Cambodia Forces Positive Families to Relocate to “AIDS Village”

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Cambodian authorities evicted 20 families from their homes in Borei Keila—a community for families living with or affected by HIV/AIDS—forcing them to live on a small settlement 12 miles from the capital of Phnom Penh because officials plan to build new offices for the Ministry of Tourism, The Associated Press reports.

According to the article, the families complained about the community relocation plan for months, saying that they would lack basic services, have no means of income and lose access to medical treatment at the new location, which locals are calling the “AIDS Village.”

“It is tragic that the government has chosen to create a permanent AIDS colony where people will face great stigma and discrimination,” said Naly Pilorge, director of the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights. Pilorge joins advocates worldwide who call the evictions discriminatory.

HIV-negative people living in the Borei Keila community were evicted as well, but some have been resettled in apartments. However, the 20 other families evicted Thursday, June 18, did not have that option.

According to human rights group Amnesty International, about 23,000 Cambodians were evicted in 2008 and another 150,000 are at risk of losing their homes because of land disputes, land grabs and commercial development projects.

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