



CamboCorps-Forum

Report

15th - 19th September 2023



Documentation Center of Cambodia

2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	1
PROJECT OVERVIEW.....	8
INTRODUCTION.....	12
CAMBOCORPS-ORIENTATION.....	13
KAMPOT.....	14
SEPTEMBER 16 TH	15
• Oem Savuth	15
• Nhean Sarin	16
SEPTEMBER 17 TH	17
• Meas Sannara	17
• Nguon Aun	18
SEPTEMBER 18 TH	19
• Mao Rin	19
PAILIN.....	20
SEPTEMBER 16 TH	21
SEPTEMBER 17 TH	21
• Leang Saren	22
• Chum Chuon	22
SEPTEMBER 18 TH	24
• Chan Ret	24
• Heng Chengly	24
• Bi Soen	25
PROCEDURE TO SELECT THE CAMBOCORPS TO JOIN THE UPCOMING FORUM.....	26
SEPTEMBER 19 TH	26
RATANAKIRI.....	27

SEPTEMBER 16 TH	28
SEPTEMBER 17 TH	29
• Say Rory	29
• Yok Kram	30
• Chavin Soum	30
SEPTEMBER 18 TH	32
• Chourng Khin	33
• Seoun Nhoun	34
SEPTEMBER 19 TH	34
MONDULKIRI	36
SEPTEMBER 16 TH	37
KOH THMA DOCUMENTATION CENTER.....	37
PHNOM DOH KROMOM.....	38
SEPTEMBER 17 TH	39
PHNOM KRAOL.....	39
• Va Nim	40
SEPTEMBER 18 TH	41
• Mors Masy	42
• Yeav Yul	43
• Nov Ny	43
REPORTING SESSION.....	44
TESTIMONIAL.....	44
SEPTEMBER 19 TH	45
CONCLUSION.....	45
PURSAT-BANTEAY MEANCHEY	46
SEPTEMBER 16 TH	47
TUOL PO CHREY.....	47
• Ouk Hach	47
• Ken Pach	48

SEPTEMBER 17 TH	48
• Som Pharath	49
SEPTEMBER 18 TH	49
• Sok Phloeun	49
• Reun Nat	51
STUNG TRENG	52
SEPTEMBER 16 TH	53
SEPTEMBER 17 TH	54
• Kong Chanthy	54
• Moul Ham	55
• Chea Chanthay	56
• Meas Peou	56
• Sung Yung	56
SEPTEMBER 18 TH	57
LEADERSHIP SESSION	57
SEPTEMBER 19 TH	59
PHNOM PENH EVENING, SEPTEMBER 19th	60
CONCLUSION	62

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On September 21, 2023, the United States Government (USG) recognized the 30th anniversary of U.S. AmeriCorps, the U.S. federal agency for national service and volunteerism. The agency, created by President Clinton in 1993, provides career pathways for Americans across the United States all while they serve their communities – addressing climate change, mentoring students, preserving native languages, supporting veterans as they transition from military to civilian life, and helping justice-involved adults re-enter society, to name a few examples.

Inspired by the vision, ideas, and impact of the USG's AmeriCorps, the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) created CamboCorps, which aspires to generate the same spirit of national service and volunteerism for the youth of Cambodia. In 2021, DC-Cam established CamboCorps to connect aspiring young Cambodians with survivors of the Khmer Rouge for purposes of learning from survivors, supporting them in access to health care and services, and building an intergenerational dialogue that contributes to the preservation of Cambodia's history.

This is the first gathering of our young CamboCorps volunteers who have been supporting our project *Advancing the Rights and Improving the Conditions of the Health of the Khmer Rouge Survivors*. For this forum, DC-Cam planned to have at least 200 students across the country join this forum where they would travel to 6 different locations to learn leadership skills and the history of the Khmer Rouge period as experienced by survivors. DC-Cam divided up the volunteers into two cohorts. The first cohort of volunteers traveled across Kampot, Pailin, and Pursat-Buntheay Meanchey for their forum. The second cohort of volunteers traveled across Stung Treng, Ratanakiri and Mondulakiri.

Based on their cohort, volunteers visited rural communities in these provinces that they never visited before to listen to the stories of survivors. It was an inspirational experience that allowed our volunteers to observe and acknowledge the geography, culture, diversity, and the history of Cambodia. For the group that traveled to Kampot, CamboCorps visited five different places such as Bak Nim village, Sre Ambel (Salt Field), Mlech Dam, Kampong Kraeng, and a durian farm at Kaun Sat Village, Teuk Chhou District in Kampot province. Each group of volunteers visited villages in other provinces, based on their assigned cohort.

For Kampot, Pailin, and Pursat-Buntheay Meanchey, our CamboCorps traveled by trains and buses whereas for volunteers in Stung Treng, Ratanakiri and Mondulakiri, they traveled by buses. For those travelling by train, we wanted them to reflect on the Khmer Rouge's forced transfer of people in 1977. Those travelling by bus to northeastern parts of Cambodia would experience how life is like for ethnic minorities and the hill tribe groups—learning about the experience of survivors in these remote areas. Regardless of mode of transportation, all CamboCorps volunteers received important information on the history of genocide and atrocity crimes

committed by the Khmer Rouge against ethnic minority groups, especially the Cham and the Vietnamese.

In future sessions, DC-Cam looks forward to expanding and refining the training, focusing on different attributes and dimensions of leadership, civic service, and more specialized training in skills that will empower the leaders of the future.

The total number of participants for this five-day forum was 149:

Kampot	Mondulkiri	Pailin	Pursat & BMC	Rattanakiri	Stung Treng	Total
17 (F)	11	18	14	15	16	91
9 (M)	13	8	9	11	8	58
26	24	26	23	26	24	149

September 15th

The volunteers' first day in Phnom Penh was focused on an initial orientation on leadership. Dr. Quach Mengly, MD, MPH, Founder of the Mengly Foundation, provided the volunteers with an introduction to the concepts of good leadership, which was supplemented by additional orientation and introductory information by DC-Cam staff.

September 16th-19th

The volunteers' mission for the dominant part of the forum was to search for survivors who were willing to share stories with them about the working sites, security centers, killing sites, and the impact of the period on their health, welfare, or other conditions.

Every team of volunteers was required to meet at least **5 survivors** at their assigned locations. Between September 16 and 19, volunteers met with survivors, conducted interviews, and discussed, organized, and ultimately processed their work for further review by DC-Cam staff. On the final day of the trip, everyone submitted their findings and recommendations about the trip. They were also asked to describe how the trip would assist future leaders. The volunteers were notified that DC-Cam would be selecting 10 outstanding CamboCorps volunteers to attend a select forum called *Cultural Diplomacy Forum for CamboCorps*. This forum is tentatively scheduled to be held at the end of this year or early next year. Volunteers also had a chance to meet DC-Cam's Director, Youk Chhang, who shared some thoughts on the vision, mission, and overall work of DC-Cam. He also discussed two important topics—Genocide awareness and the future of each volunteer. At the end of his speech, the Director highlighted the importance of taking on a leadership role in their communities, and he encouraged them to focus on their soft skills of speaking, writing, teamwork, and building partnerships.

Cross Talk at Khmer Times Office

Four CamboCorps volunteers were invited by the Khmer Times to give their insights into volunteer work and their experience on the five-day genocide and human rights study tour. The volunteers were representatives of Bunong, Cham, and Stieng minorities and they came from underprivileged family backgrounds. The following passages reflect a summarized and partly edited version of this article as it appeared in the Khmer Times.¹



The young volunteers who participated in the live Cross-Talk session (L to R) Sovann Chantrea, Chi Ien, Sa Rafikin and Chum Ra KT/Yarn Sovelt.

CamboCorps was initiated by the Documentation Centre of Cambodia (DC-Cam) for young Cambodian students who wanted to support the Khmer Rouge survivors. Using AmeriCorps as inspiration, CamboCorps allows youth to gain experience in public health and community service projects dedicated to helping survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime.

DC-Cam has had more than 1,478 CamboCorps members across the country since then, and it is recruiting another 500 members this year. Their milestone work is focused on compiling a database on 32,000 survivors regarding their stories and health conditions.

The number of CamboCorps members is on the rise, with many wanting to join the voluntary work to advance the rights and improve the health conditions of Khmer Rouge survivors. Khmer Times interviewed four CamboCorps volunteers on their experiences.

