A Year in Review

2012
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Dear Friends and Supporters,

Firstly, I would like to say thank you to all of our contributors, friends and partners for their support and collaboration during this year. Equitable Cambodia (EC) relies on the support of its donors, volunteers and partners to operate and we are deeply appreciative of this.

This year Bridges Across Borders Cambodia registered with the Ministry of Interior as Equitable Cambodia. This has been one of the final parts of a two-year process to transform Bridges Across Borders Cambodia into a locally certified organisation that is locally governed and managed. As the new executive director I am proud to say that this transition, although it has been very difficult at times, has been a success. It has been made much easier because of the hard work and enthusiasm of our team and support from our partners.

There were some major accomplishments and impacts this year. One of the big announcements was a commitment of an additional USD$1million by AusAID for livelihood support for families affected by the Cambodian Railway Rehabilitation project. AusAID has now added over USD$2million to the resettlement budget- a significant outcome that we believe wouldn’t have been achieved if not for the ongoing monitoring and bold advocacy EC has been central to since 2010.

We also published two important reports this year. A Discussion Paper on a Human Rights Approach to Development of Cambodia’s Land Sector and Derailed: A Study on the Resettlement Process and Impacts of the Rehabilitation of Cambodia’s Railways. Both of these reports have been shared to EC’s partners and read by other important stakeholders. On a personal note, I think our trip to Australia to launch the Derailed report was very exciting and rewarding. We worked closely Oxfam Australia and Monash University to launch the report at Monash’s Castan Centre for Human Rights.

With the CDP program coming to an end, we have had to say goodbye to many of the families, communities and organisations we have been working closely with over the past 5 years. We are proud to note positive changes in the all the communities since we started working with them. In particular, in Chamcar Bei, where we have been working since 2007, there have been significant improvements in health, education and agricultural practices of families. Although our official activities are finishing, we will continue to provide them with support and technical assistance as needed.

There were some new additions to the EC family, as many new volunteers joined us this year. Volunteers make great contributions to the organisation through their work with communities and partner organisations. We are always really happy to welcome volunteers and the joy and fulfilment their experience gives them also provides us with great satisfaction.

On behalf of Equitable Cambodia, I would like to thank all of our supporters and friends for helping us to keep development actors accountable and advancing human rights in Cambodia. Without you our work would be impossible.

Eang Vuthy
Executive Director
Community Development Program

The aim of the Community Development Program (CDP) is to motivate, organize, and effectively support poor and marginalized partner communities to overcome their common problems and reach their full potential. In order to achieve this, the CDP focuses on improving livelihoods; improving education and respect for child rights; improving health; and promoting community organizing and solidarity in our partner communities.

The CDP operates primarily in Chamcar Bei and Odong villages in Kep province, the Tang Khiev community in Kandal province, and with two education partners in Phnom Penh and Takeo. At the end of this year the CDP program will be finishing up and we will have to say goodbye to many of the families, communities and community-based organizations (CBOs) we have worked so closely with over the previous years. We are very proud of the improvements in these communities and we are confident that the initiatives we encouraged and supported will continue to benefit these communities long into the future.

In 2007 we started the ‘Hand in Hand’ project as an integrated community development initiative in Camcar Bei, Kep. Since then the program has expanded both in the scope of community issues it addresses and the number of communities it works with. 2012 was the last year of operation for Equitable Cambodia’s CDP program, and over this 5 year period we have invested over $1 million into Chamcar Bei, Chamcar Chek and Antong Sor in Kep. We have gone through a lengthy handover process with the CBOs and communities to facilitate the sustainability of positive changes that have occurred in these communities. Our approach has always been to build the capacity of community members, CBOs and the community so they are better able to achieve individual and community aspiration and work collectively in addressing community problems. These efforts were redoubled this year. We commissioned an external evaluation which helped us to identify which CBOs were most at risk, and put in place support mechanisms, including extended funding and extra technical assistance and mentoring, for all the communities and organisations we work with.
Central to the CDP program are the rights and dignity of at-risk marginalised children and youth, and the accessibility and availability of good quality education providers, including public schools and non-formal education programs.

Child protection is a key part of our program. We aim to ensure that through our work we help to create environments where children are free from neglect and/or abuse. The CDP program promotes child protection in school management and classrooms; in communities through workshops, education and health programs; and through identification and intervention in cases of abuse or where children are malnourished because a family is extremely deprived.

Our School, Chamcar Bei

Our School, a community-learning centre in Chamcar Bei, was re-established in 2007 with assistance by BABC (Equitable Cambodia’s predecessor) as an Education CBO that aims to provide non-formal education opportunities to students living in the area. Currently, Our School teaches a range of subjects to students from a range of ages, literacy levels and backgrounds. Classes include computer skills, English and mathematics. Over 84% of students from Our School passed examinations that marked improvement in attitudes and basic computing skills. Also, Our School provided basic Kindergarten education to 65 kids aged from 3-5 years, enabling them to learn Khmer and English alphabets and basic communication. 24 of these children were provided daily porridge and 41 children were provided daily fruit for nutrition.

In preparing for the end of CDP support and to ensure the sustainability of Our School, EC partnered with Fourth Sector Innovation (FSI) to implement a plan for funding and a separate plan to continue to improve operations and facilities after CDP support finishes. Our School has successfully registered with the Ministry of Interior and the management team works independently with full funding from a Korean NGO and has implemented a pepper plantation as a future source of income.

Rudi Boa Centre, Phnom Penh

The charter of the original Rudi Boa centre, located within village four at Boueng Kak, was to provide non-formal education programs for youths and adults in English, mathematics, arts and Khmer literacy classes, and health and hygiene awareness (including on HIV/AIDS). In addition, the centre serves as an outreach site and meeting point for a disparate community as their lives were being disrupted by the threat of eviction.

