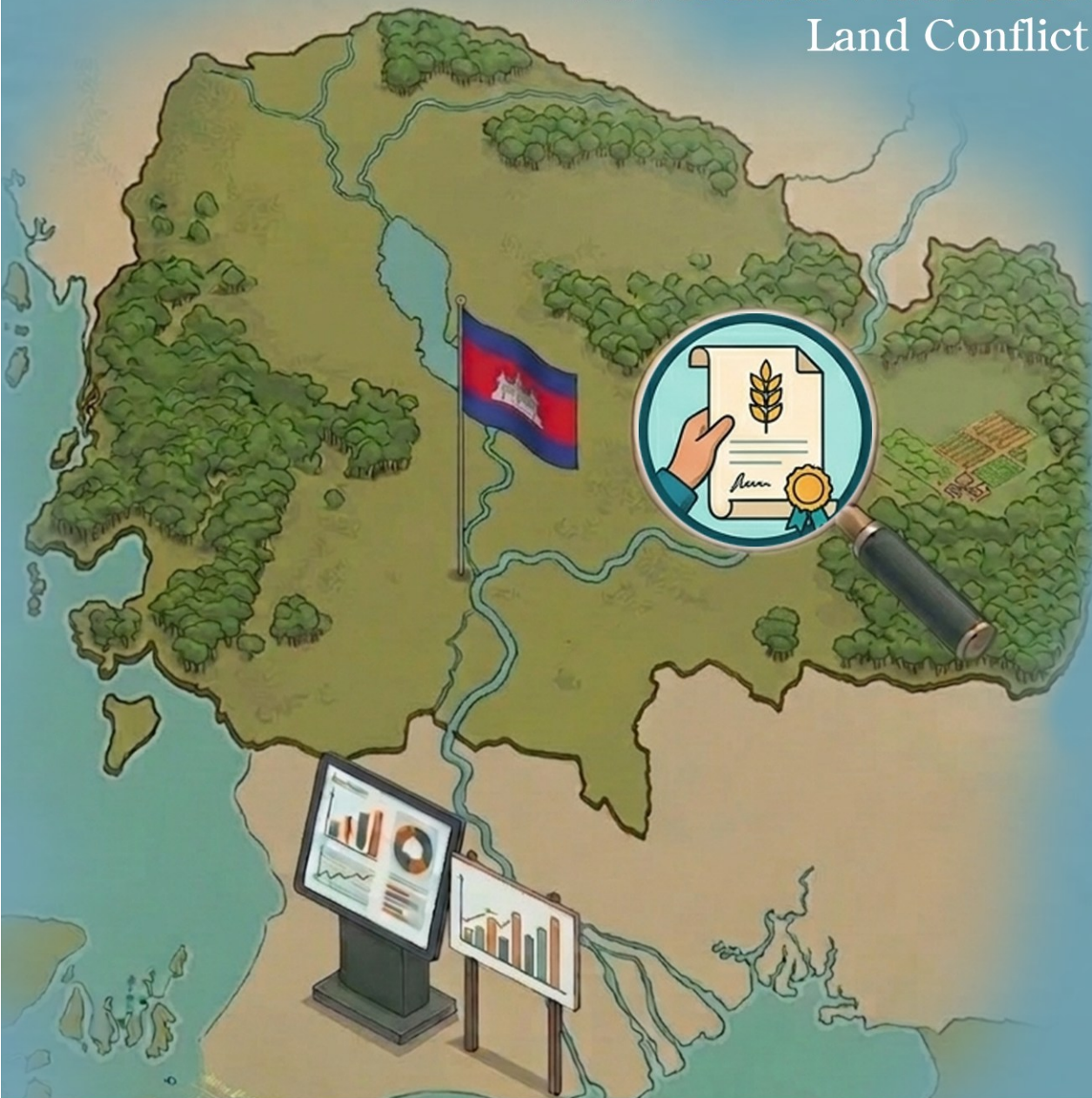


# Land Rights in Focus

2025 Cambodia Land and Resource  
Conflict Monitoring Report

Part of Land Watch Asia Initiative on  
Land Conflict Monitoring



**Cover design and images:** Open AI (2026) Gemini, 17 March 2026 version

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### **Disclaimer**

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of IFAD and ILC.

