# PINEEH PINOOH

The power of people against poverty









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#### Dear Friends,

I am very excited to share with you the inaugural issue of our **Pineeh Pinooh** quarterly newsletter. This title was overwhelmingly selected by our enthusiastic colleagues and friends who helped us launch it. Literally, **Pineeh Pinooh** means "about this and that" and it refers to simple conversations on various topics ranging from domestic to political affairs that matter to everybody.

We want **Pineeh Pinooh** to contribute to knowledge sharing and learning with regard to Cambodia's socio-economic and democratic developments. It therefore seeks to work with our partners and supporters, donors as well as fellow Oxfam colleagues, to better tell impact stories of the people we work with and to bring to light policy opportunities to help the Cambodian people we work with as they work sustainably on their escape from poverty.

I was born when Cambodia was a war-torn and poverty-stricken country. As a Khmer woman I am very proud of Oxfam's mission to fight poverty and social and economic injustices; it fits right in with my convictions. I have shared with many of you that coming back to Cambodia to serve as Oxfam's country director was one of my dream jobs.

Oxfam has been supporting the Cambodian people in their development since 1979. Back then, it was a real humanitarian intervention in which Oxfam tried to meet the Cambodian people's basic needs. Cambodia has since transformed remarkably with its sustained economic growth rate at 7% to date.

Following Cambodia's development path, Oxfam's intervention too has transformed over four decades. If you asked me what Oxfam should do in a lower middle-income country like Cambodia where the debate is no longer about 'resources lacking' but 'resources governance', I would say that it is still imperative for Oxfam to continue working with the Cambodian people. It must help them unleash their potential to truly realize inclusive growth and greater social accountability especially for vulnerable groups. We believe that "no Cambodian should be left behind". Oxfam is committed to work with all stakeholders to find lasting solutions to complex poverty issues.

To conclude, I would like to make an appeal for your contributions, dear readers! Under the section Perspectives, we want to highlight the views of many actors in Cambodian society on a wide range of important topics. So send us your opinion pieces to **PineehPinooh.Cambodia@oxfam.org** and the most inspiring ones will be published! I hope you enjoy our first issue of Pineeh Pinooh!

Best wishes, Solinn

# HEADLINE



## INNOVATIVE FARMING PRACTICES LEAD TO FOOD AND FINANCIAL SECURITY

## Climate change has created untimely drought, unseasonal rain and flooding, affecting farmer livelihoods.

Oxfam collaborates with a local organization, RACHANA, to conduct training sessions on climate-resilient agriculture techniques, to prepare villagers to have more sustainable food sources and livelihoods in the future.

Female farmers are the main target of the project. In 2015, Oxfam worked with RACHANA and Sre Khmer to create a project to empower women in the agriculture sector called Women-led Agriculture Service Team. Their goal is to ensure food security and to increase the incomes of families by applying climate change and disaster resilient principles and linking their services to the market.

#### TRAINING SESSIONS ON CLIMATE-RESILIENT AGRICULTURE TECHNIQUES

Pok Chanveasna, a member of WLAS in Treang District, Takeo Province, has attended training sessions focusing on rice production and chicken raising. Now, she can harvest rice two and sometimes three times a year. She grows rice and watermelon. Pok has also learned how to vaccinate her chickens to prevent them from contracting diseases and how to adequately feed and house them. By applying what she has learned, Pok can earn around 1,000 USD per rice harvest and from selling her chickens and has now been able to afford to buy three hectares of land. Compared to her quality of life only three years ago, Pok has improved her family's prospects remarkably. By seeing to her family's food security, she can now focus on supporting her children so that they can pursue higher education.

"Before joining the training, I did not know how to grow vegetables during the dry season. I could only grow vegetables one or twice during the year when there was enough water," said Sokhom.

Soy Sokhom and her husband, Lao Sovann, have been attending RACHANA's training sessions since 2016.

