



# WIN-WIN-WIN

Influencing for gender-transformative  
businesses in South and South East Asia



**OXFAM**

# INFLUENCING FOR GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE BUSINESSES IN SOUTH AND SOUTH EAST ASIA

## 1 Overview

### Programme information

Name	Gender Transformative and Responsible Business Investment in South-East Asia (GRAISEA)
Country	Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Philippines, Pakistan, Myanmar and ASEAN regional level
Budget	\$8m
Start Date	April 2015
End Date	June 2018
Donors	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Rockefeller Foundation and Oxfam affiliates

### Problem analysis

South-East Asia has experienced phenomenal economic growth over the past 20 years, and some countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam have reached middle-income status. However, this growth has also led to increased inequality; poverty is still widespread, and social and environmental vulnerability remain high. Economic resources remain in the hands of few people, threatening inclusive political and economic systems and exacerbating gender inequality. Discrimination against women and girls is prevalent – the UN classifies South Asia as the world’s second most unequal region for women, and two-thirds of all people living in poverty in Asia are women and girls.<sup>1</sup> While significant progress has been achieved at national level on the recognition, protection and promotion of women’s rights, various structural barriers at different levels continue to prevent women’s access to and control over land and resources, and hinder their participation in decision making.

The ASEAN<sup>2</sup> Economic Community was established in late 2015 to promote economic, political, social and cultural cooperation across the region, with a free flow of goods, services, labour, investments and capital across the 10 member states. This single market holds many opportunities but also presents important risks. Less developed countries might lose out in their terms of trade, which could favour stronger members; small-scale farmers could have less ability to compete with larger-scale producers and reduced negotiating power with large buyers, who can increasingly bargain for the lowest commodity prices; women in smallholder farms and enterprises could remain invisible and excluded from accessing economic opportunities.

Private sector investments in key value chains such as palm oil, aquaculture and rice are primarily focused on large-scale plantations/ponds, with little concern for socially and environmentally sustainable practices. Systemic gender inequalities are further exacerbated by the negative impacts of agribusiness and the absence of effective regulatory mechanisms on human rights, land rights and labour rights.

### Brief programme description

The Gender Transformative and Responsible Business Investment in South-East Asia (GRAISEA) programme aims to improve livelihoods of women and men small-scale producers in South<sup>3</sup> and South-East Asia. It is based on the recognition that financial viability and gender equitable and sustainable

supply chains are not mutually exclusive, and that win-win-win propositions are possible: wins for communities, for women and men small-scale producers, and for larger businesses. The term ‘gender-transformative’ means that gender is central to all aspects of GRAISEA and achievement of outcomes. It commits to transforming power imbalances between men and women, ensuring equitable access to and control of resources and increased decision making for women. Shifts in power relations require shifts in attitudes and beliefs, laws and policies, and in norms and structures. The programme believes that equitable, sustainable and viable value chains can be built for agriculture commodities through multi-stakeholder cooperation: where governments provide policies and laws to guide and require responsible business and gender equity; agribusinesses adopt corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies that support gender empowerment; and investors offer financial services and products to foster small-scale producer growth and sustainability.

GRAISEA focuses on the palm oil, aquaculture and rice value chains and is implemented in Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan, and includes a strong regional component. Indeed, while Oxfam engages in multiple countries across the region, power analyses reflect the need to develop regional influencing interventions targeting: a) ASEAN, for promotion and implementation of regional policies and regulations on commodities and issues of regional significance; and b) private sector companies with a regional footprint, for increased understanding of CSR and responsible business models.

To achieve its aim, GRAISEA focuses on four result areas:

