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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’s economy continued to grow in 2014, a growth estimated at 7.2%. However, development has been unjust; the rich accumulate all the wealth of the country, while the poor are mostly left behind. This year we have seen continued violence and crackdowns by both companies and authority forces in an attempt to stop any social movements. Even though the political standoff between the ruling party and the opposition ended, land, union, political activists and even NGO staff are still being threatened and harassed by the authorities. At least 11 women land activists and a number of other human rights activists have been arrested and imprisoned simply because they are demanding for their land and housing rights. In addition, the adoption of the Law on the Organization of the Courts, the Law on Organization and Functioning of the Supreme Council of the Magistracy, and the Law on the Statute of Judges and Prosecutors in 2014 put the dependency of the judiciary system into further question. These laws continue to be tools for the ruling party to use against its rivals and human rights activists.

In 2014 Equitable Cambodia continued its work to empower Cambodians to demand their rights and to advocate with and on their behalf. This year the organization saw many successes as a result of its continued advocacy, support and capacity building for communities affected by land grabbing. Communities were more organized, unified and confident, vocally demanding their rights, and international accountability mechanisms and advocacy campaigns are paving the way for investors and government to be held accountable.

Equitable Cambodia’s Community Empowerment and Legal Awareness (CELA) Program in 2014 grew its community of grassroots facilitators around the country. It trained 81 facilitators through Training of Trainer workshops on CELA curriculum including on Economic Land Concession, Indigenous Land Rights and Defending Land. This year CELA also conducted trainings on negotiation skills for indigenous communities affected by Vietnamese rubber plantations in Ratanakiri, strengthening communities for the Compliance Advisory Ombudsman (CAO) process that the DW program is supporting communities through.

The Community Organizing for Housing Rights (COHR) Program took off this year, with community organizers trained in 2013 deployed in communities to organize and mobilize them. Through this process, commu-
nities were strengthened, and increased their confidence to analyze issues as well as advocate with district and commune authorities. As a result, many mobilizations took place in 2014, with community members taking their problems into their own hands. In addition, two geographically based networks, the Railway and Lake Network were created, and the existing Canal Network was strengthened to increase the coordination and capacity of communities to advocate for their rights.

After years of campaigning by the Development Watch (DW) Program, an agreement was reached this year between EU’s Delegation to Cambodia and the Government of Cambodia to conduct an independent audit of impacts, losses and compensation deficits for communities affected by the sugarcane concessions. A full audit is planned in 2015. DW also put significant pressure on companies directly and indirectly involved with sugar concessions in 2014. Using leaked information that ANZ bank funded Phnom Penh Sugar Co. Ltd. (PPS), which displaced and dispossessed more than 1,500 families in Kampong Speu province, DW supported several large community mobilizations in front of the bank. DW’s advocacy efforts, including lobby trips to Washington DC, contributed to a major victory for the Boeung Kak Lake community in January 2014 with President Obama signing the 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act. The Act directs the US Executive Director to the World Bank to regularly report to Congress on steps taken to find remedies for the families.

I want to thank our donors, supporters, partners, staff and volunteers. It is their support and dedication that makes EC’s work possible and is deeply appreciated. We look forward to continuing our work with our donors, partners, with activists and threatened communities to advance the human rights situation in Cambodia and to grow and develop as an organization in 2015.

Eang Vuthy
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 2014 the program worked on eight major cases, including the Boeung Kak Lake development project; sugar-cane concessions in Koh Kong, Kampong Speu and Oddar Meanchey provinces; the Asian Development Bank (ADB)/AusAID-funded Railway Rehabilitation Project; the expansion of Phnom Penh International Airport; and rubber concessions in Ratanakiri province. The DW program conducted research and assisted communities to develop and implement multi-pronged advocacy strategies, including filing complaints to international accountability mechanisms; and media advocacy.

The DW program also conducts policy research and advocacy on key legislative and policy developments that impact land and housing rights in Cambodia. In 2014 it focused on a human rights impact assessment of Hoang Anh Gia Lai’s (HAGL) economic land concessions in Ratanakiri.
On 14 January 2014, the Compliance Review Panel (CRP), the compliance mechanism of the ADB, released a damning report stating unequivocally that ADB had failed to comply with its safeguard policies and as a result, the majority of affected households were worse off and impoverished. The report also included recommendations for bringing the project into compliance, including the establishment of a remedial compensation fund of $3-4 million to deliver compensation to all 4,000-plus affected households.

EC and Inclusive Development International (IDI), together with two community representatives, went to Manila from 27-30 January to brief ADB Directors ahead of their Board meeting on January 31 to consider the CRP report and recommendations. After the Board meeting, the Directors adopted a slightly modified version of the CRP’s recommendations and directed ADB Management to develop a verifiable action plan within 60 days to work towards implementing the Board-approved recommendations. Following media and other advocacy efforts by DW over the next four months, on 25 April 2014, ADB Management disclosed its draft Action Plan To Implement the Board Decision on the Recommendations of the CRP Final Report (RAP). Shortly after, DW assisted communities to respond to the RAP by providing a detailed analysis of its inadequacy in bringing the project back into compliance.

