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GENOCIDE EDUCATION IN CAMBODIA

The Teaching of "A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)" Democratic Kampuchea Textbook Distribution and Public Education Forum between Teachers, Students and Parents

Second Report for the Asia Foundation, March 1-May 30, 2011

Introduction

DC-Cam's Public Education Forum is conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. The forum is held throughout 24 Cambodian provinces: from the most remote areas of the nation, to the capital city of Phnom Penh. By providing non-formal education on how to effectively teach Democratic Kampuchea (DK) history, the forum

makes a positive impact on formal education inside Cambodian classrooms.

The forum creates a safe space for people of all ages, backgrounds, and statuses to discuss DK history. By allowing both victims and perpetrators to share their experiences and perspectives of the atrocities committed during the Khmer Rouge (KR) period, the forum leads Cambodians to the common ground necessary to finding peace, ensuring reconciliation and building a better future. The forum also encourages direct intergenerational dialogues at home, an important feat at a time when the struggles of contemporary life cause many Cambodian families to sweep their violent past under the rug.

Many survivors, haunted by their traumatic pasts, find solace in voicing for the first time the stories that they have carried inside, untold for over thirty years. At one forum in Phnom Penh, a villager, age 67, asked if she could share her story with the children. She began with tears, struggling to get control enough to speak. When she could talk, she spoke of her family. Five of her relatives had been evacuated from Phnom Penh to Kampot province. Her father and husband were executed. One of her children died from a lack of medical treatment. Unable to bear the pain of losing her beloved family members, she became sick. The KR cadres accused her of feigning illness, and forced her to eat human excrement. She endured KR torture, repeatedly losing consciousness at the hands of her tormentors. Luckily, she and one child survived the KR brutality. As she told her tale, the assembled villagers and students cried, unable to wrap their minds around the horrors she had endured. As she concluded her story, she said that she was happy to have the chance to share her experiences with so many people. Knowing that her story had been heard gave her a sense of release. The forum participants acknowledged her story, and this gave her strength. After the forum, she stayed behind granted an interview to the team as telling the story ensures that her suffering is acknowledge and remembered.



Public Education Forum in Wat Trapeang Kraham (Red pond), Ratanak Kiri

The forum enhances students’ knowledge of DK history and strengthens their belief in the brutal realities of the KR regime. Although, researchers frequently report that younger Cambodian generations know little, if anything, about what happened to their elders during the KR regime, the reality is that Cambodian youth have grown up with KR survivors, and have some knowledge about the KR era. But their knowledge is anecdotal, based on informal stories shared in the home.

In contrast, the forum teaches young Cambodians about the KR regime in a formal setting thereby making family histories more real and legitimate. At the forum, children hear survivors’ stories, listen to an expert presentation on DK history, and receive a copy of a textbook on the DK regime. This allows younger generations to form a comprehensive picture of the KR, fostering an interest in an important part of their national heritage. Young participants frequently become emotionally invested in the forum: they take notes, join discussion groups, and ask thoughtful questions of both survivors and DC-Cam staff. DC-Cam interviews reveal that even after leaving the forum, youth attendees continue engaging in dialogues about the KR regime with friends, family and educators.

Additionally, the forum links expert-led discussions and survivors’ stories to the site where the forum takes place. For example, at Mondul Kiri, Ratanak Kiri and Stung Treng, DC-Cam teams focused community discussions on the Northeast zone: the first KR stronghold and first liberated zone after the 1970 coup. Many senior KR leaders, including Pol Pot, Noun Chea, Ieng Sary, Son Sen and Nay Saran, lived in this zone on the Vietnamese border at a site called “Office 100.” Some survivors have first-hand knowledge of these events, but the young generations know only the bare-bones history. Unsurprisingly, as the team discussed the stories of the nascent communist movement and revolution to the Northeast zone, the local children became fascinated, asking question after question.



The forum location in Ratanak Kiri

From March to late May 2011, the project conducted six public education forums in six provinces. DC-Cam’s team of four conducted 46 interviews with villagers, teachers, students, and local authorities. In total, approximately 836 people participated in forums of between 100 – 200 individuals. The table provides a summary of the forums DC-Cam has conducted to date.

| Date | Location | Number of Participants | Number of interview |
|----------------|---|------------------------|---------------------|
| March 6, 2011 | Punleak village, Chong Chiek commune, Dambe district, Kampong Cham province | 100 | 11 |
| March 20, 2011 | Trapeang Kraham commune, Kaun Mum district, Ratanak Kiri province | 140 | 6 |

| | | | |
|----------------|---|-----|----|
| April 24, 2011 | Srah Russey commune, Stung Treng district, Stung Treng province | 120 | 10 |
| April 26, 2011 | Monorom commune, Sen Monorom district, Mondul Kiri province | 176 | 6 |
| May 8, 2011 | Kampong Thnom commune, Leuk Dek district, Kandal province | 230 | 5 |
| May 22, 2011 | Sre Cheng commune, Chum Kiri district, Kampot province | 135 | 8 |
| Total | | 836 | 46 |

Organization of the Forum

The format of the forum is unchanged from the previous forums. The team spends three days in the provinces near Phnom Penh, and four days in the more remote provinces to prepare for and organize the forums. Before each trip, the team calls the local authority and school directors to provide a brief description of the forum. Provincial teachers who participated in DC-Cam’s teacher training are local points of contact and assist in organizing the forums. Before going into the field, the team discusses two important points with the local authorities and school directors: the forum location and participants. The local authorities are responsible for inviting villagers, while school directors invite teachers and students. The local Pagoda is the favored site, as it is considered neutral and unbiased. In some cases, the monks are invited to participate.



