



Disenfranchised

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An investigative report by **VOD**

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Most of economic land concessions that have been authorized by the Royal Government of Cambodia have had a negative affect on the political rights of those communities, according to the Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia. The fifth National Assembly Election in July 2013 revealed that it is the case, at least for the Borei Keila community, located in Sangkat Veal Vong, Phnom Penh.

Borei Keila community members said the root of the problem is that they lost their right to vote after development firm Phan Imex Co. and authorities demolished more than 10,000 homes in their community on Jan. 3, 2012, as part of a new development. The families were force evicted and sent to live in relocation sites, like Phnom Bat in Ponhea Leu District, Kandal Province; and Toul Sambo in Sangkat Prey Veng, Phnom Penh, while some families elected to stay in tents at the Borei Keila development site.

Voters who stayed at the eviction site were unable to find their names on the voter lists

Many of the evictees who refused move to the new relocation sites reported that they had lost their right to vote in the 2013 National Election.

A villager interviewed by VOD claimed that this economic land concession has not only caused Borei Keila community members to lose their homes and forced them into poor and unsanitary living conditions due to inadequate compensation, but that the development has also stripped them of their right to vote.

While VOD found 20 evictees who were sent to the Toul Sambo and Phnom Bat relocation sites who were prevented from casting ballots in the 2013 election, VOD also found that at least 20 evictees who had continued to live at the Borei Keila site following the eviction had likewise lost their rights to vote.

Borei Keila evictee Ms. Chak Khim is currently living in a nearby dump because she did not agree to move away from

her house when it was demolished in early 2012. This 50-year old woman was unable to vote in the fifth National Assembly Election.

“I voted in all the elections, including the Commune and Sangkat Council Elections and National Assembly Elections. However, in the fifth National Assembly Election, I could not vote for no reason,” she said. “It may well be because I always helped the others and talked about the forced eviction and the houses that were demolished. (The election officials) admitted that they had removed my name (from the voter list), and they apologized to me. I could not argue with them about that, and they told me to wait for the next election. The Sangkat Chief Mr. Keo Sokal apologized to us in relation to this case. We ask him to help us to vote in this fifth National Assembly Election, but he said it was too late and we needed to wait for the next election.”

Borei Keila community representative Mr. Pich Lim Khoun, who collects the community statistics, told VOD that 165 families have not yet received adequate compensation for the displacement. He confirmed that 20 eligible voters out of 87 families who continue to stay at Borei Keila had lost their right to vote in the recent election.

“It was not less than 20, as I roughly collected the statistics and found more than 10 already. If there were no forced eviction, we would be able to vote without any obstacle; it would be like the Commune and Sangkat Council Election.”

Sitting under a plastic tent that is now his home, Borei Keila evictee Mr. Buth Samean, 30, explained that he has not yet received compensation from Phan Imex Co., and said that prior to the polling day, he had gone to Sangkat Veal Vong to register but that the Sangkat rejected his suggestion, saying he did not have valid documentation.

“I don’t know why he did not want to register me for voting,” he said. “I had witnesses as referees for registration — my wife and my neighbor — but they still did not agree. They asked for my marriage certificate, but I do not have one yet. We are married, but we haven’t applied for a marriage certificate.”



Election officials register voters for the 2013 National Election. Voters from the evicted Borei Keila community allege that some election officials prevented them from registering and voting. ©VOD

Mr. Chao Hong, 24, another Borei Keila evictee whose house was demolished but who continues to live in the community said that after the voter registration announcement from the Sangkat Council, his mother brought him to register but that they were told to wait for the next General Election.

“At that time, my mother brought me to the Sangkat office for registration, but they told me to wait for the next General Election,” Mr. Hong said. “Most of youth here are of eligible age to vote, but they did not register us because they did not like us because we always staged protests. Youth from this block could not vote.”

Mr. Hong’s youngest sister, Miss Chao Sophal, 20, also reported that she was not allowed to register to vote.

“My mother brought us the Sangkat office, but they did not register us, and they said they were busy,” she said. “My brother, mother, myself and many others went there again, but they still would not register us. When we asked why, we were told that they needed our National ID cards and certificates of identity for election.”