#### MORE SUSTAINABLE FOOD SOURCES AND LIVELIHOODS

Through RACHANA's training, the couple learned how to select the kind of vegetables to grow according to the weather conditions. They know they can grow water spinach all year round, as it does not need much water. She now gets around 500,000 riels (roughly \$125) for each crop she sells. They also raise chickens to complement their food sources and earn more money (around \$50-\$100). Cheng Sreymach and her husband Sam Sary, switched from raising pigs to chickens after being trained by RACHANA. Sreymach has taught her family to tread on white lime before entering chicken cages to prevent the spread of disease.

As part of the project, a savings group was organized in the village with a view to ensuring sustainable food and financial security. The villagers can save funds for use in case of a family emergency, as well as to invest in better quality paddy rice seeds, chickens, and organic fertilizers in order to cope with climate change.

Women-led smallholder farms have remarkably improved thanks to the project and its innovative principles and has allowed farmers to be more resilient to climate change and disasters.



"It was so hard to plant rice and my husband rejected to help. I replied I would do it alone to experiment. Just only when it yielded well my husband went to see and appraised what Rachana trained. I also learn how to raise chicken so now can make profit from them. I became successful."

Pok Chanveasna

# **OUR STORIES**

## COMMUNITY SCORING FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY



The community scorecard is a tool used in the implementation of the Social Accountability Framework in Cambodia. It is a citizen-driven accountability measure for the assessment, planning, monitoring and evaluation of service deliveries.

STAR Kampuchea uses the community scorecard in their target area for citizens to evaluate the service delivery of health centres, communes and schools. It provides citizens with the opportunity to give feedback and improve delivery of services corresponding to their needs.

Oxfam in Cambodia has been partnering with STAR Kampuchea since 2016 to implement ISAF (Implementation the Social Accountability Framework) in Svay Rieng Province. Oxfam believes that ISAF will promote local democracy and improve delivery of essential services to the poor. To succeed, it needs the long-term commitment and collaborationfrom both demand side (civil society) and supply side (government led) activities and arrangements.

#### **IMPROVING DELIVERY OF SERVICES**

Soeurng Rachany lives in Chres Commune, Chantrea District, Svay Rieng Province. She got married in 2015 and has one son. "It was extremely hard to get access to the services of the Health Centre," said Rachany, talking to the commune accountability facilitator in the health centre. During her pregnancy, Rachany used services at the health centre. In addition to the difficult road conditions she had to cover to reach the health centre, only a limited amount of medicine was available. There was not enough staff for a full day's operation. Sanitation was also a main issue for the villagers. However, they still used the health centre because they could not afford the cost of treatment at a private clinic.

During a meeting including the director and staff of the health centre together with a citizen's representative from the commune, all issues related to the health centre were raised and put into the Joint Accountability Action Plan (JAAP). "I personally felt the change in our health centre since ISAF began. I observed that more medicine is available, more nurses come to work and, most of all, sanitation has improved. I think this may be the result of ISAF," said Rachany.



## RICE FARMERS TO USE TECHNOLOGY FOR FAIR PRICES

This year, Oxfam launched BlocRice, the first pilot project in Cambodia using blockchain technology to connect a large network of people in the rice supply chain to ensure farmers are better and more fairly paid.

Fifty small-scale organic rice farmers in Preah Vihear Province are already on board! The goal is to promote a "smart contract", a three-way digital contract farming agreement between organic farmers, rice exporters and retailers. "Farmers thus gain collective bargaining power since agricultural cooperatives will be parties to the contracts", said Solinn Lim, country director of Oxfam in Cambodia.

#### BLOCKCHAIN—A SECURED, DECENTRALISED DATABASE USING CRYPTOGRAPHY

The project registers all components in the supply chain with unique identification codes on a blockchain. It then introduces a smart contract between all parties. When the produce is delivered, the acceptance will be digitally recorded and payment will be digitally transferred to agricultural cooperatives who will then transfer payment into the farmers' personal bank accounts with a local bank.

The app focuses on transparency and traceability and enables all parties to digitally facilitate, verify and enforce the negotiation and performance of a contract. All stakeholders involved can access information on the supply chain in their shared database, from planting to the manufacture of rice products.