Distribution of DK History Textbook to Participants

Immediately upon arrival at the forum site, the team visits the local authorities, the commune chief, and the school director to reconfirm the forum details. The team then formally presents a letter from the Ministry of the Interior, permitting them to conduct the forum. The team visits the forum site and makes arrangements for the comfort of participants, borrowing floor mats from the pagoda to ensure

comfortable places to sit. One of the team members interviews the

commune chief and school director to familiarize the team with the local history. The team also finds out if any participants are former KR cadre members. Finally, the team tells the authorities and education officials about DC-Cam’s work and the forum objectives to ensure effective collaboration. The team asks the commune chief and school director to preside over the forum and to give recommendations on how to most effectively conduct the session.

The forum takes place on the second day. The forum begins with welcoming remarks by the school director and the commune chief, who sometimes share their personal stories from the KR period. Next, team members distribute pre-forum surveys to assess

participants' knowledge of and attitude toward DK history. Then, a team member presents a pre-selected chapter from a DK history textbook. Following the presentation, participants are divided into groups and asked to read sections from the book. Each group is asked to select a representative to report on their section to the whole forum. A question and answer session follows. Some survivors choose to tell their stories, and students ask questions. When appropriate, survivors are asked to help answer questions related to life during KR regime.

At the end the Q&A session, the team distributes post-forum surveys to ascertain if and how participants' attitudes and knowledge change after the forum. In the afternoon, the team conducts interviews with selected students and villagers. The following are two highlights from the public education work conducted in Ratanak Kiri and Kandal.

Highlight of Public Education Forum in Ratanak Kiri

1. General overview of the forum

During the first morning session in a dining hall of Wat Trapeang Kraham, Mr. Pheng Pong-Rasy, a member of the project, introduced the team members from the Documentation Center of Cambodia who would be conducting the forum and explained the purpose of the forum. Mr. Pheng also explained DC-Cam's work for in pursuing Memory and Justice for the crimes of the Khmer Rouge. Following Mr. Pheng's introduction, a second commune council member, Mr. Suon Heang, gave his opening remarks. After his words, the team members distributed the book *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)* while pre-forum surveys were distributed to all participants to gauge their understanding of the Khmer Rouge regime.

After the participants turned in their completed surveys, a villager gave a brief speech about his perceptions of the Khmer Rouge's background and encouraged participants to pay attention and learn from the forum. A head monk, Prum Saroeun, shared his hardship experienced during the Khmer Rouge regime by describing the arrest and killing of his parents



Head monk of Trapeang Kraham, Prum Saroeun

during the civil war and the Khmer Rouge time. Afterwards, Mr. Pheng led the presentation of chapter two from the Democratic Kampuchea history book by using the K-W-L chart methodology from the teacher's guidebook. The chapter is entitled "Who were the Khmer Rouge? How Did They Gain Power?" The presentation was followed by a question and answer session with participants. Following the session, the post-forum survey was distributed to participants to review their knowledge. The forum was finished within three and half hours in the morning, running from 8:30 am to 12 pm. In the afternoon, the team members conducted 6 interviews with one monk, two villagers, one teacher, and two students.

2. Background and geographical description

Ratanak Kiri is a province in northeastern Cambodia that borders Laos to the north, Vietnam to the east, Mondul Kiri Province to the south, and Stung Treng Province to the west. For over a millennium, Ratanak Kiri has been occupied by the highland Khmer Leu people, who are a minority elsewhere in Cambodia. In 1966, the Communist Party of Kampuchea headquarters was moved to Ratanak Kiri, and hundreds of Khmer Leu joined CPK units. During this period, there was also extensive Vietnamese activity in Ratanak Kiri. Between March 1969 and May 1970, the United States undertook a massive covert bombing campaign in the region, aiming to disrupt sanctuaries for communist Vietnamese troops. Villagers were forced outside of main towns to escape the bombings. In June 1970, the central government withdrew its troops from Ratanak Kiri, abandoning the area to Khmer Rouge control. The Khmer Rouge regime became increasingly oppressive. The three Khmer Leu residents were forbidden from speaking their native languages or practicing their traditional customs and religion. Presently, residents generally live in villages of 20 to 60 families and engage in subsistence shifting agriculture. KAUN MOM District comprises seven sub-districts and twenty-three villages. According to a mapping report from 1999, the population of this district totals 9,362 -- 5,269 Khmer, 3,149 ethnic Kroeng, 559 people of Lao descent, and 402 ethnic Tum Puon. The report also mentioned that Mr. Phat Sovann, age 72, of Sre Angkrang village, Sre Angkrang Sub-district, Kon Mom District, saw human bodies in a canal, about 400 meters west of his house. This canal is called Samroang Pen Canal. He also saw human bones in front of his house. Mr. Sovann also informed us of another canal called Kbal Along Ptel Canal, another site at which he says the Khmer Rouge had killed people. He did not know where the victims came from. Nor did he how many were killed in these two particular places. These two canals are arms of Sre Pork River -- each is about three meters wide and three meters deep. Mr. Sovann said in sadness that forty members of his family were killed by the Khmer Rouge. The Kaun Mom district office is located about 10 kilometers from **Trapeang Kraham** communal hall, which stretches along National Road number 78A. The commune has three villages bordered on the southwest and east side by Trapeang Chreh commune, on the south by Sre Angkrang commune in Kaun Mom district, on the west by Krabey Chrum village, Kbal Rormeas commune, and on north by Talat commune of Sesan district.



