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 2016 - 2018

Our overall goal is to transform the national development model into one that respects, protects and progressively fulfills 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 2016-2018:

1. Threatened communities are motivated and organized to work together to secure their land and housing rights.
2. Cambodians are more informed and capable of defending their rights and advocating for equitable and sustainable development.
3. Respect for land, housing and natural resource rights of poor and vulnerable communities is improved through increased transparency and accountability of business and development actors operating in Cambodia.
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

In 2016, Cambodia witnessed a series of government crackdown incidents on opposition voices and critics, especially those who are at the forefront defending human rights and democracy.

Cambodia was shocked at Dr. Kem Ley’s daylight murder in the middle of Phnom Penh City. The mass grieving which took place following the tragedy saw hundreds of thousands of Cambodians take to the streets to honour his legacy, and revealed the extent of his influence within the country. His assassination was a clear attempt to scare off and silence opposition voices and as well as human rights defenders. Human Rights groups from Cambodia’s civil society, many Phnom Penh-based embassies, and the UN, condemned this cruel attack and called for a transparent and independent investigation into the killing, and for the perpetrator, and those who are behind his murder, to be brought to justice. Many civil society observers, and Cambodian citizens continue to have serious doubts about the court proceedings to date, the independence of the criminal justice system and the Cambodian judiciary more broadly.

As Cambodia heads toward commune elections in 2017, and national elections in 2018, political tensions continue to rise every day. We see more opposition parliamentarians and human rights activists being arrested on politically motivated charges, and subsequently sentenced to lengthy terms in jail as a result of their activism.

Specifically, four senior staff of the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOCS) – Ny Sokha, Nay Vanda, Yi Soksan and Lim Mony, along with election official, Mr. Ny Chakrya. – were charged with bribery of a witness under the Criminal Code (Article 548) and sent to prison in May 2016 without trial. Simultaneously, well-known land activist and Boeung Kak Lake community representative Tep Vanny was also arrested, along with other activists, for conducting “Black Monday,” a peaceful awareness raising campaign to demand the release of the four ADHOCS Staff and Chakrya.
Numerous members of the opposition party are also imprisoned on charges ranging from “defamation” to “incitement”.

Despite these serious attacks on human rights defenders, including pressure being placed by authorities on members of our own Equitable Cambodia team, we still pursue the mission of our organization to empower Cambodians to demand their rights and to hold responsible actors accountable for their wrongdoings. This year, the organization saw significant impacts on the cases that we have been supporting for the past 5 years through our three main programs.

Equitable Cambodia’s Community Empowerment and Legal Awareness (CELA) Program continued to enhance and strengthen networks of community advocates around the country. It trained almost 100 new grassroots facilitators and youth partners through Training of Trainers workshops, building their capacity to effectively share their acquired knowledge about defending land rights with the rest of their community members.

This year, with support from our Community Organizing for Housing Rights Program (COHR), EC facilitated the establishment of the Urban Poor Community Federation, based on democratic processes, and a collective leadership model. The Community Federation will be led by 19 community leaders from communities in three geographic areas (Boung Tumpun Lake, Stung Meanchey Canal and Railway Communities). One of the key highlights for this year, which was achieved through collective action resulting from the federation’s advocacy on a proposed expressway project, was the announcement by Prime Minister Hun Sen, on 5 January 2016, that the government would suspend the entire project. Hundreds of families that would have been affected by this project are now safe from eviction.

In the Development Watch Program (DW) supported HAGL Case, a rubber plantation affecting indigenous villagers in Ratanakiri two villages, Kachout and Ket, have officially been excised/excluded from the HAGL Concessions, and these villages are now safe from any future land encroachment by HAGL. The HAGL land concession has to date been reduced by 10,581 hectares. EC is working with community members, partner NGOs to obtain sustainable land tenure security.

Another major outcome was realized in 2016 in the Airport Case. A senior government minister announced during a meeting at Por Sen Chey District Hall, attended by around 600 affected families and representatives from the Council of Ministers, that plans for the expansion of the Phnom Penh airport were being suspended. In December 2016, the State Secretariat of Civil Aviation submitted a confirmation letter that the airport would not be expanded and that land titles could be issued to the communities living in the area.