Sangkat Veal Vong Clerk, Mr. Chum Yoeun denied the claims of the evictees, saying if they had sufficient, valid documents and two witnesses, that he would register them.

“We need two witnesses if they do not have a National ID card. The two witnesses need to declare he or she has the

correct name and lives here. That will be enough to register to vote, and that we do not need the National ID card if they do not have one,” the Sangkat clerk said.

In Article 2 of Chapter 5 of the Decision on Voter Revision and Registration of 2012, the regulation and procedures for the fifth National Assembly Election in 2013 allow that “all Khmer citizens who are 18 years old or over as of July 28, 2013 (born on or before July 28, 2013) and who have not registered or moved their residency have rights to register at the Sangkat or commune in which he or she is residing.”

However, some former Borei Keila community members who were forcibly evicted by Phan Imex Co. said that they had lost their residential book, family book and National ID card during their violent and forcible eviction in early 2012, when their homes were demolished.

An election monitor at the Bak Touk High School polling station, Ms. Sam Chanary reported that former Borei Keila community members had lost their right to vote as a result of duplicated names, misspelling of names and removal of names from the voter lists — all reasons for the head of polling station to bar them from voting.

“My name was removed from the list in this election, but in the (2012) Sangkat and Commune Council Election, my name was registered to vote,” Ms. Chanary said. “And

At least 40 eligible Borei Keila voters disenfranchised following eviction

After Phan Imex Co. and local authorities forcibly evicted Borei Keila residents and demolished more than 10,000 homes on Jan. 3, 2012, to make way for new developments, affected families were sent to relocation sites in Phnom Bat and Toul Sambo, though some of the newly homeless families elected to stay at the eviction site. At each location, VOD reporters found numerous eligible voters who had lost their ability to vote following the forced eviction — either because their names had been moved to voter lists at the wrong location or deleted altogether, or because election officials at their new site made the voter registration process overly complicated, according to the disenfranchised voters.

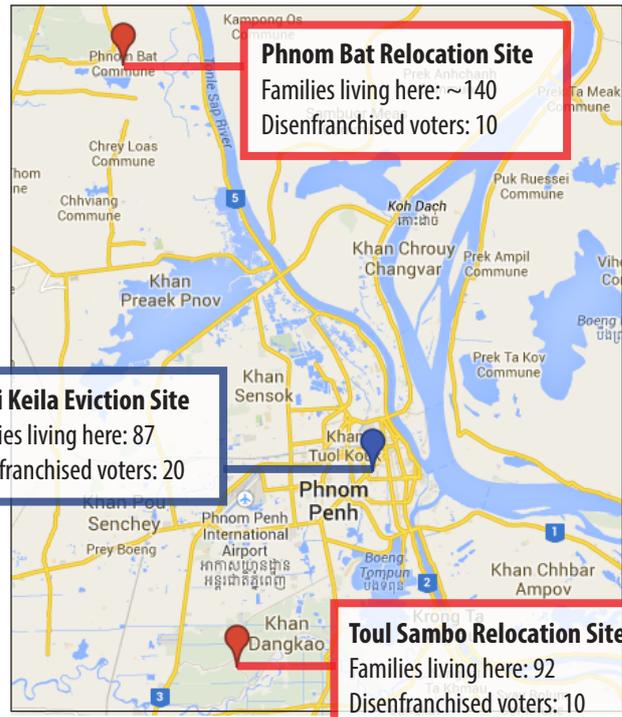


Map Area of Detail
38km North to South
34km West to East

Source: Google Maps

Borei Keila Eviction Site

Families living here: 87
Disenfranchised voters: 20



Phnom Bat Relocation Site

Families living here: ~140
Disenfranchised voters: 10

Toul Sambo Relocation Site

Families living here: 92
Disenfranchised voters: 10

Chum Pisey was able to vote in the Commune and Sangkat Council Election, but in the fifth mandate her name was removed. As far as I know, 20 people from the Borei Keila community have lost their rights to vote at just one polling station. At other polling stations, there are many people whose names were lost. Some people were moved to different stations, had duplicated names but both were used to vote, or their name was used by someone else to vote.”