Monks reading the textbook

According to the commune administrative assistant Mr. Keo Savet, in 1968 Trapeang Kraham was just a village in Sre Angkrang commune of Lumphatt district. In 1979 it became a commune in Lumphatt due to a growth in population that made it difficult for administration. Since 1987, the commune has belonged in Kaun Mom district. The commune's statistics in 2011 show the population of Trapeang Kraham as 2,447 with 571 families. 95% of the residents are farmers and peasants, 2% are workers, 1% is merchants,

1% is government officials, and 1% is elderly. Trapeang Kraham commune covers land space of over 35,139 hectares. There is one high school and one secondary school.

Mr. Hem Chhoam, a layman, said the name came from an old pond in village three of the commune in which the water is red like iron's rust. Preah Puth Kiri Ratanaram Trapeang

Kraham pagoda, where the public forum took place, was built on December 13, 1991. There are two temples in the pagoda compound. One is set on the flat ground and another temple is located on the mountain top. The two temples are about 30 meters from each other. There is one chief monk, three monks, one layman, a few laywomen, and several orphan boys.

3. Preparation for the public forum

A week prior to the forum, the team contacted a provincial teacher, Mr. Un Meun, who had received training organized by the Documentation Center of Cambodia with the cooperation of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport on how to teach the Democratic Kampuchea history. According to Mr. Un, there are three high schools in Ratanak Kiri, one in Kaun Mum district and two in the provincial town. The team decided to hold a forum in Kaun Mum district, about 40 kilometers from Ratanak Kiri provincial town. Mr. Un assisted with communication to the principal of Trapeang Krahan High School, Mr. Taing Sophea, to invite students to attend the forum. The team also talked to commune chief Mr. Em Oeun about our purpose to hold a forum in his commune. After listening to his recommendation, the team contacted the district governor for permission.



A village participant reading the history textbook.

Children reading photo captions in the textbook.

On Friday March 18, the team traveled in the early morning from Phnom Penh to Trapeang Kraham commune, Kaun Mum district, Ratanak Kiri province. At about 4:30 pm, the team arrived in Trapeang Kraham commune. The team tried to meet Mr. Em to inform him of our arrival but unfortunately he was asked to solve a problem in another village before the team reached his home. The team then decided to meet a head monk of Trapeang Kraham pagoda to request use of a dining hall to use as a meeting place between students, teachers and parents. In the dining hall, the team observed the head monk teaching two children how to read and write Khmer words. After speaking with him, he said that he received information about the forum from commune chief. He was happy to talk and share with the team stories about his life during the Khmer Rouge regime. He said that he has been an orphan since 1979. His mother, Srey Ton, died in 1972 of the US bombing in Svay Rieng and his father, Prum Than, was killed in 1976 after he was accused of serving as a Khmer Sar member and being a monk in Lon Nol regime.

Below is the brief story head monk Prum Saroeun told during an interview with the team:
"I was evacuated from my home in Svay Rieng to live in Chumreak Tret village, Chheu Teal commune, Kien Svay district, Kandal province in 1978. I worked in a Special Child Unit. My Unit

chief was named Sokha. She came from Takeo province. She was a vicious lady who used to hit me and throw pieces of soil at my head. She used to teach me soldier's theory and revolutionary songs. The teaching was in late 1978.

Before my father was arrested, he used to be a soldier during French colonization, a monk during Lon Nol regime, and then he was a group chief during the Khmer Rouge time. Because he used to be a monk, sometimes he secretly prayed at night. That was a noted point for the local cadres to report to the higher ranking cadres. My house was in Ta Na village of Kampong Ro district. One day, cooperative cadres came to arrest my father from home. A few cadres tied and transported him by bicycle to be imprisoned at a place called Wat Lar. He was shackled with many prisoners in the prison. Ta Prum was a commune chief at the time. My sister, Savoeun, came to meet my father at the prison after she got permission from Prum. My father sent a message through her to tell me that he needed me to get revenge on a few cadres for arresting and hitting him. Until now, I have never thought to get revenge on someone. I am now a monk. I will not think about this anymore. A few days later, my father was sent to be killed at Wat Russei Sanh Chas. Chim was chief of Russei Sanh prison.

In 1978, Ta Prum, Chim and many Eastern Zone cadres were arrested and killed by cadres from the Southwest zone. I knew that Ta Prum and Chim were arrested in Thmar Sar, very close to Svay Chrum district town, while they were forcing villagers to leave their homes. At the same time, many villagers were evacuated and forced to live far away from Svay Rieng. Some went to Pursat, Battambang and Kandal province, and some fled to Vietnam. My sister and I were forced to live in Kien Svay district of Kandal. Sre Ampil area, which is located in Kien Svay district, was my last place of residence during the Khmer Rouge regime. Ny was a chief of Chheu Teal commune, and Yeay Bo was a Kien Svay district chief.

