

IMPROVED SOCIAL PROTECTION AND LABOR RIGHTS FOR WOMEN WORKERS

IN ASEAN'S AGRI-FOOD SECTOR

Belgium
partner in development

OXFAM

OUR PROGRAM

IMPROVED SOCIAL PROTECTION AND LABOR RIGHTS FOR WOMEN WORKERS IN ASEAN'S AGRI-FOOD SECTOR is a Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam cluster program to empower workers in the agri-food sector to exercise their right and have access to adequate labor rights and social protection through the promotion of three pillars of Decent Work: Labor Rights at Work, Social Protection and Social Dialogue for All.



Countries implementers: CLV Cluster (Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam)

Partners: 17 national partners and 4 regional partners

WHY CARE ABOUT SOCIAL PROTECTION AND LABOR IGHTS FOR AGRI-FOOD SECTORS WORKERS

The agri-food sector represents an important share of the informal economy in ASEAN region. The food system and agri-food sector are considered responsible for a great share of employment mostly in farming activities, processing, packaging, transporting, storing, distributing, and retailing of food products. Women workers, in particular, work in informal, insecure, dangerous and unprotected jobs. They belong to the poorest sections of the population and are often left behind regarding decent work and social protection.



A woman ready to embrace the day's work tending to the rice fields, holding a basket.©Teyaorm Mas/SMP

WHAT ISSUES THE PROGRAM ADDRESSES

LABOR RIGHTS ISSUES

- Informality of the agri-food labor force
- Occupational and environmental health issues
- Job insecurity, low wages and irregular income
- Gender based violence, unpaid care and domestic work
- Unfavorable labor regulatory frameworks and legislations
- Loopholes in the law enforcement
- Underrepresentation of women in collective bargaining

SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE ISSUES

- Exclusion of informal agri-food sector workers from the social protection legal framework
- Lack of maternity protection
- Livelihood and lifecycle risks and vulnerabilities
- Limited awareness, understanding and information about social protection
- Underrepresentation in social dialogue mechanisms and lack of structured spaces for dialogue
- Loopholes in the social protection law enforcement
- Lack of complaint and redress mechanisms



A dedicated small scale farmer maintaining her crops, squatting down to eliminate weeds from her fields.©Oxfam in Vietnam.

OUR APPROACH



GENDER TRANSFORMATION AT THE CENTER – the program challenges the structures and ideologies that perpetuate gender inequality and power imbalances and aspires to change practices and attitudes towards women workers. The program strengthens the livelihoods of women working in the agri-food sector who are impacted differently due to prevalent gender cultural and societal norms.



RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH – the program is built on empowerment strategies to facilitate changes at the individual level, building collective power and solidarity allowing workers to become actors for change and to hold the duty bearers accountable. The program enables workers to exercise these rights collectively, based on their own needs and priorities, through democratic grassroots groups and collaboration at the national and regional level.



SYSTEMIC APPROACH – for lasting change we aim to facilitate systematic changes at the level of individuals, partners, employers, policy and decision makers at the national and regional level. We base our approach on Oxfam's four quadrants of change at the level of believes, attitudes, practices and policies.



INFLUENCING FOR CHANGE – evidence on workers' needs, vulnerabilities and gender issues are being used to influence local, national and global level policy and practice – highlighting both the current patterns and policy gaps, as well as opportunities and recommendations for change.

OUR STRATEGY FOR CHANGE



A dedicated coffee field owner in Salavanh Province in Laos attends to her coffee beans. With her family by her side, they cultivate and harvest the beans, while also welcoming the community to help harvest the coffee.©Oxfam in Laos

THE PROGRAM INTENDS TO MAKE LABOR RIGHTS AND SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR WORKERS IN THE AGRI-FOOD SECTOR MORE VISIBLE AS A CRUCIAL ISSUE TO BE ADDRESSED IN ACHIEVING DECENT WORK FOR ALL, REDUCING SOCIAL INEQUALITY, OVERCOMING POVERTY, AND PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY.