This year, EC supported the Rudi Boa centre with a full grant to continue programs under the leadership of Attitude Centre for Education (ACE). The Rudi Boa Centre taught an average of 242 students per month in classes held from 8:00 - 10:30 in the morning and 1:30 – 7:30 pm. Rudi Boa’s biggest achievement this year has been in the area of health. In the Kindergarten 100% of children wash their hands and approximately 90% participated in quarterly basic sanitation sessions.

Although we will no longer be directly supporting the Rudi Boa Centre, we will continue to have a relationship with them through our volunteer program.
Meakea Apiwad, Takeo

Meakea Apiwadh is dedicated to creating opportunities for unprivileged children and youth in remote and urban poor communities. Since 2004, Meakea Apiwadh has offered child-centred development to children in Khvav commune, Takeo province. Meakea provided English classes to 234 students in 13 classes of varying levels at the beginning of the year. Short of funding, Meakea decided to decrease its operation and provided English classes to only 113 students. Meakea also has a Youth Club consisting of 23 members who work together to improve their community through outreach projects, including outreach English classes, hosting volunteers, and arranging activities to promote leadership for other youth in the commune.

In March 2012, nine youth group members joined with ten students from the Meakea Centre to facilitate a cleaning drive around the school compound and promote improved sanitation at school and at home.

This year, EC supported them mostly through a grant to help them meet their operational needs for the first quarter. Fortunately, Maekea Centre is now strong enough in leadership and management that they are able to lead the organisation without support from Equitable Cambodia. Maekea Centre received its last grant from EC in the first quarter of the year, and now it is fully independent and the management is able to lead the organisation by themselves including raising funds and supporting their own operations.

Children learning the importance of hygiene
LIVELIHOODS AND FOOD SECURITY

Raising household incomes and helping to ensure a reliable food supply for households are central to improving people's living conditions. Over the past 5 years we have helped to establish a number of CBOs, savings groups and assisted with community-driven initiatives to improve economic infrastructure. Below we will go into detail on just two of our partner organisations working in this area: the Agricultural Development Association and the Women's Handicraft and Development Association (WHADA), both of which are located in Chamcar Bei. All of the livelihoods programs have been transferred to the communities, including the agriculture pass-on programs, fish ponds, savings groups and sustainable tourism programs.

Improving agriculture and animal husbandry with the Agricultural Development Association

This year, the CDP continued to support the Agricultural Development Association (ADA). They conduct regular training sessions and workshops on improved agricultural techniques with households in the extended Chamcar Bei community to improve the quality and quantity of household's agricultural outputs. CDP also attended and supported monthly meetings facilitated by ADA that aimed to encourage the community to come together to identify common challenges, brainstorm solutions and develop a plan to collectively address them. The ADA also conducted weekly household visits with community members to follow up and give recommendations to further improve productivity and farming techniques.

One of the greatest achievements of the ADA and CVTC is the success of community farm located at the CVTC. We originally had an ambitious aim to have 15 families permanently growing vegetables at the community farm using only natural pesticides, natural fertilizers and compost. We exceeded this aim, and by the end of 2012, 17 families worked together to organically grow seasonal fruits and vegetables.

Women’s Handicraft and Development Association (WHADA)

During 2012, CDP focused on strengthening the operations of WHADA and expanding the markets for their products, including a newly launched Made in Cambodia website created by a former EC employee and a stall on a popular nearby tourist destination, Rabbit Island.

The CDP organised and supported a counterpart from the Ministry of Social Affairs to mentor the WHADA leader Mrs. Pho. During this partnership, Pho improved the overall operations of WHADA, implemented a quality control process, effectively man-
aged the existing product markets, and explored ideas for expanding markets, especially during periods of high tourism. The team worked to produce an updated stock tracking sheet, product catalogue, posters, product tags, and flyers with a colourful map so visitors can find the centre and learn more about the association. EC also created a Facebook page and reinstalled the signpost at the main village crossroad.

WHADA have developed their individual bylaws and procedures in managing the groups. WHADA can now manage itself in terms of acquiring new material, quality control, store management and producers payments. WHADA was also able to manage, with limited external assistance, sustainable tourism groups for the community. This year many tourists visited and WHADA was able to host them, showing off their products and developments in the community. Their biggest problem lies with marketing and customer relations, which comes down to language difficulties. A part-time guide, who works for a local eco-tourism initiative also initiated and supported by the CDP program, is supporting them while they build their English skills. This year, 100% of WHADA operating costs were covered by the monthly income it made through the sale of its products and its sustainable community tourism initiatives. We consider this a great success and a good indicator that WHADA is now sustainable and will continue to provide a source of income after CDP’s support stops.

A member of the WHADA making kramas to be sold in markets or on the newly developed WHADA website

WOMEN AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

There has been much progress in improving the opportunities for women and girls to pursue their own goals and assume decision-making responsibilities. However, patriarchal ideas about women’s capabilities, appropriate behaviour and roles in the family and community are still prevalent in the communities we work with. In Kep, we conducted workshops with teachers and youth clubs to emphasise the important role that women have in the community and encouraged them to share this message with their students and peers. In Tang Khiev the CDP program facilitated a refresher course to raise awareness of women’s roles in designing and assessing the needs for community development. The meeting was an important reminder to the community and the women who are already involved in the activities of their capabilities and an opportunity to thank them for their important roles in leading improvements in their own community. In both Tang Khiev and Kep we have passed our targets of having more than 50% of women in community leadership positions.