In January 1979, my sister and I returned home. I heard that Yeay Bo was arrested by Vietnamese troops at a river bank in Kien Svay district. In 1980, I became a monk at Chumpou Priksar Pagoda in Svay Rieng. A moment later, because I wanted to serve as a soldier to protect the country, I resigned from being a monk and chose to be a soldier. A long time later, I became a monk and have been since then."

Mr. Pheng took time to explain to him a recently process of the ECCC and told him the top five Khmer Rouge leaders who are now in the ECCC's custody. Replying to a question asked by a team member of the project on the tribunal, the head monk answered, "I support the tribunal in bringing the top five Khmer Rouge leaders to be tried because people, especially those who have experiences during the Khmer Rouge regime, would be happy to see and reach justice. For my own opinion, the tribunal should try more Khmer Rouge leaders who were in charge of the zones or regions in Cambodia beside the top five because it will archive the feelings of the victims and allow real justices and peace."

He added that "ordinary people or victims would act in revenge upon those KR leaders in the 1980s if their faces appeared like this but are to be tried by the tribunal for national compensation in the last 30 years after the Khmer Rouge. "

At the end of the interview, Mr. Pheng turned to topic of the holding a forum. He agreed with the request and volunteered to share his experience during the Khmer Rouge with the participants in the forum's process. He said that he had never shared his experiences with anyone for more than 30 years but he would provide this to participants because he wants them to learn of the events that happened to him. He also added that he wants

villagers to tell their stories to students and the younger generation to help them understand and convince them that the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia from 1975-1979.

At around 5:50 pm, the team left for the commune chief's home. The team provided him with a DK textbook and booklet and described the aim of the forum. He said that he would not attend the forum because his health was not good. Instead, he sent three commune council members to attend the meeting and they would describe the commune situation to the forum.

After meeting with the head monk and commune chief, the team began the trip to Ratanak Kiri provincial town to find a guesthouse and to have dinner.

4. Program of the public forum

4.1. Opening Remarks - by 2nd commune council member Mr. Suon Heang

Before starting the forum, Mr. Pheng invited Mr. Suon Heang to talk about the background of Trapeang Kraham commune and give remarks to open the morning forum. Mr. Suon gave the following remarks to participants: *"First, I would say that all of you are lucky because you have the chance to get the DK history book and to sit in one place listening to the team members from DC-Cam talk about the Khmer Rouge regime. Second, you all should pay attention to the forum because this forum will give you more knowledge about the Khmer Rouge regime."* At the end of his speech, he informed the participants publicly of the opening of the forum and told them to try hard to listen at the forum.

Mr. Pheng thanked to Mr. Suon and took time to explain the purpose of the forum. He said the forum would encourage the participants to talk and discuss the experiences during Khmer Rouge regime. Children or students who attended the forum would be able to listen to their parents or elders talk about their hard work during the Khmer Rouge regime. As an example for the students or children born after the Khmer Rouge regime, Mr. Pheng asked the participants to raise their hands if they lived under the Khmer Rouge regime. Some participants raised their hands and said that life under the KR was very difficult, and this was like a lesson to the younger generation. Mr. Pheng continued to explain that the public education forum is to encourage students to ask questions about the KR to their parents or elders in order to gain extra knowledge after they have learned from school. Moreover, the forum will lead to building peace and reconciliation, locally and nationally, in Cambodia.

Some participants, especially younger children, did not hear or know the name "Khmer Rouge" while the other students knew it clearly from their school and parents. To gauge the knowledge of the participants, Mr. Pheng asked them the meaning of the two words "Khmer Rouge" and "Democratic Kampuchea". Most of the participants knew that these two phrases have the same meaning but they were used in different ways. People around Cambodia like to use "Khmer Rouge" in daily life and in informal ways but "Democratic Kampuchea" was used formally. Mr. Pheng added that besides these two phrases, we often use another phrase: "Pol Pot Regime". In detail, Mr. Pheng gave an explanation that people in different locations use different phrases or names to describe the regime. For example, people in Malai, Samlot or Pailin use "Democratic Kampuchea".

But some people in other provinces such as Kandal like to use “*Khmer Rouge*” or “*Pol Pot*” instead. However, the three different phrases serve the regime that occurred from 17 April 1975 to 6 January 1979.

After the introduction of the team and the opening remarks from the second commune council, Mr. Pheng opened the forum by outlining the details of the program and the objective of the day.

4.2. Distributing DK history book and Pre-forum survey

Before distributing the book to the participants, Mr. Pheng explained that the book contains 11 chapters covering the topics of how the Khmer Rouge gained power, the reign of the Khmer Rouge, and its fall. Mr. Pheng continued to state that the book is short but concise in its treatment of the events during the Khmer Rouge.



After his remarks the team distributed the book “*A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)*” to participants. At the same time, pre-forum surveys were distributed to the participants to fill in to measure their knowledge of the Khmer Rouge before they received a chapter lesson from the team members of the project. In order to do this consistently, Mr. Pheng divided participants into groups of students, parents and teachers. Team members of the project helped the group of villagers who cannot read and write complete their surveys. Mr. Pheng led the group of students by guiding them through each question. All pre-forum surveys were collected and the program continued. The team members allowed participants to take rest for 15 minutes and then went through to listen to the guest speakers tell their stories about life during the Khmer Rouge and observed the model teaching by Mr. Pheng.