## Acronyms

ADHOC	Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association
ANGOC	Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development
CHRAC	Cambodian Human Rights Action Cambodia
CLEC	Community Legal Education Center
FPIC	free, prior, and informed consent
HRV	human right violation
ILC	International Land Coalition
LWA	Land Watch Asia
MLMUC	Ministry of Land Management, Urbanization, and Construction
NGO	non-governmental organization
SK	STAR Kampuchea

# Introduction

## *Brief overview of the country context*

Cambodia's land sector has been marked by profound upheaval stemming from decades of conflict and political transformation. The Khmer Rouge regime (1975 to 1979) abolished private property and systematically destroyed land records, creating a legal and administrative vacuum that persists today. Following the regime's fall and through the 1980s to 1990s period of Vietnamese occupation and civil war, land governance remained fragmented. The 1993 Paris Peace Agreements and subsequent democratization brought new challenges as the country transitioned to a market economy, with the 2001 Land Law attempting to formalize land rights. However, the legacy of destroyed documentation, displaced populations, and weak institutions created conditions ripe for conflicts as economic development accelerated.

Economic liberalization and rapid growth since the 1990s have intensified pressure on land resources, making land as the country's most valuable and contested asset. Large-scale economic land concessions for agro-industrial plantations, mining, and hydropower projects have been granted by the government — often covering hundreds of thousands of hectares — frequently overlapping with areas occupied or used by rural communities. Urban expansion, particularly in Phnom Penh and provincial cities, has driven property values skyward and triggered widespread forced evictions. Tourism development in areas like Siem Reap and coastal zones has similarly displaced communities. These economic drivers occur against a backdrop of limited rule of law, where powerful political and business elites can leverage connections to acquire land, often at the expense of poor and marginalized populations who lack formal documentation.

The key drivers of land conflict in Cambodia thus reflect interconnected governance failures and development pressures. Unclear or contested land rights — stemming from incomplete registration, overlapping claims, and fraudulent documentation — create vulnerability for smallholders and indigenous communities. Weak judicial independence and endemic corruption mean disputes are rarely resolved fairly, with courts often favoring powerful actors. Indigenous communities face particular challenges as customary land rights receive inadequate legal protection despite constitutional provisions. Rural-urban migration and population growth increase competition for land, while climate change impacts (e.g., flooding and drought) force displacement and heighten tensions. The resulting conflicts range from individual boundary disputes between neighbors to large-scale confrontations between communities and concession holders or State authorities, often involving violence, intimidation, and human rights violations that have drawn international concern.

## *Rationale and objectives of the study*

As part of the initiative of the Asian NGO Coalition on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) and the Land Watch Asia (LWA) campaign, STAR Kampuchea (SK) undertook the 2025 Country Land Monitoring (CLM) study alongside with ANGOC and member- and partner- organizations in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines. The Cambodia study is financially supported by the International Land Coalition (ILC).

The country land conflict monitoring report aimed to:

- describe the prevalence and types of land and natural resource conflicts;
- examine the nature and causes of land and resource conflicts;
- discuss the human rights violations affecting individuals and communities; and,
- draw up recommendations based on the study findings and consultations.

## Concepts

LWA partners have agreed on operational definitions to standardize the scope of research and analysis of findings across participating countries. This common framework ensures that data collected from different country contexts can be meaningfully compared and aggregated for regional analysis. Adapted from Engel and Korf (2005), land conflict is defined as "a result of contradicting interests over the control, use, and management of land and resources, where the primary actors have differences in goals." This definition recognizes that land conflicts arise not only from disputes over ownership, but also from competing claims regarding how land should be used, who has the right to access it, and who holds decision-making authority over land resources. Thus, this report focuses on **structural land conflict cases** where at least one of the stakeholders in the conflict is a marginalized sector or community. This focus is intended to highlight social issues and to raise discussions about public policy and development priorities. Such conflicts may involve multiple stakeholders with divergent interests, including individual landholders, communities, private companies, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The monitoring initiative examines three primary facets: (1) cases; (2) relationships; and, (3) incidents.

*Cases* detail the storyline of the conflict and capture basic information about the conflict, including the type of land or resource being contested, the size of the contested area, its geographical location, and the historical background of how the conflict emerged. This case-level analysis provides the essential narrative framework for understanding the origins, evolution, and current status of each land conflict.

*Relationships* pertaining to stakeholders involves examining affected communities, aggressors, government agencies, and other relevant actors, and documenting their respective actions, positions, and levels of power or influence in the conflict. This relational mapping helps identify power imbalances between parties and reveals patterns of how different actors engage with land conflicts, whether through legal channels, negotiation, intimidation, or other means. Understanding these relationships is crucial for identifying potential pathways to resolution and accountability.

*Incidents of human rights violations* comprise specific events where violence against persons or communities was reported, documenting the victims and reported perpetrators, as well as the immediate and long-term impacts and effects of such violence. These incidents may include forced evictions, physical assaults, arbitrary arrests, threats, intimidation, destruction of property, or killings related to the land conflict. Systematic documentation of these violations provides evidence for advocacy efforts and legal accountability mechanisms.