¹ Taing Rinith, "Youths Share Insight, Benefits of Working with CamboCorps," Khmer Times, Sept. 21, 2023, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501363896/youths-share-insight-benefits-of-working-with-cambocorps/>

Chum Ra, a 24 year old student majoring in Khmer Literature from Kampong Cham and one of the four CamboCorps volunteers, to appear on a Cross-Talk episode, said while working on collecting data and information from Khmer Rouge survivors at Koh Thma Documentation Centre, a provincial branch of DC-Cam, he managed to understand the fragile mental wellbeing of the survivors.

“Mentally, they are the weakest group and are always in need of emotional support,” he said. Ra added that the elderly survivors whom he interviewed easily broke into tears or suddenly could not control their emotions when they recalled their painful experience under the Khmer Rouge (1975–1979).

“Many of them told me that they are delighted to be interviewed by us because their children and grandchildren have paid little to no attention to such stories. Most of the time, the younger generation even refused to believe what they said.”

Meanwhile, two of the CamboCorps who were born in the minor ethnic communities, said on Cross Talk that they were able to work on documenting the Khmer Rouge history from the first-hand accounts.

Sa Rafikin, a 21 year old electronic engineering student, was born into a Cham Muslim community in Pursat. When she joined DC-Cam as a CamboCorp volunteer, she got the opportunity to learn about the pain and suffering experienced by the elderly in her community under the ruthless rule of the Khmer Rouge because of their religious practices.

“Based on our beliefs, we cannot consume pork or dog meat. But during the Pol Pot regime, Cham people were forced to eat those meats and do other stuff that was against their religion,” she said. “They were also forbidden from doing the daily prayer. If they were caught doing it, they would be hit from behind.”

Meanwhile, 24 year old Chi Ien from the Stieng ethnic community in Mondulkiri, who will start teaching at a primary school in the near future, noted that, thanks to her volunteer work at DC-Cam, she now has more appreciation for her life after listening to the Khmer Rouge survivors in her community talk about their time during the Khmer Rouge regime.

“Although people in Stieng Community had lived in poverty before the Khmer Rouge took over the country, they had been living in peace and having enough to eat,” she said. “Things became much worse when the Khmer Rouge came into power because, to this radical group, ethnic minorities do not exist.”

“Our people were forced to work like slaves and give up their tradition and identity. Being forcefully starved, they had to steal food to stay alive while facing the risk of torture or execution if they were caught.”

Such stories were not unusual among the members of the community who lived through the Khmer Rouge, as the leaders of the ultra-Maoist movement denied the existence of the ethnic minorities, who made up more than 15% of the Cambodian population then.

To the CamboCorp volunteers, working with the Khmer Rouge survivors allows them to gain important human skills, historical knowledge, and other soft skills, such as leadership and teamwork, which they need for their future careers. Ra, who wants to be a writer, said he now has so many ideas for his future books, while Len said she will share the stories with her students.

Nevertheless, before gaining all these benefits, there are some challenges that the volunteers have to face while doing the work, which may take them all over the country.

Sovann Chantrea, a 23-year-old accounting student from Battambang and another volunteer to appear on Cross Talk yesterday, said she was bitten by a poisonous snake during a mission. “It was an accident, and to me, accidents can take place anywhere and anytime, depending on our luck,” she said. “However, I am fine now. And I think I am much a better person and leader after joining the programme.”

DC-Cam has collected data by way of a survey that was distributed to volunteers who visited survivors in their local community.

A Fruitful Result

Thanks to the volunteers' efforts, DC-Cam has been able to significantly expand its efforts in this area, particularly as it relates to developing a better understanding of the health and welfare conditions of survivors and establishing its volunteer youth leadership corps dedicated to this endeavour. As of August 2022, DC-Cam has collected information from over 31,000 Khmer Rouge survivors and recently published a paper on the finding.

According to the findings in Health and Welfare of the Survivors of the Khmer Rouge, most Khmer Rouge survivors who took part in its survey cited financial circumstances as the primary reason for not seeking treatment for mental or physical health conditions, disabilities, or ailments.

It has also been found that among the physical or mental health conditions reported by survivors, hypertension, and gastrointestinal disorders, followed by malaria, mental illness,

and heart disease, were, in this order, the most important health concerns and debilitating conditions for survivors.

Meanwhile, 87% of survivors who were surveyed by DC-Cam reported having troubling memories of the Khmer Rouge period that resonated with them to date and 25% of respondents reported still suffering from nightmares of the period, even though they occurred over 40 years ago.

DC-Cam found that medical supply, as opposed to visits to a public or private healthcare provider or hospital, is the primary method used for treatment of lingering or unexpected medical care needs.

The survivors' reliance on self-remedy to meet healthcare needs may indicate that, rather than financial resources alone, one's access to care may also be greatly influenced by other overlapping geographic or socio-organizational conditions of accessibility, the report says.

The paper makes recommendations to improve the Khmer Rouge survivors' wellbeing, including initiating policies and programmes aimed at addressing or offsetting the cost of medical care for survivors and endorsing the support networks of survivors, which will also improve survivors' access to care for survivors, particularly in remote and/or marginalized populations.

“There is a need for greater attention to information, services and resources that support healthy behaviours and routines among survivors,” it added. “Future direct action or research programmes targeting survivor communities can target the Tonle Sap Lake and plain regions of Cambodia, although other areas of Cambodia, such as the Anlong Veng region, present possibilities for further research.”

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Additional References

Some relevant articles, photos and videos on DC-Cam's CamboCorps.

<https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501360712/dc-cams-five-day-event-for-volunteers-begins-today/>

<https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501363896/youths-share-insight-benefits-of-working-with-cambocorps/>

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<https://youtu.be/0TSki0aKFME>

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<https://youtu.be/rE1C8-iOCRQ>

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<https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501373290/dc-cam-to-build-stupa-to-house-abandoned-urns/>

<https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501370106/easing-the-traumatising-memories-of-genocide-survival/>

<https://youtu.be/9a1jhTufQIM>

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<https://youtu.be/xvUNrN1joEk>

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<https://youtu.be/PLBsTwFZwLo>

Project Overview

The Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) organized the CamboCorps-Forum which officially started from September 15-19, 2023. CamboCorps was established in 2021 as a group of volunteers who aim to support and prioritize the Khmer Rouge Survivors through community service. CamboCorps was inspired by AmeriCorps which supports the community through volunteerism since 1993. “Till my last day on Earth I will be grateful that I had a chance to start AmeriCorps,” said President Bill Clinton.²

The first CamboCorps-Forum divided into six cohorts to visit at various locations such as (1) Kampot, (2) Pailin, (3) Mondulakiri, (4) Ratanakiri, (5) Stung Treng, and (6) Pursat-Banteay Meanchey provinces. They were required to visit rural communities and historical sites outside of their hometown and to listen to the stories that they never heard before. It was an inspiration that allowed our volunteers to observe and acknowledge the geography, culture, diversity, and the history of Cambodia. For the cohort that traveled to Kampot, CamboCorps visited five different places such as Bak Nim village, Srae Ambel (Salt Field), Mlech Dam, Kampong Kraeng, and a durian farm at Kaun Sat Village, Teuk Chhou District in Kampot province. For Pailin, CamboCorps arrived at Ou Tapang, Chamkar Kaphe, Phnom Yat, Phnom Khiev, and Prum Market. Ratanakiri, Ochum, and O-Kanseng. Mondulakiri, Koh Thma, Phnom Doh Kromom, Phnom Kraol, Bou Sra Waterfall, Dak Dam, Cambodia-Vietnam Border. Pursat and Banteay Meanchey, Tuol Por Chrey, Por Keo Preah Neth Preah pagoda, Trapaing Thma Dam, Banteay Chmar temple. Lastly, Stung Treng visited O-Svay and Thalaborivath.

“When did you realize that there was a genocide happening?”³

For CamboCorps cohorts who visited Kampot, Pailin and Pursat-Banteay Meanchey, DC-Cam gave the CamboCorps volunteers an opportunity to travel by train and reflect upon the history of forced transfer in Cambodia. The train ride was complemented by multiple breaks and announcements that provided volunteers with an opportunity to learn and reflect on the history of the forced transfer of Cambodians.

² Andrew Rafferty. (2014). Bill Clinton joins Obama to celebrate AmeriCorps. NBC news. Retrieved from <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/bill-clinton-joins-obama-celebrate-ameri-corps-n202176>, [27 September 2023]

³ Heri Fried. Holocaust. 2019, p.95.