4.3. Guest Speakers - by Hem Yoeun and Prum Saroeun

Before giving a mock lesson from the textbook, Mr. Pheng asked for volunteers to speak about life under the Khmer Rouge regimes to the participants. Mr. Hem Yoeun agreed to speak to the meeting. In the meantime, Mr. Pheng took time to explain to students the importance of taking notes of what the guest speakers talk about. Mr. Pheng told the group that he would ask one of the participants to summarize all important events from the guest speakers.

Mr. Hem Yoeun, a villager in village 2 of Trapeang Kraham commune, talked about life under the pressure of the Khmer Rouge from 1970-1979. Here are his remarks:

“Today I have a great opportunity to speak to all participants about the dispute between 1970 and 1975. After Lon Nol’s coupe d’état on Prince Norodom Sihanouk, a civil war was started in

Cambodia. From the end of 1972 to 1973, the US dropped B-52 bombs almost everywhere around the country. For example, Prey Lvea, Sai Va, Batt Rokar, Chambakk and others markets in Takeo province were destroyed by the B-52 bombing. Many people were killed and injured. I saw many events happen at many places in Takeo because I always went to the bombing place to see the accidents. As evidence, some wells or ponds that still keep water for daily use by people in the rural areas were created by the US bombing. I would remind all of you that the Khmer Rouge movement started a long time ago, not just in 1970. In conclusion, there have many important events that all of you, especially students, should remember. They are: Coup D'état on 18 March 1970, The victory of the Khmer Rouge on 17 April 1975, The life under the regime of 3 years 8 months and 20 days, The creation of Revolutionary Front on 2 December 1978 and the victory over the Khmer Rouge on 7 January 1979."

At the end of his speech, he mentioned that life under the Khmer Rouge was very hard, and all people's lives were in the hands of the Khmer Rouge cadres who could be killed at anytime. After the first guest speaker, the head monk of Trapeang Kraham pagoda Prum Saroeun took spoke to the participants about his life during the Khmer Rouge and the death of his parents in the regime. He cried when he spoke about his experiences. All the participants listened to him quietly. Some students took notes about what the head monk said. He lost his mother when he was 10 years old. His mother died in the US bombing in Svay Rieng province while she was holding his elder sister standing under the palm tree. When he was 14, in 1976, his father was arrested and killed at Russei Sanh Chas Prison. In 1978, he was forced to move to live temporarily in Kien Svay district of Kandal province where he was hit many times with handle of a shovel. Working for almost one year in Chheu Teal commune of Kien Svay district, he noted that Yeay Bo was an unpleasant district chief. Later, he heard that Yeay Bo was arrested by Vietnamese troops in January 1979 at the bank of Mekong River located in Kien Svay district. After January 1979, he and his sister went back to his home in Svay Rieng. At the end of his speech, he pointed out that this was the first time he told his story to anyone besides his neighbors 30 years after the collapse of Khmer Rouge regime. He continued to say that he goes to his birthplace in Svay Rieng every Khmer New Year and Phchum Ben festival to offer food and pray for his parents. He apologized to villagers attending the forum for leaving the pagoda during these two occasions.

4.4. The Presentation of Chapter 2 "Who were the Khmer Rouge? How did they gain power?" - by Pheng Pong-Rasy

Mr. Pheng opened his presentation of chapter 2, "Who were the Khmer Rouge? How did they gain power?", by dividing participants into groups of four with each group taking different reading responsibilities. Group 1 read "The Early Communist Movement"; group 2 read "The Creation of the Khmer People's Revolutionary Party"; group 3 read "The Workers' Party of Kampuchea (WPK); and group 4 read "The Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK)". Mr. Pheng gave the groups 15 minutes to read the chapter.

After reading, Mr. Pheng asked a representative from each group to summarize what the group has read. Before allowing participants to read the chapter, Mr. Pheng explained how to take notes and grasp the important events. First, group 1 spoke very briefly about the early communist movement. Group 2 also offered a brief summary of their section. But for groups 3 and 4, the representatives were smart and knew how to summarize the chapter well. Additionally, Mr. Pheng explained to students again how to take notes and summarize the lesson.

For the next step in the presentation the chapter, Mr. Pheng talked to participants to gauge their knowledge of taking notes, summarizing the lesson and listening to the teacher or speaker. Mr. Pheng wanted students to practice using these four skills at the same time. Mr. Pheng kept the group of students in the same place and permitted them to listen, take notes, summarize and think about what the presenter said. After that, Mr. Pheng asked each group to read and speak loudly to the larger group about what they had written and remembered. All groups demonstrated understanding of the chapter through their summaries.

At the last presentation session, Mr. Pheng opened the session of question and answer for participants. Few questions relating to the chapter were asked by villagers and students.

4.5. Distributing the Booklet “Genocide” and Post-Forum Survey

After the question and answer period, the team distributed the booklet titled “Genocide” and post-forum surveys 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 15 minutes, the surveys were collected and Mr. Pheng thanked all participants for their attendance and the engaging discussion.

Highlight of Public Education Forum in Kandal

1. Preparation for the public forum

On Saturday, May 7th, one day prior to the forum, the team traveled from the DC-Cam office in Phnom Penh to Kampong Phnom commune. On the way, the team made telephone calls to communicate with the key informant, Ms. Chhim Socheat Sothy, and the commune chief, Mr. Noa Touch. Ms. Chhim assisted with communication to the school director of Hun Sen Kampong Phnom high school about inviting teachers and students to attend the forum and contacting the pagoda. Mr. Noa was informed about the forum and asked to invite villagers and inform the head monk at the pagoda for the forum location.



