



ISSARA INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES NEW GRANTS WITH THE WALMART FOUNDATION AND TARGET FOUNDATION TO BUILD WORKER EMPOWERMENT AND TRANSFORM EXPLOITATIVE LABOUR SYSTEMS IN ASIA

1 February 2022 (Palo Alto, CA, USA). Issara Institute is pleased to announce new support to improve the lives of workers and end labour exploitation! These two new grants will support complementary streams of work with a common goal of building the power of jobseekers and workers in Asia, and ending the status quo of exploitation in the recruitment process. As always, we want to extend a huge thanks to all of our donors, supporters, and partners for believing in our collective work.

A new 18-month grant from the Walmart Foundation will continue our work together to accelerate the operationalization of ethical recruitment channels that will benefit job seekers, workers, recruitment actors and employers. We will raise our on-the-ground collaborations and sharing of evidence and lessons learned to a higher profile to expand worker-led approaches to transforming supply chains. Working in Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Nepal, we will build employer and recruiter capacity, mainstream Issara's Golden Dreams worker voice app and Recruitment Marketplace (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrROikJl91w>) to operationalize ethical recruitment, and generate groundbreaking actionable evidence to better center ecosystem strengthening on worker-centered insights.

An exciting new 3-year partnership with Target Foundation will help expand our community-based job seeker and worker empowerment approaches, as well as work to transform and modernize labour recruitment systems. Focusing on worker destination countries such as Thailand and Malaysia, and origin countries such as Myanmar, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal and Vietnam, we will work closely with civil society and worker Ambassadors to provide info and access to remediation to job seekers and workers, as well as build the role of worker voice and power of workers in the ethical supply chain space, through public reporting, data and best practice that is inclusive of their voice.

“Investing in community empowerment is vital for ethical supply chains,” said Dr. Lisa Rende Taylor, Issara Institute’s Executive Director. “When information asymmetries are overcome and prospective migrants have transparent, legal migration channels that are

free of debt, brokers, and exploitation down to the village level, both workers and responsible businesses benefit. And the scale of these benefits are immense when considering economic migration in Asia: saving migrant workers just \$300 in illegal recruitment fees scales up to hundreds of millions of dollars flowing to workers and their families rather than to brokers, impacting millions living in poverty. Corporate employer-pays policies requiring that workers pay zero recruitment fees would yield nearly double this impact. We are grateful for the support of our donors and partners, which allows us to create more space and systems for workers, communities, and civil society to help solve ethical supply chain issues in a more inclusive and sustainable way.”

ABOUT ISSARA INSTITUTE

Issara Institute (Issara means “freedom” in Thai and related dialects) is a non-profit organization based in Asia and the U.S. advancing ethical supply chains through worker voice, partnership, and innovation. Our main purpose is ending labour exploitation, including forced labour and human trafficking, through a systems change-based model aiming to eliminate labour abuses by transforming the systems and behaviours perpetuating labour exploitation, and empowering the rights-holders within them. Issara’s work focuses on worker-centered technologies and programs that empower and educate workers at origin and destination, and identify and help remediate labour abuses. Partnerships with brands, retailers, and manufacturers connect these companies to the voices and experiences of workers within their supply chains, creating opportunities to understand and address root causes of exploitation, use that information to strengthen business systems and prevent exploitation, ensure remediation, and drive more ethical supply chains. www.issarainstitute.org.

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