CamboCorps arrived Takeo station

According to a book called "The Forced Transfer-The Second Evacuation of People" which was published in 2014 by the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts and the Documentation Center of Cambodia. During the Khmer Rouge Regime from 1975-1979, thousands of people were forced to transfer and evacuated from Phnom Penh City to many other places in Cambodia through railway or by train. Thousands were forced to walk along the railway, they also

separated from their family during their transit of each station. Thousands of people died of exhaustion and were killed during the forced transfer.⁴

People were evacuated en masse during the 2nd phase of the movement, which was around September 1975 to 1977. Most people from the Central and Southwest Zones were forced to transfer to Siem Reap, Preah Vihear and the Northwest Zone including Battambang, Pursat and Banteay Meanchey provinces. It was estimated that between 400,000 and 500,000 people were sent to the Northwest Zone⁵ which was with cruel conditions for life.

The Khmer Rouge Leaders who ordered this crime never escaped justice even 40 years later. Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan received life imprisonment by the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia in case 002/01 that included forced evacuation of the population during phase 1 and 2.⁶

As a memorial for the victims, CamboCorps departed from Phnom Penh City on September 16th, 2023, on the same railways that were used during the genocide⁷ and crime against humanity⁸ by the Khmer Rouge regime. DC-Cam wanted the volunteers of CamboCorps to not only understand the circumstances surrounding the forced transfer, but also have an opportunity to reflect on these circumstances while traveling the exact route and tracks taken by victims of the Khmer Rouge regime. Before the capture of Phnom Penh city in 1975, the Khmer Rouge planned to evacuate thousands of people through these railways. This crime was

⁴ The Forced Transfer-The Second Evacuation of People, the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts and Documentation Center of Cambodia. Published in 2014, p.10.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ For further detail Please read ECCC's Docs F36, Appeal Judgement in Case 002/01 and E465, Case 02/01 Judgement.

⁷ Article 2. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

⁸ Article 7. Crimes Against Humanity. Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

reminiscent of the Nazi-German forced transfer of Jews from Nazi-Germany occupied parts of Europe to concentration camps during World War II.⁹

The purpose of going to Ratanakiri and Mondulkiri was to visit villages of the minority ethnic groups including Phnong, Stieng, Kreung, and Tampuon. Historical texts and public education efforts about the Khmer Rouge tend to overlook the fact that it was not just Cambodians that were treated badly by the Khmer Rouge regime, it was also ethnic groups in Cambodia, most of whom occupy the northeast region. Ratanakiri was chosen as one of the provinces to visit based on the ethnic groups and minorities which suffered under the Khmer Rouge regime. Ethnic and minority groups in every country are often neglected by the dominant groups. Most of them have diminished access to and/or resources for education and their rights have a greater probability of being overlooked, ignored, or intentionally restricted. Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingya people is one contemporary example of a minority people not properly taken care of, and Myanmar's treatment of its minorities and ethnic groups has aggravated, if not precipitated, multiple internal violent conflicts and crises in the past. Non-governmental organizations have been playing a big role in supporting the government in shaping education and health awareness.

After the Khmer Rouge regime, Cambodia still had a long road toward recovering and most of the people were still living on the assistance of the international community and local organizations. Everyone's knowledge and education were still limited, especially the ethnic and minority groups in their home villages who were remote and in some cases not reachable by local communication networks and resource. As a result of non-government organizations (NGOs) involvement in Cambodia, a lot of ethnic groups acquired important knowledge regarding health checkup, which was very useful and valuable, especially during the surge in HIV, malaria, chickenpox cases, and others. Moreover, they were prioritized as well during the trial of the Khmer Rouge leaders as the trial focused on the genocide of ethnic groups and minority groups.

During the journey of Her Majesty, the Queen Mother Norodom Monineath Sihanouk traveled through these remote regions on the way to back to Cambodia in 1973 from Peking to Siem Reap. According to her original journal, on March 7, 1973, King Norodom Sihanouk and Queen Monineath Sihanouk arrived at O'Ta Ngau River, Stung Treng, the border between Cambodia and Laos.¹⁰ This area is a historical place, and it is one of the destinations that CamboCorps visited during the forum.

This forum allowed the youths from across the country to have a chance to contribute and participate in social work, to use that experience for sustainable development, and preserve the culture in their own community, especially those who came from the minority's community.

⁹ Ibid. Heri Fried.

¹⁰ The Queen Mother Norodom Monineath Sihanouk. (2021). "Witness to history, The Journal of Cambodia's Queen Mother." Documentation Center of Cambodia.

It is also significant for our volunteers to empower their working capacity in this journey through enhancing individual and collective well-being in our promising society. DC-Cam endeavored to have all the participants of CamboCorps forum develop leadership skills starting from the concept of leading themselves, their families, their communities, their society, and their country. As once said by the U.S. President, Abraham Lincoln, “No man is good enough to govern another man without that other man’s consent.”¹¹

¹¹ Abraham Lincoln. <https://www.forbes.com/quotes/59/> [27 September 2023]

Introduction

Khmer Rouge survivors' stories are the primary resources for researching and documenting what happened during the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979. The process of documenting and researching the needs of the survivors inevitably overlaps with what survivors' have witnessed or experienced during the regime because so much of their physical health is based on their mental health. It is also notable that many survivors will pass away in the next five to ten years as many reaches 70 years old or older. Because the life expectancy of Cambodians in general is approximately 70 years of age, unless we continue to dedicate resources and attention to collection the oral history of this generation of survivors, we risk losing pieces of this history forever.¹²

In September 2023, DC-Cam published a report on the Health and Welfare of the Survivors of the Khmer Rouge that studied around 32,000 survivors. Within the population described by the report, more than 70 percent of the survivors shared 10 common diseases.¹³ Not all the Khmer Rouge survivors reported receiving basic health checks and adequate treatment. The struggle and challenges of their health remains the priority of future research and documentation. Through this program, DC-Cam hopes that the CamboCorps forum will also bring a positive outcome toward the health conditions of the Khmer Rouge survivors in the rural areas visited.

CamboCorps was established by the Documentation Center of Cambodia to give an opportunity for local students in various provinces to learn about their own history and to participate in community work inside and outside their hometown. There are two goals in this project, first, improve the health condition of the Khmer Rouge survivors with the assistance of CamboCorps. Second, build the leadership skill for our young volunteers (CamboCorps) with a renewed sense of purpose and leadership development under three principles of CamboCorps: 1. Commitment & Leadership, 2. Compassion & Respect, and 3. Collaboration & Teamwork.

In short, the CamboCorps forum is not only advancing the rights and improving the health conditions of the Khmer Rouge survivors, it is providing professional development to a new generation of youth dedicated to public service. The CamboCorps forum is about building leadership skills and inspiration for the next generation of youth by cultivating relationships with survivors, understanding of the importance of the environment, and an appreciation for public service that opens up opportunities for leadership that cannot be found in any other part of the economy or society. CamboCorps and DC-Cam are truly appreciative of the support and sponsorship of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Cambodia to make these opportunities reality.

¹² Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), Report: Health and Welfare of the Survivors of the Khmer Rouge, August 2021-August 2022, p.3 at <https://www.dccam.org/wp-content/uploads/Report-18-September-2023.pdf>, [25 September 2023]

¹³ Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), Report: Health and Welfare of the Survivors of the Khmer Rouge, August 2021-August 2022, p.22 at <https://www.dccam.org/wp-content/uploads/Report-18-September-2023.pdf>, [25 September 2023].

CamboCorps Orientation

On September 15, 2023, 149 CamboCorps traveled from across the country to participate in the CamboCorps forum at the American Intercon School, Mao Tse Tong Campus under the present of Ms. SO Farina, Deputy Director of the DC-Cam, Dr. Quach J. Mengly, founder of the Mengly J. Quach Education and Ms. Vong Socheata, the Project Management Specialist of USAID. The project coordinator of the DC-Cam, Mr. Phrum Phalla opened the remark over the details of the CamboCorps and overview of this project.



So Farina (Left), Quach J. Mengly (Middle), Vong Socheata (Right) and CamboCorps

On that occasion, Dr. Quach J. Mengly gave an encouraging speech for our volunteers. He believes that volunteerism is a path toward great leadership in the future. With his personal experience as an example, he encouraged all the volunteers to have ambition, vision, and confidence. Mengly continued that volunteering and internship are the opportunities that allow us to grow, to experience and to understand common sense and social norms. It allows us to be effective and skillful for our future career, and to have generosity toward people surrounding us, particularly for the Khmer Rouge survivors during our forum.