The Forum team members meeting with the school director Mr. Heang Vuth (in white shirt, wearing glasses) and teachers.

Monks of Kampong Phnom pagoda preparing to be served the last meal of the day set at 11 a.m. at the dining hall.

Upon arrival at about 10 a.m., the team went to meet with the school director Mr. Heang Vuth who was sitting with a group of about ten other teachers on benches in front of the school office. The team provided him with documents about the forum and showed a permission letter from Ministry of Interior, and Ministry of Education Youth and Sport. The meeting went smoothly and Ms. Chhim communicated with the head monk. The team then continued to meet with the commune chief in the pagoda compound as appointed

and also viewed the forum site. The team described the aim of the forum to him with a package containing the textbook, *Case 002* booklet, *Searching for the Truth* magazine, and the permission letter. Mr. Noa was friendly and also very helpful in arranging the forum preparation.

After a brief pause for lunch, the team contacted the commune chief and Ms. Chhim again about renting the chairs and battery for the forum, since the electricity does not reliably run. The team worked with Mr. Noa, Ms. Chhim, and the monks at the pagoda to organize the site.

In the afternoon, after everything was secured for the next day, the team left the commune chief's company and provided him with an extra copy of the DK textbook and *Case 002* booklet that he requested.

2. Program of the public forum

2.1. Opening Remarks

Ms. Ser started the official introduction at 8:00 a.m. She introduced the panel of three men sitting in the front: commune chief Mr. Noa Touch, school director Mr. Heang Vuth, and a survivor, Mr. Thoang Marin. After she introduced the participants to the forum's team members, guest speakers, DC-Cam's work and main objectives of the forum, she invited Mr. Vanthan to give an additional description of the forum.

Next, Mr. Noa Touch, the commune chief, gave his opening remarks, first thanking DC-Cam for presenting the forum and then offering a general welcome to the participants. He stated that life during the KR was difficult and that the younger generation should learn about their parents' hardship during that period. Mr. Noa described his desire for the younger generation to learn from what happened, to read the book, to remember it, and especially to concentrate on the forum and follow the process of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. He emphasized that the documents about and related to Democratic Kampuchea history and the tribunal are not only important for their study but also for their exam test as Mr. Vanthan and Ms. Ser had explained. Mr. Noa again told the panel to pay attention to the forum and pronounced the opening of the session.



Following his brief introductory statements, Ms. Ser thanked the speaker and outlined the forum's program which included distribution of the history textbook and pre-forum survey, survivor's story by Mr. Thoang Marin who used to live in detention in Koh Kantheay, model teaching of chapter nine from the textbook, a question and answer period, and the post-forum survey and evaluation.

2.2. Distributing DK history book and Pre-forum survey

At 8:20 a.m., the team passed out the textbooks and pre-forum surveys. Ms. Ser reiterated the importance of reading the entire textbook although the forum that day would only go over chapter nine. She told the students to take notes and analyze the contents when reading the textbook. Before distributing the book to the participants, Ms. Ser also 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.

After these remarks the team distributed the book *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)* to participants. Next, pre-forum surveys were distributed to the participants to fill in to measure their knowledge of the Khmer Rouge before they received a chapter lesson from the team members of the project. Meanwhile, Mr. Vanthan explained each question in the survey form to the group. At the same time, team members of the project helped the group of villagers who could not read and write complete their surveys.

Upon collecting all of the completed surveys, the forum transitioned to listen to the guest speaker tell his story about life during the Khmer Rouge and then went through to the presentation of chapter nine of the textbook. The participants observed the model teaching by Ms. Ser.

2.3. Guest Speaker

Ms. Ser invited Mr. Thoang Marin to speak about life under the Khmer Rouge regime to the participants. In the meantime, Ms. Ser took time to explain to students the importance of taking notes of what the guest speaker talked about. Ms. Ser told the group that they could ask questions after the speech and that she would ask one of the participants to summarize all important events from the guest speaker.

Mr. Thoang Marin, a villager in Ampil Tik village of Kampong Phnom commune, talked about life under the pressure of the Khmer Rouge from 1970-1979. Below is the brief summary of his remarks:

"I was sent to Koh Kantheay prison because I had a disease from the old regime and it was necessary to prevent contagion to others in the same cooperative. At the prison, I worked on planting and cultivating rice and took care of cows. I was assigned to stay with four other patients in a cottage about 30 meters from detention office. Most of the prisoners there were soldiers and government officials evacuated from Phnom Penh. The security guards put female and male prisoners in separate rooms. As for the torturing, the interrogation unit used methods such as clipping, electric shocking, and beating.

After some time, I saw that there had been a lot of more prisoners sent to the place, Koh Kantheay. The already interrogated prisoners were brought by the security unit to be killed by tying their hands behind their back and smashing them with an iron tube and stabbing them with a knife or dagger, and then they were put into a one meter deep by five meters wide and long pit.

By the end of 1978, the security unit killed all prisoners by disembowelment and threw them into the river so that the corpses would not float. I was released."

Students were encouraged to ask questions to the guest speaker as well as after each session in the forum.