The monitoring initiative also includes natural resources — such as forests, minerals, and water bodies — within the scope of land conflict monitoring.

## *Methodology, scope, and data sources*

To ensure the quality of the study, SK and ANGOC held several online meetings to provide guidance on data collection and encoding procedures. SK was re-oriented on the use of the common database template and pivot tables. Following this, SK discussed with other CSOs to explore partnership particularly in providing community-generated data. Thereafter, SK began collecting data for the 2025 land conflict monitoring. The 2023 land conflict database of Cambodia that SK compiled was updated and cases that remained unresolved in 2025 are incorporated in this report.

A draft country report was prepared and subjected to an online validation workshop on 12 March 2026, which was participated by 34 representatives from communities, NGOs, Cambodian Human Rights Committee (CHRC), and the Ministry of Land Management, Urbanization, and Construction (MLMUC).

The 2025 Cambodia land conflict monitoring covered structural land conflicts that occurred from 01 January 2025 to 31 December 2025, including the 2023 recorded conflicts that remain unresolved. Land conflicts predominantly took place in rural areas, although some cases extended into urban areas of Cambodia. The monitoring also included incidents of human rights violations (HRVs) — both violent (manifest) and non-violent (latent) — that occurred within the same period. These incidents are considered manifestations of ongoing land conflicts and were therefore linked to specific cases.

The study aimed to cover land conflict cases across the entire country. However, due to time and resource constraints, SK was only able to collect cases from 10 out of 25 cites and provinces of Cambodia.

Individual interviews were not conducted. However, clarification of the primary data was undertaken. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were not held in person but were conducted online, involving 34 participants from government institutions, the CHRC, NGOs, the MLMUC, and affected communities. These FGDs were organized as part of the data validation workshop.

Another limitation relates to case documentation. Data on land conflict cases were not centralized and were scattered across multiple sources, including government institutions, NGOs, community groups, social media platforms, and court records. Moreover, the data collected were insufficient to answer certain key questions, such as the number of affected households, the number of persons arrested, details about corrective actions by the government, and actions undertaken by communities to address land conflicts. In many cases, precise dates of incidents were also unavailable.

For 2025, SK collected a total of 34 land conflict cases that occurred from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025. SK utilized both primary and secondary sources of information for this monitoring initiative.

**Table 1. Sources of information for the cases**

Source	Number	Percentage (%)
CSO/NGO	25	36.3
Government agencies, institutions	20	29.0
Community, community-based organization	17	24.6
Mainstream media (print, online, radio)	4	5.9
Police reports	1	1.4
Court	1	1.4
Professional organizations, academe	1	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100.0</b>

A total of 69 information sources were used to document the cases. Civil society organizations (CSOs/NGOs) account for the largest share, contributing 25 sources (36.3 percent). Government agencies and institutions follow with 20 sources (29 percent), while community-based organizations (CBOs) account for 17 sources (24.6 percent).

In contrast, mainstream media contributed only four sources (5.9 percent), and professional organizations, police reports, and court records each account for 1.4 percent of total sources.

This distribution indicates that the majority of documentation is driven by civil society and community actors, with comparatively limited contribution from formal justice and law enforcement institutions.

## Key findings

### *Affected population and areas*

**Table 2a. Total number of cases, area contested, and households affected by land and resource conflicts, 2025**

Ongoing cases	Number
Total number of cases	34
Total number of hectares contested	10,851.94
Total number of households affected	8,559

In 2025, a total of 34 ongoing land and resource conflict cases were documented. These cases involved 10,851.94 hectares of contested land and affected 8,559 households nationwide. Although the number of cases appears moderate, the scale of land area and the number of affected households demonstrate that each case has significant territorial and social impact.

On average, each case involved approximately 319 hectares of contested land and affected about 252 households per case, indicating that these conflicts are collective and community-based rather than isolated individual disputes.

Land and resource conflicts in 2025 remain structurally significant, involving large tracts of land and affecting thousands of households. The relatively small number of cases mask the intensity and magnitude of impact per case. These findings confirm that land disputes in Cambodia are not isolated events but systemic issues linked to tenure insecurity, development pressures, and governance gaps.

