

## Children’s Consultation on World Bank Safeguards

Siem Reap, Cambodia

On 14 and 15 September 17 children between the ages of 10 and 16 convened in Siem Reap, Cambodia for an educational workshop on the World Bank and a consultation on the World Bank safeguards. These children were drawn from three different child-led networks including Child Advocate Network (CAN), Cambodian Children and Youth Movement for Child Rights (CCYMCR) and Child Rights Country Team (CRCT). They were from six provinces and included four children whose families had been evicted from development project sites in Boeung Kak Lake and Borei Keila.

The workshop on 14 September consisted mainly of large group discussions and instruction on World Bank structure, practice and policies, including the World Bank safeguards. There was discussion of human rights, and children’s rights, and the participants divided into groups to consider which human rights issues they saw as most pressing in their lives, and how these might be related to World Bank activities. The participants also heard from Sia Phearum, a Cambodian activist who described the World Bank’s involvement in the controversial Cambodian Land Management and Administration Project.

On 15 September the children reviewed several case studies of projects carried out by the World Bank in South Africa, Uzbekistan, the Philippines, and Uganda. These case studies primed the children to make recommendations for how the Bank can improve its policies to better protect children and communities. The children then had the opportunity to create individual posters with recommendations for the World Bank. These recommendations were then presented to the entire group. The workshop ended with the participants electing two representatives to travel to Washington, DC to present the conclusions of the consultation to policy makers.

In general the children and adolescents were active participants throughout the two day workshop and consultation and came up with thoughtful recommendations. The participation of the children from Boeung Kak Lake and Borei Keila helped all of the children to understand the ways in which World Bank projects directly impact children and thus added significant value to the consultation.

The recommendations from the Cambodian children can be summed up by one adolescent who stated “Please take care of the children’s safety, welfare and education because children are the bamboo shoots.” Specifically the recommendations focused on several areas:

1. The children called on the World Bank to improve its assessment process prior to beginning project implementation. They stated that the assessment should look not only at environmental impacts but at all of the impacts on people, and in particular, the specific impacts on children as well as on women. The impacts on adults and children should be examined separately. This

impact must be done carefully with sufficient attention paid to the “real situation on the ground.”

2. The World Bank should consult with children before engaging in projects that will impact them and should consider their input seriously. The World Bank should make sure to have consultations with government, community members, and children to avoid potential conflicts with negative impacts on the people.
3. The resettlement policy should include measures designed to protect the interests of children. Specifically there must be steps taken to ensure that children’s education is not interrupted as well as to provide all people with access to adequate shelter, sanitation, and health care facilities in the new location. The people’s safety must also be protected.
4. The World Bank should consult with communities to try to make all resettlement voluntary and, at the least, prevent the use of violence in evictions with all displacement happening peacefully.
5. Include specific protections for children and all persons with disabilities in World Bank policies. Prohibit violations of human rights. If the rights of women, children, or persons with disabilities are violated the project should be stopped.
6. The World Bank should better monitor the implementation of the project and ensure the government complies with the rules and plan for the project. The World Bank cannot ignore human rights violations perpetrated by governments on Bank funded projects.

In addition, the children who had been forcibly evicted from their homes to make way for development projects called on the World Bank to take action to assist their families and address the violence committed against them by the Cambodian government. One child from Beoung Kak Lake called on the World Bank to “[p]lease monitor closely the Cambodian government. You can’t sit quietly while there are human rights violations with World Bank funds. Find a solution for BKL especially to release land issue activists who are suffering injustice.” Another child from the same community demanded that the World Bank “not ignore the problem of children from Boeung Kak Lake. Everyday children in Boeung Kak Lake are not having enough to eat or getting access to education. World Bank please look at the current situation of people in BKL now and please be vocal about it. They beat me even though I am a child! I lost all chance of education.”