To become an effective leader, Dr. Mengly also mentioned the 3 Qs: the quality of education, the qualifications to be reliable and practical, and quantity of experience. To be elected by others, a capable leader must have 5 steps: Plan, Implement, Follow up, Update and Reinforcement. He emphasized the characteristics of leadership, which required a strong ethic of compassion, teamwork, and gratefulness to those who lend a helping hand. This ethic is a critical component to be successful. In return, we should also take care of and improve the workplace environment.

Finally, he added that leadership skills are supposed to be started from leading an individual, then a family, a community, a society, and a country. To be responsible and accountable with moral and solicit support. On that evening, CamboCorps had a chance to get to know each other within an atmosphere of friendliness.



KAMPOT



Outcomes:

5 Locations: Bak Nim, Mlech Dam, Srae Ambel, Kaun Sat Village, and Kampong Kraeng.

5 Survivors:

- Oem Savuth
- Nhean Sarin
- Meas Sannara
- Nguon Aun
- Mao Rin

Report from 16th to 19th September

SEPTEMBER 16th

CamboCorps completed their mission on day 1 and continued their journey by bus from Takeo railway station to meet survivors who shared with them about the working sites, security centers of the Khmer Rouge period, and the killing sites at Bak Nim village and Mlech Dam.



CamboCorps on the way to meet a Khmer Rouge Survivor

-Oem Savuth of Bak Nim Village, Chum Kiri District, Kampot

Oem Savuth, 62 years old, who lives in Bak Nim village, Chum Kiri District, Kampot, is a Khmer Rouge survivor. CamboCorps had the opportunity to meet and listen to Savuth's story. In 1975, Savuth lived in Phnom Penh when the Khmer Rouge occupied the city. He and his family were forced to transfer and evacuated from his house in Stueng Mean Chey District. The Khmer Rouge lied to him and the people who lived in the city about the possibility of bombing by the United States. Savuth continued his journey and worked in the rice field in Kandal provinces. In 1976, his personal belongings were removed, he was moved into a child unit for manual tasks, then he moved to Youth Child to work at a dam construction site or earthwork. The Khmer Rouge regime didn't provide enough food for Savuth. During the rainy season, they only provided him with liquid porridge, and 2-3 tablespoons of rice per day for the dry season.

Savuth's father was killed in 1976 after he was separated from him. Those who said the word "Fragrant" were accused of being related to Imperialism that was supposed to be reeducated (killed). Discussion between families was banned, and no education and conversation was permitted between each other. There was a belief that the Angkar had the eyes of a pineapple, which meant that Angkar could see all things. Ultimately, people could not trust each other. "It was hard to live," Savuth said. For the health conditions of Savuth, he appreciated DC-Cam, who provided him with the basic health checks and public information for him.



Savuth shared his story with CamboCorps at his farm, Bak Nim Village, Chum Kiri District, Kampot

- ***Nhean Sarin of Mlech Dam, Chum Kiri District, Kampot***

On the same day, CamboCorps met another Khmer Rouge survivor, Nhean Sarin. Nhean Sarin is 62 years old and she lives next to Mlech Dam at Chum Kiri District, Kampot. She guided the CamboCorps volunteers to the workplace where she used to do earthwork during the Khmer Rouge regime. Sarin was forced to work at the dam construction site until late at night. Sarin had seen the "new people" (i.e., people who the Khmer Rouge identified as less trustworthy for various reasons, one of which was they were new to the regime). New people were also called "17th April people." Sarin said that the new people were tortured and killed by the Khmer Rouge, remarking, "it was a massacre." They were the target of the Khmer Rouge.

She said that all clothes under the regime had to be dyed with a black color. Those who could not work were not allowed to have a meal. Some people were also forced to carry more earth moving buckets if they could carry more. Every week there was a collective meeting in which everyone had to complain about each other without facts or evidence. Angkar preferred the uneducated rather than the educated.



Nhean Sarin guided CamboCorps about her exact workplace during the Khmer Rouge Regime at Mlech Dam, Chum Kiri District, Kampot

At the end of day, Nhean Sarin was glad that the DC-Cam provided the health checkup for free to her, so she could be able to get the right prescription. CamboCorps volunteers were listened to what Nhean Sarin had to say about what happened during the Khmer Rouge regime, and she appreciated their active listening and genuine interest in her story. Mlech dam was one of the biggest construction sites during the Khmer Rouge regime. Thousands of victims died of exhaustion and some people were killed by the Angkar. This dam has remained until today as a historical site, also benefiting people who are living around the dam with tourism, agriculture, and clean water.

SEPTEMBER 17th

- *Meas Sannara of Srae Ambel, Kampot*

In front of 25 CamboCorps volunteers, Meas Sannara, a Khmer Rouge survivor shared his personal story about his family and what happened during the Khmer Rouge regime at Srae Ambel.

Sannara's father was killed three months after Khmer Rouge forces occupied Srae Ambel, in Kampot province. His father was a former official at the Electricity Authority during the Khmer Republic. When he returned to Srae Ambel, Angkar killed him when they knew about his background. His siblings were alive from the regime due to their status as base people. Even when Sannara's father knew about the intention of Angkar, he could not escape, he used his own life to save his entire family which survived after the regime. At dusk, Sannara and his mother went to find his father with a torch in his hand. At night he found the body of his father that was killed by the Angkar with another two people including Chan Tevy, an actress during the 1970s. Their dead bodies were used to fertilize the land for the community.



Meas Sannara and CamboCorps at a salt field in Kampot

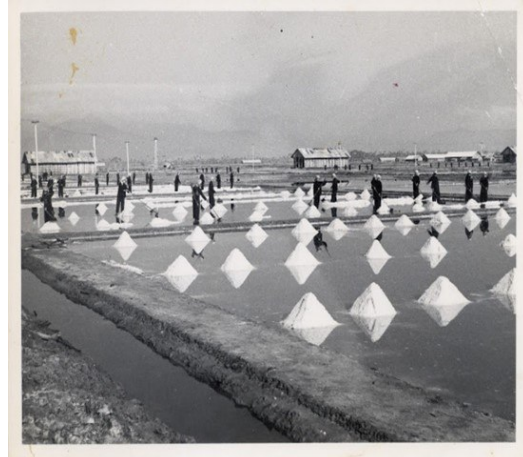
During the Khmer Rouge period, Sannara lived in Kaun Sat village. Sannara never tasted or saw salt before. He characterized the Khmer Rouge cadres at Kaun Sat village as the cruelest in Kampot province. Cadres would sometimes sexually harass and assault people from behind when the worker carried the earth baskets too slowly. Due to hot watery porridge, there was not enough time for him to eat. His sibling had to do earthwork for irrigation construction at

night. The storage facility behind him remained from the Khmer Rouge regime. At the time, it could store over 2,000 tons of salt.

Sannara remains working on the salt field under the sun. CamboCorps volunteers asked him about his health. He never checked his health before. Sannara mentioned his habit of drinking alcohol that could have a negative impact on his health. After leaving Sannara's salt field, CamboCorps volunteers walked ahead and visited the salt storage facility that remained from the Khmer Rouge period at Srae Ambel, Kampot.



CamboCorps gathered next to an old salt storage



Salt fields at Srae Ambel, Kampot (1975-1978)

- Nguon Aun At a Durian Farm, Kaun Sat Village, Teuk Chhou District, Kampot



Nguon Aun tried to remember what happened during the Khmer Rouge Regime

Nguon Aun is 73 years old and she lives in Kaun Sat Village, Teuk Chhou District, Kampot province. Nguon Aun shared her story with CamboCorps volunteers. She tried to remember what happened during the Khmer Rouge regime. Due to her old age, Aun could not remember all her experiences; however, her story is like other Khmer Rouge survivors that CamboCorps volunteers had met before. Even though her physical health remains stable, she has

difficulty hearing. Aun could not obtain even a basic health checkup let alone proper treatment for her conditions due to her lack of general knowledge on healthcare. Nguon Aun is one of

many other Khmer Rouge survivors who worked in the rice fields and at various dam construction sites during the Khmer Rouge regime. She described the death of people that were killed by the Khmer Rouge in a terrible way.

