Forced evictions and land grabbing for sugarcane plantations, Oddar Meanchey, Cambodia

EU “Everything but Arms” (EBA) initiative is leading to brutal forced displacement of Cambodian farmers.

Description

“They burned everything...including the rice. They didn’t allow us to harvest first. They said they wanted to grow sugarcane. They destroyed our houses so they could grow sugarcane.” (Widow, Oddar Meanchey province (1)).

Basic Data

Name
Forced evictions and land grabbing for sugarcane plantations, Oddar Meanchey, Cambodia

Country
Cambodia

Province
Oddar Meanchey province

Site
Samrong district, Chong Kal district

Accuracy of Location
HIGH local level

Source of Conflict

Type of Conflict (1st level)
Biomass and Land Conflicts (Forests, Agriculture and Livestock Management)

Type of Conflict (2nd level)
Plantation conflicts (incl. Pulp
Agro-fuels and biomass energy plants
Land acquisition conflicts
Intensive food production (monoculture and livestock)
Deforestation

Specific Commodities
Land
Sugar

Project Details and Actors

Project Details
The European Union (EU) has supported the sugar industry through the agreement “Everything but Arms” (EBA) with least developed countries (LDC) such as Cambodia. Companies operating in Cambodia can access the European market without tariffs and at a minimum guaranteed price. For sugar, the minimum guaranteed price has been on average three times the world-market price. While the extent of Sugarcane plantations in Cambodia was negligible in 2006, in 2012 it amounted to more than 100,000 ha. Cambodian sugar exports jumped to 13.8 million$ in 2011, 92% of which was exported to the EU (1).

**Project Area (in hectares)**
19,700

**Type of Population**
Rural

**Potential Affected Population**
33 villages

**Start Date**
24/01/2008

**Company Names or State Enterprises**
- Angkor Sugar Co., Ltd from Cambodia - sugar, sugarcane, agro-industry
- Tonle Sugar Cane Company Ltd. from Cambodia - sugar, sugarcane, agro-industry
- Cane and Sugar Valley Company from Cambodia - sugar, sugarcane, agro-industry
- Mitr Phol Sugar Corporation (MPSC) from Thailand - sugar, bioenergy, agro-industry
- Coca-Cola Company from United States of America

**Relevant government actors**
Ly Yong Phat, ruling party (CPP) senator

**International and Financial Institutions**
European Union (EU)

**Environmental justice organisations and other supporters**
LICADHO
Equitable Cambodia
ADHOC
Inclusive Development International

NGOs that signed the joint statement regarding intimidation of NGO workers investigating the case:
Equitable Cambodia, Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC), Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO), Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT), Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR), LICADHO Canada, People's Action for Change (PAC), Inclusive Development International (IDI), Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC), Community Peace-Building Network (CPN), Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community (CCFC), Diakonia, Indigenous Community Support Organization (ICSO), Building Community Voices (BCV), Cambodian Food and Service Workers' Federation (CFSWF), Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC), Housing Rights Task Force (HRTF), Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), The NGO Forum on Cambodia (NGOF), Banteay Srei, Cambodia Indigenous Youth Association (CIYA), Highlander Association (HA), Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC), Heinrich Böll Stiftung.

**Intensity of Conflict (at highest level)**
HIGH (widespread, mass mobilization, violence, arrests, etc...)

**When did the mobilization begin**
In REACTION to the implementation (during construction or operation)

**Groups Mobilizing**
- Farmers
- Indigenous groups or traditional communities
- International ejos
- Local ejos
- Local scientists/professionals

**The Conflict and the Mobilization**

The European Union (EU) has supported the sugar industry through the agreement “Everything but Arms” (EBA) with least developed countries (LDC) such as Cambodia. Companies operating in Cambodia can access the European market without tariffs and at a minimum guaranteed price. For sugar, the minimum guaranteed price has been on average three times the world-market price. While the extent of Sugarcane plantations in Cambodia was negligible in 2006, in 2012 it amounted to more than 100,000 ha. Cambodian sugar exports jumped to 13.8 million$ in 2011, 92% of which was exported to the EU (1).