Finally, I want to sincerely thank our donors, supporters, partners, staff, community activists and volunteers. Your support and encouragement are fundamental for the achievements of our organization and we look forward to seeing the improvement of the human rights situation, and development policy in Cambodia going forward, and a continued strengthening of our impact in 2017 and beyond.

Eang Vuthy
Executive Director
DEVELOPMENT WATCH PROGRAM

Development Watch Programs’ (DW) goal is to respect land, housing and natural resource rights of poor and vulnerable communities and promote improvement through increased transparency and accountability of business and development actors operating in Cambodia. The Program works to promote a human rights approach to development through monitoring, research, and advocacy activities. DW conducts evidence-based advocacy on development, trade and investment activities that violate, or risk violating, the human rights of local communities with a view to preventing harm, seeking redress and holding responsible actors accountable.

The Program’s expertise lies in supporting communities whose housing, land and natural resource rights are infringed by development or economic activities that receive support from foreign investors or bilateral and multilateral development institutions. Support to communities affected by these land projects has included, amongst other things, monitoring of community-led protests, facilitation of community meetings, facilitation in the development of advocacy strategies (at the local, national and international level), legal assistance in accessing and navigating international and extra-territorial accountability mechanisms, and media advocacy. DW’s ongoing cases include the Boeung Kak Lake development project; the sugarcane concessions in Koh Kong, Kampong Speu, Preah Vihear and Oddar Meanchey provinces; the ADB/AusAID-funded railway rehabilitation project from Poipet to Sihanoukville; the proposed expansion of Phnom Penh International Airport; and the HAGL Rubber Case in Ratanakiri province.
Follow the Money

In January 2016, EC began working with partner Inclusive Development International (IDI) on the Follow the Money (FTM) initiative. Follow the Money is a collaborative initiative of IDI, in partnership with Columbia University, Equitable Cambodia, CIRUM/LandNet (Vietnam) and Land Core Group (Myanmar).

Follow the Money uses licensed financial databases and other digital resources to uncover and expose those who profit from harmful investments. By systematically shining a light on the backers of these projects, mapping investment chains and relevant points where pressure can be applied, and providing advice on potential advocacy strategies, FTM aims to help people defend and secure their rights. Communities affected by harmful land cases can request investment chain mapping and analysis from the FTM team.

As the Cambodia partner for the FTM initiative, EC has been working with IDI to disseminate the contents of investment chain memos to local partners, and is now developing strategies for utilizing information generated by the project. For example, in March, 19 participants, including community members, as well as partners from PKH, DPA and MOSAIC attended a meeting organized by EC and IDI to present the initial findings on IDI’s investment chain mapping of Heng Fu’s sugar plantation in Preah Vihear province. During the following week, a second presentation was conducted in Phnom Penh to UNOHCHR, SADP, Licadho, ActionAid and EC staff.

The cases that EC and IDI may consider working on in more detail in the near future include the Don Sahong dam in southern Laos, and a Malaysian rubber plantation in Mondulkiri. On request from local partners, EC will provide focused support on issues including: legal training, negotiation training, documentation and evidence collection, community organizing, and so on. Investment chain mapping has also been conducted on the ING City project in Phnom Penh, which EC’s CO program has used to inform communities about the actors behind the project.
HAGL Rubber Case

In the HAGL Case, the complaint to the CAO filed by EC and IDI on behalf of villages and the support to villages for the ongoing CAO mediation led to a major victory. In January 2016, EC, affected communities of Nay, Kachout and Ket villages, partner NGOs, the CAO, HAGL and provincial authorities carried out a joint mapping trip. As a result of this joint demarcation, two villages (Kachout and Ket) have officially been excised/excluded from the HAGL Concessions, and these villages are now safe from any future land encroachment by HAGL.

The joint mapping exercises led by community leaders resulted in the creation of detailed village maps that demonstrate the extent of each communal land and their internal features of customary use. Further, the boundary demarcation process gave the opportunity to conflicting villages to settle long-lasting land disputes, which had been obstructing the validity of each claim.