Head of the Cambodian National Rescue Party’s (CNRP’s) Complaint Committee in Khan 7 Makara, Phnom Penh, Mr. Phork Lyna said that in the cases where former Borei Keila community members lost their right to vote, he had already lodged complaints to the president of the polling station, but they did not accept his complaint.

“On July 29, 2013, I lodged a complaint to Sangkat Election Committee (SEC) located at the Bak Touk High School polling station. On that day, I went there with Mr. Pov Sangva, the deputy chief of Sangkat O Russey, and with several election officers from the SEC,” Mr. Lyna said. “They did not accept my complaint, saying it is beyond their authority.”

Mr. Soun Vuthyia, head of the Khan 7 Makara polling station that refused to register Borei Keila evictees, could not be reached for comment.

However, Mr. Yoeun, the Sangkat Veal Vong Clerk, said his Sangkat did not receive any complaints from any political parties during the National Election.

Nonetheless, Mr. Lyna of the CNRP complaint committee confirmed that he lodged a complaint with the responsible officials one day after the elections, but that they refused to accept his complaint.

“In response to the refusal of the SEC in Bak Touk High School, I would like to say that I did go there with Mr. Pov Sangva (to lodge a complaint). I am not accusing anybody without proof,” he said. “The complaint is still with me now, which can be proved.”

President of Housing Rights Task Force (HRTF) Mr. Sia Phearum alleged that the authorities’ refusal to accept the complaint from the political party was motivated by partisan politics, as was their decision to delay and complicate the registration process for Borei Keila evictees by saying that there were not enough documents — because the evictees would likely not vote for the ruling party

“When they registered at their new residency, they were not allowed. The election officers asked them (former Borei Keila evictees) to certify some documents at their old place of residence. This is very complicated for them, and they gave up their efforts to get their names registered, and so they lost their right to vote,” he said. “It is the intention of the ruling party because they knew the evictees would not vote for them. And as we observed, the names and addresses of Borei Keila evictees or Boeng Kak evictees were taken by someone else on the polling day.”

Sangkat Veal Vong Clerk, Mr. Chum Yoeun, certified that the total number of citizens registered for voting in his Sangkat was 19,271. However, only 10,953 showed up on polling day, while the other 8,318 were absent. He confirmed that those who failed to cast their ballots were prevented from doing so largely due to issues related to migration, duplicated names, death or change of address.

In regard to this case, Mr. Lyna of the CNRP complaint committee covering Sangkat Veal Vong showed a report com-

paring the Sangkat's voter list with that of the larger Khan 7 Makara, to which the Sangkat belongs. The report revealed that while the Sangkat and Khan (district) voter lists were identical, the voting records from the polling day showed discrepancies. The Khan records recorded 100 more votes cast in Sangkat Veal Vong than did the Sangkat's own records. In addition, the local and district records also differed on the number of voters absent from the polls by 100 people.

Evictees at Toul Sambo relocation site claim they were prevented from registering

Voter disenfranchisement was not limited only to the evictees who chose to stay near the Borei Keila eviction site. At least 10 people out of a total of 92 families who were evicted from the Borei Keila community and sent to the Toul Sambo village relocation site about 10 kilometers away from the city also lost their right to vote.

A man who was sent to live in Toul Sambo and who spoke on condition of anonymity said some of the evictees were unable to register because they lacked money for transportation from their relocation site to the polling station, which is 10 kilometers away, near the eviction site.

"It is really weird. My mother and other brothers and sisters would cast their ballots in Baktouk High School, while I myself would vote in Olympic School. It is a waste of time since we have to travel far away from our new residence," he said. "Some villagers could not find their names looked for them one polling station after another. It is really hard for them. They need to work to support their family. So, if they could find their name easily, it would be great for them to vote there."

Another evictee displaced to Toul Sambo, Ms. Thach Hoeung, 51, described how she found herself without a home and destitute and decided to pawn her election card at a micro-finance institution in Phnom Penh called Population Funds. She said she borrowed money from that institution to pay for her family's daily expenses.

