

RESULTS SUMMARY

Collective action to protect ancestral land and restore forest

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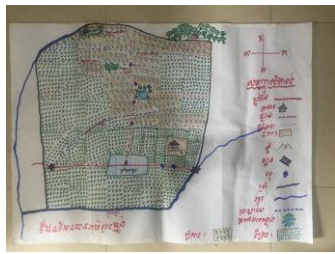
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PROJECT	Title:	Strengthening Grassroot Networks on Natural Resources Rights
	Partner:	Ponlok Khmer (PKH)
	Country:	Cambodia
	Period:	June 2022 – February 2026

CHANGE	The Kuy Indigenous community in Tasou Village, Preah Vihear Province, supported by PKH and DM, influenced local authorities to recognise and support their ancestral land claim. After conflicts with private actors, years of dialogue and advocacy led to the public recognition of 13.45 hectares as communal land in 2025, with authorities shifting from restrictive to supportive roles in dispute resolution and land protection, enabling the community to protect their sacred sites, restore forest, and practice traditions with greater security and confidence.
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CONTEXT	The Kuy community depends on ancestral land for livelihoods, cultural identity, and spiritual practices, yet faces ongoing threats and weak enforcement of Indigenous rights. Collective efforts with partners began in 2012 in response to escalating land pressure from encroachment and land-clearing by private actors, leading to collaboration with authorities in 2021. Formal recognition of communal land is slow and complex, leaving communities without legal protection. The public recognition is a key step towards legal recognition.
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CONTRIBUTION	DM, through PKH, has since 2022 supported the Kuy community's capacity development and constructive engagement with various duty bearers. PKH brought expertise from working with 22 IP communities in the region on livelihoods, land rights, and media engagement. DM's expertise in interfaith dialogue and a rights-based approach strengthened the intervention. The change was driven by the community itself, which increasingly led advocacy efforts, engaged authorities, and took ownership of protecting ancestral land and cultural heritage.
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IMAGES	 The community and local authorities resolving issues on ancestral land, 2022. DM's archive.	 A community-sketched map of Tasou village (Tuol Thnong), 2025. DM's archive.
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[See next page for more details](#) →

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACTIVITIES

Key activities included capacity building of community members in mediation, advocacy, and land rights, enabling more structured engagement with authorities, including through the use of technical evidence such as land use documentation, measurements, and sketched maps (see picture). Multi-stakeholder dialogues on natural resource management were organised annually to address land conflicts and identify solutions. PKH facilitated dialogue between communities, authorities, and private actors, alongside awareness sessions with interfaith leaders to strengthen support for Indigenous rights. Exchange visits with other communities, including MCF (Buddhist monks), promoted learning on forest protection and community organisation. Public campaigns—such as Environmental Day and Indigenous Peoples' Day—continually raised visibility, while tree planting, tree ordination, and community mapping supported both advocacy and forest restoration efforts.

LESSONS

The case shows that sustained community organisation combined with dialogue, multi-stakeholder engagement, technical evidence, and public visibility can shift attitudes and practices of local authorities. Trust-building through inclusive cultural and environmental activities proved critical in addressing sensitive land conflicts. A key lesson is that local acknowledgment of land, while reducing conflict, does not equate to formal legal recognition and requires continued advocacy at higher administrative levels. The case showed that key barriers include slow administrative processes, incomplete implementation of Indigenous land laws, and ongoing pressure on land resources. Furthermore, even with a legal recognition, continued efforts are needed to monitor and mediate conflicts, and the dialogue with local stakeholders will remain important.

EVIDENCE

The Kuy Indigenous community's land rights were publicly acknowledged by district authorities at a World Arbor Day event held on July 9, 2025. This event is documented through a Facebook post by the community itself, which provides a record of the occasion and demonstrates the scale and public visibility of the recognition. Evidence of the increased collaboration with authorities since 2021 is extensively documented in meeting minutes from conflict resolutions, dialogue sessions involving communities, authorities and private actors, as well as the picture above showcasing a joint meeting in 2021. Photo documentation, outcome harvesting, annual reports, and social media posts demonstrate participation, increased visibility, and strengthened community capacity to advocate for land rights while reflecting positive behavioural changes among local authorities.
<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1C8c6nXyyi/> (from July 9, 2025).

DOMAINS

Development strategy priorities:

Climate and green solutions

Changes in the lives of people facing poverty, marginalisation or vulnerability

x

Changes in laws, policies and practices that affect people's rights

x

Changes in the capacity of organisations and communities to support rights

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Changes in partnerships and collaborations that support people's rights

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Changes in participation of groups facing poverty, marginalisation or vulnerability

x

Changes in local leadership of development and humanitarian work

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