The mapping process itself has led to the empowerment of community representatives. As a part of supporting the mediation process, DW arranged for Forest People's Program (FPP) and DW's Technical Coordinator to conduct a training on mapping for community representatives. During the training, FPP gave examples of mapping in other countries then had community representatives practice using handheld GPS equipment and GPS voice recording. The community representatives spent time practicing mapping areas of Banlung, Ratanakiri. When the joint mapping trip was conducted in Ket, Kachout and Nay villages with the participation of local authorities, CAO, HAGL, EC and partners, it was the community members who led the mapping of their own villages. The mapping process thus empowered communities to take charge of their own claims. In addition, the mapping process built awareness and consensus amongst community members regarding the features of the land that belongs to them and provided a visual perception of the impacts in order to plan their common demands.
One of the most notable impacts of HAGL’s encroachment over the lands of the affected communities was the harassment from company workers’ and authority officials. These included physical threats, gender-based abuse and general discriminatory intimidation. As a result of the CAO-led dispute resolution process, which is based on a participatory, inter-party cooperation between communities, private sector, and authorities, these threats are now virtually non-existent. In the November reflection meeting in Siem Reap, community representatives reiterated that this was one major outcome of the process so far.

The company also subsequently opened the roads it built within the concession area for community use. This was perceived by the villagers as a demonstration of cooperation and good will by the company. Community members are now able to use these roads to more efficiently travel to their fields, transport their crops, and travel to other villages. Indeed, communal use of these roads are envisioned by both parties as being one of the major long-term solutions to the dispute resolution process.

The participatory engagement from local authorities and the level of commitment and cooperation from HAGL in itself is a major outcome of the CAO mediation process. This level of engagement has never been seen in a land dispute of this kind. The successful completion of this case will be a landmark in Cambodia and Southeast Asia.
Clean Sugar Campaign

The DW team worked extensively this year with Kampong Speu communities in Oral and Thpong District to deal with Phnom Penh Sugar’s campaign to pressure community members into taking $500 compensation per household through misinformation and intimidation and by buying off community representatives. In response, DW helped to facilitate villages select additional community representatives then worked and communicated closely with representatives from individual villages. DW organized meetings at the village level to spread important information as well as in Kampong Speu town with community representatives to build solidarity and capacity to deal with the situation.

Although some households were pressured into accepting compensation, there were positive outcomes of DW’s work with these communities in 2016. Through DW’s work, community representatives increased their knowledge about their land and human rights and improved their facilitation skills for meetings with their community members. Community representatives also strengthened their bonds with community representatives from other villages and cooperated to create and implement strategies to deal with Phnom Penh Sugar. Community representatives organized their own meetings in their communities, some of which the DW team monitored. For example, representatives in Thpong district organized at least two meetings with their community members to come up with a comprehensive protocol to prevent the company’s attempt to divide the community. DW staff’s close interaction with the communities, as well as the trainings and meetings DW organized, have helped to motivate community representatives to continue to advocate for their case and demand fair and just remedy.

The two Sugar Justice Network meetings conducted this year provided a space for affected communities from four provinces to share updates on their situations on the ground as well as create province-specific and joint action plans. An outcome of these meetings this year was the decision by the four communities to submit a joint petition to relevant government institutions requesting intervention in their case as well as the organization of a press conference to bring attention to their petition. This community-led advocacy brought attention back on the longstanding land conflicts due to sugar concessions in Cambodia.
In October, EC coordinated with UNOHCHR to organize a trip to Kampong Speu for the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Cambodia, Ms. Rhona Smith. The Special Rapporteur met with affected community members in Oral and Thpong Districts as well as with the provincial governor and a company representative. Close to 1000 community members attended the meetings with the Special Rapporteur. Since her visit, EC and communities have felt that there is less intimidation by the company and government.

EC and its partner IDI submitted a new complaint on the behalf of communities in Oddar Meanchey to Bonsucro against its readmission of Mitr Phol and EC has continued to correspond with Bonsucro regarding the complaint. To provide additional information to Bonsucro, and in preparation for possible negotiation with Mitr Pohl, EC worked with community representatives in Oddar Meanchey extensively in 2016 to validate data on affected people, quantify losses, map community lands and collect information on village histories.