**Table 2b. Number of cases and total area contested (in ha) by district/province/region**

Provinces	Number of cases		Area (ha)
	Total No.	No. of cases with info on area	
Banteay Mean Chey	1	0	nda
Kampong Chhnang	8	7	113.06
Kampong Speu	1	1	2,000.00
Koh Kong	2	2	853.70
Kratie	1	1	811.00
Mondulkiri	4	0	nda
Pheah Sihanuk	6	6	1,400.50
Preah Vihear	6	5	4,440.61
Pursat	4	1	33.07
Svay Rieng	1	1	1,200.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10,851.94</b>

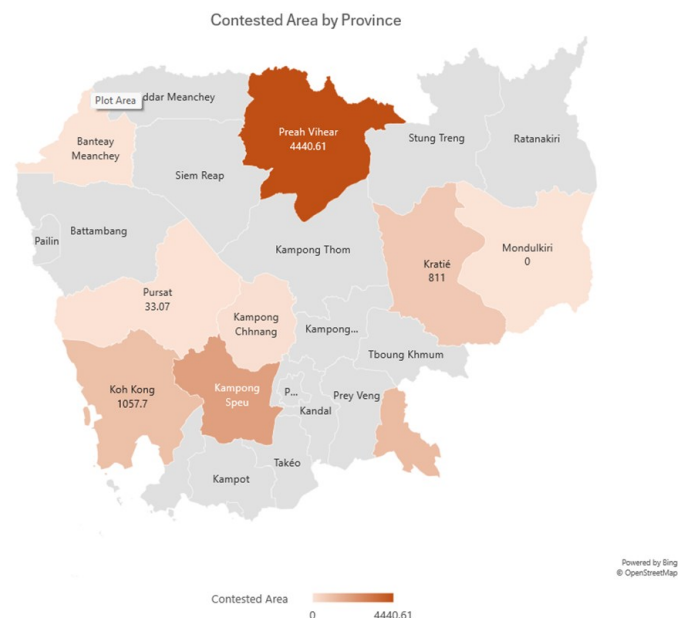
Note: nda = no data available

In 2025, a total of 34 land conflict cases were recorded across 10 provinces. However, area data were available for only 24 cases, while 10 cases (29 percent) had no available area (nda) information, particularly in Banteay Mean Chey, Pursat, and Mondulkiri.

The province with the largest contested land area is Preah Vihear, with 4,440.61 hectares across five cases, accounting for approximately 41 percent of the total contested area nationwide (10,851.94 hectares). This is followed by Kampong Speu (2,000 hectares), Pheah Sihanuk (1,200.50 hectares), and Svay Rieng (1,200 hectares).

Although Kampong Chhnang recorded the highest number of cases (eight), the total contested area is relatively small at 113.06 hectares, indicating smaller-scale conflicts. Similarly, Pursat recorded four cases, but only 33.07 hectares were documented.

This variation demonstrates that the number of cases does not necessarily correlate with the scale of contested land.





two years), and four cases (12 percent) have lasted between two and five years. The duration of three cases (nine percent) remains unknown.

This distribution clearly shows that most land conflicts are protracted rather than short-term disputes, with nearly half lasting over a decade. This reflects persistent weaknesses in land governance, dispute resolution mechanisms, and enforcement systems. The prolonged nature of conflicts increases social instability, livelihood insecurity, and the risk of HRVs.

**Table 4. Types of land and resource affected by conflicts**

Type of Land/Resource	Number of cases	Percent of cases (%)	Contested area (ha)	Percent of contested area (%)
Smallholder agriculture/farming	14	41	4,574.70	42
Common lands/public lands managed by the community	7	21	2,044.90	19
Smallholder agroforestry, people's plantation, and community forest/social forest	6	18	2,198.66	20
Housing and settlements	4	12	2,033.68	19
Indigenous people/customary land/ancestral domain	3	9	nda	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>10,851.94</b>	<b>100</b>

In 2025, in terms of number of cases, the largest share involves smallholder agriculture/farming, accounting for 14 cases (41 percent of total cases) and 4,574.70 hectares (42 percent of total contested land). This indicates that conflicts over agricultural land remain the dominant pattern both in frequency and territorial scale.

Conflicts over common/public lands managed by communities represent seven cases (21 percent) and 2,044.90 hectares (19 percent of total contested area), while smallholder agroforestry and community forest lands account for six cases (18 percent) and 2,198.66 hectares (20 percent). Housing and settlements represent four cases (12 percent), affecting 2,033.68 hectares (19 percent), reflecting significant pressure on residential land.

Indigenous/customary land conflicts account for three cases (nine percent). However, the data of contested area was not available (nda), suggesting under documentation of territorial extent in these cases.

In summary, land conflicts were predominantly agrarian and resource-based, with smallholder agriculture and community-managed lands forming the core of conflicts. The strong alignment between percentage of cases and percentage of contested area in agricultural land confirms systemic pressure on rural livelihoods. Incomplete data on indigenous land areas signals documentation gaps in customary land conflicts.

