

Expansion of Employment Opportunities for Women (EOW) in Cambodia

Initial Challenges Despite good progress in recent years, women are still at a considerable disadvantage in the labour market due to disparities in terms of access and opportunities. Traditional attitudes, known as *chba'p*, about education and occupations suitable for girls and women still contribute to gender inequalities. In practice these result in fewer opportunities for better jobs.

There are increasing job opportunities for young women at the lower levels in the job hierarchy. They are preferred workers in the formal sector garment industry. However, public administration and supervisory positions in the private sector, as well as a wide range of occupations in the technical trades and in the transport industry are mainly reserved for men. Women are concentrated in sectors and occupations with low earnings and often paid less than men for the same work.

Rural women account for 80 per cent of food production and more than 65 per cent of women are farmers. Rural women are at a disadvantage in efforts to improve productivity in farm jobs and non-farm employment, since they have limited access to training and lack information about markets and technology needed to increase production and improve livelihoods. Various factors such as low levels of literacy, physical distance and heavy workload due to the "double burden" in households caring for families as well as market work prevent women from accessing opportunities and productive resources such as land, credit, equipment, technology and services.

In 2001, the ILO/Japan Multi-Bilateral Programme, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training and the Ministry of Women's Affairs launched a project to address these issues and to contribute to poverty alleviation, socio-economic empowerment of women, and gender equality in the world of work.

Key Partners

- Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training
- Ministry of Women's Affairs
- Workers' & Employers' Organizations
- Angkor Participatory Development Organization (APDO) in Siem Reap
- Association of Farmers Development (AFD) in Takeo
- People's Association Development (PAD) in Kandal
- Urban Sector's Group (USG) in Phnom Penh



How: 2002-2006

- Community-based pilot activities for women's economic and social empowerment and decent work in Phnom Penh Municipality, Takeo, Kandal and Siem Reap provinces
 - Gender awareness raising
 - Women Workers' Rights and Gender Equality
 - Vocational/skills training suitable for each location
 - Business training
 - Occupational Safety and Health
 - Group formation
- Capacity building in gender mainstreaming and participatory approach in managing employment promotion project
- Policy advocacy based on lessons from the community-based activities and capacity building activities

Results

- 219 women and 4 men started a new business/income-generating activity
- 361 women and 11 men increased productivity in existing farm jobs
- 648 women and 15 men accessed loans to start or expand a business
- 1,342 women increased income with improved techniques and new skills
- 1074 local men and women raised awareness on gender and gender equality
- 7 village banks comprising of 62 savings and loan groups with 609 members established and operational
- Six market community groups representing more than 400 women and a federation of women market vendors established
- The status of micro-vendors improved with more respect from the local authority through collective negotiations
- Better balance of decision-making and workload in households and more active participation of women in the community
- Gender mainstreaming action plan being developed by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training
- Training manuals on "Women Workers' Rights and Gender Equality" and "Gender and Entrepreneurship Together: GET Ahead for Women in Enterprise" published
- "Decent Work for Women and Men in the Informal Economy: Profile and Good Practices in Cambodia" published

2007-August 2008: Model for other provinces - successful strategies

- Gender mainstreaming
- Progressive participatory approach
- New approaches to training
- Comprehensive training package for decent work
- Local support groups
- Good coordination among the stakeholders



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