Chi Kreng community has joined LC for the ‘Dey Krahorm Challenge’ project! One of the main purposes of the DKC project is to prove that Dey Krahorm was not the only Cambodian community with the courage and capacity to take non-violent resistance efforts to new, creative levels if given access to adequate support.

LC team has met with Chi Kreng villagers on a few occasions and for a few reasons, including as monitors. Most recently, we joined together with friends from Dey Krahorm to meet in Siem Reap city with a very special agenda.

**CHI KRENG BACKGROUND**

Located in Siem Reap province, Chi Kreng came on our radar in March 22, 2009 when a land dispute between villagers and influential businessmen over 475 hectares of rice field turned ugly. Police and military police opened fire with AK47s on approximately 80 villagers. Four villagers were shot and seriously injured.

The villagers have a valid claim to the land. They are among a total of 175 families who have been using the farmland since 1986 as a source of food and livelihood. Their efforts to obtain legal ownership documents for the land in 2004 (under the 2001 Land Law) were twice rebuffed by local authorities without reason. These same authorities later supported several businessmen to lay claim to the land.

**VILLAGERS ARRESTED ON BOGUS CHARGES**

After the shooting, 11 villagers were arrested, detained and charged with assault and robbery for trying to harvest the rice they planted. Two were convicted on the charges, the others were acquitted. The prosecutor appealed the acquittal and has since placed new charges on nine men for premeditated attempted murder. All 11 men remain in prison to this day and are now also part of the DKC project. LC has been able to visit the men four times and will continue to try to gain access to them through LICADHO Cambodia’s prison project.

**VENERABLE LOUN SOVATH from Chi Kreng**

Venerable Sovath is a very unique monk because he is an artist, a writer and a brilliant human rights defender. He also produces his own advocacy videos.

Despite threats of defrocking and imprisonment, Venerable Sovath has been endlessly advocating for his community. He is what we would call ‘a monk on a mission’. Venerable Sovath additionally supports many communities and their imprisoned leaders across the country. And now LC proudly supports the Venerable.

Our journey together began when the Venerable asked LC to help him and the Chi Kreng villagers produce a music CD about their community as an advocacy tool. Of course we said YES to the request, and called on a few of our friends from former Dey Krahorm community to help us.
**CHI KRENG CD WORKSHOP in Siem Reap**

The first 24 hours together was about sharing stories and songs to get to know each other. This heart-felt sharing really connected everyone in their suffering from forced eviction/land disputes. And within the embrace of the Vipassana (meditation) Centre we all found a place to heal and renew ourselves.

Dey Krahorm leaders helped to build trust with the villagers and build esteem with community leaders. DK representatives really shone in their role as mentors and advocates, highlighting the importance of solidarity, non-violence and creativity in resistance. DK spokesperson Chan Vichet now works with Bridges Across Borders and has recently received more formal trainer training on community security and protection. Vichet (BAB) joined Borey (LC) and Venerable Sovath (CK) as facilitators of the workshop and was able to share both his experience from Dey Krahorm and his new knowledge from BAB.

Over the following two days there was much song writing, singing, dancing, laughing until we cried, sharing, supporting one another, learning how to assess and express our needs. This is how the workshop ended up producing 20 songs (9 from detainees), 20 hours of video footage, and how this project grew into a double-CD and solidarity concert inclusive of many community leaders and groups!

**FUTURE PLANS WITH CHI KRENG**

LC and the Venerable are currently preparing for another workshop with villagers at the beginning of April 2010. This workshop has a few objectives including preparing to record the first of the songs, planning advocacy strategies for the songs, learning singing skills from professional singer, and practicing meditation as a way to deal with fear. (Meditation will be led by Venerable Sovath and David Ketchum/Peace Bridges.) It goes without saying that our time together will also be filled with laughing, dancing and friendship.

We plan to have the first song produced by early May. The song calls back and forth between the men detained in prison and their wives. The words express how they feel about the tearing apart of families and the song will be used to lobby for justice.

**SUPPORT CHI KRENG COMMUNITY ADVOCATE, EDUCATE, DONATE**

Inform yourself about the Cambodian eviction crisis

[www.licadho-cambodia.org](http://www.licadho-cambodia.org)

Donate online

[www.licadhocanada.com](http://www.licadhocanada.com)

Contact our Support Manager Ruth for other avenues to donate and/or to get more information about LICADHO Canada activities [ruthgleeson@yahoo.com](mailto:ruthgleeson@yahoo.com)