A refresher training on Family Financial Management for the Tang Khiev community
Overcoming Poverty With a Helping Hand from EC

Chhum Sareng is 52 years old and lives with her husband and two sons, aged 20 and 18, in Chamcar Bei village in Kep province, where she moved 17 years ago.

Their lives in Chamcar Bei village were very hard since the family rarely had enough food and money. The family's income came from making thatch, brooms, and occasion day labor in neighboring villagers. During particularly difficult periods, the family was forced to borrow money just to buy rice, which they made into rice porridge. Partly as a result of malnutrition, family members regularly suffered health problems, including fevers, diarrhea, and blood pressure problems.

Only able to obtain unskilled day jobs and facing persistent health problems, the family became poorer and poorer. Chum's husband had daily labor work that generated around $2 per day, not enough to cover the family's daily nutrition requirement and other expenses (such as school fees). They were forced to pull the children from secondary school so they could supplement household income by climbing a nearby mountain to collect thatch to produce brooms and material for thatch-roofs.

In 2009, Mrs. Sareng got involved in CDP's Hand in Hand project and participated in many workshops to improve her knowledge and skills in agriculture and animal husbandry, including workshops on pig raising, chicken raising and vegetable growing. She also attended workshops on gender and domestic violence, family happiness, basic sanitation, and hygienic meal preparation and storage. The project donated to her family five chickens and a bicycle, and installed a community water filter system that provided them with shared access to a water-well. During this time, one of her sons was able to return to school and became actively involved as a youth club member in an initiative to develop the school.

In 2012, Mrs. Sareng family's situation has drastically improved. They have a proper house and own chickens, pigs, two cows, and supplement their income from their brooms, thatch and daily labor work. Both children are now attending Our School, learning English, computer and other practical skills. Mrs. Sareng said, “my family wants my two sons grow up well-educated so that they can have a better life.” Fortunately, with the support of the CDP program the future for this family is looking bright.
The CDP program will become the Community Organising for Housing Rights (COHR) program in 2013. This program will be working in partnership with two other Cambodian NGOs, Housing Rights Task Force (HRTF) and Leaders and Organisers of Community Organisations in Asia (LOCOA) to organise and unite threatened urban poor communities. The program will empower people to become more socially and politically aware, to unite them and improve their capacity for advocacy and negotiation against municipal and national development models. Ultimately, the program aims to unify people and support community-led improvements to environment, community infrastructure, land security and living conditions. We will begin working with 18 new Phnom Penh communities in 2013, using lessons from the CDP program to shape it and external evaluation to help guide successful practice. We will be bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience of organising threatened communities and disempowered people and we are looking forward to this exciting and challenging new period.

“After 5 years, the CDP program has come to its end. One the one hand, it was sad to have to say goodbye to the communities that we had been working so closely with over the past five years. On the other hand, it has been fantastic to see how far the communities have come. We have stopped work with the communities we have been working with in Kep and Kandal provinces. In Kandal province we have transferred all materials and responsibility a local Christian organisation called ‘Manna4life’. The biggest success story from our partnerships has been with the Chamcar Bei community, particularly the education centre, Our School, which has stopped receiving funding and technical advice from us and become a self-sufficient, independent NGO. Although it is in the process of registering as an NGO with the government, it has been able to secure funding for itself from new donors from Korea, as well as increase students payments to encourage them to stay in school, increase student numbers and reduce school fees to 2000 reils per month.” Savoeurn Sao, CDP Program Manager
The Development Watch (DW) program aims to promote a human rights approach to development by conducting monitoring, research and advocacy. DW conducts analysis and evidence-based advocacy on policies and activities related to aid, development, trade and business in Cambodia that have adverse impacts on human rights and the environment in an effort to hold responsible actors accountable. This year the DW program has focused on monitoring, research and advocacy, for four major cases in Cambodia: Boueng Kak Development, Airport expansion, Sugar Industry and the Railway communities.

In each of these cases our major activities include:

- Legal assistance and guidance on using grievance processes. It can be particularly difficult, especially for people who are illiterate or simply do not know about the grievance processes, to make complaints about the resettlement process.
- Field investigations and monitoring, entailing review and analysis of project documentation, monitoring key meetings and field research and investigations on implementation of project resettlement and compensation.
- Evidence-based advocacy bringing to light the gross inadequacies of the planning, compensation and resettlement processes of development actors and non-compliance with safeguard mechanisms in relevant cases.
- Networking, monitoring and strategic advocacy, which included trips to international conferences and board meetings of the international organizations we were trying to lobby.
- Informing international partners and supporters about the harmful activities of international development agencies and foreign businesses investing in or trading with Cambodia and urging them to take action
- Publishing reports on cases of land grabbing and bad compensation and resettlement policy and practices to highlight and raise awareness of the problems
- Releasing a discussion paper proposing a human rights based approach to development

BOEUNG KAK LAKE

Spanning 90 hectares in central north Phnom Penh, Boueng Kak Lake (BLK) was one of the only large open spaces left in Cambodia’s capital city. Approximately 4000 families lived and worked here and are entitled to legal rights to their land under Cambodia’s 2001 Land Law, yet the residents have been denied land titles en masse. In August 2008, when the developer, Shukaku Inc., commenced filling in the lake as part of its development plans, families living in the development zone began facing immense pressure to leave. This consisted not only of intimidation by local authorities and company security forces, but also the displaced water filling in of the lake, which was literally swamping their homes.