In November, EC’s Executive Director, Eang Vuthy, conducted a lobbying trip to Sweden and Denmark, EU member states which are considered to have strong laws and policies to promote human rights globally. The lobby trip was conducted with the Deputy Director of LICADHO and was supported by Equitable Cambodia’s partners Diakonia and DCA. This trip focused on the Business and Human Rights situation in Cambodia, especially the issue around shrinking democratic space in Cambodia. During this trip, Vuthy was able to meet with various actors, including governments, parliamentarians and members of the private sector to discuss trade and the situation in Cambodia. Vuthy met with approximately twenty parliament members of these two countries and asked them to pay close attention to human rights issues in Cambodia as the situation has been worsening in the last year and there is a concern that the situation will escalate before the commune and national elections. EC and LICADHO called upon the parliament members to work with EU parliament members to follow up on the EBA-Sugar Audit in Cambodia. As a result of the meetings, the parliamentarians were convinced to organize a delegation visit to Cambodia before the commune election.
EC and other NGOs working under the banner of the Clean Sugar Campaign, have for years called upon EC has been monitoring the Railway case since the request of compliance review in 2012. EC facilitated the visit of the CRP to monitor the progress of the remedial action plan as approved by the ADB Board of Directors and ADB Management. During the monitoring mission made on April 20-27, the CRP found that the capacity of the Inter-ministerial Resettlement Committee (IRC) to build time-bound and verifiable actions to remedy the impoverished livelihood of resettled communities was improved. The CRP saw that although the Grievance Resolution Mechanism was yet to be properly tested by communities, the IRC had made improvements on their side for the new GRM to be used. The finding of the CRP opens the possibility that Cambodian authorities will be more responsive to international standards when undertaking future resettlement plans.

However, the CRP also found that several improvements still have to be made regarding the facilities (e.g. water supply schemes, roads, waste treatment plants) at the Battambang, Poipet and Sihanoukville resettlement sites, the debt loads of resettled villagers and the payment of appropriate compensations. In such circumstances, EC will continue to support affected communities and pressure relevant stakeholders towards the full restoration of households’ livelihoods.
Mosaic Project

Throughout 2016, the MOSAIC project continued its collaboration with community based research initiatives. In Steung Treng, the MOSAIC team conducted research on forest clearing through interviews with the commune chief of Kaing Cham, who created a social land concession outside of Kes village which included forested areas. Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN) researchers made a complaint to the provincial authorities, and with the support of individuals from the affected villages commissioned government officials to investigate the case. Provincial and district authorities have asked PLCN researchers for information on size of affected areas.

Mosaic and PLCN researchers conducted research on resin collection, and a new resin forest patrol group started by Conservation International. The research was used to produce a report: ‘Community Coherence Assessment: Prey Lang Forest Protection Communities.’ The Report has been cited and used by advocacy groups and negative assessments of international conservation organizations prompted discussions between PLCN and these organizations.

The Mosaic team has been collecting data related to land concessionaire, Think Biotech Ltd, a South Korean company who claims to be undertaking a re-forestation project/ To date a short documentary video has been made, along with various reports, and community sourced evidence of company abuses. The team brought project partners to the concession in Feb 2016 and partnered with a Phnom Penh Post journalist who published a news article citing one of Mosaic’s academic publications. Company activities have slowed down considerably since this time. Mosaic team investigations into Think Biotech have helped position the community to actively pursue advocacy activities under the Mosaic project, which led to the mapping of community holdings inside company boundaries. When Think Biotech came to the area to discuss demarcating their project boundaries, PLCN researchers were aware that the company area also included community resin forest areas.
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND LEGAL AWARENESS PROGRAM (CELA)

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. The program is developing a series of interactive and popular education curricula covering rights, laws, paralegal 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.

Curriculum Development

The team finalized the second draft of the Community Guide to the Circular 03, consisting of an easy guideline for people at risk of forced eviction in urban areas to improve their informal settlements. Translations of the guide were also done in Khmer. Copies of Cambodian laws such as the Constitutional Law and Land Law 2001 were bought and distributed to affected communities through community training sessions. The Cambodian Guide to Defend Land and Housing Rights and CIVICs Guide were reprinted and the Grassroots trainer and youth trainer diary book was printed. The Community Guide to Defend Land and Housing Rights, the Community Guide to Economic Land Concessions and the Civics Guide were used by youth partners, grassroots trainers and affected communities through community training sessions and are also making use of the 2001 Land Law, Constitutional Law and Forestry Law to claim their land rights, indigenous rights, right to mobilize, right to association, and the right to manage natural resources at the local level.
Training of Trainers Workshop

CELA continued to build on its foundation of participatory education and legal empowerment of marginalized people by using its existing bank of resources to train 1343 people (804 women) during 2016. CELA conducted 5 Training of Trainers workshops (ToTs) courses on Land and Housing Rights, Negotiation Skills and Economic Land Concessions, which was attended by a total of 82 (41 females). A new group of grassroots facilitators were selected from the Democracy Summer Youth Camp 2015, including university students and people from communities affected by economic land concessions in rural areas.