In May 2014, following a workshop held with community representatives, EC submitted a Requesters’ Comments on ADB Management’s Action Plan to Implement the Board Decision on the Recommendations of the CRP Final Report to ADB on behalf of affected households. The comments provided detailed analysis of the inadequacies identified in the draft Management Action Plan and proposed amendments to bring the project into compliance with ADB operational policies. The Requesters also urged ADB management to incorporate their comments into a revised Action Plan. The following month, DW supported a mass mobilization of communities affected by the Railway Rehabilitation Project to protest ADB’s failure to consult affected people on the implementation of the Board-approved recommendations. Approximately 300 community members from across the country, including women and children, demonstrated in front of ADB’s Cambodia Resident Mission (CARM) in Phnom Penh. The protestors submitted a petition to the ADB Country Director, demanding meaningful consultation on the management’s remedial action plan.

Following extensive lobbying by DW of the US Executive Director of the World Bank and the US Treasury Department, high-level US government officials have exerted considerable pressure on the ADB to bring the project into full compliance within the timeframe agreed by the Board. In October, the US led a Board Group Visit to Cambodia to pursue discussions with the Cambodian government and the ADB Resident Mission to overcome disagreements over key remedial actions required by the Board.
Phnom Penh Airport Project

Following a complaint filed by DW with International Finance Corporation’s Compliance Advisory Ombudsman (CAO) in 2013 on behalf of 59 households affected by the Airport Project, the CAO undertook several missions to Cambodia in 2014 to try to bring the parties together to resolve the issues. As a result of its efforts, the government contracted an independent auditor, Green Goal, to evaluate property and other prospective losses, and prepare an impact assessment report. Throughout 2014, DW supported the affected communities to engage in this process, monitoring CAO-led trainings and liaising with CAO representatives in Phnom Penh and D.C.

On July 9, DW screened a documentary it produced on the airport case in Phnom Penh. Members of the public, NGO partners, and media outlets attended the event, which included a question and answer session.
On August 20, during a CAO-organized multi-stakeholder meeting, H.E. Soy Sokhan of the Land Committee assured community representatives in attendance that the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) recognizes they are not illegal squatters, but legitimate landowners and would be compensated accordingly. Later that month, the government announced that a Grievance Mechanism Working Group had been established to find solutions for the airport communities. The Working Group consists of officials from the Municipality of Phnom Penh and the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction.

In September, following a request by affected households, DW obtained permission from CAO and other stakeholders to include Trapaing Levea village in the formal complaint, thus allowing the village to become formal stakeholders in the CAO-facilitated dispute resolution process.
Boeung Kak Lake

International advocacy efforts undertaken by DW, including several lobby trips to Washington, contributed to a major victory for the BKL community in January 2014, when President Obama signed the 2014 Appropriations Act. The Act directs the US Executive Director of the World Bank to report regularly to Congress on actions taken by the World Bank to provide appropriate redress for the Boeung Kak Lake households which had been laid out by the World Bank Inspection Panel. Its definition of “appropriate redress” is verbatim from the draft legislative language provided by DW, which includes three elements:

(a) provision of legal security of tenure to the families remaining in the Boeung Kak area who have been excluded from receiving land titles;

(b) clear demarcation of the developer’s concession and the 12.44ha area reserved for the community by a decree of the Prime Minister; and

(c) the establishment of a program for the provision of livelihood support to forcibly evicted Boeung Kak families in accordance with the World Bank Policy on Involuntary Resettlement.

Throughout 2014, DW continued to support community-led efforts to advocate with the Municipality of Phnom Penh and lobby the World Bank and its US Executive Director to push for implementation of remedial actions for BKL in conjunction with the eventual resumption of lending to Cambodia. The World Bank confirmed in late 2014 that new financing commitments will only be considered in conjunction with a new Country Engagement Note, which itself would follow broad-based consultations with all key stakeholders, including civil society.

However, several outstanding issues remain in this case, including:

a. an estimated 3,500 families were evicted with inadequate compensation and no resettlement assistance between 2008-2011; these families are in need of additional support to restore their living conditions;

b. the government has yet to demarcate the boundaries of the 12.44 ha resettlement area, causing continued tenure insecurity; and

c. at least 30 families still residing around the Lake remain excluded from receiving land titles under the Prime Minister’s decree.