**Table 5. Primary sector or community affected by conflict, by number and percent of cases**

Primary sector or community affected by conflict	Number of cases	Percent of cases (%)
Farmers: peasants (landless smallholder farmers, sharecroppers, agricultural workers, tenants, lessees, small owners)	26	76
Indigenous peoples (IPs)	5	15
Informal settlers	1	3
Tenured residents	1	3
Non-IP forest users, pastoralists	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100</b>

Out of 34 documented land conflict cases, the overwhelming majority affect farmers and peasants, accounting for 26 cases (76 percent). This includes landless & smallholder farmers, sharecroppers, agricultural workers, tenants, and small landowners.

Indigenous peoples (IPs) are affected in five cases (15 percent), while informal settlers, tenured residents, and non-indigenous forest users each account for one case (three percent), respectively.

Land conflicts in 2025 disproportionately affect farmers and smallholder peasants, who represent over three-quarters of all documented cases. This confirms that agrarian communities remain the most structurally vulnerable sector in land governance disputes. While indigenous communities represent a smaller proportion of cases, their customary land rights remain at risk, particularly given documentation gaps.

### *Adversarial claimants and drivers of land conflict*

**Table 6. Adversarial claimants in land conflict, by number and percent of cases**

Adversarial claimants	Number of cases	Percent of cases (%)
Government	16	47
• Government	8	24
• Local Government	5	15
• Both National and Local Governments	1	3
• State security agents	2	6
Private companies	10	29
Community vs. community (residents, settlers, migrants, refugees)	4	12
Non-State insurgent group	1	3
Powerful individuals (e.g., politicians, businessmen, landlords, officials/ex-officials, ex-military)	1	3
Others	2	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100</b>

Out of 34 documented land conflict cases, the Government is identified as the primary adversarial claimant in 16 cases (47 percent), making it the most frequently reported opposing party. Within this category, government agencies account for eight cases (24 percent), local government for five cases (15 percent), both national and local governments for one case (three percent) and State security agents account for two cases (six percent).

Private companies follow as the second most common claimant, being involved in 10 cases (29 percent). Cases categorized as community versus community account for four cases (12 percent) while powerful individuals and non-State insurgent groups each represent one case (three percent).

In summary, land conflicts were predominantly driven by disputes involving government entities and private companies. The strong presence of public authorities as adversarial claimants highlighted systemic governance challenges in land administration, concession allocation, and development planning. Community-level conflicts represented a smaller share, confirming that most conflicts arose from broader institutional and economic pressures.

**Table 7. Drivers of land and resource conflict, by number of cases and contested area (in ha)**

Drivers of land and resource conflict	Number of cases	Contested area (ha)
<b>Private-led business enterprises</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>8,726.00</b>
• Agribusiness, plantations	18	8,726.00
<b>Conflicting claims between communities/sectors over land and resource</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>33.06</b>
• Overlapping tenure and use	6	Nda
• Encroachment (e.g., migrants, settlers, refugees)	3	33.06
<b>Conservation/Protected Areas and “No Go” Zones</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>92.88</b>
<b>Government programs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2,000.00</b>
• Military facilities	1	2,000
<b>Others</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>10,851.94</b>

In 2025, the dominant driver of land conflicts is the private-led business enterprises, specifically agribusiness and plantation activities, accounting for 18 cases (53 percent) and 8,726 hectares accounting for 80 percent of total contested area.

Conflicts arising from conflicting claims between communities or sectors represent nine cases (26 percent), but involved only 33.06 hectares (less than one percent of total area) where data are available. Within this category, six cases are involved with overlapping tenure and land use (area data not available) and three cases are involved with encroachment, totaling 33.06 hectares.

Conflicts related to conservation/protected areas account for five cases (15 percent), covering 92.88 hectares (one percent of total contested area). Government programs, specifically military facilities, accounted for one case (three percent), yet involved a substantial 2,000 hectares (18 percent of total contested area). This distribution demonstrates a clear imbalance between the number of cases and the scale of land involved. As such, community-level conflicts were more frequent but involved relatively small

land areas. This pattern confirmed that structural development pressures — not merely local disagreements — are the principal drivers of large-scale land conflict.

### *Incidents of human rights violations and reported perpetrators*

**Table 8. Human Rights Violations (HRVs)**

Incidents of HRVs	Number Incidents	Number of Victims
Against individuals	1	1 individual
Against communities	1	670 households
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	

In 2025, a total of two recorded incidents of HRVs linked to land conflict were documented. One incident was committed against an individual, affecting one person, while another incident was committed against a community, affecting 670 households.

Although the number of incidents is the same (one each), the scale of impact differed significantly. The community-level violation affected hundreds of households, demonstrating a far broader social impact compared to the individual-level violation.

