

GENOCIDE EDUCATION IN CAMBODIA

The Teaching of *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)* Democratic Kampuchea Textbook Distribution:

A Public Education Forum between Teachers, Students and Parents

REPORT FROM KAMPOT PROVINCE

May 22, 2011 -- By Sayana Ser



Entrance gate of Wat Ang Damnak Thlork

On Sunday, May 22nd, 2011, the Documentation Center of Cambodia's (DC-Cam) Genocide Education Project in Cambodia conducted a public education forum in Sre Cheng commune, Chum Kiri district, Kampot province. The forum was held in the dining hall of Ang Damnak Thlork pagoda with approximately 135 participants attending the forum, including five monks, ten teachers, 90 students, 25 villagers and the commune chief and village chiefs.

The team, consisting of four DC-Cam staff members and a volunteer, coordinated the forum activities by distributing 150 copies of the history textbook, 155 posters of the Anti-Genocide slogan, 170 *Case 002* booklets and 165 copies of the *Searching for the Truth* magazine. The team also taught a chapter from the textbook as a model for the forum participants, took photos and video, and conducted eight interviews with three villagers, three students, one

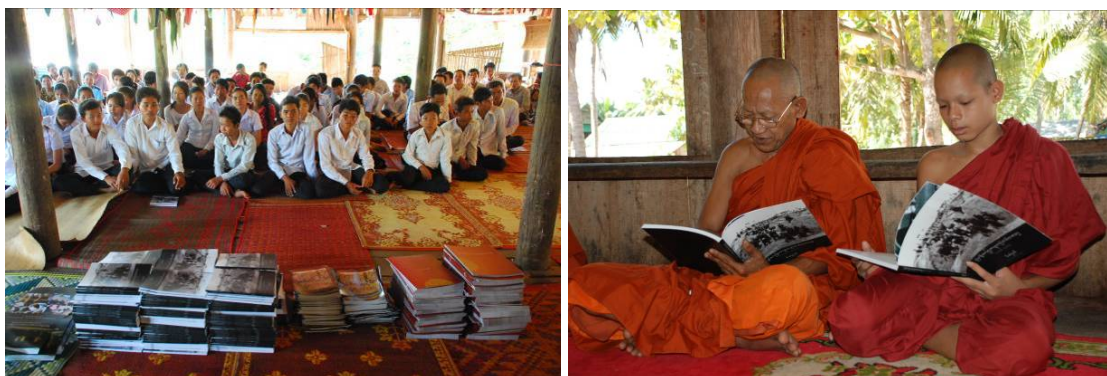
teacher, and the commune chief.

The purpose of the Public Education Forum is to create a dialogue regarding the experiences of the local villagers during the Khmer Rouge (KR) regime, to encourage the younger and older generations to engage in the dialogue, and to provide a setting for survivors to share their real life experiences under the KR. The forums also aim to link the textbook material to the particular stories of the communities in order to allow teachers and students to make the

best use of their own resources and encourage the villagers to participate with teachers in educating the younger generations about the KR history in the classroom.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE FORUM

The forum proceeded according to the program that had been previously set. To begin, I welcomed the group and introduced the five members of the team who would be coordinating the forum: myself, deputy director Dara P. Vanthan, Piseth Phat, Soheat Nhean, and the volunteer Sokvibol Theam. Then I gave a brief introduction to DC-Cam's work, its purposes, and the forum itself. After that I gave the floor to Mr. Dara P. Vanthan to give an additional statement on DC-Cam's work in pursuing Memory and Justice for the crimes of the Khmer Rouge and emphasized DC-Cam's Genocide Education Project and the forum. Following Mr. Vanthan's explanation, I invited Mr. Yim Pann, the commune chief, to give a brief introduction and opening remarks. After his remarks, the team members distributed the book *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)* and the pre-forum surveys to all participants to gauge their interest in studying the KR history and their understanding of the Khmer Rouge regime before the forum. It is noted that the pre- and post-forum surveys are created in three different versions for the three target groups of teachers, students and parents.



Students and monks participate in the forum conducted in dining hall of Ang Damnak Thlork pagoda.

