | 7 April 2019 |
| Lotus Radio | https://bit.ly/268dt59 | 5 April 2019 |
| Apsara Television | No Link | No specific date |





Oxfam in collaboration with River Coalition of Cambodia (RCC), the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), and the Cambodia Institute of Technology (ITC) convened a dialogue focus on Women and Water: **“CELEBRATING THE ROLES OF WOMEN IN LEADING AND MANAGING WATER RESOURCES”**. The event coincided with the World Water Day 2019 to reinforce the important message of SDG Goal 6, “ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030.” The event was participated by approximately 270 predominantly youth, university students, civil society partners, and selected community members.



Ms Sokunthor, a #RiverChampion and #WomanFarmerChampion from a Riverian community in Sambo district, Kratie province, opened the dialogue highlighting the importance of rivers and its resources to the lives and livelihood of her community, the Indigenous Kuy ethnic group living along Mekong River. She noted the increasing challenges they faced, including the population growth in the county which continues to put pressure on the use of existing resources, the decline in fish catch from the river, in the flow patterns of the Mekong and its tributaries which poses more challenges to agricultural productivity, river bank gardens and daily household chores. These changes impact the roles women play at home and their family. Additionally, Sokunthor observed there has been an increase of Algae in the river, causing rashes and skin irritations in people who bathe there. She urged the government ministries to investigate the issues faced by the community along the river and for the government to have greater consideration when planning development along the river. She said local communities must be a part of decision making processes when planning and approving infrastructure developments like hydropower dams.



Dr. Prof Ket Phonnara of the faculty of hydrology and water resource engineering at the Institute of Technology of Cambodia highlighted the findings from her study on the participation of women in the agricultural sector. Her study noted how crop growing links women closely to the use of water. However women's presence in leadership, information technology and research roles remain significantly low. The School of Information Technology and Engineering is made up of only 20-30% women with more dropping out as the academic year progresses. Dr. Phonnara called for greater consideration and support to women in leadership roles, not only from family and friends but also from women themselves, to be courageous and take up leadership roles especially in water related sector.



Her Excellency Ngin Lina, General Director of General Directorate of Knowledge, Information and Environment, Ministry of Environment (MoE), emphasized the MoE use of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and how they have integrated this practice into development projects including mining, ELCs and other private development projects associated with rivers, forests and mining. She said the EIA helps reduce the risk of damaging populations and the environment, noting the MoE has many principals and policies to force private development companies to carefully conduct EIA. In addition to EIA, HE Ngin Lina, also echoed the important opportunity for women. She said nowadays, there is more opportunities for women to participate in every sector.



His Excellency Vat Botkosal, Deputy Secretary of Cambodia National Mekong Committee (CNMC) echoed the key concern raised by Ms Sokunthor on issues related to water quality in the river, the challenges facing fishery management; he said we have to carefully study especially for students to further research on the topic related to women and water. In addition, he recognized the importance of the Women and River Congress being held in Nepal recently as a good step, provided the opportunity for the participants to learn from other countries experiences on how they manage their water and water resources.

"All the sharing today is very important for all of us... we have to work to promote women in the leadership role in political and economic sectors because women's role in these sectors are not yet equal to men as there are a lot of men holding the positions in the sectors... So I encourage the young women to take part in the politics and economics so at least we have more number of women leaders," said His Excellency Vat Botkosal.

Students take photos with the event's key messages: #womenandWater, #waterislife, #Fairsharingofwaterresources, #mekongriver, #welovethemekong