This year our advocacy work has targeted high-level meetings and influential leaders to push our campaign messages. One especially effective activity was the leveraging of the opportunity presented by the ASEAN People’s Forum in Phnom Penh in March, during which the DW team facilitated a visit to Boueng Kak Lake by approximately 20 people from Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. This visit resulted in an open letter to the Government...
of Cambodia from the Women’s Caucus and network participants of the ASEAN People’s Forum/ ASEAN Civil Society Conference 2012 demanding justice for the BKL community. On May 24, 13 women from the Boueng Kak Lake community, were arrested during a local demonstration. This included some of the leaders of the Boueng Kak community, who, two days later, were sentenced to two and a half years in prison under dubious legal circumstances. They were found guilty of obstructing public officials and illegally occupying state land.

DW subsequently coordinated with and advised Human Rights Watch, Freedom House and Cambodian-American groups to lobby the U.S. State Department asking Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to place the arrests on the agenda during her talks with the Foreign Minister. This advocacy was effective: Secretary Clinton did indeed call for the women to be freed during her June press conference with the Foreign Minister during the ASEAN people’s forum. Equitable Cambodia also joined the Boueng Kak community and our NGO partners in organizing over a dozen solidarity protest actions to ‘Free the 15’ (15 Boueng Kak Lake protestors who had been charged and sent to jail) despite ongoing police violence and the risk of more arrests, and played a significant role in mobilizing local and international actors to pressure authorities to release the protestors. On June 27 the Appeal Court upheld the convictions but reduced their sentences to time already served and they were free to leave. While the appeal court failed to overturn the spurious convictions, demonstrating, once again, political interference in the Cambodian courts, the release of the women was nonetheless an incredible victory for the local and global campaign to ‘Free the 15’.

Our advocacy work with the World Bank had also produced some very significant impacts. After the World Bank disengaged from Cambodia in 2011, 631 families had received land titles in the first quarter of the year. Furthermore, as a result of the UN-HABITAT fact finding mission that DW lobbied for, the Phnom Penh governor formally requested UN-HABITAT to assist in rehabilitating Boueng Kak Lake evictees, which is an important step in toward producing a remedy. In December, however, The World Bank Vice President for East Asia and the Pacific made a surprising announcement in an interview with the Phnom Penh Post that it would begin lending to Cambodia again after the national elections. Equitable Cambodia, along with partners in the BKL NGO Working Group, has committed to lobbying the World Bank to maintain its lending freeze until an agreement is reached with all Boueng Kak Lake residents.

The BKL community has become a role model for other communities. It organises and mobilizes very quickly and effectively. This year, the BKL has regularly organised and undertaken advocacy actions including marches, demonstrations and sit-ins. They have delivered petitions to the offices of local authorities and the offices of international institutions and agencies. Also, importantly, they are able to confidently negotiate with the authorities. We feel we have played a huge role in transforming this community by organising the BKL community and building their capacity to plan and implement advocacy strategies and actions. We are very proud of how the BKL community has grown in stature by becoming more active and organised, and we look forward to continuing our work with them next year.
The Sugar case involves the large-scale allotment of land concessions to private companies for sugar agro-plantations. Tens of thousands of rural and indigenous people have been affected by these concessions either through loss of land, evictions from their land or the loss or degradation of communal resources such as forests or rivers. In particular we work with communities in Oddor Meanchey, Kampong Speu and Kampong Kong provinces. Development Watch has concentrated its efforts on highlighting how the EU’s Everything But Arms trade agreement has adversely affected local communities. The policy has fuelled massive investment in industrial, export-orientated plantations in these communities through concessions to Cambodian, Thai and Vietnamese firms who then sell the sugar to European buyers through favorable trade terms.

DW has been lobbying the European Commission to trigger its own accountability process that would require an investigation into allegations of serious and systematic human rights abuses. Equitable Cambodia mobilized Cambodian and European civil society organizations to sign on to the letter, which was sent to the Trade Commissioner, all major EU institutions and media with a press release on June 26. The following month, the European Parliament passed an urgent resolution on Cambodia, which included language drafted by Equitable Cambodia calling upon the Commission to “investigate the escalation of human rights abuses in Cambodia and to temporarily suspend EBA preferences on agricultural products from Cambodia in cases where human rights abuses are identified.” This represented one of the biggest achievements of our work this year.

This year we also launched a consumer boycott campaign targeting Tate and Lyle Sugars and its suppliers, which ultimately profit from the displacement of smallholders Cambodian farmers from their land. In support of the boycott call by Cambodian farmers, DW developed a campaign website (www.boycott-bloodsugar.net) with critical information about the case and links to campaign petitions and videos. One short 1-minute film was produced for the launch of the Boycott Blood Sugar campaign in July and features shocking scenes of blood oozing out of a Tate and Lyle Golden Syrup bottle onto a woman’s pancakes which is posted on our website. We have also been working hard in our advocacy work with Bunsucro (formerly known as the Better Sugarcane Initiative), an association made up largely of companies involved in the production, processing or sale of sugar. Its mission is to work toward “continuous improvement along the sugar value chain.” In January 2011, BABC (Equitable Cambodia’s predecessor) and CLEC submitted complaints against two Bunsucro members – Tate and Lyle and Mitr Pohl – alleging that they were in violation of the Bunsucro Code of Conduct, which commits members inter alia to obeying the law and respecting human rights.

DW also worked hard throughout the year to build an international coalition around the Cambodian Clean Sugar Campaign, which it initiated in October 2010. In 2012, DW significantly bolstered these efforts with the launch of an international “Boycott Blood Sugar” campaign and significant outreach to civil society groups in Asia and Europe. On two trips to Europe in 2012, including visits to Berlin, Brussels, London and Stockholm, DW staff raised awareness about the sugar campaign and mobilized many European organizations to support the campaign.
In the case of families forcibly resettled by the railways project, the Asian Development Bank Accountability Mechanism found eligible the complaint filed by DW on behalf of 150 households in late 2011. The team provided extensive assistance to the complainants as they navigated the complex ADB accountability process. We continuously lobbied the ADB to ensure that its mediation process is conducted fairly and in a manner that empowers affected communities. At the same time, DW prepared detailed complaints on the Railway case to the ADB Compliance Review Panel and the Australian Human Rights Commission. The ADB complaint was found eligible in October and the investigation process began shortly thereafter. One month after EC put AusAID on notice that it was filing the complaint with the Australian Human Rights Commission, AusAID announced that it was committing another 1 million AUD for livelihood support activities for the resettled families.