The BKL community continued to lead a strong and public advocacy campaign in 2014, with numerous protests, many that were met with violence from police and security forces. In November 2014, seven BKL representatives were arrested when protesting at city hall over drainage problems. They were all convicted and sentenced to one year in prison and a $500 fine for obstructing traffic. Three additional activists and one monk were arrested the next day when protesting the detention of the 7 BKL activists. Starting in November BKL activists protested every Sunday in front of Prey Sar prison to demand the release of the detained activists. DW staff monitored each of these protests.
Sugarcane Concessions / EBA Campaign

**ANZ**

DW conducted advocacy to pressure investors and leading industry buyers to evaluate their relationships with targeted sugar producers. In January 2014, two confidential social and environmental assessment reports were leaked to the Clean Sugar Campaign, revealing that the Australian bank ANZ provided significant financing to Phnom Penh Sugar Co. Ltd. (PPS), which displaced and dispossessed more than 1,500 families in Kampong Speu province. After confronting ANZ with this information, EC shared the information with Australian media and assisted journalists to visit and interview affected communities. In July, ANZ announced that it had severed ties with PPS after the company prematurely repaid its loan to the bank. EC has since advocated, through direct communications with ANZ, media advocacy, and a letter-writing campaign together with Oxfam, IDI and Uniting Church, that the bank use the profits made from the loan to assist displaced families.

In October 2014, EC and IDI submitted a “specific instance” complaint to the Australian National Contact Point for the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on behalf of 681 families in Kampong Speu province. These families were forcibly displaced and dispossessed of their land as a result of the development of sugar plantations by PPS and its sister company, Kampong Speu Sugar Co. The complaint alleges that ANZ contributed to the human rights abuses perpetrated by its former client through their actions and omissions, including their failure to take reasonable measures to prevent or remedy the harms suffered by affected families.

**UK Litigation**

DW staff accompanied lawyers from Leigh Day, the UK law firm that has been retained to represent 200 displaced farmers in Koh Kong province before the UK High Court, on three field visits to Koh Kong province.
In 2013 EC and Licadho filed a complaint to the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) on behalf of affected communities in Oddar Meanchey province alleging that Mitr Phol, through its subsidiaries in Cambodia, has been complicit in a host of human rights violations, including confiscation of land, destruction of homes, and seizure of crops, in clear breach of Cambodian and international laws.

In 2014, the DW team hosted a delegation from the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) in Oddar Meanchey. During this fact-finding mission, Human Rights Commissioner Dr. Niran Pitakwatcharamet visited the plantations and resettlement site with affected communities. The following day, EC held a press conference in Phnom Penh, during which the Commissioner confirmed that Mitr Phol had engaged in illegal land grabbing, and as a result, was complicit in human rights violations.

DW’s research team collected field data in Oddar Meanchey in September and October 2014 to support the NHRCT investigation and presented its findings at a hearing before the NHRCT in Bangkok on 11 November 2014. Two community representatives also gave testimony before the Commission. During the trip, EC’s delegation also met with representatives from Mitr Phol to discuss possible solutions for the affected households.

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**EU’s Everything But Arms (EBA initiative)**

In September 2014 a breakthrough was achieved after years of campaigning when the EU’s Delegation to Cambodia confirmed that an agreement was reached with the Government of Cambodia to commence a comprehensive independent audit of the displacement impacts, losses, and compensation deficits faced by communities affected by the sugarcane concessions. The EU is currently recruiting an internationally recognized land rights and resettlement expert, who will conduct a one-month mission to meet all the stakeholders, conduct an extensive desk review, visit the concession areas and meet with affected communities, and prepare an inception report. This report will provide detailed recommendations for the methodology, structure, timeline, and governance arrangements of the full audit, which is planned in 2015.

**Coca-Cola**

In response to Oxfam’s “Behind the Brands” campaign, Coca-Cola made an unprecedented commitment to “zero tolerance for land grabs” in its supply chain and adherence to the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent across its operations. It also disclosed that Mitr Phol is one of its top three global cane sugar suppliers. Shortly thereafter, EC wrote to Coca-Cola to alert the beverage giant of Mitr Phol’s role in massive land grabs, forced evictions, and illegal logging in Oddar Meanchey province. In late-February, following a response to EC’s request for an independent assessment, Coca-Cola sent a third-party assessment team to Cambodia to investigate Mitr Phol’s operations. Since then, EC has been in regular communication with Coca Cola, including meeting with executives at their headquarters in Atlanta in November 2014, to pressure Coca-Cola to live up to its commitment to “zero tolerance for land grabs”. Coke has applied considerable pressure to Mitr Phol as a result, indicating to the company that if they don’t provide an effective remedy to the displaced families, then Coke will terminate their supply relationship with the company. This pressure appears to be working, because for the first time in four years, Mitr Phol has reached out to EC to initiate a dialogue regarding remedies.
Rubber Case

