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 (country/cambodia)

**Province**
Oddar Meanchey province

**Site**
Samrong district, Chong Kali district

**Accuracy of Location**
HIGH local level

**Source of Conflict**

**Type of Conflict (1st level)**
Biomass and Land Conflicts (Forests, Agriculture, Fisheries 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 (commodity/land)
Sugar (commodity/sugar)
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).

The sugarcane plantation land was awarded on January 24, 2008 to 3 Economic Land Concessions, totalling 19,700ha awarded on January 24, 2008 to Angkor Sugar Company, Tonle Sugar Cane Company and Cane and Sugar Valley Company, for a lease period of 70 years. The concession land is located in Samrong and Chong Kal districts, Oddar Meanchey province (1).

All companies are related to Thai Mitr Phol Sugar Corporation and contracts for the three concessions were signed on the same day. Hence, the legal limit for ELCs of 10,000 ha per company was surpassed (1). Mitr Phol Sugar Corporation (MPSC) is Thailand’s leading producer of sugar and bioenergy (3).

While at the time of granting, 4,500ha of concession land overlapped with farmers land from 33 villages, land was classified retroactively to State private land, on august 23, 2012 (1).

Mitr Phol stated that the associated Cambodian companies are expected to produce 100,000 tons of raw sugar per year (1).

In 2014, the Coca Cola Company disclosed that Mitr Phol has been among their top three sugar suppliers. Coca Cola has started an audit to investigate human rights abuses by their suppliers (4).

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 (company/angkor-sugar-co-ltd) from Cambodia (country-of-company/cambodia) - sugar, sugarcane, agro-industry
Tonle Sugar Cane Company Ltd. (company/tonle-sugar-cane-company-ltd) from Cambodia (country-of-company/cambodia) - sugar, sugarcane, agro-industry
Cane and Sugar Valley Company (company/cane-and-sugar-valley-company) from Cambodia (country-of-company/cambodia) - sugar, sugarcane, agro-industry
Mitr Phol Sugar Corporation (mpsc) (company/mitr-phol-sugar-corporation) from Thailand (country-of-company/thailand) - sugar, bioenergy, agro-industry
Coca Cola Company (company/coca-cola-company) from United States of America (country-of-company/united-states-of-america)

Relevant government actors

Ly Yong Phat, ruling party (CPP) senator

International and Financial Institutions

European Union (EU) (institution/european-union)

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 (HAI), Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOCR), Heinrich Böll Stiftung.

The Conflict and the Mobilization

Intensity of Conflict (at highest level)

HIGH (widespread, mass mobilization, violence, arrests, etc...)

When did the mobilization begin
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

Impact

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

Outcome

Project Status

In operation

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.

Sources and Materials

Legislation

(2) 2005 Sub decree on Economic Land Concessions (ELC) in Cambodia
Cambodia’s land law and related regulatory frameworks
[click to view](http://www.cambodiainvestment.gov.kh/investors-information/land-site-development.html)

References


Links

(5) Joint Statement regarding the Oddar Meanchey Authorities’ Continued Illegal Conduct Towards Equitable Cambodia’s Staff (accessed 18/02/2015) [click to view](http://www.equitable-cambodia.org/news/files/3613_Joint%20Statement%20against%20Oddar%20Meanchey%20Authorities%2C%2018%20February%202015.pdf)

Media Links
Video produced in relation to the Bittersweet Harvest report (accessed 16/02/2015) [click to view](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FvDVkVw-k8)

Amnesty international video interview with an evicted women from Bos village [click to view](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XX9yV49x0)

Other Documents


Meta Information
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Related conflicts
Land grabbing and forced evictions by Koh Kong’s sugar industry, Cambodia (/conflict/land-grabbing-and-forced-evictions-by-koh-kongs-sugar-industry-cambodia)


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