SEPTEMBER 18th

- ***Mao Rin of Kampong Kraeng Primary School***

Mao Rin lives next to the Kampong Kraeng Primary School, and he is a 70-year-old farmer. He told the CamboCorps volunteers about his story during the Khmer Rouge regime. In 1974, Rin was evacuated from Kampot to Koh Sla and he stayed there until 1979. He and his family were accused on multiple occasions of being educated people. His father was a carpenter, and Rin himself was able to mix the fertilizer for rice fields, so he was also accused by base people (old people who lived there before 17th April 1975) that he was also an educated person. Fortunately, with his hard work and his fictitious background that he advertised to the community, he was allowed to live.



Mao Rin and CamboCorps at Kampong Kraeng Primary School

Rin always followed and obeyed the rules of the Khmer Rouge to survive. It was noteworthy that rather than being a “17th April people”, Rin was actually identified as “a candidate”, which was a different label from base or new people. During the Khmer Rouge, Rin was sent to Moha Prum hospital for treatment, he received only pseudo-medicine in the form of “rabbit droppings” (i.e., the excrement of rabbits) . When his fever had still not recovered, a friend gave him medicine from China. For meals, Angkar only provided watery potato porridge, which is not sufficient nutrition. Unsurprisingly, his legs did not recover until the collapse of Khmer Rouge.

In 1976, Rin and his sibling married on the same day under the eyes of Angkar. After returning from Koh Sla in 1979, Mao Rin started his career as a lecturer at Kampong Kraeng Primary School until his retirement. According to Rin, most of the males who were called new people (or 17th April people) were killed at Koh Sla.



PAILIN



Outcomes:

5 Locations: Ou Tapang, Chamkar Kaphe, Phnom Yat, Phmom Khiev, Prum Market

5 Survivors:

- Leang Saren
- Chum Chuon
- Chan Ret
- Heng Chengly
- Bi Soen

Report from 16th to 19th September

SEPTEMBER 16th

At 7:30 a.m., the group left the train station for Battambang province. While traveling from Phnom Penh to Pailin province, Sorachna Koeut, a forum team leader, welcomed the participants and explained the mission. She said we had 26 CamboCorps volunteers. She then gave a brief update on what volunteer work had been completed so far. The CamboCorps volunteers have been supporting society and supporting atrocity crimes prevention for the future. Their work is also significant in the sense that it teaches volunteers about the value of public service, giving volunteers an opportunity to build friendships, improve teamwork skills and practice leadership in projects that give back to their community.

Sorachna Koeut also described the experience of forced transfer during the Khmer Rouge regime. She said that when the Khmer Rouge regime took power on April 17, 1975, they evacuated people from the cities. People were forcibly moved from one place to another (often multiple times)—from their place of birth to a different zone and from one cooperative to another.

The second phase of movement was from the southeast to the northwest part of the country. People were transported by foot, boat, truck, train, and oxcart. The evacuees were terrified, confused, traumatized, starved, and separated from their family members. They were also forced to journey to unknown locations. The evacuation by train was very traumatic. Evacuees were provided with almost nothing to eat and separated from their family members during the trip. The painful losses and trauma of the Cambodians are the consequence of the crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge.



Sorachna took a note on the train

After a long day of travel, all CamboCorps volunteers and staff checked into the hotel and prepared themselves for the next day's mission.

SEPTEMBER 17th

At 8:30 a.m., CamboCorps volunteers left for a field trip to Ou Ta Prang Village to interview two Khmer Rouge survivors to learn about their stories during the Khmer Rouge regime. They are Leang Saren and Chum Chuon who live in Ou Ta Prang Village, Sangkat Pailin, Pailin City, Pailin Province.

- **Leang Saren**

Leang Saren, 65, is a farmer. He is a Khmer Rouge survivor living in Ou Ta Prang Village, Sangkat Pailin, Pailin City, Pailin Province. He has four children. The survivor stated that before 1975, he and his family lived in Banteay Meanchey. The survivor was a former Khmer Rouge. In 1976, he was a Khmer Rouge soldier based in the Snuol district of Kratie province along the Cambodian-Vietnamese border. He was a Khmer Rouge soldier in the 117th Regiment who faced Vietnamese soldiers.

Leang Saren said 'Chhun Chut was the chief of the 117th Regiment at the time.' In 1979, he traveled back to Pailin province, which took seven months. He encountered many problems, such as starvation and lack of medicine. After the collapse of the Khmer Rouge, there was still civil war which left many landmines. It was unfortunate that in 1982, at the Cambodia-Thailand border, the survivor stepped on a landmine and was disabled since then. In terms of health issues, he has high blood pressure and lung illness.



Leang Saren and CamboCorps.

He also advised future generations to pay attention to their studies and prevent the Khmer Rouge regime from happening again to our society. Even though he was a former Khmer Rouge soldier at the time, he still supported the Khmer Rouge tribunal that gave life imprisonment for the Khmer Rouge leaders.

- **Chum Chuon**

Chum Chuon, 61 years old, is a farmer. He is a Khmer Rouge survivor living in Ou Ta Prang Village, Sangkat Pailin, Pailin City, Pailin Province. He has five children. The survivor stated that before the Khmer Rouge regime, he and his family lived in Rovieng District, Preah Vihear province. Around 1975 when the Khmer Rouge soldiers entered his village, they began evacuating the survivors to Choam Khsant district, Preah Vihear province, along Dong Rek Mountain. In 1977, the Khmer Rouge evacuated some villagers by 30 buses to Soutr Nikom district, Siem Reap province. When the Chum Chuon arrived, the cooperative chief ordered him to work in a rice field with insufficient food rations—just watery porridge. In 1975, the Khmer Rouge continued forcibly transferring the survivors to Danrun, located in Soutr Nikom district, Siem Reap province. In 1979, Chum Chuon returned to his birthplace with his family.

During the Khmer Rouge regime, the most memorable memory of Chum Chuon was transporting people. He would encourage them to be willing participants in the transfer by telling them they were to transport salt, but in fact, they were destined to be killed. At that time, even if we were closely related, we were also forbidden from speaking to each other. In 1996, Chuon also stepped on a landmine and since then he has been handicapped.



Chum Chuon told CamboCorps about the Khmer Rouge Regime

Chum Chuon has diabetes and is being treated at Pailin referral hospital every month. Chum Chuon told the volunteers that future generations must continue on the task of preventing the Khmer Rouge regime from reoccurring in Cambodia. The interviews with the above two survivors concluded at 10:30 a.m.

-Cambocorps volunteers continued their mission by distributing 50 copies of the book, *Witness to History*, to villagers living in Outaparing, Sangkat Pailin, Pailin City, Pailin Province. In addition, CamboCorps volunteers also visited Phnom Yat to learn about its history.

At 2 p.m., CamboCorps volunteers spent time in the field studying the Phnom Khiev water wall located in Ouatao Commune, Pailin City, Pailin province, about 9km from town of Pailin. Phnom Khiev Waterfall is one of the most famous resorts in Pailin province. The resort is a natural resort with a jungle, a mountain, clean air, lush greenery, and breathtaking



CamboCorps with Khmer Rouge survivor holds a book of "witnesses of history."

waterfalls. At 4:30 p.m., CamboCorps volunteers went through a short visit to Psar Prum market (along the Cambodian-Thai border) in Phsar Prum village, Stung Kach district, Pailin province.

SEPTEMBER 18th

At 8:30 a.m., CamboCorps volunteers left for a field trip to meet three Khmer Rouge survivors to learn about their stories and health conditions. Chan Ret, Heng Chengly, and Bi Soen live in Chamkar Kaphe Village Sang Kat Toul Lvea, Pailin City, Pailin Province.

- ***Chan Ret***

Chan Ret, 63, is a farmer. He is a Khmer Rouge survivor living in Chamkar Kaphe Village, Sangkat Tuol Lvea, Pailin City, Pailin Province. Before 1975, Chan Ret lived in S'ang district, Kandal province. In 1975, Chan Ren was 14 years old and was a Khmer Rouge soldier in the 270 Regiment. On April 17, Khmer Rouge soldiers came into Phnom Penh. He and other soldiers shouted to people in Phnom Penh that American troops would be bombed soon, so they needed to leave their houses for three days. Chan Ret said that during that time, Phnom Penh was chaotic. People were forcibly transferred to Kampong Cham, Kampong Chhnang, Svay Rieng, and other locations. All the roads were full of people. The Khmer Rouge soldiers entered the hospital and ordered patients to leave. Chan Ret witnessed a killing incident when people who refused to leave were killed. Thirty foreign journalists were arrested and sent to their country. The Khmer Rouge also killed many people and surrendered soldiers while forcibly transferring them.