After last year’s massive victory, helping to press AusAID into putting USD$1 million extra for resettlement costs, this year we have convinced AusAID to provide USD$2 million to supplement the resettlement budget.

Moreover, with the assistance DW provided to more than 150 families Poi Pet, Battambang, Sihanoukville, Phnom Penh resettlement sites to access the ADB’s grievance mechanism, the Office for the Special Project Facilitator (OSPF), 82 families received additional compensation and/or a plot of land, which had previously been denied during the original resettlement plans. The level of additional compensation received by households ranged from $100-$2500, depending on the size of their dwelling and the portion affected. This additional money will reduce families’ risk of poverty because they will be less susceptible to money lenders.

A highlight of our media work in the first half of the year was the public outreach and media campaign around the launch of Derailed and our submission of a complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission regarding the Railways project which was picked up by both Australian and Cambodian media. In 2012 we worked with a filmmaker to further develop a video that features the voices and experiences of people resettled by the railways project, which was screened at the launch of Derailed in Melbourne and a subsequent event in Washington DC in April. This video can be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vc_phYTlhU or http://www.babcambo-dia.org/railways/

Development Watch Program

Eang Vuthy speaking at the Australian launch of DERAILED: A Study on the Resettlement Process and Impacts of Rehabilitation of the Cambodian Railway
In the same year that his family moved to the resettlement site, Sareth first heard from his neighbor about an NGO called Equitable Cambodia (formerly Bridges Across Borders Cambodia), which was working to support the communities impacted by the railway rehabilitation project. With the assistance of Equitable Cambodia, Sareth was able to learn more about the railway rehabilitation project and his right to question the amount of compensation. He was given information about the ADB’s resettlement policy, the compensation breakdown, resettlement plan, and, importantly, the mechanisms for filing complaints. Equipped with this information, Sareth submitted a written complaint to the IRC, ADB, and AusAID, informing them that the DMS of his house was not correct and that the compensation provided was inadequate to rebuild a similar house. However, he received no reply and his problem remained unresolved. In November 2011, Sareth received more information from Equitable Cambodia about the ADB Accountability Mechanism and its Office of the Special Project Facilitator (OSPF). The OSPF is the ombudsman or “problem solving” stage of the ADB Accountability Mechanism. Complainants must attempt to resolve their problems through this office before asking for an investigation into compliance by the Compliance Review Panel. ADOs and affected people may complain to this office at any time until the end of the project, when the project completion report is issued.

Sareth joined more than 150 families in requesting Equitable Cambodia’s assistance in filing a complaint to OSPF in November 2011. Equitable Cambodia prepared a detailed complaint, with an analysis of all the harms suffered by the complainants, which resulted from acts and omissions by the ADB, including non-compliance with its operational policies and procedures. Early in 2012, OSPF came to investigate the complaint and to see if an agreement could be reached with the consent and participation of all the parties. Throughout the year, Equitable Cambodia engaged OSPF on behalf of the complainants to ensure that the process was as fair and balanced as possible, though the Cambodian government consistently rejected EC’s
role as the authorized representative of the complainants. After many meetings and discussions with the complainants, Equitable Cambodia withdrew itself as representative to allow the negotiations to move forward between the complainants and the IRC. Sareth, having learned a lot from Equitable Cambodia about his rights and entitlements under the ADB policy, was able to confidently represent himself in the negotiations.

In October 2012 Sareth was invited to negotiate with IRC, with the participation of OSPF, ADB, and AusAID. At the end of the meeting, IRC offered him an additional $2,100 in compensation. Sareth says that he is still not satisfied with this solution, as the amount is still far below what he originally paid for his house; however he feels he cannot afford to give any more time to this problem as he needs to earn a daily living. When asked about the OSPF process, he noted that OSPF should have allowed Equitable Cambodia, as the people’s representative, to attend the negotiation meeting. Nonetheless, Sareth is satisfied and very thankful for the work of Equitable Cambodia. Without the help of the organization, he said, he would have continued living silently, not knowing that he had legal rights to claim fair and adequate compensation, and he would be much deeper in debt than he is now. His problem, along with the problems of many of the affected families, would have been ignored.

In September 2012, Equitable Cambodia submitted a complaint to the ADB Compliance Review Panel demanding a full investigation into the harms caused to people like Nob Sareth as a result of gross negligence and non-compliance with ADB operational policies. The ADB Board approved the Compliance Review Panel’s recommendation to proceed and the investigation commenced in October 2012. Through this investigation, Equitable Cambodia hopes to secure further remedies for Sareth’s family and hundreds of other families who have suffered similar harms from the railway development project’s failure to respect the fundamental principles of human rights and justice.

AIRPORT

DW rapidly responded to an urgent new case outside of its 2012 work plan when hundreds of families living adjacent to the Phnom Penh Airport were served with eviction notices and sought our assistance.