The commune chief Mr. Nao Touch and KR survivor Mr. Thoang Marin distributing DK history textbook to the forum participants.

Grade 12 student Ms. Po Sophea expressing her opinion about the Khmer Rouge.

3. The Presentation of Chapter 9 “Office S-21 (Tuol Sleng Prison)” by Sayana Ser

Ms. Ser opened her presentation of chapter nine of *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)* by providing a brief overview of the contents of the textbook and telling the group the objectives of the chapter. After this introduction, Ms. Ser began the lesson plan for chapter nine. The lesson plan proceeded by Ms. Ser asking the group if they had ever heard of or knew about S-21 and Tuol Sleng, providing definitions and explanations of the terms, and continuing to ask the participants a few related questions. During this session, there were some students who volunteered to stand up and answer the questions by explaining their previous knowledge and understanding. The lesson then continued by having one student read aloud a paragraph from the chapter of the book and then having a second student summarize what the first student had read. This model of teaching the chapter employed a new methodology described in the *Teacher Guidebook*. While the chapter has a total of eight sections, Ms. Ser divided participants into groups of four with each group taking different reading responsibilities. Group 1 read sections 1 and 2: “The Buildings” and “The Prisoners”; group 2 read sections 3 and 4: “The Regulations” and “Prison Condition”; group 3 read “The Interrogation” and “Organizational Structure”; and group 4 read “Leaders” and “Executions”. The groups were given 15 minutes to read the chapter.

After reading, a representative from each group was asked to summarize what the group has read. Before allowing participants to read the chapter, Ms. Ser explained how to take notes and grasp the important information and events.

Ms. Ser asked the forum participants for a volunteer to come up in front of the panel to give the summary from their reading of the first two paragraphs. One female student raised her hand and provided a short summary, describing that the paragraph explained the former name and the size of Tuol Sleng prison and the type of prisoners in it. A representative of group 2 was also a female student who offered a brief summary of their sections. The representative of group 3 was a female and then a male student volunteered to add on more information to his fellow's summary. The volunteer representative of group four was also a female student who gave the summary of the last two paragraphs.



Additionally, Ms. Ser again explained to students how to take notes and summarize the lesson. She concluded the discussion of chapter nine by raising questions to the participants and provided further information on the prison's condition at the present time as it was turned into a genocide crime museum.

For the next step in the presentation of the chapter, Ms. Ser talked to participants to gauge their knowledge of taking notes, summarizing the lesson and listening to the teacher or speaker. All groups demonstrated understanding of the chapter through their summaries.

At the last presentation session, Ms. Ser opened the session of question and answer for participants.

4. Questions from participants

After the completion of the presentation of chapter nine, the team began a question and answer period lasting approximately 25 minutes. Participants were again encouraged to ask questions either about the content of what they had discussed that day or any other topic including the proceedings before the ECCC. A few of the participants raised their hands. Many of the questions were answered by Ms. Ser and Mr. Vanthan. These questions were among those asked:

1. Who was the chief of the prison before Duch?
2. Why did they (Khmer Rouge base people) hate the new evacuated people?
3. Why does the KRT try only Duch and not other Khmer Rouge? And who would be affected if there is revision (to try more suspects)?
4. Was Duch's judgment legal (fair)? If so, why and why not?
5. Why do foreigners participate in the tribunal? (Why does the tribunal have international judges and employees?)
6. How many more KR senior leaders are left to be tried at the ECCC?
7. Was there any foreigner behind the Khmer Rouge's persecution of their own people? Because it is unbelievable that Khmer could kill Khmer.

5. Distributing the Booklet "Genocide" and Post-Forum Survey and Evaluation Form

After the question and answer period, the team distributed the booklet titled "Genocide", 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 15 minutes, the surveys were collected and Ms. Ser thanked all participants for their attendance and the engaging discussion.

Observations and Impact

Textbook distribution: Participants were thrilled that DC-Cam's Genocide Education Project had come to their commune to conduct a forum and to distribute publications about the KR regime. Students and villagers asked for extra copies to give to friends and relatives who could not attend the forum, and head monks asked for copies to distribute at the pagoda, in order to teach monks about the history of the KR. The team also provided copies of the DK history textbook and other DC-Cam publications to the local schools, commune office and pagoda, ensuring public access to these important materials.

The team was encouraged to see that some students already had personal copies of the textbook. One student from Mondul Kiri mentioned during the forum that he had bought *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)* in Phnom Penh for \$5. He said, "I love this book. I regard this book as my teacher. When I read chapters from this book, I sometimes need more information from parents or elders who live next to my house in order to make sure and just for additional examples. I know that the last two-year national exam came up with many questions about the Khmer Rouge. I hope that this year is not different from last year. I kept all questions from last year and I know the answer to the questions already." Another student in Stung Treng had also purchased the book in Phnom Penh to improve his knowledge of DK history.

Family tracing: During and after the forum, the team always asked if anyone wanted to put an announcement on DC-Cam's magazine, *Searching for the Truth*, in order to trace their lost family members. In Kampong Cham, Mr. Ek, a provincial teacher who assisted with the training, mentioned that his uncle Iet Ort had disappeared during the KR regime. His mother still had a photo of his long-lost uncle. A team member, Ms. Sayana Ser, subsequently interviewed Mr. Ek's mother and obtained further information about his uncle. Iet Ort's story has since been published in *Searching for the Truth*.

