On September 05, 2009 the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR) conducted a Public Forum on the topic of Human Rights and Development from 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at Kompong Tror Lach Kroum Village, Kompong Tror Lach Commune, Kompong Tror Lach District, Kompong Chhnang Province. Residents voiced their concerns about illegal fishing and human right violations. Four guest speakers spoke at the presentation: Mr. Hol Chantho, Kampong Tralach District Governor, Mr. Sam Chankea, Adhoc representative, Mr. Koy Nhan, Commune Representative, and Mr. Doung Chhantara, the representative of SRP parliamentarian H.E Khe Vannthet. There were also 105 residents who attended the forum, and 45 of them were women. Nine residents raised their concerns and expressed their opinions relating to illegal fishing and human right violations, which both affect the living standards of the local people.

Mr. Chang Chhan, a citizen of Soben village, Peni Commune, Kampong Tralach District, Kampong Chhnang Province, raised the issue of noise pollution caused by a generator, which can be heard and is bothersome to local people and students at an English school nearby. He also said that the noise pollution has grown, especially after 11p.m., when the village changes to a larger generator.

Mr. Un Nin, the citizen of Tek Hot village, Tek Hot commune, Rolea Per Ear district, Kompong Chhnang province, voiced concern that there are six barricades set up in six different areas: 1. Beong Kak; 2. Boeng Trav; 3. Boeng Ka Srey; 4. Prek Chik; 5. Thom NubKoma; and 6. Kror Tout Samras. These barricades negatively affect the locals in each of these areas because most of them are fishermen, whose livelihoods depend on fishing. Furthermore, the illegal fishing fighting is low level because they moved away barricades in short time. He also added that “the barricades prevented fish from swimming into the lake, so fishermen who use gill nets to catch fish were unable to catch enough fish to earn money to support their family.”
Illegal fishing was happening in Kompong Tralach commune and Rolea Bear commune, and the local people can feel the effect. Illegal fishing makes it especially difficult for housewives because they are unable to buy fish for food. The shortage of food could also affect the peoples’ health because large-scale fish sellers rarely sell to consumers who only buy small quantities of fish. A female representative of the local women said that “They (the big sellers) don’t sell fish to the poor people like us, so we almost cannot find fish to eat.”

In response to these complaints, the District Governor told the people that he will solve the noise pollution issue by asking the generator’s owner to lower the noise level. If this solution does not work, he will move the generator further from the local people. He said, “I promise that I will bring this concern to the generator owner and solve the problem.”

He further added that the main point of the meeting is illegal fishing, and he will take any actions to deal those problems, it’s not stated in book only. He said: “when we see on the lands or in the water we must tell authority to move it to water official”. On the issue concerning the commune clerks’ request for 60,000 Reils for each birth certificate issued, he will ask those clerks himself how much they demanded from the people. He said he will deal with these clerks if any mistakes are found, because the Royal Government does not allow these extra payments. If these problems happen again, he said he would be pleased to help. Mr. Chhan Kea and Mr. Chhantra said “Article 16 of the Fishing Law states: fishing is prohibited during 1st June to 30th September because it is the season for fish breeding. However, during the prohibited period, we have seen barricades set up and illegal fishing occur. Mr. Doung Chhantra representative of H.E Ki Vanndeth, said, “they stated in the book only, but in the river they are not practice”.

The local people were pleased to see the presence of SRP representatives, NGOs, and local authorities, as well as the Kompong Tralach district governor, at this forum to solve their problems.