

## **Housing Rights Task Force – Bridges Across Borders Cambodia**

### **Boeung Kak Land Titles Mark a Positive Development for Housing Rights in Cambodia**

#### **MEDIA STATEMENT**

Phnom Penh, December 12, 2011 - Housing Rights Task Force (HRTF) and Bridges Across Borders Cambodia (BABC) sincerely welcomed the delivery of the first batch of land titles to residents of Boeung Kak Lake on Saturday.

Land titles were reportedly distributed to 254 Boeung Kak households by Phnom Penh Governor Kep Chuktema on September 10<sup>th</sup>, coinciding with International Human Rights Day.

We recognize that the Royal Cambodian Government took a significant positive step towards resolving one of the country's most contentious land disputes when Prime Minister Hun Sen issued a sub-decree on August 17<sup>th</sup> that returns 12.44 hectares of land - previously granted to Shukaku Inc. - to its rightful owners. The distribution of the first batch of land titles marked another significant milestone and it deserves our recognition.

“When the authorities take action to protect people's right to property and adequate housing, we are very happy to acknowledge it,” said Sia Phearum, Secretariat Director for HRTF. “The Prime Minister's sub-decree was a courageous decision and we are pleased to see the authorities beginning to implement it,” he added.

“In their unity and determination, and by effectively leveraging the influence of the World Bank to help balance the power differential with the State, the people of Boeung Kak stopped in its tracks the biggest land-grab and forced eviction since the days of the Khmer Rouge,” said David Pred, Executive Director of BAB Cambodia. “This is without doubt one of the most significant human rights victories that Cambodians have achieved since the signing of the Paris Peace Accords,” he added.

“This means that these families will now be able to go on with their lives without fear of losing their homes. It means that they will be able to contribute to and benefit from the development of the country,” said Eang Vuthy, Program Manager of BABC. “We hope that the authorities will give all the remaining families this security,” he added.

HRTF and BABC remain concerned about the Boeung Kak families who have been excluded from the entitlements granted under the sub-decree. We urge the authorities and the Shukaku Erdos Hung Jun Property Development company to

include those who want to remain onsite in the 12.44 hectare zone or negotiate an alternative agreement with them that fully respects their rights.

We are also very concerned about the plight of those who accepted compensation under duress and fled their homes in Boeung Kak over the past two and a half years. It is incumbent upon the Cambodian Government, the Shukaku Erdos Hung Jun Property Development company, and the World Bank to redress the harms suffered by these families.

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