After the participants turned in their completed surveys, I invited a villager, Mr. Son Kong, to talk about his experiences under the Khmer Rouge regime. Then, another villager Mr. Rorss Doeuvolunteered to share his experiences with the crowd. Afterward, I led the presentation and instruction of chapter six, "The Four Year Plan (1977-1980)," from the DK history textbook which was then followed by a period for questions and answers. At the completion of the forum, the post-forum surveys, evaluation forms, the Anti-Genocide slogan posters, *Case 002* booklets and *Searching for the Truth* magazines were distributed to the participants. Following the forum, the team had lunch with the commune chief at his house. After a short break we spread to different villages to conduct interviews.

BACKGROUND AND GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION

Kampot province is located in the Southern part of Cambodia and is bordered in the North by Kampong Speu province, in the East by Takeo, and in the West by Preah Sihanouk and

Koh Kong. The east of the province consists of the typical plain area for Cambodia, covered with rice fields and other agricultural plantations. The western part of the province holds the well known Bokor National Park, being a part of the grand Elephant Mountains, which is rich in lush forests and a huge range of wildlife.

Kampot province consists of eight districts, including its capital Kampot town, and is divided into 92 communes with a total of 477 villages.

CHUM KIRI is one of seven districts of Kampot. It was in the Southwest Zone or Zone 405 during the Khmer Rouge period and under the control of Ta Mok. During this period the Rumlich dam was expanded from its original size of about 10 meters in width to the biggest dam in Chum Kiri. Presently, the dam is still used as a place to store water from the surrounding mountains. People use the water from the dam to increase their income. According to a field report written by DC-Cam's staff, hundreds of people died at the site due to forced labor, starvation, and disease.

The district of Chum Kiri is subdivided into seven communes: Sre Knong, Sre Samraong, Snay Anhchhit, Chres, Champouvoanth, Trapeang Reang, and Sre Cheng. The forum location of **Sre Cheng**, field of Cheng tree in Khmer, is a village name and also one of seven communes in the district. According to the commune chief Mr. Yim Pann, the commune is subdivided into five



villages: Khporp Run, Kamnap (meaning treasures for it had a pond where treasures were found), Pong Tik, Prey Khley, and Sre Cheng. Formerly, Sre Cheng was Trapeang Reang commune in Chhouk district. There were lots of Cheng trees growing in the fields and people used the tree as an herbal remedy for women who had just given birth. It is believed that Cheng leaves kept away all bad spirits, sorcery, and witchcraft and prevented them from harming mothers and babies. To prevent any incidents from the bad elements, people would boil the leaves with water for the mother to be bathed in and its stinky smell would chase away the bad intentions. The villagers started to refer to the field as Sre Cheng and later the name of the tree was applied to the commune's name as it is now called.

Sre Cheng commune presently has a population of 2,125 families with about 10,000 people, the majority of which are farmers and peasants, a few who are traders and fishermen, and a few others who left the commune to work or do business in Thailand and Phnom Penh's garment factories.

PREPARATION FOR THE PUBLIC FORUM

A week prior to the forum, the team contacted a provincial teacher, Mr. Samroeth Boret, who had received training organized by DC-Cam with the cooperation of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MOEYS) on how to teach the Democratic Kampuchea history. According to Mr. Samroeth, there is one high school in Chum Kiri district and one secondary school in Sre Cheng commune.

The team decided to hold a forum in Sre Cheng commune, Chum Kiri district, about 90 kilometers from Kampot provincial town. The forum location Wat Ang Damnak Thlork is next to Prey Khley secondary school and about seven kilometers from Hun Sen Ang Chak high school. Mr. Samroeth assisted with communication to the school directors and principal of Hun Sen Ang Chak High School and Prey Khley secondary school. I called the commune chief Mr. Yim Pann to inform him of the forum in advance and asked him to invite villagers and village chiefs to attend the forum.