Chan Ret during interview

In 1976, Chan Ret was sent to the Cheung Ek area to work in a rice field for approximately three months. While stationed in the Cheung Ek area, he worked very hard and received little food and no rest.

In 1978, the Khmer Rouge sent Chan Ret to Khmer Kampuchea Krom to work as a Khmer Rouge soldier to fight in the border conflict with Vietnam. The Khmer Rouge were ambitious to take Kampuchea Krom back from Vietnam but they failed in this operation. Toward the end of 1978, Chan Ret stepped on a landmine that he believes was set by Vietnamese soldiers along the border. Since stepping on this landmine he has been disabled.

- ***Heng Chengly***

Heng Chengly, 63, is a farmer. She is a Khmer Rouge survivor living in Chamkar Kaphe Village, Sangkat Toul Lvea, Pailin City, Pailin Province. She has four children.

Before 1975, she lived in Tras Village, Trea Commune, Kandal Stung District, Kandal Province. In 1976, she worked at a farm, carrying earth, and building dams. Chengly stated that during that time, the food ration consisted of watery porridge mixed with corn and potato with no salt. There was no medicine for treating diseases when he and other victims got sick.



Chengly talked with CamboCorps

In 1977, Chengly was forcibly transferred from Kandal Stung district, Kandal province, to work as a garment worker in Phnom Penh. During the Khmer Rouge regime, Chengly was separated from her mother when she was eight years old and forcibly transferred to many places, therefore, she had not received any education class by the regime.

When the regime collapsed, she worked as a garment worker and ran with Khmer Rouge soldiers from Phnom Penh across Kampong Chhnang, Pursat, and Battambang until Pailin. She suffered from depression. Chengly still has not recovered from psychological trauma.

- **Bi Soen**

Bi Soen, 70, is a farmer. He is a Khmer Rouge survivor living in Chamkar Kaphe Village Sangkat Toul Lvea, Pailin City, Pailin Province. Before 1975, he lived in Banteay Meas district, Kampot province. In 1975, he suffered terribly from starvation and forced labor as a farmer at his birthplace. The food ration was tiny—only watery porridge. He was forcibly transferred in 1976 and worked as a Khmer Rouge soldier. He worked in a district unit for one month. Then he was sent to guard Pulavei Island in Kampong Som City. At Pulavei Island, he was forced to build roads around the island and plant potatoes and other vegetables. The food ration given to him was insufficient—only one can per day.



Bi Soen described his feeling during the Khmer Rouge.

In 1977, he was transferred to work in a rice field at the Kang Keng airport in Kampong Saom. The food ration given to him was still insufficient. He has health problems, such as stomach

aches and heart disease to this day. He also encourages future generations to pay attention to their studies and prevent the Khmer Rouge regime from continuing in Cambodia. The interview concluded at 11:30. CamboCorps volunteers distributed 50 copies of the *Witness to History: The Journal of Cambodia's Queen Mother* book (hereinafter, "Witness to History") to villagers living in Café Village Sangkat Pailin, Pailin City, Pailin Province.

From 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. CamboCorps members were provided time to prepare their reports (which encompassed writing a news article, completing a short video of a Khmer Rouge survivor's story, and a video of CamboCorp's mission visit trip). The top 10 best stories from CamboCorps members will be selected and exhibited at the Phnom Penh event afterward.

- ***Procedure to select the CamboCorps to join the upcoming forum***

The Pailin team leader gave CamboCorps volunteers the freedom to choose any topics for the competition. The team received 23 reports from all competitors, including two reports as videos, three as trip reports, and 18 as a story of survivors. On the last day of the trip, the CamboCorps volunteers were invited to present their stories.



CamboCorps's discussion

SEPTEMBER 19th

At 7:30 a.m., the CamboCorps volunteers distributed 75 copies of *Witness to History* book to villagers and vendors living in Prey Mongkul Village Sangkat Ou Tavoia Pailin City, Pailin Province.

At 10:30 a.m., the CamboCorps volunteers distributed 50 copies of *Witness to History* book to villagers living in Sampov Commune, Battambang district, Battambang Province.



RATANAKIRI



Outcomes:

2 Locations: Ochum, and O-Kanseng

5 Survivors:

- Say Rory
- Yok Kram
- Chavin Soum
- Chourn khin
- Seoun Nhoun

Report from 16th to 19th September 2023

SEPTEMBER 16th*Activities on the bus*

On the second day of CamboCorps forum, we departed for Ratanakiri province at 6 in the morning. One of our volunteers informed us she would be absent due to personal reasons. Therefore, the total number of volunteers were 26 people. We gathered at the lobby at 5:30 a.m. and waited for participants to arrive until 6 a.m. before we left for Ratanakiri. There was breakfast on the bus as soon as we got on the bus.

On the way to Ratanakiri, Mr. Phat Sela, Ratanakiri CamboCorps Forum team leader, introduced the participants to the purpose of the trip. He also talked about why some other teams take trains instead of buses to their destinations. That is since when the Khmer Rouge took over the country in 1975, some of the people from Phnom Penh, and other provinces were evacuated through trains. As for late 1976, and the early of 1977, the subjects from Svay Rieng, Prey Veng, Takeo, and many more were evacuated again by trains to Battambang and Banteay Meanchey.

After giving a little introduction to the participants, each participant had to introduce themselves, so they could at least get to know each other before our mission started. On the way to Ratanakiri we passed by Prey Veng, Tbaung Khmum, Kratie, and Stung Treng. We arrived at Kratie around 11:50 a.m. then we had lunch at Oudom Sambath Restaurant. During our lunch, we also met the Stung Treng team as they had lunch at the same restaurant as us. We took a few photos with them, and then we continued our journey to Ratanakiri. We later arrived at the hotel called Ratanak Sombath at 4:20 p.m. Once we arrived there, we rested for another hour before leaving for dinner at around 6:00 p.m. Then we got back to the hotel at 7:30 p.m. and got ready for tomorrow.

SEPTEMBER 17th

- **Say Rory**



Say Rory, on the right, having a conversation with our nurse

Since our arrival at Ratanakiri, it had been raining non-stop which interrupted our mission. We had breakfast until 8:30 a.m. and then we continued our journey to Village#6, La Banseak Commune, Banlung District for the whole morning session. During our visit to La Banseak, we interviewed three people ranging from ages 50 to 73. Our youngest survivor, known as Say Rory, was born two years before the Khmer Rouge took control of the entire country. As she was too young to remember what happened during the regime, she could not provide detailed information

about everything. Most of her storytelling was based on her parents as they later told her about everything they went through during that time. Somehow, even if our volunteers tried to push her for more answers, she remained saying she did not remember anything about the event.

The only thing that she remembered was that she escaped to Vietnam as soon as she was born. Therefore, we believed that when she escaped to Vietnam, the Khmer Rouge had already captured Ratanakiri before they successfully broke into Phnom Penh. Even though she and her family escaped to Vietnam, it did not guarantee that they could have a better life. Her family could barely make ends meet and suffered from poverty. In fact, Vietnam had just gotten out of the Vietnam War from 1955 to 1975. After the American troop withdrawal from Saigon, Vietnam was completely controlled by the Communist Party. Vietnam was still recovering itself from all the damages caused by the war, and their self-reliant economy was then revised to a new strategy called Doi Moi.¹⁴ Due to the economic instability in Vietnam, many Cambodian survivors that escaped to Vietnam faced difficulties while residing there. As we were done interviewing Mrs. Say Rory, we moved onto the next survivor.

¹⁴ <https://borgenproject.org/vietnam-has-reduced-poverty-but-progress-is-still-to-be-made/#:~:text=From%201975%20to%201985%2C%20Vietnam,living%20below%20the%20poverty%20line> [28 Sep 2023]

- **Yok Kram**

The next survivor's name was Yok Kram. Based on the age he had disclosed, he was born in 1950, and is 73. Yok Kram lived in Ratanakiri before 1975, and he added that when Khmer Rouge soldiers came to live in the forest, it was the village in O-Kanseng that assisted those soldiers by providing shelters and food. However, Yok Kram was not able to experience the event after 1975 as he, his family, and most of the people from the village escaped to Vietnam. He later joined the Vietnamese army in 1977 to liberate Cambodia from the extreme communist government. He started his journey in 1978 with the Vietnamese soldiers along the Cambodian-Vietnamese border, which proceeded to capture Ratanakiri. The troops that consisted of Yok Kram only came later after Ratanakiri was under the control of the Vietnamese soldiers. All the troops stayed at Banlung for one month before heading to Stung Treng, and Preah Vihear.



