

Clean Sugar Campaign

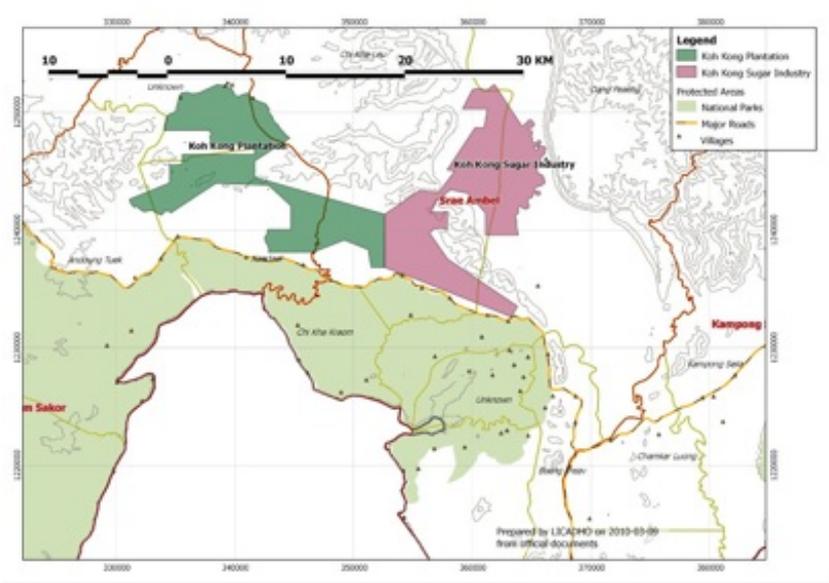
Land is life. Tell the sugar industry to stop bleeding Cambodian farmers by taking their land.



- Home
- The Campaign
- The Senator
- The Concessions**
- The Companies
- The EU
- Reports
- Media
- Take Action

Koh Kong

Koh Kong Province, Sre Ambel & Botumsakor Districts



In August 2006, two adjoining economic land concessions were granted over approximately 20,000 hectares in Botumsakor and Sre Ambel districts of Koh Kong.

The concessions were granted to two companies – *Koh Kong Plantation Co. Ltd.* and *Koh Kong Sugar Industry Co. Ltd.* – in an apparent attempt to circumvent restrictions on the size of economic land concessions stipulated by the Cambodian Land Law. One company is registered to Senator Ly Yong Phat, and one to Mr. Chamroon Chinthammit, who is C.E.O. of Thai sugar company *Khon Kaen Sugar (KSL)*. In reality this is a single plantation, which was previously owned by a joint-venture of:

- *Khon Kaen Sugar* (Thai company holding a 50% share);
- *Vewong* (Taiwanese partner, holding 30%); and
- *Ly Yong Phat* (holding 20%).

Ly Yong Phat apparently sold his share of the joint venture to KSL in 2010. This is reflected in KSL's 2010 annual report, which indicates that it holds 70% of the Koh Kong operation.

Human rights violations and impacts on local communities

Since 2006 there have been reports of serious human rights violations connected to this concession. According to one Cambodian legal aid organization, as of January 2007, "2,879 villagers reported complaints about the companies' encroachment on their land." Villagers have lost both residential land and farmland that they legally possess and depend upon to sustain their families. During one forced eviction, two villagers received non-fatal gunshot wounds, while other community members were beaten with rifle butts as they tried to protect their homes from demolition. There are also documented instances of company staff confiscating villagers' livestock and demanding payment for their return. In some cases livestock have been shot if they stray within the boundaries of the concession. Community members also report intimidation by company staff and security forces. This case has been documented by local and international organizations, including the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. In a 2007 report the Office stated that the concessions were:

"granted without public consultation ... The clearing of rice fields and orchards belonging to villagers in Sre Ambel district has affected over 400 families; some have little or no land remaining for farming, and are surviving on last year's rice harvest. The concession has also restricted the availability of grazing land for villagers' livestock, and company security guards have reportedly seized or shot cattle straying into the concession area. Villagers are now reported to be facing difficulties in repaying loans taken out under micro-credit schemes, due to the loss of sources of income. Both companies have expanded their activities despite efforts to resolve the dispute, including the establishment of a provincial working group and an agreement that further bulldozing activity would be suspended until the dispute was resolved."

Testimonies gathered from affected people reveal the following impacts from these concessions:

- **Food insecurity has increased and families have become impoverished as a result of the loss of their farmland and grazing**

land. Affected farmers can no longer grow enough food to sustain their families. Many have sold their cows because they have nowhere for them to graze.

- **Crops have been destroyed** that local farmers have been cultivating for years, including cashew, tamarind, and mango trees.
- Company guards have **shot or confiscated animals**, including buffalo and cows.
- **Chemical waste from the plantation has poisoned local water** sources and killed fish, which is the main source of protein for surrounding communities.
- **Children have been pulled out of school** in order to work for their struggling families.
- Company staff **prevent local people from going into the forest** to collect forest by-products, or sometimes charge a fee to do so, which represents a significant loss of livelihood.
- Some people who lost all their land have had **no choice but to work on the plantations**. The pay is low and the work is irregular. Before they can work for the company, people must also agree to drop any claims for compensation.
- Many outspoken community members **fear for their security** because of their activism.

This long-running dispute remains ongoing and all efforts to seek a resolution according to the relevant laws and procedures have failed. The companies holding the concessions continue to clear disputed land, and local farmers have been forced to leave with little or no compensation.

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