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About us

Equitable Cambodia is a registered national non-governmental organisation in Cambodia working to promote equitable development and the progressive realization of human rights in Cambodia through research, evidence-based advocacy, community empowerment and support for grassroots-led social change. Equitable Cambodia was formed out of the localization of Bridges Across Borders Cambodia (BABC), an international solidarity organization active in Cambodia since 2003. Equitable Cambodia was registered by the Ministry of Interior as a Cambodian national non-governmental organization in March 2012.

Our Vision

We envision a Cambodia in which all people are able to enjoy their basic human rights and natural resources are managed sustainably for the common good.

Our Mission

Equitable Cambodia promotes inclusive and equitable development to further the progressive realization of human rights in Cambodia through research, evidence-based advocacy, community organizing and empowerment.

Our Core Values

We strive to “be the change”
We promote, defend and respect human rights
We cultivate empowerment
We practice active non-violence
We respect diversity and practice non-discrimination
We promote gender equality
We see challenges as opportunities
We have courage
We practice team-building
We are financially transparent
We are trustworthy and dependable
We are diligent and industrious
We respect others’ opinions
We are kind and compassionate

Overall Goals for 2013-2015

Our overall goal is to transform the national development model into one that respects, protects and fulfils the human rights of the Cambodian people. In order to achieve this long-term goal, Equitable Cambodia has established three program goals and one organizational goal for the period 2013-2015:

1. Threatened communities are motivated and organized to work together to secure their land and housing rights.
2. Cambodians are more informed and equipped to become active citizens, defend human rights, and advocate for inclusive and equitable development.
3. Authorities, development partners, and the private sector are held accountable for violations of land, housing, and natural resource rights, and the overall land governance policy framework is improved.
4. Equitable Cambodia is a highly professional organization with competent staff, strong team spirit, and adherence to best practices in financial, administrative and human resources management.
Letter from the Executive Director

Cambodia witnessed repeated assaults on opponents of the ruling party and increased threats to the security of human rights defenders in 2015. The political situation has been deteriorating, especially in the second half of the year when a dozen parliamentarians and activists were sentenced to up to 20 years in prison because of their activism. In the name of a vaguely framed ‘absolute order’ and national stability, security arm forces were deployed against any group deemed ‘illegal’, and other politically motivated arrest warrants were issued to topple leaders of the opposition party. Unions, land activists and civil society organizations were also targeted with systematic crackdowns ordered by the authorities. The situation has become particularly degraded with the adoption of the new NGO law in July that gives authorities the power to decide which activities can and cannot take place. In this climate, the activities of Equitable Cambodia on the ground became more restricted, with our staff being intimidated and threatened with arrest when working with communities.

Despite the concerning circumstances, Equitable Cambodia has been working fearlessly to empower Cambodians to demand their rights and to hold responsible actors accountable for their wrongdoings. This year, the organization saw urban and rural people strengthening their capacity to advocate for their rights, organizing themselves tirelessly to raise their voices and unifying their efforts to demand the government to comply with its human rights obligations.

In 2015, Equitable Cambodia’s Community Empowerment and Legal Awareness (CELA) Program enhanced their network of community advocates around the country. It trained 86 new grassroots facilitators through Training of Trainers workshops on how to efficiently share their acquired knowledge about defending land rights with the rest of their community members.
The Community Organizing for Housing Rights (COHR) strengthened the capacities of poor communities living in Phnom Penh to address insecurity of tenure and to advocate housing rights. Through their support, communities organized created significant impacts. The COHR team monitored the selection of community leaders who have demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to stand for their community rights and to facilitate the democratic process of people's empowerment. One of the results of such tireless work has been the design of alternative development plans made by the people living in the Lake, Railways and Canal areas in order to proactively engage with local authorities and avoid eviction threats.

After two years of intense campaigning, the Development Watch (DW) Program has reached a landmark agreement with the Vietnamese rubber company, HAGL, operating in the ancestral territories of indigenous people in Ratanakiri Province. Under the CAO dispute resolution process, Equitable Cambodia extensively supported indigenous representatives in detailing their problems and formulating common demands for their collective losses. The breakthrough of the negotiation process occurred in September, when HAGL officially agreed not to develop plantations on the land falling within its concessions but that the company had not cleared yet. Moreover, HAGL committed to continue the negotiation process in order to find a solution for the 11 villages whose land had been already cleared to make room for the rubber plantations. Thanks to our advocacy and support to the indigenous people, I can say that at least 3 villages are now safe from evictions, although EC is still working with authorities and developers to address the remaining issues. Another important achievement of the DW Program in 2015, has been the withdrawal of the Thai sugar company Mitr Pohl from three plantations in Oddar Meanchey and the related confirmation of the concession cancellation by the Government. In addition, our advocacy efforts on the case led the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand to release an investigation report in October, which found evidence of human rights violation committed by the company and confirmed its responsibility to provide remedies to the affected communities.