Yok Kram during the interview

During the liberation, Yok Kram was separated from his family for years, and they met again in Ratanakiri in 1982. During his experience in the armed forces, he said there was no difficulty as he was treated well. However, based on what he heard from the other survivors, he stated that all the family members were divided from one another. Family members were banned from meeting each other, and all they could do was walk past by acting as if they were strangers. If they secretly met up, then they would be punished by Angkar, or worse, killed. After Yok Kram came back to Preah Vihear, he was driven to Ratanakiri by the Vietnamese soldiers in 1982. That was when he met his family and lived in O-Kanseng until these days.

- **Chavin Soum**

We interviewed Chavin Soum as the last survivor for the day. Chavin Soum was born in 1950. He was probably 25 years old when the Khmer Rouge took control of the country. During 1975, he went to live in the forest near the Laotian border for three years with his family, and his entire village. Throughout his hiding in the forest, he had to live with caution to protect the whole village from being harmed by the Khmer Rouge. Moreover, the difficulty of staying in the forest was that there was not enough food.

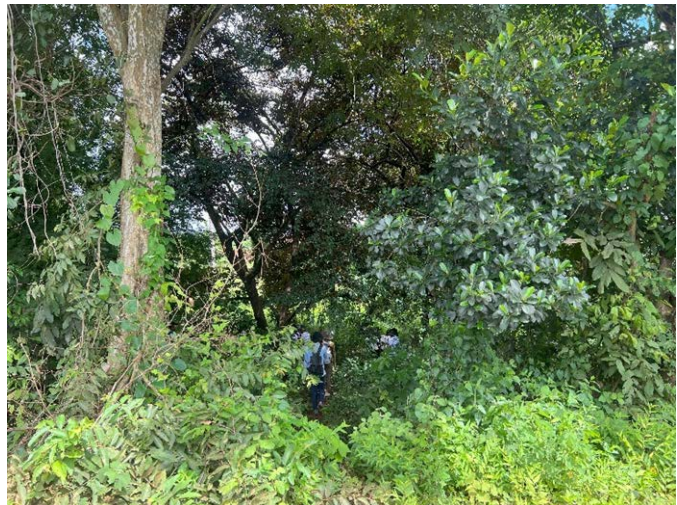


Chavin Soum, on the left, told the students about his experience

To feed their stomachs, they had to steal food from the base people. However, there had been no cases where they got caught by the Khmer Rouge soldiers for stealing. He also stated there had been no contagious diseases in the forest, and the only difficulties were food, and protecting themselves from the Khmer Rouge soldiers. There was that one time when he witnessed the killing of someone that he knew. The victim was just an ordinary person. The victim got shot and died instantly. He

and his family then escaped to Laos from the forest in 1978, and he joined the Vietnamese army in 1979. His troops also took part in liberating Cambodia. After the liberation, the troops drove him back to the base in Ratanakiri in 1982, and he also met his family there. Today Chavin Soum is 73 years old, and he resides in O-Kanseng, Ratanakiri. As he has gotten older, he has developed an illness. He has found himself having a headache from time to time, and he usually has blurry thoughts. Sometimes, he has blurry vision as well, and no medicines can help according to what he had told our volunteers.

Later, we walked to O-Kanseng Security Center. When we arrived there, we only saw a land that was filled with trees and plants. The security center was demolished, and there was nothing left. Our students had a little talk with a local villager about the prison and found out that the security center was used to detain politicians and some other well-known people in Cambodia. The volunteers asked the villager for the name of the prisoners, and there was no one that the villager knew. Then we went to Phnom Svay for one hour and took a group photo. In the afternoon, we had lunch and then headed for Yeak Loam Lake. We could not find any survivors; therefore, we were



O-Kanseng Security Center covered in trees

there to sightsee the lake as a team, which can be considered as a team bonding activity. We walked half of the lake due to a muddy trail and then we got back to the hotel. We continued our journey and then headed to Kanseng lake. We took some pictures with the team and then rested there for a bit before heading to the hotel to have dinner.

SEPTEMBER 18th



Health Book Distribution to the villager

On the morning of September 18, 2023, we started our day by having breakfast at Paradise Restaurant. Due to the rain, we were not able to go to Veunsai as planned. The road was slippery, and we had to park our bus and walk for another 30 km to reach Veunsai. We came up with another plan, and we went to the Provincial Health Department of Ratanakiri at around 8:30 in the morning.

At the Provincial Health Department of Ratanakiri, our purpose of going there was to distribute 100 books of the *Witness to History*. We distributed around 100 books to the Provincial Health Department. We met the head of the Administrative Department, Houn Hing. During the meeting, Mr. Houn Hing and Mr. Phat Sela exchanged a little talk. Mr. Sela gave a brief to Mr. Houn Hing about the Queen Mother library as well as her Majesty's book. Mr. Houn Hing also introduced us to the Health Centers in Ratanakiri. The total number of health care centers in the province is around 30 centers, and there are around 6 health posts.



Meeting at Provincial Health Department

Currently, there are 500 staff at the institutions, and there is a plan to upgrade the health post to a referral hospital. After the conversation ended, they both bid their farewell and then we left for our next destination—Ka Chanh Waterfall—in the hope of meeting the villagers to distribute the health books and to interview the survivors. We could not find anyone to interview at the waterfall, so we proceeded to distribute health information books to the villagers at Ka Chanh district that we met and then we rode the bus back to the hotel. We handed out a health book to each villager by dividing our group into two teams. There were young and old people that we handed the book to. Some of them were welcoming, and some

of the villagers were cautious about us as they thought the volunteers were salesmen, but it worked well after our explanation. After successfully handing out health books, we continued our journey back to the hotel.



Group photo with Keang Tola

In the afternoon, our doctor set up a meeting with the District Governor of Ochum; Keang Tola, at 2 p.m. The doctor also found us two survivors for the students to interview. During the meeting, Mr. Keang Tola talked about his background before becoming a District Governor. After the speech of the District Governor, we took a few photos with him as he was in a rush to join another meeting. Then we welcomed the survivors to talk about their experience during the Khmer Rouge regime.

- **Chourng Khin**

The first victim was Chourng Khin who was 25 years old when the regime occurred. Chourng Khin had to watch over thirty families. He was forced to work on the plantation field day and night. He was about to get executed as he was accused of not being able to do his work. He added that there was nothing for him, and the village to eat.

From 1975 to 1979, he survived by mixing his porridge with potato. In 1979, Vietnam liberated Ratanakiri, and he was able to live his life until these days. Today Chourng Khin is 73 years old, and he lives in Ochum district.



Interviewed with Chourng Khin

- **Seoun Nhoun**

Seoun Nhoun was our last survivor among the five survivors we had interviewed. She was born in 1957, and she was watching the medicine warehouse from 1975 to 1979. Based on her experience, she did not face any difficulties as her position during the time was superior among the other villagers. However, she stated that the villagers were starving, and many died to diseases such as food poisoning, malaria, and other conditions.

Once we were done with the interview, we left Ochum district, and headed to Kuch Veary as a reward for the students' hard work. We had dinner at 6:30 p.m. and then we came back to the hotel and had another meeting at 9:30 p.m. for choosing students to display their reports or crafts at the upcoming event. Mr. Phat Sela decided to choose the students after reviewing their work. He set the deadline for the students to submit their work on September 24, 2023. Later he will choose the outstanding ones to display their results on the upcoming event prepared by DC-Cam. Then the evening ended, and everyone left for their room and rested before going back to Phnom Penh in the morning.



Interviewed with a Khmer Rouge survivor: Seoun Nhoun

Then the evening ended, and everyone left for their room and rested before going back to Phnom Penh in the morning.

SEPTEMBER 19th

We left Ratanakiri at 6 a.m. in the morning because the road back home was quite far. On our way back, we did not do anything as most of the participants woke up early, and most of them were tired. We stopped by the road to have breakfast; some students ate their breakfast on the bus, while some other students sat on the ground alongside the road. Once they were done, we continued our journey to Kratie, and arrived at 12:15 p.m. We had lunch at the same restaurant as



Phat Sela distributing books to Mr. Keang Tola at Ochum District

the first day we arrived in Kratie. We stopped there for around half an hour and continued heading for Phnom Penh. We arrived at Phnom Penh at 5:45 p.m., and our bus stopped at the hotel. As soon as the dinner was finished, everyone went back to the hotel, and that marked the end of our Ratanakiri trip.



