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equitable cambodia



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**Child Labor on Sugar Plantations in Cambodia is Well Documented**  
*A response to Tate & Lyle and its Thai supplier's denial of child labor allegations and threat of legal action against The Guardian*

July 23, 2013 - The Guardian newspaper recently ran [a damning expose of child labor on the KSL Group sugar plantations in Cambodia](#) that supply the sugar giant Tate & Lyle Sugars. Rather than acting quickly to address the abuses, the companies seem to have resorted to a strategy of denial and legal bullying in an attempt to defend their tarnished reputations.

[Tate & Lyle Sugars told Foodnavigator.com](#) that the farms depicted in a [video accompanying The Guardian article](#) are “definitely not [KSL’s] farms.” Similarly, a KSL spokesperson was quoted in the article stating that, “there are not now, nor have ever been, any children working on our farms.”

We, the undersigned organizations, know otherwise. And we have the evidence to back it up.

In the course of our research into the impacts of the burgeoning Cambodian sugar industry, we first learned of children working on the KSL plantations in Koh Kong’s Sre Ambel district in early 2012. Our organizations obtained extensive testimony from families that were impoverished after they were violently evicted from their land to make way for KSL’s land concessions in 2006. Those families stated that they were then forced to send their children to work with them on the company’s plantations in order to earn enough for their survival.

During this year’s harvest season, our researchers observed and photographed children as young as nine years old working on the KSL farms alongside their family members. According to multiple plantation workers, children are engaged in cutting, tying and carrying cane bundles or in second planter/picker, sprayer and grass cutter positions. The work is strenuous, as one bundle of sugarcane weighs between 10 to 40 kilograms. Children from age 13 perform jobs such as spraying, which requires more dexterity.

“The Guardian got it right,” said Eang Vuthy, Executive Director of Equitable Cambodia. “Our photographs of child workers on the KSL plantations are undeniable and we would be pleased to submit them as evidence in court if Tate & Lyle Sugars really dares to sue The Guardian,” he added.

“It is shameful that Tate & Lyle Sugars is spending its resources on high-cost lawyers to threaten journalists for reporting on the facts, rather than working with its sugar suppliers to redress the devastation it has caused to so many poor families in Cambodia,” said David Pred, Managing Associate of Inclusive Development International.

“KSL needs to return the land that it stole from the families in Sre Ambel or provide fair and adequate compensation for both the land and for their lost income over the

past seven years,” said Yeng Virak, Executive Director of Community Legal Education Center. “Then they will be able to send their children back to school where they belong, rather than toiling in the sugar fields.”

**Link to photographs of child labor on the KSL plantations in Koh Kong and other industrial farms in Cambodia:** [http://ruom.photoshelter.com/gallery/Blood-Sugar/G0000fQjj\\_X6h0CM/](http://ruom.photoshelter.com/gallery/Blood-Sugar/G0000fQjj_X6h0CM/)

Read more at [www.cleansugarcampaign.net](http://www.cleansugarcampaign.net)

**Contacts:**

Yeng Virak, Executive Director of CLEC, +855 12 801 235, [virakyeng@yahoo.com](mailto:virakyeng@yahoo.com)  
*Eang Vuthy Exective Director of EC, +855 12 791 700,*  
[vuthy@equitablecambodia.org](mailto:vuthy@equitablecambodia.org)  
*David Pred, Managing Associate of Inclusive Development International,*  
[davidpred@inclusivedevelopment.net](mailto:davidpred@inclusivedevelopment.net)  
*Am Sam Ath, Monitoring Technical Supervisor of LICADHO, +855 12 327 770*  
*Seng Sokheng, Secretariat Coordinator of CDPS-CPN, + 855 92 324 668*

**Equitable Cambodia (EC)** is a Cambodian non-governmental organization working to transform the national development model into one that respects, protects and progressively fulfills the human rights of the Cambodian people. More information on EC is available at [www.equitablecambodia.org](http://www.equitablecambodia.org).

**Inclusive Development International (IDI)** is an NGO with associates based in Southeast Asia, China, Europe and the United States working to advance a human rights approach to development and support marginalized people to claim their rights in the centers of power. More information about IDI is available at [www.inclusivedevelopment.net](http://www.inclusivedevelopment.net).

**Community Legal Education Center (CLEC)** is a Cambodian legal resource non-governmental organization (NGO) that specializes in land and natural resources, public interest legal advocacy, labor and good governance. More information on CLEC is available at [www.clec.org.kh](http://www.clec.org.kh)

**Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)** is a national Cambodian human rights organization. Since its establishment in 1992, LICADHO has been at the forefront of efforts to protect civil and political and economic and social rights in Cambodia and to promote respect for them by the Cambodian government and institutions. Building on its past achievements, LICADHO continues to be an advocate for the Cambodian people and a monitor of the government through wide ranging human rights programs from its main office in Phnom Penh and 12 provincial offices. [www.licadho-cambodia.org](http://www.licadho-cambodia.org)