Finally, I want to sincerely thank our donors, supporters, partners, staff, community activists and volunteers. Your support and encouragement are fundamental to the achievements of our organization and we look forward to see the advancement of human rights in Cambodia and increased impacts from our work in 2016.

Eang Vuth
Executive Director
The Development Watch (DW) program of Equitable Cambodia aims to promote a human rights-based approach to development by conducting monitoring, research, analysis and evidence-based advocacy on aid, trade, and investment activities that have adverse impacts on human rights and the environment in an effort to hold business and development actors accountable.

In 2015, the DW program focused on eight cases where we believe evidence-based advocacy has a reasonable likelihood of being successful and creating important precedents. These cases include the Boeung Kak Lake development project; the sugarcane concessions in Koh Kong, KampongSpeu and Oddar Meanchey provinces; the Asian Development Bank (ADB)/AusAID-funded Railway Rehabilitation Project from Poipet to Sihanoukville; the proposed expansion of Phnom Penh International Airport; and the rubber concessions in Ratanakiri province including those owned by Hoang AngGia Lai and Vietnam Rubber Group.

The DW programme provides support to communities affected by these projects and which includes, amongst other things: facilitating the development of community-led advocacy strategies (at the local, national and international level); legal assistance in accessing and navigating international accountability mechanisms; and high-level strategic advocacy.
Boeung Kak Lake

DW continued to monitor and support the Boeung Kak Lake (BKL) community-led campaigns in order to free the 10 BKL activists and one monk who were arbitrarily arrested, tried and convicted in November 2014. In January 2015 the Appeals Court upheld the convictions, though some sentences were reduced. The BKL community organized several major mobilizations, including protests at the Appeal Court, demonstrations at the Prey Sor Prison where BKL activists were detained and submitted letters to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and various embassies. In April 2015, the BKL activists were freed following a royal pardon and as part of a political deal between the CPP and CNRP.

As a result of EC and partner NGO support to the BKL campaign, during a meeting with the Municipality of Phnom Penh (MPP), 16 BKL families were told that they would receive land plots of 4x16m within the 12.44ha awarded to the community in 2011. To push this process forward on behalf of the remaining families, the BLK community organized a press conference on the four-year anniversary of the sub decree which gave the 12.44ha land back to the BKL community. On December 25th delegates of the MPP made a visit in BKL to measure and mark the boundaries of 37 plots stating that the plots would be assigned through a lottery system at a later date. The MPP also committed to assign other 21 plots to the remaining landless families.
Railway Rehabilitation Project

In January 2015, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) confirmed that the Samrong Estate Freight Station had been removed from the project’s scope at the Cambodian government’s request. This positive outcome is a direct result of the complaint filed by EC and IDI on behalf of Railway project affected families, along with our persistent lobbying and support of community-led advocacy. With the support of the Compliance Review Panel (CRP), the Samrong families are now in a much stronger position to secure legal recognition of their land rights from the Phnom Penh Cadastral Authority. The community submitted a letter to the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction and the Municipality of Phnom Penh (MPP) to request for a formal registration of land titles. In turn, the MPP asked the Porsenchey district to solve the Samrong case and in December the community was able to meet with district officials to discuss future plans for the land registration process.

The DW team organized and facilitated CRP’s visits with affected communities in Poipet, Battambang, Preah, Sihanoukville, and Phnom Penh to monitor ADB’s progress in implementing the remedial actions approved by Board of Directors alongside the CRP investigation report made public in January 2014. Importantly, in Poipet the CRP found the commune authorities were not in compliance with the established Grievance Redress Mechanism because they were not explaining that complainants had a 30 day period to appeal the remedial compensation calculations. Moreover, complainants that did not accept the offer were also not given anything in writing. These issues were raised in the CRP report to the Inter-ministerial Resettlement Committee (IRC) and included recommendations to conduct meetings with affected families to explain the GRM process.
Remedial compensations were distributed to affected households during the first half of the year. Although the compensations were still inadequate, they constituted a major impact of DW’s work on this case since 2010. For example, at the Phnom Penh resettlement site 111 affected households accepted additional compensations ranging from $70 to over $3000 USD while in Battambang additional compensations ranged between $280 to $6000 USD. Beyond individual compensations, the IRC made some infrastructure improvements in the resettlements sites such as access roads, drainage systems and there are plans for building or upgrading health centers. In addition, after a long struggle with the ADB, the Government agreed to extend the living allowances for relocated households up to the commencement of the Expanded Income Restoration (EIR) program given the longer duration of transition period that many affected households had to go through to restore their incomes. While each of these remedial actions remain flawed in various respects, they constitute significant tangible remedies for thousands of affected people. EC will continue its advocacy work in order to align remedial actions and programs with international standards.