Logistics had also being prepared. DC-Cam staff members Chao Prohaos, Phat Piseth, Mam Sophat and Long Aun helped with copying and preparing the pre- and post-forum surveys, evaluation forms, video camera, camera, two MP3 recorders, 200 copies of the DK history textbooks, 200 copies of the latest issue of DC-Cam's *Searching for the Truth* magazine, 200 copies of the booklet titled *Genocide* and 200 copies of the Anti-genocide slogan poster.



Exterior view of the forum location: Dining hall.



DC-Cam director Youk Chhang talking with head monk.

On Saturday, May 21st, one day prior to the forum, the team traveled from the DC-Cam office in Phnom Penh to Sre Cheng Commune. On the way, the team made telephone calls to communicate with the key informant Mr. Samroeth. We arrived at Wat Ang Damnak Thlork at 11 o'clock to meet with the teacher, head monk, and commune chief and together we sat and talked. The team talked to commune chief again and explained our purpose to hold a forum in his commune. The team also contacted the district governor, as recommended by Mr. Yim, for permission.

While discussing, the commune chief shared with the team his brief family background and told us that one his sons is studying in Phnom Penh. Mr. Yim pointed out a few people who were former Khmer Rouge soldiers for the team to interview. One of them was his brother-in-law named Chhem Srieng who began serving the KR as a soldier as a teenager at the age of thirteen.

After the meeting and checking the site with the teacher and commune chief, the team went on to conduct an interview with the commune chief's brother-in-law. We followed Mr. Yim to his place. Meanwhile the provincial teacher Mr. Samroeth and his family were preparing lunch for us. At 2:30 p.m. the team finished the interview, returned to Mr. Yim's house where we had parked the car and drove to the teacher's house for lunch. The commune chief had also invited us to lunch with him at his place but we told him that had already confirmed with the teacher and that we would be eating with him tomorrow. The team conducted one more interview after that.

Late in the afternoon, after everything was secured for the next day, the team left the teacher's company and thanked him and his family for their warm hospitality.

PROGRAM OF THE PUBLIC FORUM

1. Opening Remarks

The official introduction of the forum started at 8:00 a.m. I delivered a brief welcome speech and introduced members of the team to participants and also explained the purposes of the forum. Then, deputy director Mr. Dara P. Vanthan explained to participants DC-Cam's work, the importance of studying the history of Democratic Kampuchea and the purpose of today's forum. Mr. Vanthan said that genocide happened in Cambodia in 1975 but there was a law against the crime of genocide created by the United Nations in 1948. Despite this, there are still crimes and violence taking place in the world and Sudan is one recent example. He added that it is important to be educated and study about the genocide and if the students do not learn about it, crimes could happen again and again. Therefore, they, the students and young generations, are the ones to prevent genocide from reoccurring.

Next, Mr. Yim Pann, the commune chief, gave his opening remarks by first thanking DC-Cam for creating the program of bringing the forum to the commune and then offering a general welcome to the participants. He described life under Pol Pot as one of fear where people had no right to talk, families were separated, children never saw their parents, and could not meet each other. Mr. Yim emphasized to the students that in this post-modern high tech time, youth are being drawn in by material things like karaoke, mobile phones, drugs, and gambling. He stated that the younger generation should learn about their parents' hardship from what happened in the past to prevent it and that if we did not study it to know how it happened it could come back again and we would be the victims. At the end of his speech, Mr. Yim told the participants to pay attention to the forum and to learn from it and reflect to benefit their study in the future.

After the introduction of the team and the opening remarks from the commune chief, I thanked the speaker and outlined to the audience the details of the program and again the objective of the day.

2. Distributing DK history book and Pre-forum survey

Before distributing the book to the participants, I explained that the book contains eleven chapters covering the topics of how the Khmer Rouge gained power, the reign of the Khmer Rouge, and its fall. I also explained that we go through only one chapter of the book in each forum. Chapter six about the Four Year Plan (1977-1980) would be presented to the participants that morning after completion of the pre-forum surveys.

After these remarks the team distributed the textbook *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)* to attendees. Next, the pre-forum surveys were distributed to the participants to fill in before going on to the model lesson of chapter six. Meanwhile, Mr. Vanthan led the group of students by guiding them through each question in the survey form. At the same time, team members of the project helped the group of villagers who could not read and write complete their surveys.