After the 5 Training-of-Trainer workshops, participants submitted 39 training proposals to CELA and 28 of these workshops were conducted in land conflict hotspots in Phnom Penh and in 8 Provinces. The CELA team monitored and provided support for 21 of 28 community workshops. During these indirect trainings CELA encouraged, supervised and offered facilitation support to the trainers, reaching a total of 1161 participants (of which 733 were women). CELA staff observed that these training sessions were particularly useful for communities because the youth partners and grassroots trainers complemented each other: the youth partners’ legal background ensured that grassroots trainers were able to explain theory and answer technical questions, while grassroots trainers provided experience. After the 5 training of trainer workshops, participants became more confident and brave in facilitating the training.
Democracy Summer Camp and youth training

CELA’s Democracy Summer Camp on the CIVICs guide: Introduction to Law, Rights and Democracy, was conducted in Kep province with 25 participants, of which 9 were female. After participating in the camp, youth who attended the camp conducted 12 youth trainings on CIVICs guide in 7 different provinces by youth. The total number of participants attending these trainings was 346 (197 women). 211 of these participants took a post test of which 189 (90%) passed. Through learning and understanding about laws, human rights and democracy youth trainers became more active through public speaking during forums and on social media to express their opinions on human rights issues. 4 youth spoke on radio talk shows as guest speakers to share their knowledge acquired through the Civics course to youth in Cambodia.

If you want to learn more about Democracy Summer Camp, please find us at: Facebook.com/DemocracySummerCamp

Supporting Community Led Advocacy

During this time, CELA also monitored and provided financial support to some community-led advocacy activities organized by the BKL community, Railway community and the communities affected by the Koh Kong Sugar Concession. CELA collaborated with partner NGOs to support communities in Koh Kong by providing financial contribution and technical support to organize protests with the purpose of demanding the release of three young activists of Mother Nature who unjustly spent 10 months in pretrial detention. Following the massive mobilization, Mr. San Mala, Mr. Try Sovikea, and Mr. Sim Samnang were released from jail on the 1st of July.

The CELA Program cooperated with the Community Organizing Housing Rights (COHR) program to collect relevant information about new communities (Ta Tok and Doun Ov communities), and provided technical advice to mobilize and strengthen capacities of communities in the Lake area (Boeung Cheng Ek) affected by the ING company and threatened with forced eviction.
Direct Training

CELA has continued to play a central role in supporting solidarity building both amongst community members and between communities and grassroots activists in order to defend land, natural resources and housing rights in Cambodia. CELA conducted 4 direct training sessions for affected communities on subjects including invalid contracts, how to organize community meetings, as well as on Indigenous Land Rights, Economic Land Concessions and the Communal Land Titling Process, Negotiation and Possible Options to reach an agreement. These direct trainings were the result of the collaboration with the DW Program in order to do groundwork with affected communities in Kampong Speu Province and Ratanakiri Province. The work aimed to build local capacities, increase trust among community members and select new village representatives in order to improve the communication between EC, reps and community members. 75 community reps (21 women) affected by the sugar concessions in Kampong Speu Province and by the rubber concessions in Ratanakiri Province participated in the trainings. Based on CELA observation, the community representatives in Kampong Speu became stronger as they increased their legal and rights knowledge through the direct trainings, and proactive in organizing meeting by themselves in their own villages. As a result the communities became more united, supporting each to other in the campaign to protect their land rights. Community representatives in Ratanakiri also organized 6 meetings at each of their respective villages on their own to share what they had learnt to their members. They shared how to think and create options to reach an agreement through negotiation.
COMMUNITY ORGANIZING FOR HOUSING RIGHTS PROGRAM (COHR)

The Community Organizing for Housing Rights (COHR) program was launched in 2013 with the purpose of assisting threatened urban poor communities in Phnom Penh to work together in order to secure their land and housing rights.