In August 2015, DW filed a complaint on the behalf of 23 people affected by the Railway project requesting a new investigation by the CRP. The complaint stemmed from the fact that the first CRP investigation in 2012 did not address the plight of families who were considered “partially-affected” and allowed to remain temporarily living in proximity of the railway tracks. Families were living in cramped conditions without any security that they won't be forcibly evicted in the future. Other households refused to move to the resettlement site 20-30 kilometers away from their current homes in Phnom Penh as they have seen their former neighbours driven into destitution. After conducting an initial assessment, the CRP found that the new complaint was not eligible for further investigation because it did not present new evidence that wasn’t already considered in the previous report. However, the panel claimed that the complainants’ grievances needed to be adequately and urgently addressed under the existing remedial action plan adopted by the ADB board. The CRP also stated that families who refused to move to the resettlement site outside of Phnom Penh had the right to receive an alternative resettlement solution.
Clean Sugar Campaign

Koh Kong Province

In January, the UK sugar giant Tate & Lyle and KSL Company offered a joint compensation package to the 200 families displaced from the sugarcane plantations in Botum Sakor and Sre Ambel districts. The compensation package followed the lawsuit against Tate and Lyle in the UK, which the affected families filed with the support of the DW team.

The National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) released its final report on the investigations into the allegations of human rights violations committed by the KSL Group of Thailand in Cambodia. Although the report states that KSL did not personally commit human rights violations, since they received benefits from the economic land concessions causing human rights abuses, the Commission determined that they are in part responsible.
Oddar Meanchey

In February 2015, the Thai sugar company Mitr Pohl confirmed that it withdrew its operations from three plantations in Oddar Meanchey. Later on, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries confirmed in its website that these ELCs had been cancelled. Unfortunately, when the communities asked for the return of their land, the Ministry released a letter stating that their land was registered as state land with titles being already processed. However, EC has continued its advocacy work on behalf of the families displaced and maintained pressure on Mitr Pohl through their biggest customer Coca Cola, which Mitr Pohl is one of its biggest suppliers, in order to provide fair compensation to the affected households.

In October, the NHRCT released its investigation report on the Oddar Meanchey concessions held by Mitr Pohl. EC organized a press conference where the Commissioner of NHRCT, EC and its partner NGO in Thailand (TERRA) presented the findings of the NHRCT. The report found evidence of human rights violations committed by Mitr Pohl’s operations and stated that the company has a duty and responsibility to solve and remedy the problems it caused.
As a part of this process, EC attended several meetings and provided systematic comments on the draft inception report of the consultant hired to design the audit. EC also facilitated meetings between the established inter-ministerial working group and affected communities in Kampong Speu and held several meetings with the EU Delegation and representatives of the working group. In June EC and NGO partners sent a letter to the EU Ambassador of Cambodia raising concerns about the audit process moving forward without a commitment from the RGC on the nature of reparations. The letter also raised concerns about the arbitrary exclusion of other sugarcane concessions, particularly in PreahVihear Province. In turn, the EU responded in October stating that the audit process did not “rule out the returning of land” and that the EU had advised the RGC that a “sustainable solution requires a remedial action in all sugarcane ELCs that are object of land grabbing allegations”.