Ms. Hoeung confirmed that on the polling day, she brought a photocopy of her election card to her polling station in Sangkat Prey Veng, but that she was not allowed to vote without the original.

"I am sick, and I do not have money, so I decided to pawn my original election card and would use the copied one for voting," said Ms. Hoeung who is a paralytic. "However, my daughter and I were not allowed to vote. Why did I pawn my election card? Because we are poor and I am so sick. But the election officers told me I could not vote if I did not have the original election card. They told me to go back home."

Another evictee staying at the Toul Sambo relocation site, Ms. Pen Horn, 31, told VOD that in election card indicates that she is supposed to vote at polling station No. 0032 in Baktouk High School, but when she went there on polling day, she was told that her name was not on the voter list.

"I voted in the Commune and Sangkat Council Election (in 2012) and in many others, but on the polling day in 2013, my friends could find their names and vote, while I myself could not find my name. I just wondered why, and I felt really sorry about that," said the disappointed voter. "I have valid documents for voting, but others only had a voting card and they were allowed to vote. I have cast my ballot twice, but during this fifth National Assembly Election, I could not find my name on the voter list. I asked the election officer why I could not find my name, as I had valid documents. They told me to ask the Toul Sambo authorities."

In response to Ms. Horn's story and others like hers, Sangkat Prey Veng Chief Mr. Kong Sam Ol said that most of 92 families of Borei Keila evictees who were displaced at Toul Sambo had been able to vote. Those who could not vote were prevented from doing so because of misspelled names or changed names, while other evictees went to vote in their former Baktouk High School polling station.

"This issue [of losing right to vote] did not happen in my Sangkat, because some voted at the Baktouk High School polling station in Sangkat Veal Vong, he said, adding that there were "one or two" cases of evictees being unable to vote because of a misspelled name. "It was hard to facilitate since many representatives from political parties and

civil society organizations were there, and they pushed to help eligible voters to vote. In general, they were able to vote, and many came to get the certificate of identity at the Sangkat office."

Ms. Van Thyda, 45, is currently working as an agricultural laborer to support her 70-year-old mother and five nieces and nephews. She lives in a tent near the rice field where she works in Toul Sambo village, Khan Dangkor, Phnom Penh. Thyda said that prior to the polling day, she brought her certificate of identity and receipt of voter registration to verify at Baktouk High School, polling station No. 0955 in Sangkat Prey Veng, Sangkat Veal Vong, but she could not find her name.

"When I was at Borei Keila, I voted in all the elections. Yet, when I was displaced to the relocation site, my name was removed (from the voter list), and I could not vote, even though I have valid documents," she said. "The election officers told me they do not know since they already tried to find my name but no one could find."

The problem of voter disenfranchisement among Borei Kei-

"This (registration) is very complicated. It is the intention of the ruling party because they knew the evictees would not vote for them."

**MR. SIA PHEARUM,
PRESIDENT
HOUSING RIGHTS TASK FORCE**

la evictees was a matter of concern prior to the election, according to election observer and CNRP representative for Toul Sambo village, Mr. Ya Veng Hul, whose team lodged a complaint with the Sangkat Prey Veng Election Committee prior to the National Election in the case of 10 evictees residing from the Toul Sambo relocation site who had lost their right to vote.

“I asked the Deputy Chief of Sangkat Prey Veng of the CNRP to prepare complaint to lodge with the to Sangkat Election Committee (SEC), but the SEC has not informed us of anything yet,” he said. “After we lodged our complaint to the head of SEC, they never informed us of anything.”

The head of the Sangkat Prey Veng Election Committee, Mr. Nang Nen, could not be reached for clarification on the matter. However, Sangkat Chief Mr. Sam Ol said his Sangkat did not receive any complaints associated with voter disenfranchisement from any party representatives or citizens either on or after the polling day.

Secretary-General of the National Election Committee (NEC), Mr. Tep Nytha, told VOD that if the evictees at the relocation site had valid transferring documents or family books, they would be able to register their name at their new location. However, if the election officers or authorities denied their request for registration, Cambodian citizens have the right to lodge complaints to relevant institutions seeking legal action, he said.