When residents of three villages adjacent the airport were served with eviction notices alleging that they were living illegally on State property, 194 families signed a letter requesting assistance from the Housing Rights Task Force coalition, of which EC is an active member. The DW program undertook a rapid legal assessment of the land tenure status of the residents and arranged mapping of those involved in the threatened evictions. In collaboration with other NGOs
working with the communities, including STT, HRTF and LICADHO, DW drafted and sent letters to the US Ambassador (media reports indicated that one justification for the evictions was the need to build a security road for US President Barack Obama and other delegates attending the ASEAN conference) and to the International Finance Corporation (IFC), which has provided financing to Cambodia Airports (SCA) for a possible expansion of the airport grounds. EC, HRTF and STT held a joint meeting with IFC’s Country Representative and Regional Representative in November 2011 to follow up on our letter. IFC intervened with its client SCA, apparently as a result of our letter, and convinced them to develop the security road within the existing airport walls. IFC also confirmed during our meeting that there would be no resettlement resulting from the planned airport expansion. While the government is still threatening to “deal” with the families around the airport after the 2013 national elections, our urgent intervention with IFC thwarted for the time being what appeared to be an imminent forced eviction of thousands of people in November 2012.

The threat of eviction remains and may reappear after the national elections in August 2013, but this intervention succeeded in averting the imminent eviction of hundreds of households in November 2012.

Research and major publications

DW launched two major research and analysis publications in 2012: A Discussion Paper on a Human Rights Approach to Development of Cambodia’s Land Sector and Derailed: A Study on the Resettlement Process and Impacts of the Rehabilitation of Cambodia’s Railway, both of which have received international recognition as important contributions to their respective fields in terms of both substance and methodology.

This year, DW also initiated a two-year research project, in collaboration with Monash University and Oxfam Australia, to investigate barriers to community driven accountability and also began conducting empirical research on the impacts of the sugar industry on the economic, social and cultural rights of affected local communities.

“Our biggest achievement this year came in November 2012 when DW quickly responded to the urgent requests for assistance from several hundred families living around the Phnom Penh airport whom were facing imminent threat of forced eviction. While the government is still threatening to “deal” with the families around the airport after the 2013 national elections, our intervention with thwarts, for the time being, what appeared to be an imminent forced eviction of families living around the airport was stopped.”

Eang Vuthy, DW Program Manager
Community Empowerment and Legal Awareness

The Community Empowerment and Legal Awareness Program (CELA) aims to address the significant barriers to just and inclusive development in Cambodia by empowering Cambodians to advocate for human rights change. The program is developing a series of interactive, popular education curricula covering rights, laws, para-legal 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.

CELA continued to support grassroots-led advocacy in 2012 by individual communities and networks involved in land and housing rights struggles, including:
- the Boueng Kak lake communities,
- sugarcane concession affected communities,
- Railways Rehabilitation Project affected communities,
- Prey Lang Forest communities, and
- Thmor Kotor community, which is affected by the proposed expansion of Phnom Penh International Airport.

From education to facilitation, technical and strategic support and financial assistance, CELA has contributed to the growing grassroots movement to defend land, housing and natural resource rights in Cambodia. The following are some highlights of the community-led advocacy initiatives that the CELA program supported during 2012. Our work supports other programs, such as the Development Watch program, by providing training to communities on issues such as law and community organizing. Our cases cut across programs and we support each other where possible.

The CELA team worked extremely hard this year and there was some huge achievements as the team excelled in utilizing their individual skills and teamwork capabilities. The first was the successful publication of the popular legal education resource: A Community Guide to Mining “Impact, Rights and Action”. We also continued to develop popular legal education curricula resources aimed at empowering people to defend their rights, including a draft Community Guide to Economic Land Concessions: Risks, Rights and Action.

In addition, we continued to conduct participatory education and empowerment training using our bank of resources, including A Cambodian Guide to Defending Land and Housing Rights (hereafter, “Defending Land”) and A Guide to Personal Security for Human Rights Defenders, to train grassroots facilitators and support them to use the curricula to deliver community workshops throughout the country.

In 2012, the CELA program conducted five training of trainer workshops with three separate groups of grassroots facilitators on its human rights defender series of curricula for a total of 100 participants (35 women). These included one training on A Guide to...
Personal Security for Human Rights Defenders, two trainings on the Defending Land course, one training on A Community Guide to Mining and one training on the draft Community Guide to Economic Land Concessions. One training course that was conducted in January over 4 days in Rattankiri Province had participants from a number of different environmental NGOs from around Cambodia, including Phnom Penh, Rattanakiri, Kratie, Strung Treng and Preah Vihear including participants from indigenous communities in Rattanakiri. This training focused on the guidebook A Guide to Personal Security for Human Rights Defenders where topics were covered that included what risks people face, predicting and identifying threats, identifying their seriousness, minimizing security risk, responding to incidents and rights immediately after arrest. The participants will take this information and use it to hold their own training sessions, disseminating the information to other protestors and activists in the communities.

We also conducted our first ever Democracy Summer Camp for university law students at a rural community centre in Kep Province. The camp brought together 32 law students for five days of village immersion and learning the principles of democracy and human rights, combined with plenty of fun. The participants received training of trainers on CELA’s Civics: An Introduction to Law, Human Rights and Democracy course, sandwiched between early morning farm work and late nights of playing games and preparing their lessons for the following day. The camp ended with the participants going to the community school in Chamcar Bei village to facilitate Civics lessons for local students aged from 12 to 18 years.

