Mrs. Phloek Phyrom, 39 years old, is a Pu Nong woman (indigenous community), living in Laoka village, Sangkat Sokh Dom, Krong Sen Monorom, Mondulkiri province. Currently, she is farmer and a facilitator of indigenous groups in Modulkiri province covering 5 districts and 39 villages in total.

She has been an indigenous rights activist since 2010 when she experienced the clearing of community land by an investment company. She is also passionate about protecting natural resources and indigenous culture and takes part in protecting the culture and natural resources of her community.

After discussing with other communities about the impact of land and natural resource depletion, as well as deforestation, she became an indigenous rights activist. Community representatives and members from other areas, such as Busra, Kaoh Nheaek, Monourom, Kaev Seima, and Ou Reang, jointly submitted a petition to the Mondulkiri Provincial and Municipal Court to seek resolutions for affected indigenous peoples, to stop deforestation and to end clearance of community forests.

Her achievements include securing the return of 27 hectares of land from the Villa Development Company back in May 2017 and facilitating indigenous communities to gain knowledge through various trainings on the Law of Self-determination and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

During her activism she has received death threat when she was celebrating Indigenous People in 2017. In 2018, she received another death threat while she was carrying out advocacy related to the Dos Kromom mountain issue. A third death threat was received when she tried to defend 70 hectares of indigenous land. In 2016, Phyrom and her community were sued for physical abuse, in 2018, the police told her that the lawsuit had been dropped. These factors affected her emotionally, however, did not stop her from her work. She reiterated that if she stopped that would mean she had been defeated. In response to these challenges, she has carried out many advocacy activities by raising relevant laws, guiding authorities to the incident sites and disseminating information to the public.

As a woman indigenous rights and forestry activist, her freedom has been restricted more than ordinary people and she has been monitored and tracked while attending meetings with her community and meetings about indigenous song, despite the fact these activities do not require prior notification being given to the authorities.

As a woman indigenous rights defender, she defines gender equality as complementarity. Even though we know that women and men are equal, sometimes men misunderstand the term “equality” by saying that women have to work as hard as men. In contrast, gender equality is the complementary roles of men and women.

She wants the government to broaden opportunities for women in practice not just on paper, in order to increase their participation (especially indigenous women). She notes that some local authorities still discriminate against indigenous women by using inappropriate words.