Following engagement with indigenous communities affected by HAGL concessions in late 2013, DW supported 17 community representatives to travel to Phnom Penh in early 2014 to meet with IFC representatives and voice their concerns directly. DW then drafted a complaint which included a summary of the harms based on the preliminary findings of the impact assessment research conducted, and an analysis of the IFC’s and its client’s compliance with IFC social and environmental policy requirements. This complaint was submitted to the CAO on February 10th. It alleged that HAGL, a Vietnamese company that is partially funded by Dragon Capital (an equity fund that IFC invests in), has been granted a concession for large amounts of land in Ratanakiri province that belong to indigenous communities. This concession had resulted in widespread community and household losses of farming, grazing, residential and forest land as well as burial grounds and spirit forests creating devastating social, economic and cultural impacts. The DW team issued a press release and organized a press conference at Meta House in Phnom Penh where community and NGO representatives announced the complaint to the CAO public. The news was reported widely in the Cambodian press and received international coverage.

On February 24th, the CAO found that the complaint met its eligibility criteria for further assessment. During the CAO’s assessment trip in March/April, the DW team showed CAO representatives the negative impacts of HAGL’s encroachment on community land. After the assessment, CAO secured the agreement of HAGL to engage in a dispute resolution process. HAGL also agreed to two consecutive six-month moratoriums on land clearance activities while the mediation process is ongoing.

EC conducted several workshops on negotiation skills with the community representatives to help prepare them for negotiations with HAGL. The mediation process was blocked by the Ratanakiri provincial governor throughout much of 2014, but following advocacy by EC and its partners with the World Bank and IFC, the Ministry of Interior issued a letter of support for the CAO process in October 2014. This letter has now enabled the process to proceed. CAO visited Ratanakiri in November to conduct training with the communities and the company and lay the groundwork for the mediation. The first joint meeting with the communities and HAGL is due to take place in January 2015.

In order to complement the CAO process, and establish an evidence base to support community’s case, EC and IDI have conducted a human rights impact assessment of the HAGL concessions. Using Indigenous People’s Rights and the Right to Food as its framework, the research team developed a research methodology and a range of research instruments. The research team made four trips to Ratanakiri and completed interviews, surveys and mapping in 20 affected villages in AndongMeas, O’Chum and Koun Mom districts. The impact assessment report has been finalized and will be presented to HAGL during the first joint meeting in January 2015.
COMMUNITY DRIVEN ACCOUNTABILITY (CDA) PROJECT

In January, the CDA team conducted feedback sessions and research validation with communities affected by the Lower Sesan2 Dam project. In each village, between 35 to 50 community members participated in these sessions. Validated data was analyzed and presented in the form of a briefing paper, “Social Issues, Consultation, and People’s Participation with respect to the Lower Sesan 2 Dam.” The paper outlines the communities’ main concerns, key findings, and recommendations going forward. It was produced in both Khmer and English and shared with River Coalition Committee (RCC) and Oxfam Australia. The briefing paper will help to inform future advocacy strategies and activities within the Sesan communities.

In May, three members of DW’s research team travelled to Melbourne, Australia to present key findings of the CDA Project to international partners. The research team met with academics from Monash University at Oxfam Australia’s head office to share research findings, conduct cross-case analysis, discuss outputs, and conclude the Cambodia portion of the joint project. The DW team also gave a presentation on the CDA Project as part of Oxfam’s Development Effectiveness Talks.
The Community Empowerment and Legal Awareness Program (CELA) aims to address significant barriers to just and inclusive development in Cambodia by empowering Cambodians to advocate for human rights change. It is developing a series of interactive, popular education curricula covering rights, laws, paralegal skills, and legal strategies for challenging investment and development projects that do not respect human rights. Using these education curricula, 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 2014, 2510 people (1365 females) 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 2014 CELA conducted five Training-of-Trainers workshops (ToTs) on its various human rights defender curricula to train new facilitators. This included the following:

- 2 workshops on the Defending Land course attended by 33 participants (including 15 women);
- 1 workshop on Economic Land Concessions with 31 participants (14 women); and

In total, 81 participants (20 women) were trained to be grassroots or youth facilitators through these 5 ToT workshops.
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 as they deliver the lessons.

In 2014 grassroots facilitators and youth facilitators conducted 54 workshops in 15 provinces and in Phnom Penh. This included 35 trainings conducted by grassroots facilitators and 19 trainings conducted by youth facilitators or a total of 1672 participants (931 women) trained. These 54 workshops were primarily held in land conflict “hotspots,” where land conflicts are particularly serious and where it is difficult to organize meetings and trainings due to problems with local authorities. Participants of the workshops learned from the two groups of trainers, grassroots and youth facilitators, who complimented each others’ skills and knowledge. The youth facilitators were able to explain theory and answer technical questions based on their legal backgrounds while grassroots facilitators imparted knowledge from their own experiences. This year CELA monitored and provided support for 25 of the workshops including 14 trainings by grassroots facilitators and 11 trainings by youth facilitators.
In 2014, CELA conducted 9 community trainings with participants affected by land issues focusing on communities affected by sugar plantations in Kompong Speu, Koh Kong and Oddar Meanchey provinces and by rubber plantations in Ratanakiri Province. 7 of the trainings were on land and housing rights and advocacy strategies while another 2 trainings were on negotiation, specifically for indigenous communities affected by Vietnamese rubber plantations in Ratanakiri Province, which EC’s Development Watch (DW) Program is assisting in a major complaint to the Compliance Advisory Ombudsman (CAO). In total, 246 participants (106 women) attended CELA trainings in 2014.
Support for Grassroots-Led Advocacy

