

Success of Advocacy on Land Dispute

Bous Tom Village, Koak Khpos Commune, Banteay Ampil District,
Oddar Meanchey Province, Cambodia

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In 2012, according to the new Directive of Prime Minister #001, Volunteer Youth Groups were stationed in Bous Tom Village, Koak Khpos Commune, Banteay Ampil District, Oddar Meanchey Province to demarcate the land and provide people with concrete land titles. A dispute between



military and farmers (130 families) however a dispute between farmers and military troop interrupted the process: farmers claimed that military illegally grabbed their land.

In 2013, when the CISOM project started, farmers brought this case to CISOM for intervention.

CISOM advised the farmers to lodge a complaint to local authorities. The District Chief accepted the complaint files and promised to settle the case. Months later the problem was still up in the

air.

Months after months, CISOM kept helping farmers through the following interventions:

- Offering training on land rights and advocacy tactic to Community Professionals, staff and SHG members to solve the dispute.
- Legal consultation with CISOM team
- Raising issues in the public forum
- Raising the issue in SHG forum

In January 2015, the people gathered again and meet with the District Chief for intervention. He again promised to investigate the case, and this time he visited the people and collected more information. He then sent his report and the claim to the provincial level, while people keep raising this issue among SHG members and keep consulting with CISOM. The local NGO, CIDO, coordinated the people to organise and participate to various forums such as SHG forum and public forum. This is an advocacy tactic to voice repeatedly a petition and to push the government to speed up its response.



In August 2015, CIDO coordinated the people to join in the public forum presided by the Provincial Governor, H.E.Sor Thavy. People again raised their issue and received a promise from the governor to solve this problem as soon as possible. He met few times with the villagers and military and called for a meeting between the farmers and a soldier representative, Mr. Mok. Sovann.

Finally in May, 2016, the case was settled successfully with 97 families accepting the land titles.

Mr. Phin Sophin, Leader of SHG, said: “It is our success, even the process of dispute settlement took time and we lost a tiny part of land, I got most of my land back. It also proved the unity of our farmers, particularly the unity within a SHG.”

In conclusion, it is noticed that advocacy through public forum can be considered as an effective way to raise and spread the voice of the people widely. Additionally, solving land dispute with military should be done strategically and peacefully. Seeking upper level of government’s support is the best tactic to put pressure on the land grabber.