All pre-forum surveys were collected and the program continued as the attendees listened to the guest speakers tell their stories about life during the Khmer Rouge and observed the model teaching of chapter six from the textbook.

3. Guest Speaker

Mr. Kong Son was invited to talk about his experiences during the Khmer Rouge. The group was asked to listen and take note of key important facts from the story because they would be asked to summarize.



Mr. Kong said: *"At first, I was sent to work in rice fields. The whole day everyday was spent in the field and I received only a bowl of rice porridge. After six months of working the rice fields, I was selected to build modern houses with three other men as carpenters in Porn Tik village, Prey Khley, and Sre Cheng. I didn't know anything about the work but I had to be there at the workshop site by 5 a.m. We followed the organization and went wherever we were ordered to go, including to build a hospital in the forest. As for eating, we ate in cooperatives like other people, nothing special and no different. I worked as carpenter till 1978 when I was ordered to build a storehouse for rice. I was separated from my families and learned that my children were confronting hardship starving for food and my nieces and nephews died of starvation and disease.*

So, it was a miserable time and we should

eliminate it and make our country progress and have prosperity."

After the speech, I asked the participants if they had questions for Mr. Kong and asked if other participants would like to add or share their stories. Then Mr. Doeu Ros volunteered to speak briefly about his life experiences during the regime. He said: *"I want to share a brief bit of some aspects from that time. I was 18 in 1970, born and lived in Kampong Cham. We were farmers, peasants and poor students. We were studying and never thought of warfare. But when Lon Nol did the coup d'état, our country fell into conflict. We youth joined the movement. But our main purpose in joining the movement was not for the causes of persecution and starvation but for the country to bring back independence and support Samdach Ao. After that, the conflicts went on for five years. I think we gained nothing from five years of conflict. It was the political game of the powerful countries. The big country wants to have the small country like ours. They created problems for us because they wanted us and the country and innocent people suffered and we became victims. They want to benefit from us.*

This is just my personal point of view, I would like to apologize if there is any mistake in my talk."

At the end of the speech, Mr. Vanthan and I pointed out to participants the two different contexts of the two guest speakers' narrations. The first speaker talked about his life experiences under the regime and the second speaker spoke from his point of view from the outside context, looking from the political view.

4. The Presentation of Chapter 6 "The Four Year Plan (1977-1980)"

I began the model teaching of chapter six of *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)* by providing a brief overview of the contents of the textbook and told the group the objectives of the chapter. I talked with the group about what they had mostly heard from people about the Khmer Rouge regarding hardship, forced labor, killing and starvation, and especially the working in the rice fields, digging canals and building dams. I related these matters to the four year plan policy of the KR. Skeptical people wondered why there was not enough food to supply the people if the population witnessed the harvesting of high yielding rice crops with some areas yielding more than the set plan.

I then continued informing the participants to concentrate on the readings by their fellow students while also picking up on the key points and important events from the readings. To begin, I asked for a volunteer student to read out aloud the first paragraph of the chapter and then had a second student summarize what the first student had read. I followed with several discussion questions I proposed to generate the group's interaction.

This teaching model is a new methodology excerpted from the Teacher Guidebook. Students were encouraged to ask questions during each stage. While the chapter has a total of nine paragraphs, in the interest of time permitted during the forum, I had the students and villagers work on only five paragraphs in the chapter and the remaining paragraphs I summarized at the end.

I asked the forum participants for a volunteer to read the first paragraph of chapter six. One male student read the first paragraph aloud at the front of the room. I also mentioned to the group again to try picking up the key words and important events for the summary. I explained that they will have to learn how to summarize, and not to read when they were asked to do the summary but talk briefly like in the way of telling a story or some events. I then asked for volunteers to summarize what the first student had just read. I pointed out one female student to come up front for the summary. Within this first paragraph, I asked them what the key word "Collectivization" means and discussed it with them.