#### BRINGING BEST PRACTICES TO CAMBODIA

Farmers have registered their profiles and farming data, such as planting areas and expected yields, into the web-based BlocRice system. Their average land size is between one to two hectares and they produce around 2.5 to 3 tonnes of organic rice per year.

"The sheer fact of being registered as an actor on the blockchain platform implies that people matter", said Solinn Lim, Country Director of OXfam in Cambodia. "BlocRice will give them a platform to empower themselves."

Blockchain for Livelihoods from Organic Cambodian Rice, or BlocRice, is being implemented from April 2018 to March 2019. If successful, the project aims to be expanded to other provinces as well as others crops.

## **MY PROBLEMS, MY SOLUTIONS**

With partner Phare Ponleu Selpak, Oxfam supported a group of 12 women living in a poor community, helping them learn to use art performance to promote the inclusion of the most vulnerable living in slum areas in Battambang.

Drugs, gambling, domestic violence... The performance of "My Problems, My Solutions", by the Battambang Theatre Group, depicts the most common issues faced in the home communities of the 12 women on stage.

"Before being part of this project, these group of women were the most marginalized in their community. They had no job, went on begging for daily living", said Chhit Chanphireak, Program Manager from Phare Ponleu Selpak. "We consulted them and trained them to use theatre as a tool to build confidence and speak out. Now they are not afraid of sharing their problems anymore. By talking things out and becoming aware of their own problems, they realised they were able to find solutions to address them".

#### RAISE ONE'S VOICE, MAKING IT HEARD

Mom is 29 years old and pregnant with her fourth child. "The gambling scene is inspired from my life. I was a gambler and my husband was a drinker. We used to send our kids out to beg on the streets and we have no job. I joined the Battambang Theatre Group a bit by chance and now I really enjoy performing. I feel more confident. Plus, I get some money from the program while performing. This helps improve my life". Mom and her husband are now both working at small jobs and have stopped sending their kids out to beg in the streets. "We feel more responsible for supporting our family as parents. It helped us think about our problem and made us ashamed of our behaviour."

Through the project the women were also provided with agriculture skills to have a small additional income.

Four months after the end of the funding, the women are still performing. Sokha Srey, Oxfam's Voice Grant and Partnership Specialist said "This is a very nice surprise and one of the success stories of this project."



## SAY NO TO PLASTIC! OXFAM TEAM CLEANS THE STREETS

World Cleanup Day is an annual, global civic initiative that has been happening for the last 10 years. But this was the first year Cambodia, through the Ministry of Environment, officially joined the other 155 countries. The staff of Oxfam in Cambodia, their families and friends were part of it.

The few hours we spent filling up eco-bags with litter, especially plastic, was not just about cleaning up the streets. It was most importantly about raising awareness of the local residents and ourselves about the plastic epidemic and trash disposal issues.



#### **RAISING AWARENESS**

At first, our team's impression was that the Night Market area was actually pretty clean! But it was only when we started to really look at the streets with the purpose of picking up litter that we all opened our eyes, realizing that we had been suffering from "trash blindness." While waste collection employees accomplish the important and grueling task of picking up the bulk of the waste in often very challenging and unhygienic conditions, there are still many very small pieces of trash that make their way to the street due to improper waste disposal. In about an hour, we had filled up 15 bags with a variety of waste and separated plastic bottles from the rest of the trash.

#### A HEALTHIER, MORE SUSTAINABLE PLANET STARTS WITH US!

While cleaning up our environment and being conscious about properly disposing of our waste should be an everyday preoccupation, our collective and visible action of cleaning up triggered reactions from local residents. We received water bottles and thumbs up as a gesture of support. We overheard people debating among themselves about bad littering practices. We were approached by people who came up to throw their empty drink cups into our bags and people asking why we were doing this.



### UNDERSTANDING HER RIGHTS TO ENSURE HER SAFETY

Drink excessively or risk alcohol-fueled tempers flaring and losing work or worse? This is what beer promoter Ms Pov Sinath faces every day; with two children to care for, there's only one option.

"A customer once forced me to drink a whole bottle of beer. Though he didn't threaten me directly, I could see that he had a gun. I had no choice, so I forced myself to drink the whole bottle," Sinath said.