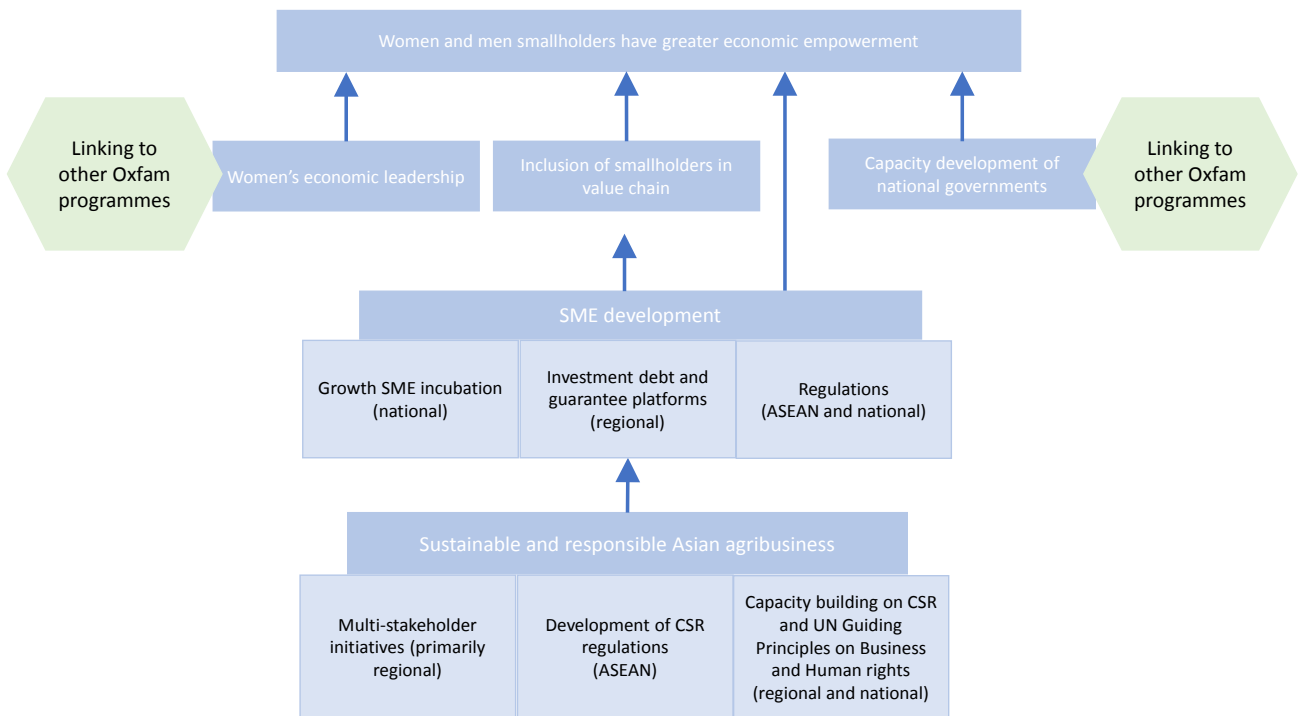
1. Stronger engagement of duty-bearers at national and regional level for promotion of responsible practices, including a focus on gender equality and women’s economic empowerment. Achieved through developing evidence and case studies, and regional and national advocacy and lobbying.
2. Socially, environmentally and economically responsible and gender-transformative value chains that benefit men and women smallholder producers. Achieved through developing value-chain models based on small-scale production, strengthening producer organizations, and supporting women’s economic leadership.

# INFLUENCING FOR GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE BUSINESSES IN SOUTH AND SOUTH EAST ASIA

3. Adoption by corporate agribusinesses of CSR policies and plans that support responsible practices in targeted value chains. Achieved through developing and promoting specific transformative and responsible practices, generating and disseminating knowledge on CSR, developing the capacity of target companies, and documenting and sharing case studies and best practices.

4. Responsible investments by financial institutions and investors in the agricultural sector, using innovative financing solutions that support women and men smallholders. Achieved through incubation of growth SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises),<sup>4</sup> creation of debt platforms and guarantee facilities for SMEs, improvement of SME regulatory framework, and development of regional mentor network.

## Theory of change



# INFLUENCING FOR GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE BUSINESSES IN SOUTH AND SOUTH EAST ASIA

## 2 Achievements and challenges

### Achievements to date

In its first two years the programme has made important progress, with the potential to lead to long-term impact across all four result areas:

1. Developing and strengthening partnerships at regional level, most notably with the ASEAN CSR Network. This collaboration is driving reflection and dialogue on responsible business practices in South-East Asia among the private sector, governments, trade unions and civil society organizations (CSOs). Building on these alliances and stakeholders' increased awareness of responsible business principles will be instrumental to the success of regional advocacy in the remaining programme period.
2. Establishing partnerships to create transformative agricultural value chains to drive sustainability of programme benefits. For example, in Indonesia, Oxfam and WWF are supporting a processing company to obtain Aquaculture Stewardship Council certification by carrying out gendered social impact assessments with small-scale producers. Certification confirms that the processing company has an environmentally and socially responsible business model, and increases its market rank.
3. Establishing multi-sector partnerships to influence agribusinesses to adopt CSR policies and incorporate gender equality in business values in Indonesia, Vietnam and Cambodia. In Vietnam, Oxfam is developing a CSR index that will be used to monitor CSR in aquaculture. In Cambodia, GRAISEA has supported the establishment of a CSR platform that brings together companies and chambers of commerce. The platform aims to ensure that CSR guidelines, tools and principles are widely known, adopted and implemented by companies, and that the government adopts a national CSR framework by 2018.
4. Launching the Global Impactors Network to provide voluntary business development mentorship to small social enterprises to strengthen their capacity and improve their access to finance, networks and markets.