I asked another volunteer to read paragraph two and asked another student to summarize. At this point, the villagers were also asked to share and express their views. A villager shared the following with the forum: "In the regime, people had no private belongings, no basic rights; big houses had been removed to built stables or hold cattle, kitchens. Husbands and wives lived separately in cooperatives, and children in mobile units or children units...I don't know what they (KR) wanted, what they were thinking...I was young, I was 17, and the school was under tree shade and dry soil was used as chalk. We worked all day digging canals, building dams...and did not have enough to eat."

The following three paragraphs continued with the same step of having one volunteer student to read and another to summarize with some comments from the villagers.

I concluded the discussion of chapter six by asking the group a few questions to gauge their understanding and knowledge. I further emphasized a few points from chapter six. I explained that the purpose of the four-year plan in the minds of the KR was to transform Cambodia from an undeveloped agricultural country to high-producing agricultural country. For example, workers were required to produce three tons of rice per hectare in less fertile areas where as in more fertile areas workers were required to produce up to 6-7 tons per hectare. Furthermore, I explained some reasons of why the plan was not successful. Next, I opened the session of question and answer.



A villager participant reading the history textbook.



Children reading photo captions in the textbook.

5. Questions from participants

Questions and answers were discussed during and after the completion of the chapter six presentation. Mr. Vanthan and I coordinated the session. The questions from villagers and students were as follows:

1. I wonder why people did not have enough food to eat when the rice product yielded a lot amount during the harvesting. Where did all the rice go? Where did they take it to?
2. Did the regime that caused millions people to death have anything to do with foreigners? If it did, will there be any restitution and how?
3. I heard on the radio Khieu Samphan said he had no power, no right, and had not even an office. Is Khieu Samphan just a small chess piece for a foreign country? (Puppet of foreign country or under pressure of foreign command).
4. Why did foreigners (UN) not take any action to intervene when there were such brutal crimes committed on Cambodian people and let it last for more than three years?
5. I heard the tribunal has prosecuted Kaing Gek Eav alias Duch in Case 001, and there will be the trial of Case 002 for the KR senior leaders and Case 003. I know that the tribunal's purpose is only to persecute the senior leaders but if it continues it will stretch down to more cases that could affect the lower ranking members. So, what is the rule of law of the tribunal? Its limitation is till what case number? And how long will it take for the trial to complete?

6. Distributing the ECCC related materials and Post-Forum Survey and Evaluation Form

After the question and answer period, the team distributed the booklet titled "Genocide," *Searching for the Truth* magazines, anti-genocide slogan posters, post-forum surveys and the forum evaluation form in order to assess how the knowledge and attitude of the participants toward studying KR history had or had not changed after attending the forum. After about 20 minutes, the surveys were collected and then I invited the commune chief to give a closing remark. He thanked all participants for their attendance and the engaging discussion. Some final advice to the group, especially to students, was to read the documents the team distributed so that they will have more knowledge and deeper understanding. He wished the team and the forum the best of four Buddha wishes: life, power, happiness and health.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

Strengthen the Relationship between DC-Cam and Provincial Teacher Mr. Samroeth Boret

Mr. Samroeth had been the key person of the forum for the team had contacted him for his assistance with logistics and administrative cooperation with local authorities, school directors and principals, teachers, students, villagers, and the commune chief. One day before the forum took place, on the way to the find the forum location, Mr. Samroeth called to check on us and told the team about directions. Upon arrival, the team met with him, the head monk, and the commune chief in the pagoda compound. On that same day, the team had a meal at his house, during which he offered the team a big lunch with delicious food cooked by his wife and family. He also assisted the team in finding former KR cadres for interviews.

Building Relationships with Sre Cheng Commune

The commune chief of Sre Cheng, Mr. Yim Pann, had also been very helpful in supporting the forum. His cooperation made the forum go as planned. He helped with informing all the village chiefs and people as well as the school principals. He also gave guidance to the team by pointing out a few people we wanted to conduct interviews with.

The team was very welcomed by Mr. Yim and his family and he invited us for lunch at his house. The team ate lunch at his place after the forum. The food cooked by his wife and was as good as the first lunch at Mr. Samroeth's place.