## POOR WORK CONDITIONS AND MINIMAL VALUE ON WORKERS

"Some customers complain that I am too old for this job but I said to them if I am not allowed to do this job, what else can I do?". Sinath is grateful to work for CAMBREW, the head company of Angkor Beer, as it means she doesn't work in a garment factory. However, the environment of alcohol and drug abuse that surrounds her work is a concern to her family, and for very little pay. "My salary is only enough for the rent and one bag of rice," she said. Their family depends on her husband's income, a mototaxi driver, and the profits from rice-wine sold by her family in her home province, Svay Rieng. Sinath moved to Phnom Penh for work in 1996. Thus, being isolated, she has lost the support network that comes with living with six siblings. Sinath is a member of the Cambodian Food and Service Workers' Federation (CFSWF) and she explained how the organization has helped her understand her rights and how to protect them. The members gather regularly to discuss many issues. The organization also supports weekly Khmer lessons for the workers and their children to improve their verbal and written language skills and boost their confidence. "It would be great if people could place a higher value on me and my job," she said. Sinath is hopeful that through the work of CFSWF, culture around beer promoters and the value they are given in society will improve.

## LIVING IN FEAR—A PRICE TOO STEEP FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE MEKONG

The collapse of a dam at the Xe Pian-Xe Namnoy Hydropower Project resulted in the tragic loss of life and thousands being left homeless, their livelihoods likewise destroyed.

The Lao government's announcement of immediate measures to be taken is to be commended. However, this decision lost its shine with the continuation of assessments for the proposed Pak Lay dam, and it leaves us worried as many evaluations have failed to correctly identify risks.

Oxfam asserts that positive change depends on the local beneficiary communities having a say in projects. Too often, these communities bear the consequences when things go wrong. Policy or practice designed by experts often leads to mediocre outcomes when they overlook carefully considering the needs of the communities.

This was an avoidable man-made disaster that could have been prevented through effective information systems. Oxfam's Cambodian partner, My Village, has discovered that people have their doubts that lessons will be learned.

"We are worried and scared to replant the vegetable crops destroyed by the flood. Villagers who have relatives in Laos have a gut feeling that floods from the dam will come again," said Pheng Sivath, deputy chairman of a community-based organization in Siem Pang District, Stung Treng Province, Cambodia.

Their worries are justified because there is no functional early warning system. Oxfam has found that community-owned early warning systems where people can access information quickly and reliably are effective in saving lives and that they cost little.

To learn from this disaster, we cannot follow the same old development agenda with safety precautions. Initiatives need to consider the view of the communities, whether up or downstream. Failure to do that will leave us with development that benefits a few at the cost of the many. And that is too steep a price to pay.

A woman carries a child in the flood ravaged village in Sanamxai, Attapeu province, Laos, on July 26. Photo: Nhac Nguyen/AFP



#### Cambodia's latest development scene



### **H.E. SAY SAMAL**

Minister, Ministry of Environment

"I think that in the next 10 years, we will step into the golden age because our Cambodian people have higher education. They have broadly knowledge. They can transfer their ideas into businesses. I think Cambodia will go faster."

### How do you envision Cambodia development in the next years?

Regarding the historical achievements we enjoyed so far for Cambodia, for the next 30 or 40 years we also want to see Cambodia to become a high-income country. A proud, strong and active country as well as a good model member in the regions. We have big ambition for the future of Cambodia.

Obviously, we can see that Cambodian people as well as the Government would like a sustainable development. To develop Cambodia, we will not exclude anyone or any segment of the society. We all need to move forward together. Looking at the economic growth in the last 20 years after we got fully peace in 1998, after we applied the winwin strategy, our economy grew around 7% per year for the last 20 years. We can see changes in our social classes. The middle class grew a lot more than before.

## What does this development mean for the Minister of Environment?

In the Ministry of Environment, we have Environmental Impact Assessment. All the development projects, we need to do the assessment whether those projects have impacts on our environment, society, culture and economy. We need to balance our developments. We need to study which developments meet our strategic and economic development plans. Which developments related to our culture and people. What developments we can do. And what developments that we need to do in order to contribute to the development of the world. For example, in the Ministry of Environment, we have a sustainable development council. This council works to achieve the sustainable development goals of the United Nations.