### Specific challenges

The programme has faced several challenges. First, in terms of management, the programme invested considerably in the design of its monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems. However, monitoring and data collection have proven difficult for some partners and it is clear that additional support is required.

Second, the programme's mid-term evaluation (MTE) noted a challenge in partners' ownership of the two key concepts of gender transformation and responsible business. This can be attributed to the fact that, while highly relevant to the context, these concepts are still relatively new to partners. While the programme has invested in research and learning to ensure both concepts are contextually well-defined, understood and adopted, the sheer number of partners and their varying capacities make roll-out of these concepts challenging. On gender transformation in particular, most partners were considered gender-blind at the start of the programme.<sup>5</sup> Meaningfully integrating gender justice principles in implementation strategies, capacity building and advocacy has therefore been more challenging than anticipated. Based on MTE findings and recommendations, programme teams are adjusting their ways of working and scope to address these needs and provide advisory support.

### Lessons learned

It is important to invest resources and time to develop guidance and tools on 'new' concepts and in building partner capacity for these concepts to be effectively integrated in interventions.

Work with non-traditional partners requires joint and clear development of expectations, ways of working and monitoring systems.

Selecting organizations for engagement in multi-stakeholder networks should be based on (updated) stakeholder analysis.

Achieving behavioural change that challenges social norms on gender is a long-term process (see 'In focus').



# INFLUENCING FOR GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE BUSINESSES IN SOUTH AND SOUTH EAST ASIA

## 3 Partnerships and links with other programmes

### Partnerships

GRAISEA adopts a multi-stakeholder approach in which Oxfam assumes a convening role, bringing together diverse stakeholders engaged in targeted value chains, and to create an enabling environment for agribusiness, SMEs, and men and women smallholders.

Bringing these actors together is an end in itself as it allows learning, building alliances, and accessing influencing and decision making spaces. Oxfam sees its role as a facilitator, helping to establish and maintain links among its different partners where there is value in collaboration and joint work, e.g. linking the Cambodia CSR platform to the ASEAN CSR Network. However, as noted by a 2015 review of multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) in South-East Asia, Oxfam's role goes beyond facilitation – especially if local partners lack capacity – requiring additional resources.

Given the importance of Oxfam's convening role in GRAISEA and its engagement with non-traditional actors, it is also necessary to build processes to assess the impact of the approach and identify potential areas of improvement. Based on this recommendation, Oxfam conducted a social network analysis that looked at partners' perceptions of the programme, and linkages among partners. Overall feedback was positive, and partners' perceived added-value of their engagement with

GRAISEA was aligned with programme objectives. The analysis also presented several areas for improvement, particularly on partner engagement. The team is currently developing ways to address identified gaps and enhance elements that are seen as having distinct added-value. The programme will also be developing tools to assess the effectiveness of its convening approach.

A learning point is that selection of organizations for engagement in multi-stakeholder networks should be based on updated stakeholder analysis and power mapping to ensure engagement is focused and adds value, considering the programme's resources, timeframe and existing partners. In developing relationships with private sector stakeholders, GRAISEA notes that building trust is important and takes time.

### Links with other Oxfam programmes

GRAISEA is aligned with Oxfam's work on women's rights, economic justice and inequality. It builds on global, regional and national experience and expertise in programme and influencing work. By linking country-level value-chain interventions with smallholders to broader campaigns such as GROW, GRAISEA has potential to provide learning on bridging the gap between programmes and campaigns.

# INFLUENCING FOR GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE BUSINESSES IN SOUTH AND SOUTH EAST ASIA

## 4 In focus

### Influencing for gender-transformative business investment

Building on Oxfam's expertise in gender justice and economic justice, one of GRAISEA's key aspirations is to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Its commitment to transforming unequal power relations between women and men means that gender must be central to every part of the programme.

GRAISEA seeks to deliver transformational change for women and men by:

- Using key approaches to women's economic empowerment developed by Oxfam. These include the Gender Action Learning System (GALS),<sup>6</sup> a community-led empowerment methodology; and Gendered Enterprise and Markets (GEM),<sup>7</sup> a market systems approach that aims to build sustainable livelihoods and empower women.
- Ensuring that the different needs of women and men in the target groups the programme seeks to reach at country and regional level are considered.
- Addressing women's economic empowerment in key thematic areas: a) palm oil, aquaculture and rice value chains, by addressing power relations both along selected supply chains and the overall environment in which smallholders operate; b) CSR, by incorporating gender-transformative guidelines for responsible business in the influencing strategy for CSR policies and plans; c) impact investment and enterprise development, by influencing companies to commit to gender-transformative agendas and microfinance providers to include a gender perspective in their financial products and services; and d) regional regulations and practices, by influencing ASEAN to incorporate inclusiveness standards in its regulations for private sector investments and to enable financing options that will benefit women.

