

With No Will to Amend, LANGO Must Be Repealed

February 10, 2020 – We, the undersigned communities and civil society groups, urge the Royal Government of Cambodia to immediately repeal the Law on Associations and NGOs (LANGO).

Today's fourth meeting between the Ministry of Interior and some local NGOs failed to result in meaningful amendments to LANGO. This is the latest in a long line of actions which show that the government lacks the will to amend this law, which affects not just NGOs but also grassroots groups and associations.

Some in the government have said the diversity of opinions among thousands of civil society groups is the reason why suitable amendments cannot be passed. We find the differences in structure, purpose and representation of various groups, associations and organisations to be the strength of a free, diverse and independent civil society. By arguing the need for absolute consensus, the Ministry of Interior is hiding its lack of will behind an impossible standard.

As members of a vibrant civil society that serves Cambodia's citizens and stands as a pillar strengthening both the government and private sector, we are particularly concerned by the impact that this law has on local grassroots groups and associations. These groups are key to ensuring citizens' voices are heard when decisions are made regarding their land and livelihoods, and LANGO unduly restricts their ability to organise. Groups operating at the grassroots level have reported that local authorities regularly use LANGO to restrict their activities.

Prior to LANGO's passage in July 2015, the law was widely criticised by grassroots groups, unions, NGOs and the United Nations. Time and time again, the government was urged to abandon the law, which criminalises all unregistered groups and makes registration dependent on an unclear and complex bureaucratic process. This gives the government far too much arbitrary control over which groups and associations are able to exercise their constitutional rights to freely express and organise themselves.

There is no need for LANGO. Cambodia's civil code already governs both associations and organisations. Any criminal acts are already covered under the nation's criminal code. An additional law only serves to deter, intimidate and restrict civil society, which has documented frequent and sustained surveillance and intimidation due to LANGO.

We agree with the dozens of international brands that called on the government last month to repeal LANGO as an urgent step towards allowing Cambodia's civil society groups to operate without fear of harassment or repression. We believe that civil society groups, grassroots communities and local associations should be able to work towards Cambodia's development without facing arbitrary restrictions and interference from LANGO.

The law is unnecessary, and serves only to restrict the free assembly, organisation and expression of the diverse members of Cambodia's civil society. As such, we the undersigned groups demand LANGO's immediate repeal.

Signed:

1. 24 Families Community (Preah Sihanouk)
2. 197 Land Community (Koh Kong)
3. 92 Community (Phnom Penh)
4. Angdoug Trabek Land Community (Svay Rieng)
5. Angdoug Thmar Community (Preah Sihanouk)
6. Anlong Run Community (Battambang)
7. Areng Indigenous Community (Koh Kong)
8. Banteay Srey Community (Phnom Penh)
9. Bat Khteah Community (Preah Sihanouk)
10. Boeung Chhuk Community (Phnom Penh)
11. Boeung Kak Community (Phnom Penh)
12. Boeung Pram Community (Battambang)
13. Borei Keila Community (Phnom Penh)
14. Bos Sa Am Community (Battambang)
15. Bos Snao Community (Kampong Cham)
16. Buddhism for Peace Organization (BPO)
17. Building and Wood Workers Trade Union Federation of Cambodia (BWTUC)
18. C I 5 Community (Preah Sihanouk)
19. CamASEAN Youth's Future (CamASEAN)
20. Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
21. Cambodian Food and Service Workers' Federation (CFSWF)
22. Cambodian Independent Teachers' Association (CITA)
23. Cambodian Informal Economy Workers Association (CIWA)
24. Cambodian Labor Confederation (CLC)
25. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
26. Cambodian Youth Network (CYN)
27. Community for Nature Protection (Pursat)
28. Chek Meas Land Community (Svay Rieng)
29. Cheko Community (Phnom Penh)
30. Chikor Kraom Land Community (Koh Kong)
31. Chikor Leu Land Community (Koh Kong)
32. Chorm Kravean Community (Kampong Cham)
33. Community Network in Action (CAN)
34. Community Peace- Building Network (CPN)
35. Dok Por Community (Kampong Speu)
36. Dombe Community (Tbong Khmum)
37. Equitable Cambodia (EC)
38. Forest and Biodiversity Preservation Community (Svay Rieng)
39. Forestry Community (Ratanakiri)
40. Gender and Development Cambodia (GADC)
41. Highlander Association
42. Horng Samnom Community (Kampong Speu)
43. Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA)

44. Independent Monk Network for Social Justice (IMNSJ)
45. Indigenous Youth at Brome Community (Preah Vihear)
46. Indradevi Association (IDA)
47. Klang Teuk 78 Community (Siem Reap)
48. Koh Sdech Land Community (Koh Kong)
49. Koh Sralao Fishery Community (Koh Kong)
50. Legal Support for Children and Women - LSCW (Koh Kong)
51. Lor Peang Land Community (Kampong Chhnang)
52. Minority Rights Organization (MIRO)
53. Moeunchey Land Community (Svay Rieng)
54. Mother Nature Cambodia (MNC)
55. Natural Resource Protection Community (Kampong Chhnang)
56. Network for Prey Long Protection in Mean Rith Commune (Kampong Thom)
57. Orm Laing Community (Kampong Spue)
58. Ou Chheu Teal Community (Preah Sihanouk)
59. Ou Tracheak Chet Community (Preah Sihanouk)
60. Ou Vor Preng Community (Battambang)
61. Phnom Bat Community (Phnom Penh)
62. Phnom Kram Community (Siem Reap)
63. Phnom Sleuk Community (Battambang)
64. Phnom Thnort Community (Kampot)
65. Phsar Kandal Village Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)
66. Phum 22 Community (Phnom Penh)
67. Phum Bo Loy Community (Rattanakiri)
68. Phum Dei Chhnang Community (Kampong Speu)
69. Phum Ou Svay Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)
70. Phum Sela Khmer Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)
71. Ponlok Khmer (PKH)
72. Prasak Community (Battambang)
73. Prek Ksach Land Community (Koh Kong)
74. Prek Takung Community (Phnom Penh)
75. Prey Chher Pich Sangva Laor Chhert Community (Kampong Chhnang)
76. Prey Peay Fishery Community (Kampot)
77. Prey Preal Community (Battambang)
78. Railway Community (Phnom Penh)
79. Raksmeay Samaki Community (Kampong Speu)
80. Ranakiri Youth Network (Rattanakiri)
81. Rural Cambodia Technological Support Organisation (RCTSO)
82. Rum Cheik Land Community (Siem Reap)
83. Samaki 4 Community (Phnom Penh)
84. Samaki Romeas Haek Land Community (Svay Rieng)
85. Samot Kram Community (Rattanakiri)
86. Samot Leu Community (Rattanakiri)
87. Sangkom Thmey Land Community (Pursat)

88. Sdey Krom Fishery Community (Battambang)
89. Somros Koh Sdech Fishery Community (Koh Kong)
90. SOS International Airport Community (Phnom Penh)
91. Spean Chhes Community (Preah Sihanouk)
92. Sre Prang Community (Kampong Cham)
93. Steung Bort village Land community (Banteay Meanchey)
94. Ta Noun Land Community (Koh Kong)
95. Thnong Land Community (Koh Kong)
96. Toul Sangke B Community (Phnom Penh)
97. Tourism Employee Grand Diamond City Union (Banteay Meanchey)
98. Trapaing Chor Community (Kampong Speu)
99. Tumnop II Community (Phnom Penh)
100. Steung Khsach Sor Community (Kampong Chhnang)