This indicates that even a small number of HRV incidents can generate large-scale consequences when communities are involved. This reinforces the importance of analyzing both incident count and scale of impact.

#### **Box 1. Dispossession and resistance: The Srayong land conflict**

The land dispute in Srayong commune traces back to 1 March 2011, when the Ministry of Economics and Finance granted a 9,000-hectare economic land concession to Seladamex Co. Ltd for a rubber plantation. Approximately 600 hectares of this area overlapped with community land owned and cultivated by more than 300 families across Srayong Cheung, Srayong Tbound, and Mrech villages. Although the company initially promised employment and local development, it proceeded to demarcate boundaries and clear around 250 hectares without consultation or consent. Community protests were met with force, and many residents reported lacking formal land titles despite long-term occupation, with some alleging that their documents were destroyed.



After several years of inactivity, the conflict escalated in 2022 when military personnel entered the area and cleared approximately 450 hectares, demolishing homes and displacing families. Villagers were threatened with arrest if they resisted or documented the operations. In December 2023, local authorities ordered 131 families to vacate the disputed land, followed by the installation of barricades and armed guards to restrict access. These actions intensified tensions and further limited the community's ability to sustain their livelihoods.

On 6 March 2024, a large-scale forced eviction was carried out by a combined force of military personnel, police, and government officials. More than 130 villagers attempted to resist, resulting in violent clashes involving warning gun shots, tear gas, and physical assaults. Homes were burned and demolished, and many residents fled into nearby forests. At least 29 community members were arrested, with 25 charged with illegal encroachment on State land. After 36 days in detention, they were released on bail under restrictive conditions, including prohibitions on protest and returning to the area. Many returned to find their homes destroyed and were forced to relocate.



Despite ongoing advocacy by civil society organizations, access to justice remains severely constrained. Legal barriers, intimidation, and political repression continue to limit community action, while restrictions on NGOs have hindered the provision of assistance. Displacement has led to severe economic hardship, food insecurity, and family separation, with some residents seeking refuge in forest areas under precarious conditions. The case highlights the persistence of land conflicts driven by overlapping claims, weak tenure security, and the use of force in resolving disputes, leaving affected communities in prolonged vulnerability.

*Sources:*

*25 People Imprisoned in Preah Vihear Land Dispute," LICADHO, March 12, 2024, <https://www.licadho-cambodia.org/flashnews.php?perm=383>.*

*Thayvie Sinn, "Save Cambodia," Save Cambodia, April 21, 2024, <https://savecambodia.org/urgent-action-model-letters/land-evictions-arrests-and-beatings-of-evicted-landholders-and-those-assisting-them>.*

**Table 9. Forms of HRVs committed against individuals, by number of incidents and number of victims**

Type of HRVs	Number of incidents	Number of individual victims		
		Male	Female	Total
Sexual assault	1	-	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

*Note: The recorded type of HRV reflects the most recent violation inflicted on the victim.*

In 2025, a documented case of human rights violation (HRV) involved the sexual assault of a young woman, allegedly perpetrated by the military.

Although the number of incidents was minimal, the nature of the violation — sexual assault — indicated a serious breach of personal security and human dignity.

**Table 10. Reported perpetrators of HRVs against individuals, by number of incidents and percentage**

Perpetrators of HRVs against individuals	Number of incidents	Percent of incidents
State security agents (police, army, or military)	1	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100</b>

The reported perpetrator of an HRV incident committed against an individual was from the military.

**Table 11. Communities affected by HRVs, by number of incidents and number of affected households**

Communities affected by HRVs	Number of incidents	Number of affected households
Indigenous peoples (IPs)	1	670
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>670</b>

In 2025, there was one documented incident of HRV linked to land conflict affecting a community that SK gathered. This incident involved IPs and impacted 670 households. Although this was only one recorded incident, the scale of impact was substantial, affecting a large number of households within a single indigenous community. This underscored the structural vulnerability of indigenous communities in land and resource conflicts, particularly in relation to tenure insecurity, access to ancestral domains, and protection gaps.

**Table 12. Types of HRVs committed against communities, by number of incidents and number of affected households**

Type of HRVs against communities	Number of incidents	Number of affected households
Forcible entry/encroachment, entry without free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)	1	670
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>670</b>

An incident of HRV involved forcible entry/encroachment without Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) and affected 670 households. This action created tension between the affected communities and the responsible actor, as the land was occupied or claimed without proper consultation or agreement. As a result, the situation escalated into a land conflict due to competing claims over land rights and the lack of a fair and transparent resolution process.

This incident underscored the importance of enforcing FPIC principles and protecting communities from unauthorized land intrusion. The scale of impact suggested structural weaknesses in land governance and consultation mechanisms.

