

ACCESS TO COLLECTIVE LAND TITLES FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN CAMBODIA - 2026 UPDATE

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

Overview

In Cambodia, there are approximately 172,980 Indigenous Peoples (IPs), representing 1.11% of the country's population, living in 15 of the 25 provinces. There are an estimated 488 Indigenous communities that sustain their livelihoods through traditional agriculture practices, including cultivating forest land using a technique known as 'shifting cultivation' or 'rotational farming'.¹ In addition, the beliefs, traditions, and identities of Cambodia's Indigenous communities are closely tied to their lands, forests and natural resources.²

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR OBTAINING COLLECTIVE LAND TITLES (CLTS)

Indigenous peoples' land rights are protected by both international and national law. The Cambodian Constitution (Article 31) recognizes these rights, while the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights guarantees the right to adequate housing. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples also recognizes their rights to the lands, territories and resources they traditionally occupy and use, and requires the State to provide legal recognition and protection. While the 2001 Land Law and Sub-Decree No. 83 of 2009 recognize IPs' collective ownership in Cambodia, Indigenous communities continue to face challenges, and their rights are not yet fully protected.



PROGRESS IN OBTAINING COLLECTIVE LAND TITLES (CLTS)

Although the registration process was simplified in 2020, the procedure is still slow due to its complexity, high cost, and lengthy duration.³



The first collective land registration took place in 2011. Over the 14 years up to 2025, only 43 (8.81%) of Cambodia's 488 indigenous communities had obtained collective land titles.⁴

There were no reports of any increase in the number of collective land titles granted from July 2024 to July 2025!⁵

According to official data and information from the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction, as of June 2026, there were **59 indigenous communities** registered, and granted collective land titles.⁶ 59 is equivalent to **12.09%** of the 488 indigenous communities throughout the Kingdom of Cambodia. The progress from 43 communities as of June 2025 to 59 communities as of June 2026 is an increase of **16 communities**, or **160%** of the Royal Government's commitment to issue 10 collective land titles per year.

The data and information presented above are a **significant indicator** of the Royal Government's progress in accelerating the registration and granting of collective land ownership to indigenous peoples!

Data and summary information about indigenous communities that have been registered and have received collective land titles throughout the Kingdom of Cambodia.

- 59 communities corresponding to 1,974 land tiles on an area of 62,495.6640 hectares, equivalent to 6,678 families, of which:**
- 1. Ratanakiri Province has 38 communities corresponding to 1,130 land tiles on an area of 39,715.1749 hectares, equivalent to 4,150 families.**
 - 2. Mondulakiri Province has 8 communities corresponding to 401 land tiles on an area of 8,531.68 hectares, equivalent to 578 families.**
 - 3. Kratie Province has 9 communities corresponding to 331 land tiles on an area of 8,206.3923 hectares, equivalent to 1,625 families.**
 - 4. Stung Treng Province has 4 communities corresponding to 112 land tiles on an area of 6,042.4168 hectares, equivalent to 334 families.**

CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL.

Despite the increase in the number of indigenous communities receiving collective land ownership from 43 communities as of June 2025 to 59 communities as of June 2026, they still face the following common challenges and concerns:

- The lengthy process of granting collective land titles continues to hinder Indigenous communities' effective enjoyment of their rights to traditional lands and adequate housing, as protected under national and international law.
- Indigenous community lands, including shifting cultivation lands, pastures, burial grounds, and sacred lands, continue to be affected by the operations of private companies.
- IPs are deeply concerned about new development projects approved by the government and their potential impacts on community forests, residential lands, burial grounds, sacred lands, and shifting cultivation lands.
- Illegal logging and mining are disrupting the traditional livelihoods of Indigenous communities.
- The issuing of private land titles to influential individuals over land already covered by Indigenous communities' collective land titles is a serious and complex problem.
- IPs living in the Cambodian-Thailand border area are deeply concerned that they will become landless and homeless, and lose access to natural resources due to encroachment by the Thai military.⁷

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF CAMBODIA (RGC)

- The Royal Government of Cambodia and the competent ministries should accelerate the registration and issuance of collective land titles to Indigenous communities, in line with the Royal Government's commitment to grant collective land titles to 10 communities each year.
- The Royal Government of Cambodia should take effective measures to protect the traditional lands of Indigenous communities from encroachment and adverse impacts caused by the activities of private companies, in accordance with national law and international human rights standards.
- The Royal Government of Cambodia should ensure that all newly licensed development projects do not adversely affect the lands and traditional natural resources of Indigenous communities by strengthening the transparent and effective implementation of Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs).
- The Royal Government and competent authorities should take strict legal action against those who commit crimes of illegal logging and mining, in accordance with the Law on Forestry, the Law on Mineral Resource Management and Exploitation, and the Code on Environment and Natural Resources.
- The Royal Government of Cambodia should ensure that no further private land titles are issued over land covered by Indigenous communities' collective land titles and resolve existing cases by returning the affected land to the communities in accordance with the boundaries specified in their collective land titles.
- The Royal Government of Cambodia should establish accessible and effective procedures for claiming restitution and compensation for individuals whose property and land have been damaged, destroyed, or confiscated as a result of border conflicts, with particular attention to ensuring that women, Indigenous communities, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups have equal and meaningful access to these procedures.

Sources

1. Report on the Demographic and Socio-Economic Situation of Cambodia's Indigenous Peoples, 2024, pages 12, 26 and 170.
2. CCHR, 'International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples,' August 2023.
3. CCHR 'Access to Collective Land Titles for Indigenous Communities in Cambodia - 2025 Update.'
4. CCHR 'Access to Collective Land Titles for Indigenous Communities in Cambodia - 2025 Update.'
5. CCHR 'Access to Collective Land Titles for Indigenous Communities in Cambodia - 2025 Update.'
6. Letter from the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction No. 2102, dated July 23, 2026, in response to the letter of CCHR, No. 00251/26, dated June 29, 2026, requesting updated data on the number of collective land tiles of indigenous communities in the Kingdom of Cambodia in 2026.
7. CCHR 'Briefing Note: Displacement from the Cambodia-Thailand border conflict, December 2025'.

We welcome constructive feedback, updates, and corrections!