In 2014, CELA continued to support grassroots-led advocacy of communities and networks involved in land and housing rights issues. CELA’s support included monitoring protests, technical & strategic advice, and financial support. This year the program provided technical and or financial support for 83 activities. It focused on supporting networking and community-led advocacy by communities affected by the BoeungKak Lake (BKL) development in Phnom Penh; the Railway Rehabilitation Project (from Sihanoukville to Poipet); the rubber plantation concession in Ratanakiri Province; the sugar industry in Koh Kong, Kampong Speu and Oddar Meanchey provinces; the Phnom Penh airport expansion; and mining operations in and around Prey Lang forest. Some of the community led-advocacy supported by CELA in 2014 was:

- the campaign to push the government for a boundary on 12.44 hectares in BKL;
- the campaign to release 23 activists from Tropang Thlong Prison;
- the campaign to release the 17 detainees in CC2;
- Petitions and complaints written and submitted to the National Assembly, MOI, and MOJ, by Prek Gik village, Sreh Ambel District to ask for intervention in their land grabbing case.
Publications

In 2014 CELA tested and finalized the second draft of *A Community Guide to Negotiation Skills* with 2000 copies printed. This negotiation skill guide provides a four-day training curriculum that discusses strategies, techniques and tips for negotiating. In doing so, the curriculum is directly and immediately relevant to the challenges faced by communities trying to get government authorities, companies or powerful individuals behind evictions to negotiate fairly. The curriculum was used to train communities affected by the rubber concessions in Ratanakiri in late 2014.

CELA also updated the law within *A Cambodian Guide to Defending Land and Housing Rights*. 1400 books were printed and disseminated to communities across the country.

Democracy Summer Camp

CELA conducted its 3rd Democracy Summer Camp in Kep Province in August 2014 with 32 (15 female) participants from 5 universities including the Royal University of Phnom Penh, Khemarak University, Royal University of Law and Economics and Chenla University. During the camp, participants were given an introduction to Cambodian civil law, human rights and democracy. They were also trained in facilitation skills, and given the opportunity to practice them by planning and conducting mini-facilitations. Furthermore, they learned how to develop training proposals and plans to be conducted after the camp.

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

The Community Organizing for Housing Rights (COHR) program works to organize and federate threatened urban poor communities in Phnom Penh to work together to secure their land and housing rights. To do this, community organizers are embedded in threatened communities to help form and organize communities and unite residents so they are better able to work together to identify and address problems in the community. Community organizers work to improve communities’ capacities in advocacy and negotiation to strengthen security of tenure and as a part of this process, support people-led improvements to the environment, community infrastructure and living conditions. Ultimately, the project aims to transform the network of communities involved in the program into a community federation that is able to advance the rights and interests of the urban poor.

Training Community Organizers

In 2014, COHR trained 8 new community organizer trainees. The trainees went through a 5-day classroom session on basic theory of community organizing and social class analysis. After completion of the classroom session, trainees commenced their 6-12 month field training, going into communities to organize and mobilize them. The COHR trainer and manager followed up with each trainee individually and provided reflection sessions at least two times per month throughout the year. At the end of 2014, 1 of the trainees successfully passed the test to become a community organizer, while another trainee will continue their training into early 2015. 6 trainees were unable to pass the test.

Organizing and Mobilizing Communities

This year 10 community organizers trained by COHR in 2013, and 8 new community organizer trainees were initially deployed in 27 urban poor communities. Later on the number of communities deployed to was reduced to 20, as trainees could not cover all 27 communities. However, relationships were maintained with all communities.

To organize and mobilize communities, community organizers and community organizing trainees went into communities to 1) understand the community structure, 2) talk to villagers to understand their situation, 3) identify and prioritize physical infrastructure or housing rights related issues 4) identify practical tactics to unite the community and 5) identify existing and potential leaders to work within the community.