“In the case of voter registration without valid documents to fulfill the requirement, if the election officer denied their requests, they can lodge a complaint,” Mr. Nytha said. “And if they have valid documents and the election officers still did not agree, they can lodge a complaint to the Sangkat or Commune Council in order to register to vote and complain against those who did not accept their names.”

However, election monitors like Mr. Hang Puthea, executive director of the Neutral and Impartial Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (NICFEC), claim that disenfranchisement of voters displaced from one location to another is the sole fault of the authorities.

“Authority is responsible in recording the address of evictees and make it easy for them to vote after they were displaced to a relocation site. In opposite, if the authority does not coordinate in voter registration, it is violating voter’s right and it has to be accountable before the law.”

Mr. Som Sovan, governor of Khan 7 Makara, formerly home to the Borei Keila community, did not answer questions posed to him by VOD reporters, stating that he has just been elected and referring the question to the Phnom Penh Municipality. However, Spokesman for the Phnom Penh

Municipality Mr. Long Dimand replied to VOD inquiries by saying questions regarding the displacement of Borei Keila evictees were “not relevant” to him. He referred all questions to the NEC.

“I think we should not go back to the past and we should focus on current and future challenges,” the municipality spokesman said. “So if we keep bringing up the past, I do not have any ideas to tell you, but I would just like to tell you that this case should be under the responsibility of Phnom Penh Election Committee.”

When asked about the situation, Head of Phnom Penh Election Committee (PEC) Mr. Lon Chheng Kai said that after the displacement, local authorities and the PEC had produced the necessary documents for the evictees, but he does not know the situation of those who were unable to vote.

“They were registered,” he said. “It is not like what they said. We already facilitated and intervened for faster processing for the displaced people. We

already prepared documents for their registration. Whether they came or not, I don’t know. I have no comments when they say such things.”

Evictees at Phnom Bat faced overly complicated registration process

Some 140 families of the former Borei Keila community people were displaced to yet another relocation site located in Preah Por Village, Phsar Dek Commune, Ponhea Leu District, Kandal Province in early 2012. This relocation site is around 40 kilometers away from Borei Keila. In this community, at least 10 people lost their right to vote following their displacement.

Siting in a hammock under her small house in Preah Por village, Ms. Sok Saroeun, 69, a Borei Keila evictee, described with tears how in the previous elections, she voted at polling station No. 0368 at Baktouk High School in Sangkat Veal Vong, Phnom Penh, not far from her former home at Borei Keila. However, following her displacement, the authorities transferred her name to the voter lists at the relocation site.

Nevertheless, prior to the polling day, Saroeun brought her transfer documents to her new commune office in Phsar Dek in order to validate her identity for the election, but the commune chief refused to register her for voting. She said she did not have two witnesses to fulfill the requirement of registration. She claimed that she did not have witnesses because she did not have enough money to pay the witnesses to travel with her to register for voting. Moreover, she claimed many evictees did not have witnesses, so they lost their right to vote.

“I think we should not go back to the past, and we should focus on current and future challenges. If we keep bringing up the past, I do not have any ideas to tell you.”

MR. LONG DIMAND

**PHNOM PENH CITY SPOKESMAN
(ON THE DISENFRANCHISEMENT
OF BOREI KEILA EVICTEES)**



Borei Keila community members have held many highly publicized protests since their forcible eviction in 2012, leading some observers to alledge political motivation behind their disenfranchisement. ©VOD

“They violently demolished our homes and forced us to live here. If we did not accept this compensation, we would be landless and homeless. And yet when we asked to register for the election, they denied us,” she said. “What can we do? When we asked to register at the commune office, they told us that they could not do that since I do not have witnesses as required by the law. Most people were able to get certificates of identity for voting without witnesses — they just showed the election officers their family book. However, when I used my family book, they did not allow me to register.”