### **KEO KOUNILA,**

#### Young Entrepreneur and blogger

## What is your view on Cambodia's recent development?

I think that Cambodia is currently growing rapidly, especially in the business and service industries. We can see that many foreigners are interested in investing in Cambodia.

Because Cambodia has a free market economy, whether one likes it or not, there are winners and losers. But where a free market is practised, there are trickledown effects. That results in benefits to other people, but it needs time.

So, we have to ask ourselves as Khmer youth living in Cambodia, how can we receive benefits from the development that is taking place these days? What languages must we learn more and what skills must we acquire?

Second, Cambodia is part of ASEAN. ASEAN is growing strongly. Even adults in Cambodia have to learn new skills to compete with the energetic youth in the region as well as those in the business sector. That is something they have to be aware of.

## How do you envision Cambodia's development in the years to come?

I think that the area that Cambodia should focus on over the next five years is service providing, because Cambodia has only 15 million people compared to Indonesia's 200 million. We are very small. There are other countries that are smaller than us, like Brunei and Singapore. But why is Singapore very strong? It experiences financial growth because it focuses on some big areas, such as its ports. Ports have a high growth rate and high economic benefits. Cambodia has a young population, with 60 to 70% of its population under 30 or 35. That is a great potential.

If they are to fully enter the labour force, what can they do? As for services, we also know foreign languages well. So, we can focus strongly on services, not only providing domestic services but also work across ASEAN and we can go further than ASEAN.

"Khmer young people must rethink what they want in the future and what direction they want Cambodia to move towards. If we improve our education, our language ability, our technical skills, then we will have the capacity, like others. We have to grab the opportunities. We need to learn a lot from others."





## DAM CHANTHY

Indigenous Tumpoun, Director of Highlander Association

## What is your view of recent development in Cambodia?

My overall perspective on development in Ratanakiri is that it is going too fast, especially the granting of land concession projects to big companies. I am not opposed to development projects because the government needs to develop in order to generate improvements. But the indigenous people do not have much knowledge of the whys and wherefores of these development projects.

One of the main issues is the lack of consideration for which area to develop and which area to reserve for the traditional use of the indigenous people. Our natural forests are big and full of spirit trees, harvest areas for timber and places to grow vegetables for the community. In many development projects, the indigenous people are not generally given enough information. They do not have the opportunity to participate in the discussion or see to the legality of the agreement. As we all know, the indigenous people's education level is limited specifically in the Khmer language and the laws related to the issue. At the national level, access to information may be good, but at the local level, it still needs a lot of improvement.

## What do you see as Cambodia's priorities for the next five years?

Education is a fundamental sector to develop. When people are well-educated, they can protect their cultures and traditions and improve their own and others' livelihood. The Highlander Association has been supporting indigenous youth with their studies by providing students from grade 7 to 12 a place to stay during their school years. Since 2008, we have supported over 300 high school graduates, and some of them have now become village chiefs or are working for NGOs and other institutions. We would like to urge the government, NGOs, donors, and other institutions to provide scholarships to these students to pursue their studies at the university level.

And regarding development projects on indigenous land, whether it's a rubber tree plantation or a land concession, we propose that the authorities involved undertake a thorough discussion and encourage negotiation between the main stakeholders and the indigenous people involved, with a careful study of the traditions. This must be conducted in the language of the indigenous people to make it possible for all the local people to understand.

"Also, we propose to have negotiations and work out agreements with the locals and authorities involved to have reserved areas for the community, as well as traditional and natural forests. If the whole development process is conducted with integrity and clarity among the parties, it will prevent many future problems and both the companies and communities will benefit from the development."



### **RET SOVANNPUNLEU,**

Outreach worker, Men's Health Cambodia

"I think Cambodia's priority is to improve employment opportunities, upgrade the salary scale, have greater freedom of expression and equality of rights between people with power and ordinary citizens, and legalize marriage for homosexual people."