Through this process community organizers and trainees collected information that could be used to stimulate collective action on issues relevant to each community. They then worked with communities to identify ways to resolve the issues to achieve their desired outcomes. To do so, organizers facilitated community meetings and learning sessions to build communities’ organizing and advocacy capacities, strengthen their solidarity and increase their confidence. Financial support was also provided to communities to assist with essential infrastructure upgrades relating to drainage, roads and garbage removal. Some examples of community actions in 2014 include:

- In February 2014, 50 families from Prek Takong 1 village mobilized to solve a flooding issue caused by a local landowner who had filled in a pond. The flooding was making it difficult for residents to access their homes. The community mobilized to pressure the village chief and the local landowner and as a result, the landowner agreed to make a financial contribution to the construction of a new road. COHR and the community residents also made financial contributions and by mid-March the road was completed for the residents to use.
In March 2014, over 400 residents of eight communities living along Stoeung Meanchey canal mobilized to participate in a public forum with the District Governor to clarify their concerns about the development of the canal. At the end of this public forum, the Governor publicly announced to the residents and media that there will be no evictions in the Stoeung Meanchey canal communities. In response to this, the residents made an announcement that they will continue to clean the garbage from the canal in April and before Khmer New Year. This announcement aimed to show to the public that the Stoeung Meanchey residents were not causing problems, and instead actively taking care of their community. During the public forum, the Governor also agreed to the residents request for a working group to study whether on-site upgrading could move forward.

On 24 July, one of the organizing trainees, together with four leaders of Village 17 went to follow up on their demand for financial support from the Sangkat for their sewage system initiatives. The Sangkat chief agreed to give them US$1,250. The trainee organized a reflection with leaders and they agreed to call for a community meeting to discuss concrete steps for the construction.
Impact story

Dependency or Independence

The Kva community situated in Sangkat Dangkor of Phnom Penh is composed of 153 families. Most of the villagers are Cintri workers, garment factory workers, and ice factory workers. A few people are civil servants and or work in the informal sector. The community did not have the confidence to go to the local authorities directly about their problems, one of which was a problem with flooding. The flooding problem therefore remained unresolved.

In 2014, the COHR program deployed Sarun, a community organizer, to the village. The organizer and the villagers worked together to identify the community’s problems and planned to confront the authorities to demand services to pump and drain water out of the pond that was causing flooding. To do so villagers mobilized in front of the District office to demand that they fulfil their obligation to assist them. They then conducted regular two-week follow ups with the authorities to see if any progress was being made. This strengthened the community and demonstrated to them that they could rely on each other to solve their problems.

Sarun, the community organizer, reports that Kva villagers have strengthened their capacity to discuss their problems and devise effective strategies to confront local authorities. The community has requested that Sarun spend more time in the community to educate other villagers on the importance of mobilizing to tackle community issues. They hope that this will increase participation in the mobilizations against the authorities.
Creating a Community Federation

COHR is aiming to set up a Community Federation in target urban poor communities by the end of 2015. As a part of this process, starting in August 2014, COHR aimed to create two new geographically based networks; the Railway Network and the Lake Network, and strengthen the existing Canal Network. It did this by bringing leaders from each area to work together on issues pertaining to their communities.

In 2014 the Railway Network communities completed four main activities: 1) studying potential relocation sites 2) updating community data on individual families’ resettlement and compensation for future advocacy purposes 3) discussing strategies to demand information from the ADB on the Railway Project, and 4) discussing alternative development plans. The Canal Network communities activities were: 1) working to get a public promise from the Khan governor for on-site upgrading, 2) updating community data on individual families’ resettlement and compensation, 3) mobilizing to clean the canal, and 4) creating an alternative development plan. The Lake Network, worked on 1) demanding land titles from local authorities, and 2) creating awareness about future development plans for Boeung Tompun.

In addition, COHR is working to identify natural leaders from the Railway, Canal and Lake networks to manage and lead the community federation. So far it has identified 45 potential leaders.

Annual Gathering

On 15-16 November 2014, the COHR program organized a two-day annual gathering with 92 leaders and residents (49 female) from the Railway, Canal and Lake Networks. This gathering officially established the Lake and Railway Networks and acknowledged the strengthening of the existing Canal network. During the gathering, participants also learned from the experiences of senior community organizers from Indonesia about on-site upgrading and federation establishment. The gathering also gave a space for communities from the three different networks to develop relationships and network with each other.
The EC Volunteer Program strives to bring people together from across the world in meaningful exchanges to make sustainable and positive impacts on both the individuals and the communities we support. Volunteers have the opportunity to gain insight into Cambodian life and culture, as well as an introduction into the world of development and human rights work. In turn, volunteers play a key role in supporting the growth of EC projects. In 2014 Volunteer Program hosted almost two hundred volunteers in Phnom Penh and in Kep province.

United World College of South East Asia (UWCSEA)

EC has enjoyed a long partnership with United World College of South East Asia. This year EC hosted 3 groups of grade 11 students, a total of 13 students, for their independent project week. One group assisted the local teacher at Tiny Toones with English classes, as well as with English classes at Rudi Boa using art and educational games. The other two groups worked side by side with the community members in Odong village, Kep province to build a house for a family suffering from serious illness. The house was built with a zinc roof and walls, and included a toilet.