**Project Area (in hectares)**
19,700

**Type of Population**
Rural

**Potential Affected Population**
33 villages

**Start Date**
24/01/2008

**Company Names or State Enterprises**
- Angkor Sugar Co., Ltd from Cambodia - sugar, sugarcane, agro-industry
- Tonle Sugar Cane Company Ltd. from Cambodia - sugar, sugarcane, agro-industry
- Cane and Sugar Valley Company from Cambodia - sugar, sugarcane, agro-industry
- Mitr Phol Sugar Corporation (MPSC) from Thailand - sugar, bioenergy, agro-industry
- Coca-Cola Company from United States of America

**Relevant government actors**
Ly Yong Phat, ruling party (CPP) senator

**International and Financial Institutions**
European Union (EU)

**Environmental justice organisations and other supporters**
LICADHO
Equitable Cambodia
ADHOC
Inclusive Development International

NGOs that signed the joint statement regarding intimidation of NGO workers investigating the case:
Equitable Cambodia, Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC), Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO), Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT), Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR), LICADHO Canada, People's Action for Change (PAC), Inclusive Development International (IDI), Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC), Community Peace-Building Network (CPN), Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community (CCFC), Diakonia, Indigenous Community Support Organization (ICSO), Building Community Voices (BCV), Cambodian Food and Service Workers' Federation (CFSWF), Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC), Housing Rights Task Force (HRTF), Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), The NGO Forum on Cambodia (NGOF), Banteay Srei, Cambodia Indigenous Youth Association (CIYA), Highlander Association (HA), Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC), Heinrich Böll Stiftung.

**Intensity of Conflict (at highest level)**
HIGH (widespread, mass mobilization, violence, arrests, etc...)

**When did the mobilization begin**
In REACTION to the implementation (during construction or operation)

**Groups Mobilizing**
- Farmers
- Indigenous groups or traditional communities
- International ejos
- Local ejos
- Local scientists/professionals
Forms of Mobilization
Creation of alternative reports/knowledge
Involvement of national and international NGOs
Official complaint letters and petitions
Public campaigns
Boycotts of companies-products
Refusal of compensation

Environmental Impacts
Visible: Biodiversity loss (wildlife, agro-diversity), Food insecurity (crop damage), Loss of landscape/aesthetic degradation, Deforestation and loss of vegetation cover
Potential: Air pollution, Soil contamination, Soil erosion, Surface water pollution / Decreasing water (physico-chemical, biological) quality, Groundwater pollution or depletion, Reduced ecological / hydrological connectivity

Health Impacts
Visible: Malnutrition, Mental problems including stress, depression and suicide, Violence related health impacts (homicides, rape, etc.)

Socio-economic Impacts
Visible: Increase in Corruption/Co-optation of different actors, Displacement, Increase in violence and crime, Loss of livelihood, Militarization and increased police presence, Violations of human rights, Land dispossession, Loss of landscape/sense of place
Potential: Lack of work security, labour absenteeism, firings, unemployment, Loss of traditional knowledge/practices/cultures, Specific impacts on women

Pathways for conflict outcome / response
Compensation
Corruption
Criminalization of activists
Land demarcation
Migration/displacement
Repression

Development of Alternatives
Proposals/recommendations put forward, according to the “Bittersweet Harvest” report (1), released by Equitable Cambodia (EC) and Inclusive Development International (IDI):
To the EU: that EU should investigate impacts; temporarily suspend EBA trade; verify that producers are not involved in Human rights abuses or environmental destruction; ban import of agricultural goods produced on illegally acquired land, among others.
To The Cambodian Government: Enforce the moratorium on new ELC; assure that the required social and environmental impact assessments are conducted; cancel concessions that violate human rights; support dispossessed families in returning to their land; return illegally granted concession land; and stop state military-backed up evictions, among others.
To the involved companies: Stop forced evictions; stop destruction of community natural resources; stop using violence against people; return illegally appropriated land; stop using child labour, among others.

Do you consider this as a success?
No

Why? Explain briefly.
The project goes on at the cost of communities and the environment.

Legislations
(2) 2005 Subdecree on Economic Land Concessions (ELC) in Cambodia
Cambodia’s land law and related regulatory frameworks
References

[cite]

[cite]

Links

[cite]

(5) Joint Statement regarding the Oddar Meanchey Authorities’ Continued Illegal Conduct Towards Equitable Cambodia’s Staff (accessed 18/02/2015)
[cite]

Media Links

Video produced in relation to the Bittersweet Harvest report (accessed 16/02/2015)
[cite]

Amnesty International video interview with an evicted women from Bos village
[cite]

Other Documents

Burning houses in Oddar Meanchey Source: http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/sugar-giant-spotlight-abuse
[cite]

[cite]

Contributor

A. Scheidel (ICTA-UAB) arnim.scheidel "at" gmail.com

Last update

19/02/2015

Related conflicts

Land grabbing and forced evictions by Koh Kong's sugar industry, Cambodia

'Blood sugar' land grab by Phnom Penh Sugar Company, Kampong Speu, Cambodia

Comments