Another Borei Keila evictee Ms. Vou Channy told VOD that two months prior to the polling day she, too, brought her transfer documents from the Borei Keila authorities to her new Preah Por Commune authorities for registration. Yet, the authorities told her it was too late to issue the certificates of identity for voting.

“In the previous place, we had enough documents for voting — we just went in and voted. Here, we need to transfer, but I do not know how to transfer,” she said. “We need to transfer from Borei Keila to Phnom Bat. We were assigned to live in Preah Por Commune, but they did not tell me that at the time. When I came back from Phnom Penh, I was told that we needed to do transfer at Preah Por Commune. I went to ask the village chief, who told me that it was too late and asked me to wait for the next General Election.”

The NEC calendar dated Aug. 7, 2013, states that voter registration and verification be held at the commune and Sangkat level from Oct. 1, 2013, to Oct. 20, 2013.

A former Borei Keila community member Ms. Khan Sreypeuv, 29, said that those who were violently evicted by Phan Imex Co. from Borei Keila to Phnom Bat were supposed to go to vote in Odres Primary School, Ponhea Leu District, polling station No. 0717. Ms. Sreypeuv said she was able to vote at that polling station. She claimed, however, that the relocation has made it harder to vote than previously.

“It was so easy when I was at Borei Keila,” she said. “Here is so hard, as we need to travel a bit far to go to the polling station. We need to use *motodup*, which costs around 10,000 Reil (\$2.50 USD) for a return trip. It consumes time, and, of course, our money.”

In response to these cases, Sangkat Veal Vong Clerk Mr. Yoeun said that when the city authorities produce new population statistics transferring Borei Keila evictees to relocation sites, their names would be automatically deleted from the voter lists at their previous address. He claimed that voter disenfranchisement was the responsibility of the authorities at the relocation sites.

“In the name of the Phnom Penh Municipality, we are authorized to remove and transfer the names of Borei Keila community members to Toul Sambo or Phnom Bat, and it

will be automatically recognized by the authorities in those places,” he said. “When they [authorities at Toul Sambo and Phnom Bat] say that they have not recognized it, it is their responsibility to do so.”

Head of the Phsar Dek Commune Election Committee (CEC) Mr. Ouk Sokunthea said he know of several people who lost their right to vote in the fifth National Assembly Election, but he could not mention any particular figure.

“If their name was spelled incorrectly compared to the valid document, we would not allow them to vote. However, if it is an incorrect family name, but their date of birth and residency is correct, we will allow them to vote,” he said. “We allow them to vote if they have enough valid documents to fulfill the requirement.”

Civil society says political partisanship behind loss of voter rights

Executive Director of Cambodian Defenders Project (CDP), prominent attorney Mr. Sok Sam Oeun told VOD that during the transfer of names from an old residence to a new residence, local authorities were solely responsible for voter disenfranchisement among evictees. The loss of the right to vote is the fault of authorities and not the citizens themselves, he said.

“If there is a change, the local authorities have to report it to the upper level — ranging from the district to the province — and they have to remember that it is the commune and Sangkat authorities who have the power to register voters. Therefore, the commune and Sangkat have the duty to help newly arrived persons so that they can vote,” he said. “Previously, the government or local authorities put this burden on the citizens, and they overlooked their own faults.”

Executive Director of Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL) Mr. Koul Panha argued that the excuses of responsible authorities for the lack of documents, postponing the issuance of certificates of identity, and failure to register citizens for the election is due to the fact that those election officers are in favor of the ruling party.

“They [commune and Sangkat authorities] are mostly working for the ruling party. That is why it is a kind of conflict of interest as they implement their duties. However, he can work without serving the political interest,” he said. “That is the problem — he works not only for a political party and an election campaign, but he also manages citizens in the interest of his political party. If he performs any work that serves the public interest in a neutral manner, it would be

problem for him. That is why he needs to work in favor of his political party. As for the election system, it is problematic to allow the village chief and commune chief to work on that issue.”

10 people of 92 former Borei Keila community families who were displaced in Sangkat Prey Veng, Khan Dangkor, Phnom Penh have lost their rights to vote. However, Sangkat Prey Veng clerk Mr Un Chantha said that the total number of voters in the list in this commune is 3,978 people and 3,260 showed up on the polling day, while 718 people were absent. He confirmed that those absent were due to duplicated names, no registration and giving up voting rights because of migration .