In April, 83 grade 8 students and teachers from UWCSEA visited Tiny Toones, Rudi Boa, and Wat Thann after dividing into smaller groups. They decorated book covers with the local students, drawing and coloring, and sticking flowers on them, to the students’ liking. At the end of their visit they learned hip hop dancing from Tiny Toones break dancers in return. Both parties had a blast before departing to the UWCSEA students headed back to Singapore.
This past month has been amazing. Both the placement at Impact school and lodging at EC headquarters have made me feel so at home. Teaching English at Impact school has given me a new perspective on life. From teaching 35 six-year-olds at once to disciplining groups of cheeky boys, I have found a new respect for teachers and mothers. This job is not easy! More importantly, I’ve found a new motivation to study. On the first day, I saw six sometimes even seven students cram onto one bench and table, all fighting for some writing space and a good view of the board. Even though they had already missed half of the lesson and it was raining cats and dogs, students still bothered to come to class and scrambled to take notes on what they had missed. This was a total contrast to everything I knew back in Singapore. Students showed little interest in school; found excuses to skip class, not finish homework and made little effort. Our motivation for learning paled in comparison to the Cambodians.

A startling wake-up call, this was also a hard truth I so desperately needed. To my surprise their motivation and fire for learning never extinguished throughout the month. Always eager to learn, my students have taught me an invaluable lesson of appreciating education. It was and still is a great shame that they are deprived of a first-class education simply because of their socio-economic situation.

Sue Ann, UWCSEA grade 12
Developing World Connections (DWC)

EC partners with a non-profit organization, Developing World Connections, to offer meaningful experiences to volunteers. Based in Canada, DWC works closely with grassroots organizations like EC to support sustainable development initiatives for impoverished communities.

This year EC hosted three groups, a total of 20 volunteers from DWC. Each group spent two weeks in Odong village, Kep province. They worked with the families and community members to complete 11 latrines and the community center.

In March, team leader Wade Billy and his seven team members Don, Tom, Beth, Ben, Lorene, Robin, and Janet, many of who had worked on the project previously, worked with locals to complete five latrines. They lay bricks, dug holes, inserted a cement cistern holding tank, plastered walls and completed the latrines with Zinc roofs and squat toilets. Although the team worked through the sweltering heat they had a very enjoyable time at the project site due to the friendly interaction with the locals. The group also had the opportunity to visit a local school in Chambcar Bei village.

In July 2014, EC welcomed team leader Dan and six United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) volunteers on a cultural immersion trip to Cambodia. They spent some time in Phnom Penh visiting cultural attractions and various military institutions before heading to Kep province to work on latrine construction for two weeks. Even with some weather challenges, with a few days of pouring rain, they still managed to finish four latrines for the families in Odong village.

Some of the highlights for the team included visiting the informal local school and playing soccer with students and the local teachers. One of the volunteers sang some songs with his guitar and taught the students to do the Hokey-Pokey, which the students really enjoyed.

In November, team leader Sarah led 4 other members Scott, Todd, Sandra and Catherine who worked two weeks to complete the last two latrines build in 2014. They completed one latrine for villagers in Odong and another for the Women Handicraft Project where girls can earn income by making scarves and jewelry to help support families while attending school.
Global Explorers (GE)

Global Explorers is a nonprofit organization with a mission of inspiring responsible global citizenship and provides transformative opportunities for students and educators. It has been an EC partner since 2013.

During the second year of partnership between GE and EC, 15 students and teachers volunteered their time in Kep to construct two latrines- digging holes, laying bricks, plastering walls and inserting a cement cistern holding.

Global Explorers has felt very fortunate to partner with Equitable Cambodia for the past two years in order to provide latrines for families in the Kep area. While our students love seeing the archeological sites around the country and participating in activities such as cooking classes, it is the service projects with groups like Equitable Cambodia that truly teach them about the culture AND about themselves. A day of hard, physical work alongside these beautiful, welcoming families will hopefully inspire all of our students to become responsible global citizens that will strive to make the world an even better place. Even with blistered hands and sunburned cheeks, the only complaint from the students is that we are not able to spend more time with Equitable Cambodia! Thank you for all you are doing to improve the lives of so many Cambodians, and for letting Global Explorers be even just a small part of your work!

Shannon, Teacher

MT. Pleasant Kep Health Initiative (MKHI)

MKHI, an NGO based in Canada, places students in Kep province for 4 to 6 weeks province of Kep, Cambodia, where they engage in volunteer work, individual study, and knowledge transfer with local partner organizations. As students stay in the villages that they work in, MKHI provides a pre-training before participants arrive in Cambodia to make sure interactions with and impacts on host community are positive and respectful.