**Table 13. Reported perpetrators of HRVs committed against communities, by number of incidents and percentage**

Reported perpetrators of HRVs against communities	Number of incidents	Percent of incidents (%)
Powerful individuals, authorities (e.g., politicians, ex-bureaucrats, ex-military, landlords, etc.)	1	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

The reported perpetrator in this case was identified as a powerful individual, specifically a tycoon who owns an Agriculture Company, and attributes the abuse to his position and control.

This incident showed that elite or politically connected actors may pose substantial risk in land-related conflicts, particularly where power asymmetries existed between communities and influential claimants.

### *Responses of affected communities*

**Table 14. Responses by communities to address conflict**

Responses of Communities to Conflicts	Number of Responses
Seek conflict resolution	31
• through government administrative mechanism	22
• through local or direct negotiations	5
• through courts and/or quasi-judicial bodies	4
Peaceful demonstrations/non-violent acts	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>

In 2025, a total of 34 documented community responses to land conflicts were recorded. The majority, 31 responses (91 percent) involved seeking conflict resolution through formal or semi-formal mechanisms. Among these, 22 responses representing 65 percent of total cases, pursued through government administrative mechanisms, making this the dominant strategy. Communities also engaged in local or direct negotiations with five documented responses (15 percent) and courts or quasi-judicial bodies with four responses (12 percent). In addition, three responses (nine percent) involved peaceful demonstrations or other non-violent actions.

This distribution showed that communities overwhelmingly prefer institutional and procedural approaches rather than protest-based actions, but may also be a reflection of limited alternatives. The relatively low use of courts and demonstrations suggested possible barriers to legal access or risk considerations.

**Table 15. Corrective actions to address the conflict**

Whether corrective actions were taken to address the conflict case	Number
Yes	21
• by the Government/State	18
• by agreement with the adversarial party	1
• by third party	2
No/Not yet	12
No information available	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>

Out of 34 documented land conflict cases in 2025, 21 cases (62 percent) reported that corrective actions were taken, while 12 cases (35 percent) had no corrective action or remained unresolved at the time of reporting. In one case (three percent), no information was available on whether corrective measures were taken.

Among the 21 cases where action was taken, the majority were addressed by the government as recorded for 18 cases (53 percent). Two cases (six percent) involved intervention by a third party, while only one case (three percent) was resolved through agreement with the adversarial party.

Although corrective actions were taken in most cases, a significant proportion (35 percent) remained unresolved, highlighting structural inefficiencies in land conflict resolution. The dominance of government-led actions suggested strong institutional involvement, but limited use of negotiated settlements or independent mediation indicated underdeveloped alternative dispute resolution pathways.

## Conclusion and recommendations

### *Conclusion*

The 2025 monitoring data confirm that land and resource conflicts in Cambodia remain structurally driven, agrarian-centered, and institutionally complex, despite a relatively moderate number of documented cases.

A total of 34 ongoing cases were recorded, involving 10,851.94 hectares of contested land and affecting 8,559 households. While the number of cases appeared limited, the scale of territorial and social impact per case were substantial — each case affecting an average of 252 households and involving approximately 319 hectares.

- *Agrarian and rural concentration*
  - 76 percent of cases affected farmers and peasants, confirming that smallholder agriculture remained the most vulnerable sector.
  - 41 percent of cases (42 percent of contested area) involved smallholder agricultural land.

- When combined with agroforestry and community-managed lands, rural resource areas account for 81 percent of contested land.
- *Private and institutional drivers dominate territorial impact*
  - Private-led business enterprises accounted for 53 percent of cases and 80 percent of contested land area (8,726 hectares).
  - Government programs, though only three percent of cases, accounted for 18 percent of contested land area (2,000 hectares).
  - Government entities were adversarial claimants in 47 percent of cases, while private companies accounted for 29 percent.
  - Together, private enterprises and State-linked actors drive 70 percent of cases and nearly all large-scale territorial impact.
- *Protracted nature of conflicts*
  - 62 percent of cases have lasted more than five years.
  - 47 percent of cases have persisted for over ten years.

This demonstrates systemic weaknesses in timely dispute resolution and long-term governance challenges.

- *Human rights dimension*
  - One HRV (i.e., sexual assault) against an individual by the military.
  - One HRV against a community involved forcible entry and without FPIC, affecting 670 indigenous households.

Although HRV incidents appeared numerically low, the data highlighted that severity and scale matter more than frequency.

- *Community response and resolution patterns*
  - 91 percent of community responses sought resolution through formal mechanisms.
  - 65 percent relied on government administrative processes.
  - Courts (12 percent) and demonstrations (nine percent) were used less frequently.