Simultaneously, CELA has continued to play a central role in supporting solidarity-building activities between communities and grassroots activists defending land, natural resources and housing rights in Cambodia. Specifically, the program continued to focus on supporting networking and community-led advocacy by communities affected by the Boueng Kak Lake development in Phnom Penh, the Railway Rehabilitation Project, and the sugar industry.
A major highlight from 2012 was the Free the 15! Campaign, initiated after 15 Boueng Kak Lake (BKL) representatives were arbitrarily arrested, convicted and sentenced to 2.5 years in prison. EC worked very hard together with other NGO partners and BKL community representatives who remained free to get the 15 out of the prison. While the Development Watch program focused on high-level advocacy and mobilizations at the international level, the CELA program supported the BKL community to lead the campaign on the ground in Cambodia. The CELA team joined other BKL Working Group members to help the community to develop an advocacy plan and then provided financial and moral support to them as they implemented it, including over 12 direct protest actions in one month. On 27 June 2012, faced with enormous pressure domestically and internationally, the Appeal Court decided to release the 13 BKL representatives (the two other representatives were released on bail earlier). While the arrests were totally unjustified, their release constituted a major victory for the people over power, which was achieved mostly through the hard work and determination of the BKL community.

This year the CELA program also began collaborating with Focus on the Global South to host the training of the third generation of “action researchers” in Oddor Meanchey province. The action research process involves information gathering and sharing, analytical discussions, planning and carrying out locally generated, grounded advocacy actions in the area of land/natural resource conflicts. The researchers are gathering information about local conflict conditions related to sugar concessions, militarization, and REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) so that they can discuss and analyse the information with their community members, and work with the communities to devise appropriate strategies and actions to address the issues.

“The Democracy Summer Camp was special for us because it was our first time organising and facilitating a camp for university students, and it went really well. The participants had a great time at the camp, the teaching methodology was very good, the modules were engaging, and the facilitation was top quality. The participants were very also very interested and enthusiastic. During the camp, the students built their communication skills, learned community workshop planning and facilitation skills, and had got experience teaching students in the country side high schools about law in Cambodia. At the end I felt proud about my team because we were working so hard to make this first camp go smoothly and it went without any problems! The first time to do something you expect to make a few mistakes, but there were no big problems. It made the team realise how strong we are and how well we work together as a group.” Makara Bun, CELA Program Manager
Volunteer Program 2012

EC has a long history of facilitating volunteer placements where young people, students, interns, and professionals work and live in Cambodia making tangible and positive impacts on the people with whom they work, as well as on themselves. Over the years our volunteer program has hosted hundreds of people from around the world in meaningful cultural exchanges and solidarity actions – sharing knowledge, skills, experience, laughter and tears – and in turn dissolving many of the borders that separate the world’s people. EC and our local partners are profoundly grateful to all our volunteers for their invaluable contributions.

Uniting People and Cultures with United World College (UWC) Southeast Asia

EC has developed a strong partnership with United World College Southeast Asia, whose stated objective is to “make education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future, and educate individuals to take responsibility for shaping a better world”. Building on UWC’s notion of service at the local, community and global level EC offers graduating students the opportunity to take a service-inspired “gap year” to gain a unique insight to the myriad of challenges facing Cambodians. In 2012, EC hosted eight students from UWC who volunteered with us for nearly four months. We also welcomed over 75 UWC graduates, 8 on their Global Concern exposure trip, and hosted three groups of grade 11 students who helped to build a home for Family Dream Project and teaching English to the vulnerable students in Phnom Penh and Chamcar Bei village.

“After my sister had done her gap year in Phnom Penh and told me how much she loved it, I really wanted to try the same thing and I didn't feel ready for college after graduating. Coming to Phnom Penh would allow me more time as well as allow me to experience how to live independently. The last days of teaching were very sad, but also very gratifying! The students threw me a party and gave me presents all with “I love Bika” written on the paper. It really showed me how grateful they were for me being there and it made me appreciate the experience at a whole new level”. Ambika Chanrai
EC partners with non-profit organization Developing World Connections (DWC) to offer meaningful adventures to volunteers ranging from students to business executives. Based in Canada, DWC works closely with grassroots organizations like EC to support sustainable development initiatives with impoverished communities and offer short-term volunteer placements to people who want to spend their vacation time making a positive difference in the world.

In 2012, EC hosted three DWC groups to Cambodia – a charismatic student in March and energetic group of professionals in July. Among the groups contributions and achievements were the construction of four latrines for families in Chamcar Bei village, building three houses for the poorest families in the Family Dream initiative, helping Family Dream members plough and plant vegetables, assisting local teachers teach English classes and clearing grass from the 193 trees nursery in community vocational training centre. Also, volunteers spent quality time with women from the livelihoods project while making jewellery from coconut shells and learning to hand weave Khmer traditional scarves.

Watkinson School

We welcomed nine Watkinson students for their exposure visit to Chamcar Bei, Kep where they helped to building a thatch and Zink home as part of the as part of the Family Dream Project in Chamcar Bei village.

Student Volunteers

In 2012 we welcomed sixteen individual international and Cambodian student volunteers. The student volunteers supported a wide range of activities including assisting research on access to the hydrology system; assisting with the facilitation of sessions providing basic malaria, dengue, sanitation training and pregnancy care; teaching English and sport; building latrines for a Family Dream Project in Chamcar Bei, planting long bean in the community centre and hand weaving tradition scarf and making jewellery from coconut for our Community Development Program and Community Health Taskforce in Kep.
“Interning at Equitable Cambodia for a summer has been an unforgettable experience. Some days were spent in the office researching international trade policy, while others were spent on the frontlines monitoring Cambodians protesting for their rights. Going to resettlement sites to interview victims of forced evictions, seeing how they were now struggling to afford food and schooling for their children, was not only eye opening but gave a strong sense of motivation for the letters and reports written to advocate on their behalf. I feel lucky to have been given the opportunity to work for such meaningful causes.” Dana Humrighouse

Professional and Career Break Volunteers

With so many individuals wanting to “get involved” with supporting development efforts in Cambodia and more and more professionals taking mid-career breaks, EC welcomes long-term volunteers with advanced skills to work alongside local Cambodian counterparts in a variety of roles and projects throughout the year. In 2012 we hosted four short and long-term volunteers. Linda Tucker (an Australian Legal Advisor), Francis Ryan (an English Communications professional) who were instrumental in developing and supporting the implementation of EC programs, while at the same time building the capacity of our local staff and community partners.