We support **workers** to have a strong and collective voice in decision making spaces at various levels to claim for their rights to social protection and labor rights. We support **governments and policy makers** to recognize the need for comprehensive, gender transformative and shock-responsive social protection for all workers and improve the laws and legislations in the interest of women workers. We support **private sector** to contribute to equitable labor rights provisions and comply with the gender specific labor and social protection international standards. We engage with **ASEAN** relevant regional bodies to recognize and promote a gender transformative and shock-responsive agenda for social protection and labor rights in the agri-food sector.

CHANGES WE CO-CREATE

Increased ability of the workers to **ENGAGE EFFECTIVELY WITH POWER HOLDERS STAKEHOLDERS** and including policy makers and implementers, employers, local authorities, and securing new spaces for dialogue.



CHANGES IN THE OPINIONS OF THE POLICY MAKERS att various levels, so they adopt laws, regulations and practices to the advantage of workers. This change equally applies to the regional level. We expect that changed opinions in certain ASEAN structures and institutions will improve the ASEAN guidance to the member states and create peer pressure to act on the interest of women workers.



CHANGES IN BEHAVIORS AND ATTITUDES OF EMPLOYERS in the agri-food sector to better comply with laws and regulations. Convincing them that compliance with laws is beneficial to the sustainability of their business is the most important change to be achieved.



CHANGES IN THE CAPACITY OF THE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS to strengthen their capacity and knowledge to apply feminist principles, to increase their willingness and ability to work with others on topics of common concern and to network at national and regional levels.



STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS WE PRIORITIZE

TOGETHER WITH OUR PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS, COLLABORATORS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES, WE FOCUS ON FOUR MAIN AREAS OF INTERVENTION:


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VOICE AND REPRESENTATION

- Work with women workers through a wide network of workers groups, associations and trade unions
- Build women workers' capacity and leadership to defend their interests in relation to social protection and labor rights
- Promote spaces for dialogue, negotiation and representation with authorities, government agencies and employers
- Engage workers in multi-stakeholder platforms


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POLICY ENGAGEMENT

- Empower workers to participate in decision-making processes with policy and law makers on labor rights and social protection issues
- Collect evidence on workers' needs, vulnerabilities, gender issues and formulate and present policy recommendations
- Strengthen national alliances, networks and coalitions and jointly advocate for policy change in the interest of women workers
- Increase the base of public support for women workers' demands



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PRIVATE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- Foster strong collaboration with the private sector to ensure that the rights of workers are respected and that the companies understand the value of a productive workforce
- Promote social dialogue and collective bargaining with employers
- Promote public and private dialogues through multi-stakeholder platforms



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Regional and ASEAN influencing

- Influence ASEAN institutions to integrate and implement gender transformative policies and practices in the ASEAN Frameworks
- Build strong partnerships and alliances between labor rights and agri-food movements in the region
- Promote common ambition, build consensus between partners, regional networks and alliances on common influencing agendas

WHO ARE OUR CONSTITUENTS?

By 2026

The program will be working with

69.200
Women workers organized in approximately

800
Local groups



54.600
WOMEN OWN-ACCOUNT WORKERS

in the food value chain (farmers, producers, traders & processors, food sellers, food service workers) in urban and rural areas

14.600
WOMEN WAGED WORKERS

in the food value chain: agriculture workers in plantations (coffee, tea, banana, ...); workers in farming and processing companies (shrimp, rice, coffee, tea, beverage); workers in distribution and retail companies (drivers, supermarket workers, etc.)

OUR PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

CAMBODIA

Coalition of Cambodian Farmers Community Association (CCFC)

Cambodian Food and Service Workers' Federation (CFSWF)

Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA)

Banteay Srei (BS)

Cambodian Labour Confederation (CLC)

Youth Resource Development Program (YRDP)

LAOS

Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU)

Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MoLSW)

Informal Worker Advancement Association (IWAA)

Community Association for Mobilizing Knowledge In Development (CAMKID)

Lao Farmers Network (LFN)

Association to support the development of peasant societies (ASDSP)

Phan-Thin Social Enterprise (PTSE)

Maeying Huamjai Phattana (MHP)

VIETNAM

Vietnam Farmer's Union (VNFU)

Institute of Workers and Trade Union (IWTU)

Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ho Chi Minh City Branch (VCCI HCM)

REGIONAL PARTNERS

Asia Monitoring Resource Centre (AMRC)

Pesticide Action Network Asia and Pacific (PANAP)

International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAW)

StreetNet International

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