The Program aims to facilitate people-led processes to strengthen the capacity of, and empower communities to organize and address their tenure and housing rights issues. This helps urban people to become more socially and politically aware and active in mobilizing for municipal and national development policies that respect the rights of the poor. The program helps to form and unify peoples’ organizations, improve their capacity in advocacy and negotiation, and support people-led improvements to the environment, community infrastructure and living conditions in informal settlements as a strategy for strengthening security of tenure. By the end of 2018, the program aims to promote the formation of a federation of urban poor communities in Phnom Penh that will be able to advocate collectively the resolution of common problems stemming from discrimination against the poor and the violation of their fundamental human rights and put collective pressure on government agencies to address the problems at a policy level.

The COHR program currently employs 10 community organizers (COs) and is now working with 24 communities: 5 communities in the Lake area, 9 communities in the Canal area and 10 communities in the Railway area. Through the COs, the Program is now able to reach a total of 2,851 families and 12,728 people (7411 females).
This year (January-December 2016), the COHR program continued to work in three geographic areas; the Railway area (10 communities), Canal area (9 communities) and Lake area (5 communities). Through the Community Organizers’ (COs) support the program saw improvements in the functioning of small groups and geographic networks. Target communities continued to be active in their advocacy efforts to defend their housing rights, with key achievements seen this year in each of the geographic areas.

In 2015 CO worked in target community areas to develop mass based community organization setting up small groups of community members. In 2016, COs helped to improve the functioning of these small groups by supporting community members to facilitate meetings 1-2 times a month. Between January and December 2016, 63 small groups conducted meetings 405 times. These meetings increased communities’ knowledge and helped to further develop a culture of information-sharing in the community and strengthen democratic decision-making processes. The CO team also updated the natural leader list every quarter in order to check the progress of their work and maintain relationships with them to deal with community’s issues.

COs ensured that community networks set up with the participation of community natural leaders were functioning through monthly meetings. The 3 geographic networks conducted meetings 12 times during the 2016. In addition, to increase the capacity of community leaders and the networks they belong to, COs conducted three trainings, two on land and housing rights and another on social analysis. 60 community leaders (45 females) in the Railway area and Lake area were trained by COs on the “Community Guide to Land and Housing Rights” in cooperation with EC’s CELA Program. In March, CO conducted a training for 36 community leaders on Social Analysis where people understood the oppression they face due to powerful and rich people and felt motivated to change this situation by mobilizing their communities to demand for their land and housing rights.
To build strong relationships and solidarity among community members, 8 events were supported financially by the COHR Program. These events made people stronger and more collaborative. Community members built trust, and confidence therefore a stronger foundation for grassroots mobilization. In addition, to help with community upgrades and to encourage community members to work collaboratively together, 8 infrastructure upgrade projects were supported. The projects used cement for building houses, roads, wells, and footbridges.

As a result of the community networks, communities actively supported each other with their advocacy events. Between January and December communities held 44 advocacy events, and most of these events were attended by community members from the various networks. COs also helped facilitate 44 reflection meetings after each of the advocacy events.
CO support of community advocacy resulted in major achievements in 2016. After advocacy efforts by the Railway Network to obtain information about the expressway project along railway track from Boeung Kak to Phnom Penh Airport Prime Minister Hun Sen announced the cancelation of the expressway in April 2016. The Lake Network’s request to the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction to cut their land out from ING Holding Project (satellite city) was answered in the form of a letter from the Ministry to the Municipality of Phnom Penh to intervene in the case in June 2016. In relation to the Canal Network, the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction and Municipality of Phnom Penh set up a working group to conduct a study on on-site upgrading in May 2016 in response to Steung Meancheay communities’ demands for on-site upgrading. Tongov community’s plans to stay on-site and to be relocated nearby was approved by the Chbar Ampov District Governor in May 2016. The community alternative development plan created in 2016 for 27 households from Tangov community proved effective in stopping evictions in the community and for demanding that the district governor of Chbar Ampov implement the alternative plan. The governor approved the alternative plan and allowed for 9 households to stay on-site and 18 households to move to an area about 2 kilometers from original site. They received their plots in September 2016. (See details below in “highlights from 2016.”)