**Workshop on the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises - Kampong Speu case study**

In May EC hosted a public seminar on “Promoting Responsible Corporate Conduct in the Greater Mekong Region” in partnership with OECD Watch. The workshop gave participants a chance to learn about the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises as a tool for corporate accountability. The event provided space for short presentation by community representatives on how they have been adversely affected by the sugar concessions in Kampong Speu. Eang Vuthy, Executive Director of EC, also gave a presentation on ANZ Bank, a financier of the sugar plantations in Kampong Speu Province, in relation to corporate accountability under the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. In addition, EC facilitated a field trip for 13 OECD Watch General Assembly members to visit the sugar plantations in two affected communities which filed a complaint against ANZ Bank to the Australian National Contact Point for the OECD Guidelines.
HAGL Rubber Case

The Vietnamese company Hoang Anh Gia Lai (HAGL) and representatives of 17 affected villages held joint meetings under the Compliance Advisor/Ombudsman (CAO) dispute resolution process in Banlung, Rattanakiri Province in January 2015. During the meetings HAGL signed the joint statement and agreed to not further clear land in the project areas until the resolution of all the issues. These meetings followed the complaint submitted on behalf of the complainants by Equitable Cambodia (EC) and partner non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the sharing with HAGL and CAO of the “Human Rights Impact Assessment” completed by EC and Inclusive Development International (IDI) in 2014 regarding HAGL’s operations and impacts.

EC and partner NGOs extensively prepared the villagers and community representatives for the joint meeting among parties held in March 2015. During the meeting the community representatives sat directly across from HAGL delegates to deliver their Collective Demands on behalf of all 17 villages in order to settle the dispute. On April 14, HAGL provided a written response to the Collective Demands and provided access to some of the roads blocked by the Company. On most of the demands, the company responded by seeking additional information on community losses and village-specific demands.

In May 2015, EC and NGO partners consulted with community representatives and delivered the draft proposal to divide the affected communities into three main village groups for the purpose of negotiations:

(i) Group 1 – Villages that had been affected but that were unsure whether HAGL was the concessionaire;
(ii) Group 2 – Villages that were located within a HAGL Economic Land Concession (ELC), but had not yet affected;
(iii) Group 3 – Villages affected by a HAGL ELC, either by land clearance or plantation.

After EC and partner NGOs supported community representatives in developing a detailed inventory of their problems and losses and corresponding demands for their losses, individual village demands for Groups 1, 2 and 3 were delivered to the company in June 2015. HAGL responded by stating that their concessions did not regard the affected villages of the Group 1. Despite this, EC and other NGOs will continue to support Group 1 Villages with training, advocacy and research aimed at finding other potential avenues for resolution of their problems. Furthermore, HAGL distributed a signed and stamped letter recognizing the aforementioned, as well as committing to not engage in future encroachment or land clearance of Group 1 Villages.

As part of the advocacy strategy, workshops were also organized for the villagers. The training provided communities with previous examples from other countries in which settlements had been reached in similar land disputes. Furthermore, EC and NGO partners briefed the on the array of options
available for reaching a settlement. In addition, field visits were organized with the consent of HAGL in order to assist the communities in sketching customary maps showing their village boundaries, land use and areas which have been affected by the rubber concessions.

In addition, EC Technical Advisor and IDI Managing Director David Pred met with the CEO of Global Emerging Markets (GEM) in their New York headquarters. This private equity firm had committed $80 million in equity to HAGL in late 2014. However, following a written letter from EC and IDI advising GEM of HAGL’s illegal activities and devastating impacts on local communities in Cambodia, the investment firm agreed to impose conditions on its investment according to the letter’s recommendations. The CEO confirmed that GEM had not made any equity disbursements to HAGL and would not do so until it demonstrated that it was addressing the communities’ grievances.

The major breakthrough in the negotiation process occurred in Siem Reap during meetings between HAGL, its subsidiaries and NGO advisors on September 7 2015. HAGL representatives signed off on a commitment stating that the company agreed to not clear, develop, interfere, encroach upon or impact the land of the Villagers falling within its concessions but not yet affected (Group 2), whether directly, by association with or investment in other companies. In addition, HAGL agreed not to engage in any further clearance or development in the remaining areas of the Group 3 Villages. In the following joint statements HAGL, pledged to undertake steps towards implementing the agreement, namely by guaranteeing a joint mapping and demarcation process of village boundaries, providing compensations to the villagers for the affected land and, should they not accept the offer, return of land. HAGL also agreed to develop an operational grievance mechanism in relation to their rubber plantations in Cambodia, to use chemical products that comply with environmental regulations, to cease fishing from areas of villages’ use and to support the villagers in securing their land titles.