The programme's MTE highlights particular success in work with value chains; interventions were assessed to be largely successful in increasing technical capacity and gender awareness. While it is still too early to assess long-term impact, the approaches used illustrate potential for shifts in power between women and men. Use of poverty and social impact analysis, GALS and technical trainings have, in general, led to improved production practices and quality, and at the same time supported women's engagement. For example, following an exchange visit, male farmers in Lampung in Indonesia have become more open to women's organizations contributing to shrimp production.

In Socotrang, Indonesia, use of GALS has driven an increase in recognition and redistribution of care work. In Thailand, GRAISEA has supported the establishment of four women-led fish processing social enterprises called Fisherfolk. These have proven very effective in empowering women, who are now seen as important contributors to household incomes. Nevertheless, the programme review noted that achieving behavioural change that challenges social norms on gender is a long-term process.

Oxfam and partners have successfully lobbied the Round Table of Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), which adopted a resolution, proposed by Oxfam and co-signed by various stakeholders in the palm oil value chain. The resolution called for more proactive and comprehensive inclusion of smallholders and host communities in sustainability efforts, and stronger references to gender equality in the RSPO's standards and practices for its members. GRAISEA will support the RSPO in how gender transformation can be included in its standards. This represents an important step forward and can be built on for future policy advocacy.

The programme has also had significant achievements at the national level in influencing government and private sector policies and practices, especially in Cambodia and the Philippines. In Cambodia, partners consulted communities and lobbied the government to include CSR clauses in agriculture and environment laws. Partners are confident that these laws will be passed, providing an entry point for including gender equality in future revisions. In the Philippines, partners lobbied the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to either amend or introduce a new administrative order to protect farmers. The existing order has now been revoked so it can be further strengthened, providing partners with an additional influencing opportunity. However, it is important to note that the 'gender dimension' has not been appropriately included in some of these advocacy efforts. Translating gender-transformative principles into key and succinct policy asks for government and companies has been difficult, especially as this is not a priority for them. Oxfam and partners, using learning from programme implementation and the MTE, are exploring how best to address this.

For further information about this programme:

[www.oxfam.org.uk/graisea](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/graisea)

# INFLUENCING FOR GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE BUSINESSES IN SOUTH AND SOUTH EAST ASIA

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Bernabe, M.D., Hamer, J. and Fried, M. (2015). *Asia at a crossroads: Why the region must address inequality now*. Retrieved from <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/asia-at-a-crossroads-why-the-region-must-address-inequality-now-338447>

<sup>2</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

<sup>3</sup> The programme was expanded in January 2017 to include work on rice value chains in Pakistan, Cambodia and Vietnam.

<sup>4</sup> Growth SMEs are SMEs which have stable finances, operate at moderate to significant scale, and can be scaled up through advisory support, incubation and investments.

<sup>5</sup> Using the 'Gender Ladder', gender blindness is defined as the state when gender is not considered relevant to development outcomes. Gender transformation is when gender is central to all aspects of programme development and in achieving positive or transformative outcomes around gender equality, women's rights and women's economic empowerment.

<sup>6</sup> Oxfam Novib. Gender Action Learning System. Retrieved from [http://www.oxfamnovib.nl/redactie/Downloads/English/SPEF/141023\\_2-pager\\_Flyer\\_GALS\\_Oxfam.pdf](http://www.oxfamnovib.nl/redactie/Downloads/English/SPEF/141023_2-pager_Flyer_GALS_Oxfam.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Oxfam. Gendered Enterprise and Markets (GEM). Retrieved from [http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/our-work/food-livelihoods/gem#contentprimary\\_0\\_ctl00\\_FirstTab](http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/our-work/food-livelihoods/gem#contentprimary_0_ctl00_FirstTab)

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This paper was written by Sarah Barakat. Oxfam acknowledges the assistance of Roxanne Abdulali and Kimberly Bowman in its production. It is part of a series of papers written to inform public debate on development and humanitarian policy issues.

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The information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.

Published by Oxfam GB for Oxfam International under ISBN 978-0-85598-982-8 in July 2017.

Oxfam GB, Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2JY, UK.

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