## What is your view on Cambodia's recent development?

From my point of view, Cambodia's recent development shows a great deal of improvement, such as in the area of infrastructure: buildings, schools, bridges and roads. The recently held election also went smoothly. Many of the people seem to enjoy their current lifestyle with the big malls and many entertainment places being put up. This development means so much to all the people including myself because we all want to see new things, enjoy a better economic situation and have a more vibrant and sophisticated lifestyle. More importantly, this development also brings many employment opportunities to Cambodians, leading to improved living conditions for senior citizens, children and women alike.

#### What kind of change/development do you want to see in Cambodia over the next five years?

Generally, I think the Cambodian people are becoming more knowledgeable, particularly with regard to the elimination of discriminatory and violence-related behaviors. However, problems in these areas still occur sometimes, affecting small groups of people. So what I want most is for everyone to be more open-minded, eliminate discrimination and stop all forms of violence, especially toward the LGBTQ community. More importantly, we all should focus our efforts instead on serving society and humanitarian causes, giving value and respect to one another. Therefore, over the next five years, I think Cambodia's priority is to improve employment opportunities, upgrade the salary scale, have greater freedom of expression and equality of rights between people with power and ordinary citizens, and legalize marriage for homosexual people.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

#### OCTOBER

#### WORKSHOP

Regional Workshop of Social Protection Program, Siem Reap

### NOVEMBER

#### LAUNCHING EVENT

Blockchain for Livelihood from Organic Cambodian Rice (BlocRice) project

### DECEMBER

#### LAUNCHING

GRAISEA 2 Launch in Cambodia Empowering women and men smallholder farmers through responsible business and inclusive value chains See all events on our website https://cambodia.oxfam.org/ calendar-node-field-date/month

# NEWSROOM

#### BELGIAN AMBASSADOR VISIT FOR MARGINALISED WORKERS

Belgian ambassador Mr. Philippe Kridelka visited Oxfam partners working with the Inclusive and Equitable Social Protection for Marginalized Workers in ASEAN, a five-year programme (2017-2021) funded by the Belgian Development Agency, in early July 2018.

The partners - including Women's Network for Unity (WNU), Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Associations (IDEA) and garment factory trade unions - shared information about their programs but also the challenges and difficulties faced by informal workers in Cambodia.



Oxfam encourages youth to apply for entrepreneur program at Impact Hub

Sub-national consultation on "CSO's inputs for Contribution to the National Strategic Development Plan 2019-2023" Siem Reap province

Women in leadership against adversity, Lotus Radio

Oxfam joins NGO Forum on Cambodia in facilitating dialogue with RGC on National Strategic Development Plan 2019-23

Corporate Social Responsibility Talk show, Bayon TV

Regional vegetable forum 2018 - sharing knowledge to promote development of the vegetable sector



# WINDOW ON THE WORLD

#### PAKISTAN

In Pakistan, Oxfam is empowering young women to become inspiring climate change fighter

#### ECUADOR

In Ecuador, Oxfam encourages the participation of the indigenous population, people of African descent and Montubios in the power structure, using policies which recognize cultural diversity

#### PAPUA NEW GUINEA

In Papua New Guinea, Oxfam is improving the health of rural communities by improving access to safe water supplies, sanitation facilities and improved hygiene practices. See how safe water transforms communities.

## GET TO KNOW US

Oxfam has been supporting Cambodia's development since 1979, making it the first INGO operating inside Cambodia during the controversial post-Khmer Rouge genocide period. Oxfam in Cambodia works in a wide range of programs advocating for women Economic Empowerment, Livelihoods for vulnerable groups, Natural Resource Governance, Climate Change Resilience and Sustainable Energy, Financial Inclusion, Social Protection and Decent works, Sustainable and Climate Resilient Agriculture, Disaster Preparedness and Humanitarian Relief, Civic Engagement and Financing for Development.



## THANK YOU PARTNERS!

We appreciate the long-standing support and relationship we have with our partners. 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 cooperation and collaboration we have had over the years and we hope to continue this journey for years to come.



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