On December 13, HAGL conducted an apology ceremony for the villages to honor the indigenous community.
VGR Rubber Case

Vietnam Rubber Group (VRG) is a major concessionaire in Cambodia, whose operations have had serious adverse impacts on the land tenure and livelihoods of local farmers. In July 2014, in response to pressure made by a Global Witness investigation, VRG launched a new operational-level grievance mechanism and invited people to submit their complaints. Following a field visit to five VRG-affected villages, the DW team found that all five communities wanted to submit complaints. The team selected two villages for further research, conducting focus groups, individual interviews, and participatory mapping sessions to support the communities in filling their complaints to the mechanism. In September the team filed a complaint on behalf of the two villages at the VRG office in Phnom Penh which included background information on the villages, human rights impacts of the concession, as well as laid out the companies’ violation of local and international standards.

Although the VRG mechanism requires the company to respond within 30 days, the company failed to respond within this time period. Only after requests from Global Witness did the company finally respond in December. However, the response was in Vietnamese, again failing to meet the requirement for the response to be in Khmer or English. The DW team will follow up to get the response in the required language in January 2016.
Phnom Penh Airport Project

In 2015 the Compliance Advisory/Ombudsman (CAO) organized two major multi-stakeholder meetings regarding the CAO-led dispute resolution process to address the threat of eviction of the Airport community. These meetings involved the affected communities, Green Goal, CAO, Société Concessionnaire de l'Aéroport (SCA), International Financial Corporation (IFC), the Government’s Land Committee and several NGOs. At the first meeting in February, Green Goal, the independent auditor contracted by the government, gave updates on the census they had so far conducted. This included the mapping of each of the households’ possessions and gathering data to determine household assets. They also clarified that compensation for land would be based on the synthesis of 3 criteria, namely the market price, government tax regime and price requested from affected households. The presentation by Green Goal and comments from the Land Committee reconfirmed the Cambodian Government's commitment to adhere to IFC’s Performance Standards for this project. At the second meeting in December, the Land Committee and Green Goal informed the communities that the final draft of the Relocation Action Plan (RAP) had been submitted by Green Goal to the Land Committee for review. The Committee will be approving the RAP in 2016, and will organize a public forum to discuss it with the airport communities.

Throughout the year EC continued to support the Airport communities through the CAO process, organizing mobilization on the ground and monitoring CAO meetings. EC supported and monitored CAO-led facilitated meetings regarding the creation of the “Airport Community Advisory Group” to help communities work together more effectively and communicate with stakeholders.
The Cocoon/Mosaic team started initial outreach activities for its research in the first half of 2015. The project aims at studying the intersection of the social impacts of climate change mitigation strategies and land grabbing. Between February and May the team conducted primary data collection in the Greater Aural region and in Prey Lang, Phnom Penh, making a total of 5 field trips. Group discussions and interviews with network committees, commune chiefs, members of commune council and a commune deputy were also conducted.

In February the team provided a research methods training session to university students from 4 universities in Phnom Penh. The project was introduced as an opportunity to practice field research skills and learn about situations on the ground. Following the training session, the Cocoon/Mosaic team recruited 20 students as research trainees.

In June the team organized two inception workshops, one in the Prey Lang region and the other in the Greater Aural region. During the meeting, villagers were introduced to the Mosaic project and were consulted on whether they are interested in participating in action research. The team organized the Phase I of the action research training to target communities in Greater Aural and Prey Lang regions. Participants were taught about research tools and techniques and action research teams put the newly acquired skills to work in November and December. The Prey Lang and Prey Vihear action research teams focused their analysis on mining companies holding concessions in the area and began studying resin trees in Stung Treng while in Kampong Chnaing team started researching about an irrigation project affecting the local community. Phase II of action research training was also given to the Prey Lang research team in November.
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND LEGAL AWARENESS PROGRAM (CELA)

The Community Empowerment and Legal Awareness Program (CELA) of Equitable Cambodia (EC) aims to address significant barriers to just and inclusive development in Cambodia by empowering Cambodians to advocate for human rights change. The program has developed a series of interactive, popular education curricula covering rights, laws, advocacy skills, and legal strategies for challenging investment and development projects that do not respect human rights. It builds the capacity of grassroots activists to impart knowledge, skills and values contained in these resources to their community. The program is helping to rectify the imbalance of power in Cambodia by nurturing networks of community advocates and supporting their mobilization and collective advocacy actions. Over the course of the 2015, 1701 people (992 of whom were women) were trained with CELA education curricula.

Building Capacity of Grassroots Facilitators

Training of Trainers (ToT) Workshops

CELA continued to develop a growing, nationwide group of facilitators - grassroots facilitators from local communities, and youth facilitators from Cambodian universities. These facilitators went on to impart the knowledge and skills contained in CELA’s popular education materials.

