



## Housing Rights Task Force

#52; Street 306, Sangkat Boeung Keng I, Chamcarmorn, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel/Fax: 855 23 996 531; P.O. Box: 1247, Email: [cam.hrtf@gmail.com](mailto:cam.hrtf@gmail.com); [www.hrtfcambodia.org](http://www.hrtfcambodia.org)

---

### Press Release

For immediate release  
September 10, 2010

### **Flooded Homes:** **Threat of Health Hazards Used to Evict Boeung Kok Residents**

**Housing Rights Task Force (HRTF) condemns the intentional flooding of the Boeung Kok area in Phnom Penh, which poses risks to public health and is forcing residents to dismantle their homes and leave the area.**

Water levels in the remainder of Boeung Kok lake, which continues to be filled in with sand, have been rising since the onset of the rainy season in Cambodia, reaching critical levels in late August.

Between Aug. 22-25, large parts of villages 1, 6, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24, were inundated with water, affecting over 1000 households. Residents had to wade through knee and hip-high, unsanitary water to reach their homes, while others were forced to seek shelter elsewhere as their homes were uninhabitable due to the flooding.

Protesting outside City Hall on Aug. 25, community members demanded authorities take action to stop the pumping of sand into the lake and drain the water, as well as allow people to repair homes and latrines affected by the flooding.

Following community demands, the authorities momentarily ceased filling in the lake and enlarged the sluiceway to drain the water. Over the past week, less heavy rains have further eased flooding, and water levels are currently down.

However, instead of further improving drainage, authorities allowed the filling in of the lake to continue only a day after the halt. Residents also report the sluice gate is closed off during the filling to prevent the sand draining out of the lake, and that rubbish is clogging the sluiceway, preventing efficient drainage.

With more heavy rains expected, the risk of further flooding remains imminent.

“My home was completely flooded up to my knees for over a week,” said Soum Somaly, a resident of Village 6. “Walking through the dirty water caused rashes on my legs and mosquitoes thrived in the stagnant water. One my neighbours also got an electric shock because his house was under water. He had to be hospitalised.”

Flooding is also coercing residents to demolish their now uninhabitable homes.

“I have seen many people dismantle their homes and taking the money lately,” said Tong Chanthou, a resident of Village 20. “They are forced to leave because they cannot live in their homes due to the flooding.”

“The continued pumping of sand into the lake, and the inefficient drainage measures, indicates the flooding is a deliberate measure to increase pressure on residents to move away from the area by exposing them to health hazards and conditions not fit for living,” said Sia Phearum, Secretary General of Housing Rights Task Force.

“Such measures show clear disregard for the right to health as enshrined in the Cambodian constitution as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights to which Cambodia is a signatory. In addition, it violates the residents’ right to adequate housing, also enshrined in international human rights law.”

“Using flooding and its associated health impacts to force people to leave the Boeung Kok area is the latest in a series of pressure tactics used against the residents” said David Pred, Executive Director of Bridges Across Borders Cambodia. “Exposing children to the health hazards of sewage-laden water is a particularly repulsive tactic,” he added.

The filling in of Boeung Kok Lake is also likely to lead to flooding in other areas of Phnom Penh. The Boeung Kok Area Drainage and Flooding Assessment completed by Australian engineers in December 2008 shows significant flooding impacts will occur across parts of Russei Keo district, with “potential to cause significant impacts on property and hazard to life downstream.”

The assessment concludes that “[t]he responsibility to design and provide mitigation works falls to Shukaku Inc. These works must be constructed as part of the development prior to filling of the lake to prevent increased risk to life and property.”

Given that these mitigation measures have not been put into place, as a result of which large areas surrounding Boeung Kok lake face flooding, it falls on Shukaku Inc.’s responsibility to compensate people for damages caused by their actions.

HRTF calls on the authorities to order an immediate halt to the pumping of sand into Boeung Kok Lake and for effective flood mitigation measures to be put in place, a re-evaluation of the environmental and social impacts of the Shukaku Inc. development, as well as provide urgent, direct assistance to individuals and households affected by the flooding.

More Information Please Contact:

Mr. Sia Phearum, Secretary General, Housing Rights Task Force; H/P: 855 12 852 325

Mr. David Pred, Executive Director, Bridge Across Borders Cambodia; H/P: 855-92 285 954

Ms Nora Lindstrom, Advisor, Sahmakum Teang Tnaut; H/P: 855 15 552 805

Mr. Rolando Molina, Regional Director, Center on Housing Rights and Evictions; 855 17 523 274