

ISSARA INSTITUTE

JOB DESCRIPTION | REGIONAL PROGRAM MANAGER, SUPPLIER ENGAGEMENT

Job Title: Regional Program Manager, Supplier Engagement
Duration: 1 year, with possibility of extension
Responsible to: Regional Director
Duty Station: Bangkok, Thailand or Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

BACKGROUND

Issara Institute is an independent non-profit organization based in Southeast Asia and the United States tackling human trafficking and forced labour from the lens of business and human rights. The Institute was established in 2014 by a team of anti-trafficking experts coming out of the United Nations who created an alliance of private sector, civil society, and government partners committed to transformational, sustainable, worker-driven approaches to labour issues, especially those occurring in global supply chains. It is staffed by leading regional and international experts in labour rights, business and human rights, and research and technology.

We believe that, together, we can transform the lives of tens of millions of workers through worker voice, partnership, and innovation – that sustainable systems driving more ethical labour recruitment and working conditions are vital to the future of workers individually and collectively, to equity and fairness across supply chains, and to sustainable poverty alleviation efforts.

POSITION SUMMARY

This is a key position in our organization that links the work of Issara's on-the-ground Business and Human Rights Teams with the global brand and retailer-facing Ethical Supply Chains Team. Supplier engagement across all tiers of the supply chain is a key component of the Business and Human Rights teams' day-to-day work, from small-scale upstream farms to leading national brands.

There is a natural tension between the standards set by national laws and those set by corporate codes of conduct, the latter which can be considerably higher. For example, employer-pays ethical recruitment is being required by more brands and retailers than ever before, yet the laws of most of the countries of Asia allow recruiters and employers to charge certain recruitment-related fees to workers. The Regional Program Manager, Supplier Engagement will work closely with country-level Business and Human Rights teams to guide ongoing supplier engagement and help to navigate these tensions, including through remediation processes, post-risk systems strengthening, training and capacity building, and ongoing multi-stakeholder engagement. The Program Manager will also liaise with Issara's global brand and retailer Strategic Partners to keep them informed regarding trends and developments across their supply chains and geographies, and regarding emerging good practice in incentivizing supplier strengthening.

The ideal candidate will be able to balance maintaining relationships with businesses while advancing the rights and voices of workers. The candidate will be analytical, organized, and able to work both on teams and independently. Program management and private sector experience is required, as is training and facilitation ability and strong writing skills. The individual must be able to professionally present information to a range of stakeholders and be comfortable evaluating, balancing, and presenting data and information from a range of sources.

SCOPE OF WORK

The Regional Program Manager, Supplier Engagement will play an integral role on Issara's regional technical team, alongside experts in ethical recruitment, civil society engagement, and research, technology, and worker voice. Specific aspects of the scope of work include:

1. Supporting the country teams on case analysis, remediation escalations (drawing upon Issara's data and remediation protocols), and recommendations for systems strengthening to help encourage suppliers to address root causes of risk;
2. Ensuring coherent and effective supplier engagement through ongoing technical support to country teams, and direct involvement in key supplier management discussions and escalations that lead to clear actions and measurable progress (note that on-site fieldwork will be central to this, once COVID precautionary measures allow for it);
3. Supporting the capacity development of suppliers, supplier groups, and industry groups in destination/production countries, including via Issara tools such as Golden Dreams Marketplace ethical recruitment toolkits, and advancing new solutions;
4. Liaising with outreach and empowerment teams to understand the priorities and realities being voiced by workers, and ensuring that supplier engagement strategies remain informed by worker voice;
5. Leading the design and implementation of key multi-stakeholder events and convenings that relate to supplier engagement, the impact of corporate policies and actions on suppliers, and emerging good practice;
6. Monitoring the effectiveness of key supplier engagement initiatives on the ground, supporting country-level teams in internal assessment and improvement, and proactively distilling key data and lessons learned into analytical briefs, webinars, social media posts, and other means of sharing with the broader community;
7. Liaising with Issara's Strategic Partners in scheduled group meetings as well as other individual meetings as appropriate to support Strategic Partner target setting, workplan check-ins, and remediation-related escalations;
8. Representing Issara Institute in international events and fora; and

9. Serving as part of the Issara regional technical team, joining weekly scheduled meetings and collaborating closely with fellow regional staff.

REQUIRED SKILLS & EXPERTISE

We have a lean, dynamic, seasoned team that is committed to change, innovation, and impact. We are conscientious, hold a high standard of care for the people we serve, and understand that we have to be able to work effectively with partners spanning the largest multinational corporations to the smallest grassroots CBOs. Our work ecosystem is multicultural, respectful, and energetic, whether we are working on tasks in teams, or working alone from home. The Regional Program Manager, Supplier Engagement should have:

- Minimum 6–8 years of relevant working experience from either the private sector, government, and/or international or national organizations (NGOs)
- Master’s degree in international development, business, area/social sciences, and/or human rights
- Experience with business and human rights, supply chain and ethical sourcing, corporate social responsibility, and/or business consulting
- Fluency in English, with excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Experience working in a professional, multicultural environment
- Ability to handle confidential data with discretion
- Strong facilitation and training skills
- Willingness and ability to travel to Issara program countries, especially Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, and Vietnam

If you are interested in applying for this position, please send a CV, the names and contact details of three references, and a cover letter explaining your interest in the position and relevant expertise to admin@issarainstitute.org. Please note a cover letter specific to motivation and relevance for this position is required for consideration.