Healing: Sometimes, sharing stories is the best medicine. The forums create a platform for survivors to voice their tales after decades of silence. Having their stories heard - and acknowledged - eases the suffering of survivors. This was true for Prum Saroeun, the head monk of Trapeang Kraham pagoda, who warmly welcomed DC-Cam and allowed the team to use the pagoda's hall for the forum. At the forum, Mr. Saroeun began to talk of his bitter personal experiences during the KR. He tearfully told the team about his father who the KR tortured to death, and about his mother and baby sibling who were killed in a bombing raid. The monk offered to be a guest speaker in future forums and expressed his gratitude for having been given a chance to tell participants about his experiences.

Some students cry when survivors tell of their painful experiences during the KR. They cry because they imagined the suffering and hardship their parents must have endured. For instance, a high school senior from Kandal Po Sophea emotionally explained, "I would like to know the history and background of my mother and the families under the KR regime, and whenever I asked her, she never talked, but was on the brink of tears. I understand that they might have confronted hardship and suffered horribly during that period so they cannot talk it out, but I would like to request that all parents openly talk about what happened in the era so that the children can know."

Educating ethnic highlanders: The northeastern provinces, including Steung Treng, Kratie, Mondul Kiri and Ratanak Kiri, were the first headquarters of the nascent Cambodian KR movement. Ethnic minorities were living in these regions endured KR atrocities, including forced relocation, forced labor, and execution. Yet, even thirty years later, ethnic highlanders' knowledge and understanding of KR history remain sparse. In these provinces, the forums reinforced local knowledge and encouraged survivors to share their stories with the younger generations. At one forum, Mr. Hout Chea, an ethnic Kawett, joined the revolution in 1963 and later worked as Ieng Sary's bodyguard. He told the team that he only ever knew about events that took place in Ratanak Kiri. He had no knowledge of how the KR came to power. The team's presentation introduced him for the first time to the history of the early KR communist movement.

Formal teaching of DK history in school: To date, DC-Cam together with the Ministry of Education has trained close to 2,000 history teachers nationwide. In each forum, these teachers lead student participation as part of their extra-curricular activities. From interviews conducted with students and teachers, the team learned that some teachers have begun teaching DK history in the classrooms. For example, Ms. Hem Romanea, a teacher from Mondul Kiri province shared that she has integrated DK history as part of her standard syllabus. For Ms. Romanea, the forum reinforces what her students learn in the classroom. She expressed her pride in her students, who have shown a keen interest in DK history both in and out of the classroom, asking their parents and grandparents to share their personal KR experiences. Ms. Romanea also discussed some of the challenges she faces in teaching DK history, which is a new subject for her. By reviewing DC-Cam's materials and participating in DC-Cam's teacher training, she has increased her confidence. Similarly, Mr. Keo Vibol, Deputy Director of Mondul Kiri High School, told the team that he has asked teachers at his school to integrate DK history into their core curriculum.

Challenges and Recommendations

Time management: The forums begin at 8 AM and are supposed to end by 11 AM. However, in several cases, the forums last until noon. The pre- and post-survey is the primary reason for this overrun, as the surveys take almost an hour to complete. The surveys take so long because illiterate villagers need assistance from team members and teachers. Additionally, the surveys are distracting to participants. In some cases, participants are unable to finish the post-survey, as it cuts into their lunchtime. To address these difficulties, the team recommends one team member read the survey aloud to all participants, so that participants can complete the survey together in a more efficient manner.

Organization of the forum: Participants in the forum include teachers, students and villagers. Usually, students outnumber villagers. Because presenters focus on the students, some villagers feel marginalized. The team must address all participants and allow an equal chance for participation in its various activities. In addition, the team has to look closely into the environment of the forum. Additionally, the presentation can be too long and complex causing some participants to become distracted. The team should encourage more interaction between participants, and solicit help from the villagers in answering student questions related to life during the KR. In addition, the forum length (three hours

plus) may be too long. For the subsequent forums, the team may want to consider including a break so that participants can chat and have a snack.

Administrative bureaucracy: The forum is conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior. In a few cases, the local authority interrupted, asking to see the official permission letter. This happened in Mondul Kiri province, when two policemen came in the middle of the forum to see the permission letter, although the team had already presented the letter to the commune chief. Because DK history is a politically and emotionally sensitive topic, the local authorities in some cases may be hesitant and may even feel uncomfortable with non-personal communication. For instance, in Kandal, the authorities required personal delivery of the permission letter. In this case, the team needs to have the commune chief present at the forum from beginning to end, in order to avoid interruptions.

Educational resources in the communities: Cambodian communities lack educational resources to encourage the self-awareness, critical thinking and up-to-date information necessary for daily life. All primary, lower secondary and high schools confront shortages in textbooks, and other educational materials. Lower secondary schools and high schools have only between 50 and 100 copies of DK history textbooks each. In all public education forums conducted to date, school directors and commune chiefs universally recommended the greater distribution of DK history textbook to their schools and communes for the sake of educating both the villagers and their children about the atrocities that occurred during the DK regime. DC-Cam plans to distribute more copies of the DK history textbook to the schools, but the center does not have enough copies to serve the communities. For the subsequent forums, DC-Cam will bring extra copies to ensure that each commune receives at least ten to twenty copies for the community.