This year, the COHR Program facilitated the set up of the Urban Poor Community Federation. In September and October 2016, one federation workshop and three consultation workshops in three areas were held to discuss about processes and internal rules of the Community Federation. In every area, there were about 60 to 70 community small group leaders and active members who joined the discussion. On 30 November, the Urban Poor Community Federation was established based on democratic processes and a collective leadership model. The Community Federation will be led by 19 community leaders from the three geographic areas (Lake, Canal and Railway).
Railway Area

The Railway community’s advocacy on the proposed expressway project announced by Prime Minister Hun Sen on 5 January 2016 was successful in stopping the entire project. The communities carefully planned and actively demanded for detailed information from the Ministry of Public Works and Transport which lead to a discussion with the Secretariat of the Ministry. As this discussion did not result in a solution, the community gathered 4 times between January and March 2016 in front of the Ministry to demand more information on the project. On 5 April 2016, the Prime Minister canceled the expressway project because the government did not want people to keep demanding for information. The Governor of the Municipality of Phnom Penh stated that the project would have affected about 4,000 families along the railway track.

Lake Area

Lake communities worked to solve their community issue by demanding that their land be cut from the ING Holding development project. After extensive discussion about how to deal with the ING development project, the community sent a letter to the ING office demanding that their land be cut from the project. After the company did not respond to the letter, the community gathered at the ING office 3 times. However, the company still did not solve their problem. The community then changed their strategy by making their demands to the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction in June 2016. The Ministry had taken action by asking the Municipality of Phnom Penh (MPP) to respond to the community. The community plans to follow up on actions taken by the MPP.
Steung Meanchevy Communities (Canal Area)

Steung Meanchevy communities affected by the canal development project followed up on their letter to the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction and the MPP asking to stay on-site with their alternative development plan. As a response to the communities’ demand, the Ministry and the MPP set up a Working Group in May 2016 which conducted feasibility study on the community on-site starting from. The team leader of the Working Group has told communities that the MPP governor and Minister of Land Management asked the team to try to find a way for people to stay on-site even with the canal development project.

Tangov Communities (Canal Area)

Tangov community was successful in demanding to stay on-site and to be relocated nearby. Since 2015 the community has advocated for staying on-site many times to the Chbar Ampov District Governor. The community used the alternative development plan they developed with support from the COHR Program for their negotiations with the governor. Finally in May 2016, the District Governor decided that some of the community (9 households) would be allowed to stay on-site where there was space and some of the community (18 households) In September the 18 families received their plots, and a exchange visit was organized for the Steung Meanchevy community to support Tangov Community to move their houses to the new site. The 18 families had all moved to the site by December.
Impact Stories

A. HAGL Rubber Case: A success story of a joint mapping trip

Following the Cambodian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries’ granting of an economic land concession of tens of thousands of hectares to the Vietnamese company Hoàng Anh Gia Lai (HAGL), which included lands of customary use of fourteen indigenous villages in Andong Meas and Ou Chum districts, Ratanakiri Province, a coalition of NGOs and INGOs - including Equitable Cambodia - began advocating against the company’s encroachment and clearance of communal village areas. After an impact assessment concluded in May 2015 and substantial advocacy work targeting international and regional financial institutions indirectly supporting HAGL in their activities, an Agreement was reached between the company and Community Representatives - advised by NGOs - under the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO) of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) dispute resolution process in September 2015. This landmark agreement provides a corporate commitment to not only support the delimitation and subsequent titling of communal lands, but also provides a corporate commitment to participate in the mapping of the communities’ areas of customary use, to cease mass land clearing of traditional farming and forest areas and subsequent planting of further rubber trees, and to compensate for or return all customary lands to the affected communities. An official Working Group has been appointed by the Ratanakiri Provincial government in order to support the implementation of the Agreement, namely in supporting and supervising mapping endeavors and participating in meetings between the parties. That the project would have affected about 4,000 families along the railway track.
By the end of 2016, 14 villages were mapped. Included in this mapping process is the external boundary delimitation of each community, as well as the mapping of the internal features of customary use – namely those located within the areas that were affected by the company’s activities. The generated maps will provide a visual display of the facts on which the parties will negotiate and the communities may be able to present these maps to the Provincial Government. In addition, the maps are relevant for the purposes of the internal dynamic of the communities within this process. Not only does the mapping process clarify and create consensus of all villagers regarding the extent of their land and the internal features that belong to them, but it provides them a visual perception of their plans for each parcel of land that has been affected (return, compensation, lease, etc.). There will be a universal language that is accurate and easily perceivable, which will support the communities in deciding whether or not to pursue communal land titles.