In 2015, CELA conducted four Training-of-Trainers workshops (ToTs) on its human rights defender curricula to train new facilitators. The program mainly focused on the Defending Land, Economic Land Concessions and Mining course. Two of the ToTs were to train a new group of facilitators consisting of university students who participated in last year’s Democracy Summer Camp. They then worked in collaboration with the grassroots paralegal network that CELA has trained in past years to deliver the curricula at the community level throughout the country. In total, 86 participants (of whom 31 were women) were trained to be grassroots or youth facilitators through Defending Land courses.
Workshops conducted by grassroots and student facilitators

After completing the ToT workshops, grassroots and youth facilitators are prepared and encouraged to organize community training workshops in order to empower communities. The CELA program provides financial and logistical support for the facilitators, and CELA trainers frequently join to monitor and provide support for them while they implement the trainings.

In 2015 grassroots facilitators and university students conducted 27 workshops with a total of 939 participants, 619 of whom were women. These 27 workshops were primarily held in land conflict “hotspots” in 10 provinces, where land conflicts are particularly serious and where it is difficult to organize meetings and trainings due to problems with local authorities. The CELA team observed that they were particularly useful for communities because the two groups of trainers complemented one another. Indeed, the youth partners’ legal backgrounds ensured they were able to explain theories and answer technical questions, while grassroots trainers provided knowledge from their own experience. This year CELA monitored and provided support for 23 of the workshops finding that trainers became more confident and brave in implementing the sessions.
CELA Community Trainings

This year CELA conducted 7 direct community training sessions with participants affected by land issues focusing on infrastructure projects in Phnom Penh, sugarcane plantations in Kampong Speu and rubber plantations in Ratanakiri Province. The training sessions were to improve the negotiation skills of affected communities, specifically for people affected by the expansion of the Phnom Penh Airport in the context of the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO) mediation process and villagers affected by the rehabilitation of the Railway Project with the purpose of engaging with the ADB accountability mechanism to demand fair and just compensation. In addition, the CELA team provided training sessions on Land and Housing Rights for communities in Kampong Speu and designed trainings for the indigenous communities affected by the Vietnamese rubber plantations in Ratanakiri Province in order to increase their legal knowledge and strengthen their negotiation skills. These trainings helped to secure the agreements between HAGL and the communities in September 2015. In total, 153 participants (72 women) attended the community trainings.
Support for Grassroots-Led Advocacy

In 2015 CELA continued to support grassroots-led advocacy work of communities and networks involved in housing and land rights issues, providing support for monitoring protests, giving technical and strategic advice to threatened communities as well as financial support. CELA also monitored and/or provided financial assistance to a number of other community actions, such as submitting petitions, filing complaints to provincial courts, organizing campaigns and providing legal support to community activists in court trials. In total, CELA supported 55 community actions in 2015.

Democracy Summer Camp

CELA organized its 4th Democracy Summer Camp with 33 youths (18 women) in Kep province. During the Camp youths were introduced to Cambodian Civil Law, democracy, and human rights and were also trained to develop facilitation skills. Participants also learned how to submit training proposals for trainings to be conducted after the Summer Camp. CELA provided financial and technical support to 19 youth trainings in 2015.

If you want to learn more about Democracy Summer Camp, please find us at:
Facebook.com/DemocracySummerCamp
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND LEGAL AWARENESS PROGRAM
COMMUNITY ORGANIZING FOR HOUSING RIGHTS (COHR)

The Community Organizing for Housing Rights (COHR) program was launched in 2013 with the purpose of assisting threatened urban poor communities in Phnom Penh to work together in order to secure their land and housing rights. The Program aims to facilitate people-led processes to strengthen the capacity of, and empower communities to organize and address their tenure and housing rights issues. Over the longer term, the program aims to promote the formation of a federation of urban poor communities in Phnom Penh that will be able to advocate collectively for the resolution of common problems related to tenure insecurity and inadequate housing stemming from discrimination against the poor and the violation of their fundamental human rights.

