



Leaders and Organizers of Community Organization in Asia

23, March 2011

H.E. Ambassador Zhang Xianyi

Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Bangladesh  
PLOT 2&4, EMBASSY ROAD, BLOCK-1, BARIDARA, BANGLADESH

PS to Ambassador: (02)8855405; Administrative Office: (02)8829166; Fax: (02)8823004



Dear Sir, Mr. Ambassador,

We, the Shelter for the poor is a non-political, non-partisan and Not-for-Profit human rights based organization, working with the urban poor / slum dwellers and the homeless communities from around Bangladesh and we are working on the issues of land and housing rights, as well as advocating on issues of social justice, human rights and peace. We are a member of **Leaders and Organizers of Community Organizations in Asia (LOCOA)**, an Asian regional network of urban poor organizations. Through this network, we have been following the disturbing developments surrounding the evictions of approximately 4,000 families from on and around Boeung Kak Lake in Phnom Penh, Cambodia since 2009 due to an illegal development project that has been supported by a series of Chinese investors. Recently, we learned about the involvement of a Chinese company from Inner Mongolia, **Erdos Hongjun Investment Co.**, as a new investor in this development project.

**We understand that Erdos Hongjun has been involved in the project as an investment partner of the Cambodian developer Shukaku, Inc. since last year.** The project itself is based on an illegal 99-year concession granted in 2007 by the Municipality of Phnom Penh to Shukaku Inc. to fill in Boeung Kak Lake and develop the 133 hectare area for commercial purposes, which entails the eviction of the approximately 4,000 families originally living in the lake area. While half of these families have already been compelled to move away under duress, the roughly 2,000 families that remain have just been issued eviction notices dated 2 March 2011, specifying that they face the prospect of forced eviction if they do not leave the area by 8 March 2011. While the families of Boeung Kak Lake have thus far repeatedly faced multiple injustices due to this development project, they are not at all opposed to the development of Boeung Kak Lake per se. However, they remain firm in asserting that any development of the Boeung Kak Lake area must be inclusive, and their own rights to participation must be respected. Indeed, the people have taken the initiative to consult with technical experts and have come up with their own compromise solution that ensures that all stakeholders, including Cambodian society as a whole, will benefit from the development.

**Specifically, the residents of Boeung Kak Lake are proposing an alternative plan based on land sharing that would use only 15 out of the 133 hectares of total area in the project for the construction of housing to accommodate all residents on and around the lake. This arrangement amounts to allowing the people to remain on and make use of fewer than 12% of the total area for their residence, while leaving the remaining 88% of the area to the developers to use for commercial benefit.**

Unfortunately, Shukaku Inc. has thus far been unwilling to talk with the people of Boeung Kak Lake or consider their alternative development plan and has instead



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been intent on evicting them from the area without any dialog. **We therefore call on the Chinese government to persuade Erdos Hongjun Investment Co. to recognize its moral responsibility to the people of Boeung Kak Lake by freezing its investment in the development project until such time as Shukaku Inc. and the Municipality of Phnom Penh open negotiations with the people's representatives and reach a satisfactory conclusion regarding their land sharing plan.**

It should also be pointed out that the World Bank has become involved in this case and is currently urging the Cambodian government to halt the evictions and find a solution to the conflict that meets with the satisfaction of the affected families. Like other recognized international development agencies, the World Bank likely realizes the desirability of land sharing as a mode of problem solving in land conflicts caused by development projects, because it ensures in principle that all relevant parties can jointly benefit from the fruits of development.

**Finally, we would like to remind you of the historical importance of China's role in the international arena as a genuine supporter of development in the global south. In particular, China continues to be viewed as a friend and a key economic partner by many people throughout Asia. It would therefore be most unfortunate if Erdos Hongjun's irresponsible investment in the Boeung Kak Lake development project were to continue, resulting in the forced eviction of the remaining 2,000 families in the area, as this situation would certainly damage the good reputation of China. We trust that the Chinese government will understand the gravity of the situation and persuade Erdos Hongjun Investment Co. to suspend its investment in the Boeung Kak Lake development project until Shukaku Inc. and the Municipality of Phnom Penh are able to reach a constructive agreement with the people of Boeung Kak Lake themselves on their alternative land sharing plan.**

Sincerely,

Abu Rayhan Al-Beeroonee  
CEO, Shelter for the Poor and  
Member of LOCOA in Bangladesh