



Chambok Community Based Eco-Tourism and Mlup Baitong selected as World Legacy Award Finalists

Prestigious international award by National Geographic and ITB Berlin

Phnom Penh, 7 December 2016 – Chambok Community Based Eco-Tourism (CBET), in cooperation with environmental NGO Mlup Baitong, has been selected as a **finalist for the National Geographic World Legacy Awards 2017** in the category “**Engaging Communities**”. Chambok CBET is one of three finalists in this category and was selected among over 100 applications from 45 countries across six continents. The winners will be announced live on stage during the ITB Berlin in March 2017.

The World Legacy Awards are an initiative of National Geographic Partners (USA) in partnership with ITB Berlin, the world's largest travel gathering. They honor the companies, destinations and organizations that are driving the positive transformation of the global tourism industry, showcasing leaders and visionaries in sustainable tourism best practices and sharing their stories with millions of travelers. The National Geographic Society is one of the world's largest and most prestigious nonprofit scientific, educational, and travel organizations reaching more than 450 million people worldwide. It has partnered with ITB Berlin, the world's largest travel gathering, to initiate this award. In 2016, 180,000 visitors attended the ITB Berlin, among them 120,000 trade visitors.

For Chambok CBET, this is the second nomination for a large international award, after already winning the To Do! Award 2013 together with Mlup Baitong. Both partners teamed up to apply for the World Legacy Awards this year. The selection process included an online application and an on-site field evaluation by a National Geographic judge. During the field visit the judge had the chance to experience the partners' work in sustainable tourism first hand, and to meet stakeholders such as community members, tourists, representatives of Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Tourism, as well as Mlup Baitong staff. After a successful evaluation, Chambok CBET was officially announced as a finalist by National Geographic on December 1st, 2016. Representatives of Mlup Baitong and Chambok CBET will attend the award ceremony at ITB Berlin in Germany in March 2017.

About Chambok Community Based Eco-Tourism

Almost 15 years ago, Mlup Baitong launched an initiative to lift the community of Chambok out of poverty through eco-tourism. Back then, villagers with no sustainable income sources engaged in illegal logging, charcoal and fuel-wood production, and wildlife hunting. More than half of the population has since joined the CBET, trained in eco-tourism skills, and received initial

infrastructure improvement support. Now a self-sustaining operation, the CBET generates profits to members and contributes 20 percent of its income to a community development fund supporting women's self-help groups, health projects, micro-enterprise initiatives, and a community water supply system providing water connect from waterfall. All CBET staff, tour guides, businesses, and managers are members of the local community, providing guided treks, traditional handicrafts and cooking, local home stays, dance performances, and ox-cart rides. Members established and patrol a Community Protected Area to conserve surrounding rainforest, prevent illegal activities, and grow saplings for reforestation. Chambok has become a model for environmental protection, improved livelihoods, and authentic travel experiences in Cambodia and beyond. Chambok is one community among 62 Community Forestry and Community Protected Area sites that have been established and coordinated by Mlup Baitong with financing from the EU, Bread for the World, Oxfam Novib, and other partners.

About Mlup Baitong

Mlup Baitong, literally translated as “green shade”, is a dynamic and respected Cambodian NGO. It was first established in 1998 to address the problem of deforestation in Cambodia with a focus on educating the general public on conservation of natural resources. The Ministry of Interior officially recognized Mlup Baitong as a national NGO, headed by a Cambodian Director, in August 2003. Since then, Mlup Baitong has successfully developed and implemented a range of projects focusing on environmental education, awareness raising and conservation, environmentally sustainable community livelihood improvement, community based forest management, community based eco-tourism development, and resilience farming to climate change.

For more information, please visit:

Chambok Community Based Eco-Tourism:

www.chambok.org

Mlup Baitong:

www.mlup-baitong.org

www.facebook.com/mlupbaitongcambodia/

World Legacy Awards 2017:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/worldlegacyawards/winners.html>

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/worldlegacyawards/about-the-awards.html>

Press contact:

Mlup Baitong

Mr. OM Sophana

Deputy Executive Director

194, Street 371, Boeung Tumpon,

Meanchey, Phnom Penh

E-mail: mlup@online.com.kh

Tel: (+855) 012-840-136; (+855) 087-840-136