In 2015, one of the main focuses of the COHR Program was on the establishment of community small groups and the selection of natural leaders to facilitate the accomplishment of common objectives of these groups. By the end of the year, 55 community small groups with 666 members were established in 20 target urban poor communities. The COHR team worked intensively to identify 125 natural leaders, who demonstrated the ability and commitment to stand for their community rights, value others’ ideas, and respect the democratic process of community empowerment. Community leaders and their groups implemented different activities such as facilitating discussion on community issues, and setting up strategies and action plans.
Through the small groups and natural leaders COs supported communities to develop advocacy and negotiation strategies to protect their housing and land rights. Community leaders and community members were particularly active this year. 8 Steung Meanchey communities and the Tangov community developed alternative development plans in order to negotiate with the Khan Governor and the MPP for on-site upgrading. The Kva community demanded a drainage system from Dangkor district and ToulSangke B community successfully demanded for budget support to build a drainage system at RusseyKeo district. 9 Railway communities developed plans to negotiate with the Ministry of Public Works and advocated with the ADB in order to receive clear information about the railway project. They mobilized in front of the ADB residential office three times and organized one press conference in order to demand a public forum about the railway development project. The railway communities also demanded for clearer information about the railway project by going to the offices of and sending letters to the Ministry of Public Works and Transport and the Railway Department.

In addition, Lake, Canal and Railway communities improved their living conditions by organizing to manage trash and improve infrastructure such as drainage systems, walkways, footbridges and electricity wires. Importantly, through the infrastructure improvements they showed the public that they were productive citizens that belong in the city.

The COHR program promoted cooperation and networking among urban poor communities threatened by eviction through establishing and strengthening three urban poor community networks in the Railway, Lake and Canal communities. All networks made plans for monthly group meetings in order to discuss community issues and make decisions together based on a democratic process. The three networks will be transformed into a community federation at the end of 2016.
COHR Program in 2015: Stories of Community Advocacy and Actions

Lake Communities Organize Event to Discuss the 30-meter Road Development

Between July and August, groundwork and meetings were conducted in the PrekTakong 1 community to organize a community solidarity event to discuss a wastewater basin and the impact of a 30 m road development. A role-play was also organized to practice making demands for on-site upgrading and explaining the impact to the media and other community members. The spread information about potential community eviction to the entire community and the media.

A press conference was organized for the event and several media outlets published stories about the event and surrounding issues in the days after the event. During this whole process, from March to July, several hundred small meetings took place in order to update communities, organize the event and carry out a letter campaign to the company and local Sangkat and Khan authorities.

Demanding ING Company to Stop Flooding (Lake Area)

During February, groundwork was conducted and meetings took place to rectify the flooding issue caused by ING company filling the local lake with sand. It was agreed that the PrekTakong I community would deliver a letter to the Sangkat office and demand the government take action.
Demanding CINTRI to Collect Garbage in Village 23 (Railway Area)

Between October and December 2015, COs facilitated groundwork and meetings with community leaders and members of Village 23 to demand garbage pickup service from CINTRI, which was non-existent despite the fact that community members paid a monthly fee for this service. During the meetings the community discussed how to resolve the garbage truck issue and set roles and responsibilities in order to solve the problem, agreeing to send a letter to the Sangkat chief.

On October 26th, 8 community leaders delivered a letter demanding that a garbage truck come to Sangkat BeungKak II. However, the Sangkat chief said he would not be able to help as CINTRI had not responded to his many requests to pick up trash from the community. On December 7th community leaders went to the Khan office and talked to the Khan ToulKork governor about their issue, and delivered a letter to him. They gave the Khan Governor 15 days to organize the garbage truck to come collect garbage in community.

One week after the meeting with the Khan Governor the garbage truck began collecting garbage twice a week. The community was happy with their victory and understood that they were successful because of their own advocacy efforts.
ToulSangke B Community Demands Budget Support from the Local Governor to Build a Drainage System (Railway Area)

COs did ground work with 27 community leaders and members from ToulSangke B community, between April and August 2015 to encourage the community to solve their problems together. During the meetings communities discussed plans to demand a drainage system in their community from Sangkat Toul Sangke, Khan Russey Keo. COs facilitated role plays with the community to prepare for negotiations with the Sangkat and Khan. The community leaders went to Sangkat ToulSangke twice to demand budget support but his response was always that the Sangkat had no budget to support this project.

The community then turned to the Khan level, organizing 30 people to meet the Khan governor. His office continually responded that he was busy or that the person in charge was not there. In response, 70 people went and protested with banners in front of the Khan office. Although the Khan governor was at a meeting at the MPP when the protest started, he left the meeting and came to meet the community. He responded to the community’s request, allocating them a budget of $2,250 USD to fix the drainage system.
Alternative Development Plans (Canal Area)

COs conducted groundwork and facilitated meetings with 8 communities in SteungMeanchey throughout 2015. At the meetings, communities discussed alternative development plans, selected housing models and planned for a public launching to try to convince the MPP to let them stay on-site along SteungMeanchey Canal. Community members eventually agreed on an alternative plan with 425 houses with two house sizes (4 meters x 8 meters and 4 meters x 10 meters.) They also planned for an 8m wide canal, with 6m wide roads on both sides, and a public space for gardens, sports, markets etc.