Commune chief Mr. Yim Pann and his wife.



The team having ripe mangos at Mr. Chhem Srieng's place.

Working with the commune chief and the local schools has created valuable working relationships between DC-Cam and the Sre Cheng commune for the future. The team informed Mr. Yim in advance that we will invite him to see the trial hearing of Case 002.

Teachers', Students' and Parents' Participation

The engagement between the students and the material was strong and a variety of students and villagers actively participated in the discussions. The students and villagers asked a number of important questions. Some answers were solicited from the teachers.

The Forum and Teaching History

Regarding the forum, Mr. Yim Pann, the commune chief, thinks that it is very good because it can provide a certain part of knowledge about the history of the Khmer Rouge to communicate to the people who attend the forum. He requested the Center to hold this forum in every village and district for the young generation to know the history and their background, and to reflect from its past to see what is good and bad. He told me that he will have his son who is a freshman studying in Phnom Penh to come visit the Center and asked me to teach his son the model lesson for it is a good way to help students with their reading and improve their ability of speaking in public.

Mr. Nin Sopha, a teacher at Prey Khley secondary school noted that the methodology used in the forum is not completely new to him but is a good one. He said that the teaching in villages like this can reduce violence and promote reconciliation in the country because through the explanation and discussion of the crimes and acts committed in the past, those who before did not want to study to have good intentions can possibly change their thinking

and may be good leaders in the future. The teaching can also open dialogue among the students and their parents.

For the first question in the forum I asked the group about whether or not they have ever heard about the KR and from where and almost all of the students answered that they heard from and have talked to their parents about the KR. Interviews with students showed that the forum and the teaching method was new to them which was good for them. Bora Theng, a 12th grade student of Hun Sen Ang Chak high school, said that the forum allowed him to learn how bad and brutal the regime was and let him know what is good to do and not to do bad things as well as ways to help us to prevent it from happening again.

The team hopes that the forum will further encourage students to continue learning about the KR history, continue talking to their parents and other community members, and encourage them to contribute to the process of reconciliation and peace building.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED



On the way to interview Mr. Chhem Srieng at his place.

Administration and Local Authorities

Even though the team had good communication with the provincial teacher and received cooperation from the commune chief, administrative work with higher local authorities such as district and provincial governors is still a challenge sometimes at some places. Our first key contact person is a provincial teacher whom we called one week in advance to inform and asked for assistance with the logistics and permission from commune and village chiefs as well as school directors and principals. Meanwhile, we also find the contact of commune

chief and call to ask for permission to conduct the forum, with explanation that we will meet to give him a copy and show him the original permission letter from Ministry of Interior one day prior to the forum. Even with approval from the commune chief, we still had to follow administrative bureaucracy. Later, on Saturday afternoon, Mr. Yim had me contact the district chief to inform him about the forum. Respectively, the team had to meet with the official and govern in person but since the district office was closed at weekend, Mr. Yim gave me the governor's phone number and I called to inform him and asked for the permission.

The team learned that at some far locations, depending on the actual situation, the team will consider whether or not it is necessary to go a few days earlier before the forum in order to ask permission, check on the situation of the site and look for forum locations, and complete administrative work and communication that could take more than one day.

Attendance and Materials

It is another challenge to confirm the number of participants with the host commune. Usually, the number of attendees is lower than 200 and sometimes even much lower than 100. Some reasons for low attendance are of the far distance, road conditions, transportation, harvesting and planting seasons, household works, etc. The team will try to reconfirm the number, implement measures to prevent and reduce any large discrepancy in numbers and engagement in the future. The team will normally bring 200 sets of documents and materials and the surplus materials, if not much, will be distributed by the team to the school library, commune office, and people near the commune.

Technology/Road Condition

While the team was well prepared with the logistics and materials from the office and checked up with everything, especially the testing of the sound equipments, the amplifier was broken due to the inside thin wire cord being detached. This caused the sound system to not work with the batteries. This was due to the long bumpy road. Luckily, the team had prepared in advance the generator from pagoda and filled it with ten liters petrol. Additionally, the quality of the microphone sound was disrupted at times, and the loudspeaker had static interference. It is important that in the future the team check and test the equipment twice after each transport and before the forum.