In addition to the mapping, EC has organized a series of workshops and solidarity-building exercises with the affected communities. The workshops include awareness on their human and fundamental rights under Cambodian and international law; and on the communal land titling and its procedure. These workshops are highly important as they will empower communities to make independent and informed decisions on the future of their villages, as well as enable them to fully exercise their rights in the long-term. The successful completion of this case will be a landmark in Cambodia and Southeast Asia as a whole due to the community participation in the process, the engagement of provincial authorities, and the commitments made by the company.
B. Tangov Community’s Success to Stay On-Site

Tangov community is situated along PrekBaraing (Baraing canal) in SangkatNiroth and Sangkat Chbar Ampov 1, Khan ChbarAmpov of Phnom Penh capital city. The community consists of 27 houses. The community residents are street sellers at ChbarAmpov market, motordop drivers, and TukTuk drivers.

On 11 March 2015, Khan Chbar Ampov (Chbar Ampov district) issued a notice asking people to move out accusing them of occupying state land. As a part of the MPP project to create a road to facilitate the development of the private Peng Hout housing project and other Real Estate Companies, the district started to fill the canal with sand and install big drainage system resulting in moving people along Prek Barang away.

Actions Taken by the CO team and Tangov Community

In response to the above issue, community organizers supported people to call for many community meetings discussing that they did not occupy state land since they bought the land with the local authority’s recognition. Community organizers help people organize their documents such as national identification cards, family books, birth certificates and other legal documents to show that they were not illegally occupying the land.

Community Organizers (COs) conducted regular meetings and ground work with community people to confirm their commitment and built solidarity in the community through collective actions. COs also brought in two villagers from the railway community who had successful experiences in demanding a solution for road construction by Shukaku Company. The two villagers shared their experiences and the strategies they applied to demand for a negotiation.
Tangov residents then discussed their demands and possible actions. Through the discussion the community agreed on a plan to demand to stay on-site. They then asked an architect to make an alternative development plan which developed a plan to stay on-site on 5 x 6 m plots. Using the alternative development plan, the community continued its advocacy to stay on-site.

On 13 February the community went to meet with the District Governor to discuss the alternative development plan. At the meeting the governor agreed to conduct a survey in order to determine if people would be able to stay on-site. On 22 February Tangov residents organized a cultural event. During the event the community announced their demands to stay on-site with the alternative development plan. Local authorities were also invited, though they did not come to the event. In May the community met with the district governor again. During this meeting he agreed to let some people stay on-site and other to be relocated nearby. On 24 June the community met with the district governor who promised that after 2 months they would the canal with soil so that houses could be built for them.

As a result of the community actions with COs support, 9 out of 27 families reached an agreement with the District Governor (Khan Chbar Ampov) to stay on-site. Another 18 families agreed to move near by to Tangov Krom where it is about 2 kilometers from original land. People who move to new land got budget support from District Governor 1 million riels for each family and the truck brought the old material (wood and equipment) to the new relocation site as well.

In addition, as a result of community advocacy, 8 families who were not involved with advocacy efforts to stay on-site because they wanted compensation received 5,000 USD to move away from the Prek Barang Canal.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

**Partners**

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

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

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

**Donors**

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OSI14
OSI15
Oxfam Australia
Oxfam Novib 1
Oxfam Novib 2
SADP
SAGE
Wheeler Foundation
VP
GD
# 2016 Financial Summary

## Opening Balance
- $307,416.66

## Income Receipts

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>USD</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Grant Receipts</td>
<td>963,362.49</td>
<td>98.16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Donation &amp; Volunteer Program</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Receipts</strong></td>
<td>981,386.16</td>
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## Disbursements

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<td>Development Watch Program</td>
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<td>Community Organizing for Housing Rights Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Empowerment and Legal Awareness Program</td>
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<td>Follow The Money</td>
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<td>Cambodia Justice Initiative</td>
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<td>Central Office Cost</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
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<td>100%</td>
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Note: The charts provide a visual representation of the financial summary.
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