PRESS RELEASE

(May 30, 2023, Phnom Penh) – Community members from Sre Ambel district’s Chikor Leu commune in Koh Kong province have reached a settlement with supply chain actors related to a land concession granted to KSL Group of Thailand in 2006.

Equitable Cambodia, along with partner local and international NGOs, have been assisting the community with their advocacy efforts since 2012. A decade later, a joint voluntary settlement agreement to end the dispute was concluded between 200 households and 71 child labor claimants involved in litigation in the UK High Court. After a long process, in April 2023, the fund was finally distributed to affected villagers.

Equitable Cambodia is pleased to have worked with private sector stakeholders to provide some level of resolution to this long-standing and important issue.

The resolution is a testament to the tireless efforts of the community to push for justice, and the sustained support provided by many local and international NGOs.

Since 2018, local authorities in Koh Kong province have also been helpful in assisting the community with the necessary administrative procedures for the provision of land titles to the 200 households from a 300-hectare section of the land concession. This land was returned to the community as part of a separate agreement reached in 2014.

The litigation against Tate and Lyle in the United Kingdom (Song Mao & Ors v (1) Tate & Lyle Sugar Industries, (2) Tate and Lyle Sugars Limited) has since been withdrawn.

After many years of advocating for remedy, community members now finally have access to much needed funds and can begin to rebuild their lives. Nuoch Min, a mother of 2 children in Chikor Leu commune explains:

“I’m very happy and surprised. I never expected the money to arrive. We have been waiting for a long time. Many times, the company promised to pay money in the past, but it never happened, so I can’t believe it’s not a dream. I have used the money to pay back some loans that I have had to take out supporting my family since 2006, and I have also been able to support my children’s further education”.

In providing this resolution, supply chain actors have finally shown some level of accountability for their involvement in these very serious human rights violations. Far too often, complicated corporate arrangements allow companies to avoid responsibility for violations, and this settlement sets an important precedent with regards to the intersection of business and human rights.

Eang Vuthy, Executive Director of Equitable Cambodia notes: “Even though this result took many years to be realized, it’s important to show that when companies contribute to harm, they have an obligation to provide remedies to the victims.”

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