Bomb shell hung at dining hall, being used as bell

Student Participation

While villagers seemed to be very engaging during this forum, many students were shy and nervous when I picked on them to give a summary or talk about what points they captured from the readings. They volunteered to read the paragraph of the chapter and a few asked questions. This was because the teaching lesson was new to them. In the future, the team will consider more ways to encourage and elicit the participation of the students, villagers and teachers.



Student summarizing the reading of a paragraph from chapter six.

The forum was held in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and funded by The Asia Foundation (TAF) (Phnom Penh, Cambodia) with the core support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Swedish International Agency for Development (Sida).

TEAM MEMBERS:

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APPENDIX 1

Experiences of Kan Phan in Democratic Kampuchea

We have heard about a lot of sufferings and known a lot of victims during the Khmer Rouge regime. However, the life stories from officials serving the Democratic Kampuchea might not be as common.

The 68 year-old uncle Kan Phan lived through the regime under a different name, Meas Phan, because he wanted to use his grandfather's surname like his children did. He was a member of the village council at Trapaing Veng Village, Trapaing Raing Commune, Chum Kiri District, Kampot Province from 1975 to 1977. He was in charge of the economic well-being of the Trapaing Veng villagers, most of whom were elderly. For example, whenever there was a shortage of food reported by the villagers, uncle Phan would make a request to the communal office for extra food such as corn and rice. He always tried to protect his villagers from harm. There was a villager, for instance, named An who had just moved to Trapaing Veng Village from Kampuchea Krom and was accused of being Vietnamese, but uncle Phan stood up to reject this allegation and saved An's life. In addition to this primary responsibility, uncle Phan also managed the division of the villagers into different groups, each of which carried out different agricultural activities including farming rice and building the irrigation system, just to name a few.

Despite his title, uncle Phan also experienced similar brutality and hardship and led a similar life full of fear, sorrow, and conspiracy like that of the ordinary villagers. Moreover, uncle Phan risked his life to save his villagers from harm.

During this regime, uncle Phan was forced to do a lot of physical work in the field like carrying soil with his shoulders. The work was so hard that he dislocated his shoulder and the scar remains today. As part of the village council, uncle Phan, with the fear of getting tortured, had to work even harder than the ordinary villagers. As part of his routine work, he got up very early in the morning before the sunrise and went to work in the one-hectare rice field making sure that the work assigned was done before dawn. His cousin, named Meas Dum, is another illustration of the brutality done by the Khmer Rouge as he was sent, without any known reason, to La'ang Mountain, beaten up, insulted, and forced to work hard with very little food to eat.

Other than all this physical hardship and torturing, uncle Phan also had a lot of mental and emotional oppression. More often than not, uncle Phan led a life during that time full of fear when he saw many of the villagers getting arrested one after another. He rarely had a good sleep because in his mind, he was always thinking of one day getting arrested as well. On one occasion, his own father was arrested by the commune agent. Thus, he took off and hid all his valuable belongings for his children in case he too got arrested.

Apart from those physical and emotional sufferings, uncle Phan has also seen a lot of the brutality of the Khmer Rouge commune agent over the innocent civilians as well as the public infrastructure. He has seen a group female Khmer Rouge soldiers aged between 20 and 30 often come to the village and arrest a group of around five or six villagers who were left under his supervision. Without their awareness, they were accused of being the enemies. They got their hands tied up to the back and walked to somewhere that he did not know. Some of them, as far as uncle Phan could remember, included Sary and Din who were brought to the village from Svay Rieng and Kampot respectively. He then immediately stood up to oppose these brutal acts until there were no more arrests of the villagers under his

watch. Moreover, he had seen the same brutal acts upon the villagers of a different racial characteristic, particularly the Chinese. They were ordinary old villagers doing small family business and were accused of being the enemies too.

There was so much conspiracy. People could not trust each other. There were even some bad individuals who often made faulty reports to the commune about some bad deeds of the villagers, which they actually did not do. This caused some innocent villagers to get sent to the La'ang Mountain, where they would be tortured and overworked without enough food.

