



Bunong Indigenous People Association (BIPA)



We are a grassroots organization who engages for better livelihoods for Bunong indigenous people

Who we support

The Bunong people are a poor, marginalized ethnic minority who lives in the Northeast of Cambodia. They are confronted with the loss of their fields, grazing areas and forest resources due to the rapid expansion of rubber plantations and intrusion of settlers. Moreover, sacred places and graveyards that represent the origins of their communities have been destroyed. The loss of land has both a strong impact on Bunong livelihoods and on their social relations, religious beliefs and cultural and political identities.



A family brings home the remains of their field hut, when the plantation forced them to leave. Whereas before, the Bunong felt free to go wherever they pleased to make a new field, to gather forest resources and to fish, they are now constrained by the plantations. Before, they could show their children and grandchildren sacred places. Now, they are worried that the new generation will slowly forget the destroyed places and Bunong identity will fade away.



Rice harvest in a swidden field. People miss the days when several families worked together to sow and harvest a swidden field. With smaller and less fertile fields, less forest resources and less fish, it is difficult to provide for a healthy and diversified diet.

Who we are

We founded Bunong Indigenous People Association (BIPA) in 2009 to respond to this challenging situation. We are a grassroots civil society organization and our team consists of Bunong people.



“We share the everyday life of affected communities. That is why we gain knowledge of their needs and together with them, we find ways to support them best.”

What we do

BIPA focuses on strengthening the self-help capacity of the Bunong people to solve the pressing land conflicts, enhance the sustainability of livelihoods of Bunong villagers and improve the access of Bunong children and youth to education.

Main activities and goals:

1. Solutions for land conflicts

BIPA supports villagers' capacity to reach sustainable solutions in peaceful negotiations for the many land conflicts. Thanks to the sustained efforts of BIPA, the rubber plantations and local authorities agreed to regular negotiations with the villagers. BIPA supports the village representatives to negotiate for a fair share of revenues and the redress of adverse impacts of the plantations.



A serious land conflict due to the desecration of a major graveyard was resolved when the plantation agreed to a compensation payment and to participate in a reconciliation ceremony.

2. Forest protection

BIPA supports villagers to protect their forests from encroachment of loggers and settlers. Villagers regularly go on forest patrols. When they detect intruders, they inform them of their mistake of trespassing and inform also local government officials.



Bunong villagers discover a newly cleared field from settlers in their forest.

3. Agriculture

BIPA enhances farmers' capacities to adapt their agricultural systems to the land scarcity. BIPA provides technological support and knowledge to the farmers and develops ways together with them on how to secure and diversify their livelihoods.



BIPA supports Bunong farmers to adapt to new agricultural systems. The farmers are enabled to cultivate traditional staple crops along with new permanent crops.



BIPA facilitates the exchange among Bunong and other farmers. Villagers learn how to sustainably grow and market new crops in order to diversify their livelihoods.

4. Education

BIPA improves access to formal education of Bunong children and youth in order to enhance their capacity to adapt to the fast changing environment. Bunong youth are in urgent need of a much better education in order to find non-traditional employment opportunities and to support their kin and co-villagers in this difficult transition phase.



Bunong families can hardly afford a higher education for their children. BIPA established a student dorm in 2011 in Phnom Penh for gifted students.



Bunong students from BIPA dorm participate in community volunteer work.

How you can engage

BIPA depends on the generous support of donors and partners. With your financial engagement you make our activities for better livelihoods for Bunong indigenous people possible. As a grassroots organization, we operate with very minimal overhead costs. This way, the donations we receive from individuals and foundations directly impact the communities in their quest for better livelihoods.

We thank you very much for your interest in our work. For further information, please contact:

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BIPA was officially registered as a local association with the Ministry of Interior of the Royal Cambodian Government in February 2016.

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