Participants stay directly in the village where they work. As such, MKHI puts a strong emphasis on providing training for their volunteers before the placement in order to both optimize the experiential learning process and to ensure that the impact on the host community is positive and respectful. In 2014 a group of 12 MKHI volunteers worked alongside the community in Odong village for 3 weeks helping with in latrine/bathroom construction. During these 3 weeks they dug holes, laid bricks, plastered the walls, and set up water basins completing 6 latrines.

Individual and Career Break Volunteers

This year one long term volunteer from Canada and nine university students from Myanmar, Brazil, Denmark, England, America and Australia volunteered with Equitable Cambodia’s programs. The university students were able to gain experience and put theory into practice by getting involved in development work while contributing to EC’s programs, building the capacity of staff and communities by working side by side with them. They helped with various work such as editing reports, minute taking, research, monitoring trainings in the provinces, maintaining the volunteer facebook page and creating a video to highlight the impact of eviction communities. Some of them also assisted with English classes in our partner schools, Impact School, Wat Thann and Tiny Toones.
My volunteering placement with Equitable Cambodia
Mark Hall

The main project I worked on during my time here [at EC] was creating a video with colleagues to highlight the impact of eviction on people who had been forcibly evicted in the past. With colleagues I visited the resettlement sites, interviewed people living there and then returned to make a video of their experiences. We have just about finished the first version and I really look forward to seeing the final version when it is published!

I knew that forced evictions were a real problem, but it is only after doing this work with EC that I realise just how difficult it can be for people to have to move from where they are living and for urban poor communities, displacement can cause a huge range of problems for the people affected. As well as being denied the benefits of living within the city, the conditions of the resettlement sites, the remote location and the upheaval all combine to make day to day life a lot worse for most residents. Hopefully our work in producing the video will have a positive impact and encourage residents to resist eviction in future.

In summary, it was a great pleasure to work at EC. I really appreciated that the staff were friendly and welcoming, very committed to their work and very knowledgeable. I am sure that my experience here will be very useful for me in future and hopefully I contributed to the work that EC does.

Cambodian Legal Interns

In 2014 we had four Cambodian legal interns from the Royal University of Law and Economics working with the CELA and DW team. These interns made invaluable contributions to the programs' work and at the same time gained experience and developed their capacity in human rights work.

“I have changed positively since working in the CELA team; I built my capacity, changed my attitude and improved both my law skills and English skills. The biggest thing for me has been that I was involved in society, even though it may not be as direct as some other activists or human right defenders. I was able to be involved to help my society by sharing my knowledge and giving advice to communities and youth through the trainings I was involved in. This is part of a social movement and a step for positive change. I really like this work because I am a Cambodian, and I do not want to see any Cambodian people being abused or their rights violated. I want Cambodian people to know their rights and fight human rights abuses to make democracy a reality.

Vanthea Sy, CELA intern

To learn more about our volunteer program and the wide range of volunteering options facilitated by Equitable Cambodia, please see our website: http://www.equitablecambodia.org/volunteer
Or, send an email to: volunteer@equitablecambodia.org
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  
Aziza Schools  
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  
Developing World Connections  
Epic Arts  
ESCR Net  
Focus on the Global South  
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  
Leaders and Organizers of Community Organizing in Asia  
LICADHO  
LICADHO Canada  
Meakea Aphiwadh  
Mekong Watch  
MT. Pleasant Kep Health Initiative (MKHI)  
NGO Forum on ADB  
NGO Forum on Cambodia  
One World Foundation  
Room to Read  
Sahmakum Teang Tnaut  
Sustainable Cambodia  
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

We would also like to thank the following donors that made significant contributions to Equitable Cambodia (EC) in 2013:

**Donors**

DanChurchAid/Christian Aid  
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Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research WOTRO Scientific for Global Development (NWO).  
Norwegian People's Aid  
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Oxfam Australia  
Oxfam Great Britan  
Oxfam Novib  
Planet Wheeler Foundation  
Rotary Club  
Southeast Asia Development Program (SADP)  
The McKnight Foundation  
United World Colleges  
Volunteer contributions
2014 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Opening Balance $ 256,079.00

### Income Receipts

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<th>Source</th>
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<td>Grant Receipts</td>
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<td>General Donation &amp; Volunteer Program</td>
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### Disbursements

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<td>Development Watch Program</td>
<td>227,025.81</td>
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<td>Community Organizing for Housing Rights Program</td>
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<td>Community Empowerment and Legal Awareness Program</td>
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Sectors of Disbursements:
- Development Watch Program, $227,025.81, 31%
- Community Organizing for Housing Rights Program, $188,310.88, 26%
- Community Empowerment and Legal Awareness Program, $176,127.96, 24%
- Community Driven Accountability Project, $36,547.05, 5%
- Cambodia Justice Initiative, $46,280.96, 6%
- Volunteer Program, $35,911.09, 5%
- Central Office Cost, $20,950.68, 3%
GET INVOLVED!

Donate

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 Borders 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 Equitable 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

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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.

Website: www.equitablecambodia.org
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