Cultural and public properties, at the other side, were also severely destroyed. One pagoda in Ta Reach Village nearby Trapaing Veng Village, for instance, was demolished; parts of the pagoda were made into pig farms; burial sites were flattened; big houses in the villages were turned into the same small houses; and no one dared to stand up to oppose these acts.

Uncle Phan had also been deported just as the ordinary villagers had. In 1977, he was brought to Koh Thom Commune, Koh Thom District, Kandal Province, where he carried out the same work with similar responsibilities. At that time, many of the Trapaing Veng villagers insisted that they move there with him. Thus he was accused of initiating and leading a movement, and he strongly rejected this allegation, claiming that it was Angkar who sent them there. Several big trucks came and were loaded with villagers, including uncle Phan, to Koh Thom District. Uncle Phan did not really realize why he and other villagers were deported to this new place; he just knew he was going to do farming there.

In Koh Thom, uncle Phan performed the same sort of work. It was a bit milder, though. During the rainy season, the women cut the grass for the cows to eat, and the men cut the shrub and worked in the rice field. Uncle Phan was obliged to visit different working groups of old villagers in order to check if they had enough food or needed anything. He still continued to take care of the villagers and fearlessly stood up to protect them since he knew the chief of Koh Thom District there, named Yan, who used to study with him. Therefore, people in his village led quite a decent life. Trapaing Veng villagers, however, did not enjoy the same story as they were continuously arrested by the commune agent after uncle Phan left.

That is why Group 17, which was deported from Phnom Penh to his village and is still alive today, is still grateful of him since he was the one who saved them.

Today, uncle Phan is still living in Trapaing Veng Village, Trapaing Raing Commune, Chumkiri District, Kampot Province. He currently works for the village and is in charge of healthcare service. He is also a priest at a pagoda, responsible for managing the budget for renovating the pagoda. He describes the work as very busy, especially during the time when there is any construction or renovation of the pagoda.

In sum, it can be concluded that not only did uncle Phan, who had an official title at the village council, experience similar hardships and brutality just as ordinary people did, but he was also able to help and protect many of his villagers from harm.

APPENDIX 2

Interview Summary

Yim Pann, 60, commune chief of Sre Cheng

During the time of conflict, Mr. Yim had to move from his birthplace in Angkor Chey district to Chum Kiri district to escape from Thiv Ky Vietnam and Pol Pol who accused him of being a student supporter of Lon Nol. All of his friends were killed in the village. He pretended to be illiterate and endured the hard work. He married in 1973.

Doeu Ros, 59, born in Lvi commune, Sithor Kandal district, Prey Veng province

Mr. Doeu joined the movement in 1970 in the Sithor Kandal unit. The reason he joined the movement was to claim freedom for the nation, not for himself. Since 1970, he first worked in the economics section and later became a factory worker in Phnom Penh. From 1976 to 1979, he was sent to work in an electricity section in the forest of Stung Chhev. During the disordered situation, he escaped to the Thai border to stay in a camp and returned in 1993. He lost one niece and one nephew in the Khmer Rouge regime.

Muon Nak, 18, grade 12 student of Hun Sen Ang Chak high school

Muon's grandparents died in the Khmer Rouge regime because they fell sick and had no medical treatment. He learned from his parents that they were evacuated and forced to do hard work at Rumlich dam without being given enough food.

Muon said it is hard to believe but he has gained knowledge through the oral conversations told from one to another with evidence left from the regime and documents.

Nen Soeung, 70 (b. 1941), birthplace in Kaing Samroang village, Chriev commune, Thbaung district, Kampong Speu province

Mr. Nen was a clerk of the commune. He was evacuated to Trapeang Cho commune, Oaral district in Kampong Speu province and worked as biography recorder. In the regime, he lost his wife, one child and a brother. He saw Khmer Rouge cadres destroy cultural treasures by doing things like dropping a statue of Buddha into a river and killing people by shooting and beating them with bamboo sticks and leaving them destitute.