“A volunteer visiting the notorious Tuol Sleung Genocide Museum and learning about the Cambodia’s tragic years under the Khmer Rouge

“Having recently returned from spending time in Cambodia with Equitable Cambodia I was very impressed with Vy (Sotheavy, Volunteer Program Manager) the volunteering coordinator.

I was met at the airport by a smiling representative of the organisation and taken speedily by tuk tuk to my accommodation which was to be above the office in Phnom Penh. Vy was able to select a range of restaurants and places of interest to visit and was always on the end of the phone 24 hours a day to give advice as and when required. I was also assigned my own personal tuk tuk driver which proved invaluable and he was always only a phone call away. The cost of transport was always very reasonable and there was never any need to negotiate a fare. I was asked to deliver a series of leadership and communication courses to the management committee and also to the staff in the main office. This was all arranged very efficiently by Vy and there was never really any need to worry...
about who might attend the course and we managed to some training with almost all the people in the organisation. The final part of my assignment took me to the southern part of the country and to the beautiful rural village of Chamcar Bei in the province of Kep. Travel in Cambodia can often be challenging and the roads difficult to navigate particularly in the rainy season. I arrived at the bus station by tuk tuk and the driver organised my ticket and put my bags on the bus and 5 hours later I was at my destination being met by a smiling face eager to take me to my wonderful accommodation at the Vine Retreat. Vy had once again made sure through her organisational abilities that my travel was stress free and without incident.

I would certainly recommend Equitable Cambodia for a volunteering experience with a group of people who really value your contribution and make you feel very welcome. Cambodia has opened its doors over recent years and the young people are benefiting from the experience and professionalism volunteers are bringing to the project. Thank you Vy and colleagues for making my experience a truly memorable one.”

Francis Raynes

Legal Intern Program

In 2012, EC continued its program of selecting Cambodian law student volunteers from Royal University of Law and Economics in Phnom Penh to undertake internships with the CELA and DW programs. The program encourages outstanding Cambodian law students to develop and nurture and interest in public interest legal work, exposing students to the injustices and difficult conditions that many Cambodians face every day. Legal interns provide invaluable assistance in the legal training-of-trainer programs, bringing an enthusiastic and motivational attitude to the training session. They also contribute directly to the advocacy work of the DW program by helping to draft, edit and translate complaints and other communications with development organisations, conducting legal research and analysis and collecting and organising information relevant to cases. The program aims to give legal interns invaluable experience from working with a human rights organisation and to develop their understanding and passion for human rights issues in their country.

Volunteers also have the opportunity to work on projects outside Phnom Penh. This photo shows a group of volunteers spending time in one of our partner communities in Kep Province.
2012 Financial Summary

Opening Balance

$203,899.00

Income Receipts

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<th>Description</th>
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Disbursements

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<td><strong>Total disbursements</strong></td>
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

Partners

Amnesty International
Aziza Schools
Bank Information Centre
Bridges Across Boarders Southeast Asia
Community
Legal Education Initiative
Building Community Voices
Cambodian Kids Foundation
Cambodian Indigenous Youth Association
Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions
Community Capacities for Development
Community Legal Education Centre
Community Peace Building Network
Developing World Connections
Epic Arts
Focus on the Global South
Housing Rights Task Force
Indigenous Community Support Organization
Indigenous Rights Active Members
International Accountability Project
International School of Phnom Penh
Leaders and Organizers of Community Organizing in Asia
LICADHO
LICADHO Canada
Meakea Aphiwadh
NGO Forum on ADB
NGO Forum on Cambodia
One World Foundation
Room to Read
Sahmakum Teang Tnaut
Sustainable Cambodia
Tiny Toones
United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
United World College of South East Asia
Youth for Peace

We would also like to thank the following donors that made significant contributions to Equitable Cambodia in 2012:

Donors

Diakonia
Cimbria Foundation
Friends of Rainbow School
Heinrich Böll Stiftung
McKnight Foundation
Norwegian People’s Aid
Open Society Institute
Open Society Justice Initiative
Monash University
Oxfam Australia
Planet Wheeler Foundation
Dan Church Aid
Global Development Group
Social Justice Fund
Hunter Lewis Foundation
Blue Moon Foundation
Buff Whiteley
Raymond Dalio
United World Colleges
Developing World Connection
participants in the volunteer program
General Donations
Kep Trio Event
Sahmakum Teang Tnaut

And of course, our directors, staff, interns and volunteers who have given so much off their time, energy and passion to building Equitable Cambodia. We extend our deepest thanks to everyone who has contributed to our work.
Get Involved!

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.

Secure credit card donations can be made on our website at www.equitablecambodia.org. US residents can also make tax-deductible donations through Bridges Across Boarders Southeast Asia (BABSEA). Just send a check made out to BABSEA to PO Box 358887, Gainesville, FL 32635-8800, USA. Be sure to note that the donation is for Bridges Across Boarders Cambodia.

Volunteer

Equitable Cambodia is always looking for dynamic and enthusiastic people to join our team. If you are interested in volunteering with us, please visit our website or contact volunteer@equitablecambodia.org.

Follow us

Get up-to-date information on our work to support Cambodia’s most vulnerable communities and the political situation in Cambodia. You can also give us a louder voice by subscribing to our page, signing our petitions and sharing our page and posts with your friends and family.

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