In September 2015 communities and COs conducted role plays to practice explaining the alternative development plan and demand for on-site upgrading along Steung Meanchey Canal. The community then organized a launching event for their alternative development plan with participants from the Ministry of Land Management and Urban Planning (MLMUP), MPP, various embassies, the Lake and Railway communities, NGOs and media. During the event, Steung Meanchey communities described how people could live along the canal based on their alternative development plan. In addition, they then sent a letter to the MPP and MLMUP asking for a consultation meeting about their plan.

Between October and December 2015, some community members supported by COs went to meet the Director in charge of Urban Poor Development at the MPP to discuss the community letter that people submitted during the launching event for the alternative plan. Although the community followed up with the Director they have not had a response to their plan.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At Equitable Cambodia we strongly believe in cooperation and co-ordination with other like-minded groups and we would like to recognize the following partners:

**Partners**

Amnesty International  
Action Aid  
Act Alliance  
Aziza Schools  
ADIC  
Bank Information Centre  
Bank on Human Rights  
Bridges Across Borders Southeast Asia  
Community Legal Education Initiative  
Building Community Voices  
Cambodia Indigenous Youth Association  
Cambodian Kids Foundation  
Center for International Environmental Law  
Community Capacities for Development  
Community Legal Education Centre  
Community Peace Building Network  
Cambodian Center for Human Rights  
Developing World Connections  
Epic Arts  
Earth Rights International  
ESCR Net  
Focus on the Global South  
FIAN  
Forest People Program  
Global Witness  
Highlander Association  
Housing Rights Task Force  
Human Rights Watch  
Indigenous Community Support Organization  
IRAM (Indigenous Rights Active Members)  
International Accountability Project  
International School of Phnom Penh  
Inclusive Development International  
Leaders and Organizers of Community Organizing in Asia  
LICADHO  
Land Core Group  
LandNet  
Meakea Aphiwadh  
Mekong Watch  
MT. Pleasant Kep Health Initiative (MKHI)  
NGO Forum on ADB  
NGO Forum on Cambodia  
One World Foundation  
OECD Watch  
Pan Nature  

Room to Read  
Sahmakum Teang Thaut  
Sustainable Cambodia  
Solidarity House  
Sevana SEA  
The Bretton Woods Project  
The Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)  
Tiny Toones  
Towards Ecological Recovery and Regional Alliances (TERRA)  
United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights  
United World College of South East Asia Youth for Peace  
United Sisterhood

We would also like to thank the following donors that made significant contributions to Equitable Cambodia (EC) in 2015:

**Donors**

Diakonia  
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Mcknight/SADP  
OSI  
MRLG  
SADP  
HBF  
NWO/Mosaic  
ICCO/Mosaic  
Forum Syd  
SAGE
# 2015 Financial Summary

## Opening Balance
$188,644.70

## Income Receipts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Receipts</th>
<th>USD</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grant Receipts</td>
<td>$783,137.00</td>
<td>97.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Donation &amp; Volunteer Program</td>
<td>$21,733.00</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Receipts</strong></td>
<td>$804,870.00</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Grant Receipts**: $783,137.00 (97.30%)
- **General Donation & Volunteer Program**: $21,733.00 (2.70%)

## Disbursements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disbursement</th>
<th>USD</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development Watch Program</td>
<td>$269,455.03</td>
<td>39.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Organizing for Housing Rights Program</td>
<td>$191,495.14</td>
<td>27.91%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Empowerment and Legal Awareness Program</td>
<td>$176,115.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Follow The Money</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cambodia Justice Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer Program</td>
<td>$14,561.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central Office Cost</td>
<td>$4,087.75</td>
<td>0.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Disbursements</strong></td>
<td>$686,099.02</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Development Watch Program**: $269,455.03 (39.27%)
- **Community Organizing for Housing Rights Program**: $191,495.14 (27.91%)
- **Central Office Cost**: $4,087.75 (0.60%)
GET INVOLVED!

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The work of Equitable Cambodia is made possible by the support of our network of friends around the world whose compassion and yearning for justice knows no borders.

If you are moved by our work, please consider making a financial contribution to support a specific Equitable Cambodia program or a general donation to help us further all of our programs.

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