Government institutions were the dominant corrective actors (53 percent of total cases), while negotiated settlements remained rare (three percent).

However, while corrective actions were taken in 62 percent of cases, no actions at all were taken for 35 percent of the cases, indicating partial and incomplete system responsiveness.

## *Recommendation*

### **For Government:**

Given that government entities are involved in 47 percent of adversarial cases and lead 53 percent of corrective actions, strengthening institutional performance is critical.

#### *Strengthen land governance and transparency*

- Publish transparent data on land allocation, concessions, and dispute resolution outcomes
- Digitize and centralize cadastral and land conflict information systems
- Publish concession contracts and land allocation data
- Establish special mechanisms for cases older than 10 years
- Improve documentation completeness, especially on contested land areas and duration of cases and for IPs
- Expand collective titling for IPs
- Mandate human rights due diligence for agribusiness and plantation projects
- Establish grievance mechanisms for communities affected by private investments

#### *Prioritize resolution of protracted cases*

- Establish a special task force to resolve cases older than 10 years
- Introduce time-bound administrative review mechanisms
- Regularly monitor and publicly report on unresolved cases

#### *Enforce FPIC and community consultation*

- Institutionalize FPIC before approving land-based projects
- Create independent verification mechanisms for consultation processes
- Penalize unlawful forcible entry or encroachment

#### *Strengthen accountability mechanisms*

- Strengthen alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and mediation systems
- Enhance oversight of State security involvement in land disputes
- Establish independent complaint and grievance redress mechanisms
- Improve transparency in corrective action implementation

### **For Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):**

Given that only 36 percent of information sources come from CSOs, and communities still need support, CSOs should:

#### *Improve monitoring and documentation*

- Strengthen standardized data collection, particularly on HRVs and contested area measurement
- Disaggregate data by gender, indigenous identity, and vulnerability category

#### *Support community legal empowerment*

- Expand legal literacy programs for farmers and indigenous communities
- Provide legal aid support for long-standing disputes
- Assist communities in engaging effectively in administrative processes

### *Promote accountability and policy reform*

- Advocate for stronger concession transparency laws
- Monitor implementation of FPIC compliance
- Engage in constructive dialogue platforms with government agencies

### *Strengthen early warning and prevention*

- Develop hotspot monitoring in provinces with high contested areas (e.g., large-scale agribusiness zones)
- Identify cases at risk of escalation and support mediation early

## **For Communities:**

Given that 76 percent of cases affected farmers and 15 percent affected IPs, community capacity remains essential.

### *Strengthen collective organization*

- Form or strengthen community land committees
- Maintain documented records of land use, occupation, and agreements
- Engage in collective rather than individual negotiation when possible

### *Utilize formal mechanisms strategically*

- Continue using government administrative channels (currently 65 percent of responses), but track progress and timelines
- Seek mediation support when cases stagnate
- Document all communications and decisions

### *Protect community rights*

- Demand FPIC in all development projects affecting community land
- Avoid escalation but document any intimidation or coercion
- Engage with CSOs for technical and legal support

### *Strengthen long-term resilience*

- Develop alternative livelihood strategies where land insecurity persists
- Build alliances with neighboring communities to strengthen advocacy

## **Overall Strategic Message**

- *For Government:* Improve transparency, accelerate resolution, and institutionalize accountability
- *For CSOs:* Strengthen monitoring, legal empowerment, and policy advocacy
- *For Communities:* Enhance organization, documentation, and strategic engagement with formal mechanisms

Targeted and coordinated action among these three actors can reduce protracted conflicts, strengthen tenure security, and prevent large-scale land conflicts from escalating into human rights crises.

## Strategic outlook (2026 to 2028)

If structural drivers — agribusiness expansion, large-scale land allocation, weak enforcement, and ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms — remain unaddressed, land conflicts are likely to persist or intensify. However, with strengthened transparency, institutional accountability, and meaningful community participation, Cambodia has the opportunity to transition from reactive conflict management to preventive and rights-based land governance. ■

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This study's success is a testament to our collective effort and commitment to understanding land rights.

Sincerely yours,

Nhek Sarin  
Executive Director

The 2025 Land and Resource Conflict Monitoring (LRCM) Report shows that Cambodia's land sector remains highly contested due to historical upheaval, weak governance, and rapid economic and urban development pressures disproportionately affecting smallholder farmers and indigenous communities. In 2025, 34 ongoing land conflict cases impacted 8,559 households across 10,852 hectares, highlighting long-standing disputes driven by private actors, State entities, and systemic institutional weaknesses. Urgent improvements in transparency, FPIC compliance, dispute resolution, and coordinated land governance are needed to secure land rights and prevent human rights abuses.