A representative of the Borei Keila community, Ms. Khav Lay who collected the statistics of the evictees displaced to Psar Dek Commune said that 140 families formerly of Borei Keila were sent to live there. Of those, at least 10 eligible voters lost their right to vote.

Voter records from Phsar Dek Commune show a total of 5,644 registered voters, of which 4,828 showed up on the polling day, with 816 absentees, said the commune’s Second Deputy Chief Mr. Duk Soeun.

But the Borei Keila evictees at Phsar Dek and Phnom Bat represent only a small portion of the citizens who have been forcibly evicted from their Phnom Penh homes in recent years. A Dec. 2011 report issued by the Housing Rights Task Force (HRTF) focusing on the socio-economic effects of forced evictions in Phnom Penh outlines the situations of the 74 communities— composed of 11,922 families and 32,440 individuals — affected by forced evictions in 2011 alone. HRTF Director Mr. Phearum told VOD that in 2012 the number of families evicted from Phnom Penh to the city outskirts was 611 in 2012 - 2013.

Mr. Panha of COMFREL told VOD that 1.2 million of 9 million voters lost their right to vote during the Commune and Sangkat Council Elections in 2012. He confirmed that the reasons behind their disenfranchisement included incorrectly spelled names, duplicated names, death, migration and, in some cases, being barred from registering to vote.

A report issued by the NEC on Sept. 11, 2013, listed the total number of voters registered for the 2013 National Election at more than 9.6 million, though only just over 6.6 million showed up on the polling day. NEC Secretary General Mr. Nytha said that those 3 million voters did not participate in the election due to the fact that many of them went to study abroad or had migrated or immigrated to other countries.

“They violently demolished our homes and forced us to live here. If we did not accept this compensation, we would be landless and homeless. And yet when we register for the election, they denied us. What can we do?”

**MS. SOK SAROEUN
BOREI KEILA EVICTEE
RELOCATED TO PHNOM BAT**

Election monitors say registration reforms needed to prevent voter disenfranchisement

Overall, VOD's investigation into the disenfranchisement of Borei Keila voters uncovered three main factors that prevented them from voting, including: Citizens who did not register to vote on time, and election authorities who worked in a politically partisan manner and made the registration process overly complicated.

Civil society representatives and election observers reported that election authorities prevented or delayed evictees from registering and discriminated against them because they believed that members of the displaced Borei Keila community would vote against the ruling party. Evictees reported that election authorities required them to show their transferring documents from their old address to the relocation site, their family book, two passport-sized photos and two witnesses. Other evictees reported that the authorities postponed their registration by saying that they were busy. Evictees also faced logistical challenges in registering to vote, including the fact that many lacked the time and money to travel to government offices where they could register.

However, some Cambodian citizens lost their right to vote because they neglected to register, either because of destitution, migration, or because of difficulties related to the location of the polling station. As for the authorities, civil so-

ciety representatives claim that their failure to widely share election-related information to all groups of people played a causal role in the disenfranchisement of evictee voters.

Election monitors recommended that election law, policy and procedure, including mechanisms associated with voter registration and verification should be amended in order to simplify the process. Moreover, observers specifically recommend that the NEC should develop a special registration procedure for those who will be or have been displaced to relocation sites. Election observers stress that this procedure should specifically outline the responsibilities of local authorities in their role as registrars, with authorities at the original address being charged with issuance of certificates of identity and transfer letters to the relocation site as well as with the compiling of a list of evictees to be transferred to the relocation site in order to ensure a free and fair registration process. In particular, election monitors said, authorities that play an important role in registering voters at the local level must perform their job in a neutral manner.

In order to ensure the transparency of the next National Election, monitors propose that the NEC publicly recruit election officers through a transparent process that would include testing and an exam. In addition, monitors recommend that the NEC establish an independent arbitration committee consisting of representatives from political parties, and national and international civil society organizations. ■

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