MONDULKIRI



Outcomes:

5 Locations: Koh Thma, Phnom Doh Kromom, Phnom Kraol, Bou Sra Waterfall, Dak Dam, Cambodia-Vietnam Border

5 Survivors:

- Va Nim
- Mors Masy
- Yeav Yul
- Nov Ny
- Srouy Ket (no interview)

Report from 16th to 19th September 2023

SEPTEMBER 16th

The bus departed Phnom Penh city at 5 a.m. The distance from Phnom Penh to Mondulkiri province is 320 km by road. Since the bus travelled through Tbong Khmum province, we decided to stop by Koh Thma Documentation Center, which is located in Tbong Khmum province for volunteers to visit the center as well as the museum.

-Koh Thma Documentation Center



Collection of photos in front of the Koh Thma Documentation Center



CamboCorps volunteers walk through and see the displayed photo collection



CamboCorps volunteers and Sok Vannak, study tour leader, stand in front of the Koh Thma Musuem, located in the Bun Rany Hun Sen Koh Thma Primary School

The explanation of the story in the museum and center was coordinated by Sok Vannak and Vy Sitha, who are the staff responsible for managing the Koh Thma Documentation Center. Ms. Sitha explained

that the Bun Rany Hun Sen Koh Thma Primary School was the military base where Samdech Hun Sen, stood by to fight with the Khmer Rouge troops.



Vannak walks CamboCorps volunteer through the museum



Sitha explains a CamboCorps volunteer about the displayed map

-Phnom Doh Kromom (Doh Kromom Mountain)

We arrived to Mondulkiri province earlier than we had planned, so we decided to go the Phnom Doh Kromom. Unfortunately, it was raining slightly, so we waited until the rain stopped. After that, we had a group photo and headed back to dine at the restaurant.



Group photo at the Phnom Doh Kromom

SEPTEMBER 17th

-Phnom Kraol (Kraol Mountain)

After having breakfast at 6:30 a.m., we headed to Phnom Kraol (Kraol Mountain) which is in Kaoh Nheaek district. It took an hour to reach the place. The history of Phnom Kraol is stated on the displayed board, which is 3,000 meters from the district. According to Mr. Theav Hai, there was a group of wild humans without any clothes and shelter living on Phnom Kraol. One day, there was a group of hunters going into the wild to hunt animals. They left their meal boxes on the tree and then could not find it when they came back from hunting. The animal hunters started to plan to hang their food on the tree again and waited to see who stole it. Surprisingly, they saw a group of wild humans without clothes had shown up and taken the food.



Displayed board telling the history of Phnom Kraol (Kraol Mountain)

During the Khmer Rouge era, Phnom Kraol was the place where ethnic minority groups were forcibly evacuated to and told to stay there. They lived there for the whole Khmer Rouge era until the post era, when they could leave the place.



Vannak briefs the history of Phnom Kraol during the Khmer Rouge era

-Va Nim



Vannak interviews Nim while having Cambodcorps volunteers siting around

During the visit of Phnom Kraol, we met and interviewed a Khmer Rouge survivor who is 78 years old, named Va Nim. After asking around, Mrs. Nim is one of the eldest members who lives in Phnom Kraol. She has been living in Phnom Kraol for 18 years. She was born in Koh Sotin distict in Kampong Cham province. During the Khmer Rouge era, she was evacuated to Kompong Thom. She does not remember what district or commune she lived in during the Khmer Rouge period. She mostly talked about how she had meals together with other people. She also mentioned that when the Angkar ordered them to crawl inside the crab hole, people had to do so, meaning that whatever the Angkar orders, people had to comply with no exception. Every 10 days she could have a rest from work, which encompassed building a dam. However, during her rest time, she still had to do other things such as chasing mice. After the Khmer Rouge era, she could not find any of her siblings after going back to her hometown in

Kompong Cham. Because she is not from Koh Nhaek, she could not tell us any stories of the place.

After interviewing her, we headed to the village to distribute a health information book and the Queen Mother Diary book to people in the area.



People living in the village around Koh Nhaek district gets the health book and Queen Mother Diary book

SEPTEMBER 18th

-Bou Sra Waterfall

The third day of the study tour was full of activities. We started off by having breakfast before heading to the Bou Sra Waterfall in the Pech Chreada district. It took us around half an hour to reach the place. When we arrived, we distributed books to people sitting around the entrance.



Vannak and CamboCorps volunteers distributed books to people sitting around the entrance before going inside



CamboCorps heads inside the Bou Sra Waterfall



Doctors from KV hospital walks alongside CamboCorps volunteers

Not long after walking entering the area, CamboCorps volunteers started interviewing Khmer Rouge survivors in the area. CamboCorps volunteers' goal was to find ethnic indigenous people in the area to hear their stories of how Khmer Rouge treated ethnic minorities differently from Cambodian people. The presumption was because the Khmer Rouge were known to discriminate against Cambodia's minority groups, we would hear stories and personal insights into the experience of the ethnic minority people under the Khmer Rouge regime. CamboCorps volunteers were eager to hear the story from ethnic minorities.

-Mors Masy

One of the CamboCorps volunteers, named Chab Reaksmeay, approached a Phnong indigenous person (Hilltribes) who was selling honey and some vegetables on the ground. Mors Masy, age 80 years old, is a Phnong indigenous person who survived the Khmer Rouge regime. All ethnic minorities were evacuated to live in the Koh Nheak district together. Mors said she could not speak Khmer at all during the Khmer Rouge. Even now, she could not understand some words when the volunteers talked to her, so her daughter sitting next to her translated the meaning. Reaksmeay spent around 20 minutes interviewing the survivor. Mors said she could not wear any jewelry such as earrings and necklaces. She lost all her six siblings during that time. She came back alone after the Khmer Rouge era. She described how people were killed and were tied up all day.



Chab Reaksmeay (right-hand side) interviews Mors. (left-hand side)



Mors has a group photo with CamboCorps volunteers

-Yeav Yul

*Sa Fy interviews Yul in the field behind her house.
Photo by Sa Fy*

After visiting Bou Sra Waterfall, we came back to have lunch before going into the village to interview survivors in the village. Simultaneously, we also distributed books to people along the way. One of the CamboCorps volunteers interviewed a woman who lives in the Pech Chreada district, Srae Ampom Commune. Yeav Yul is a Phnong indigenous who went through the Khmer Rouge genocide. She is around 60 years old and has 7 children, some of them have already moved out. Yul said that she was so hungry during the Khmer Rouge period. She ate

whatever she saw on her way and did not care whether they were poisonous. Eating only with salt was the best meal for her because she wanted to survive. Back then, she could not live together with her parents in the house. They were separated from one another, her mother lived 3 kilometers from her while her father lived 5 kilometers from her mother. She could not visit them unless she asked her teacher to go and kept it a secret. She was 10 years old at that time. A story that she remembers was when her uncle had been killed because he spoke out and complained about how Angkar had ordered him to build the dam when he only knew how to farm. He also complained about the meal that he was provided, saying it could not fill his stomach. As a result, he was escorted to study (the term that was used to mean he would be killed). He was ordered to dig a pit and was killed in that pit. Another story she remembers was when Khmer Rouge troops tortured her father because he stole one corn in front of his own house. He was tied up and all members of the family were ordered to stand around and watch him being tortured. No one was allowed to shed a tear or else they would be tortured too.

-Nov Ny

The next agenda of the day was Dak Dam, which was in Ou Reang district, Dak Dam commune. We stopped by the Dak Dam Commune Hall and distributed books. Later, we walked into the village to meet survivors. One of the CamboCorps volunteers, named Kim Ang, interviewed a survivor who went through the genocide. His name is Nov Ny and he is 79 years old. He lived in Kampong Cham during the Khmer Rouge era.



CamboCorps volunteer, Kim Ang, interviews Ny who is the Khmer Rouge survivor

His wife passed away when she was 78 years old. During the interview, Ny mentioned about the rule when there was a love connection between man and woman. A man and woman could not walk around together or else they would be killed. He mentioned that there was a couple who were killed because they loved each other. The Angkar did not allow couples who loved each other to match unless the Khmer Rouge matched the couple themselves. Before killing the couple, they were ordered to stand naked in front of the whole village and shouted, "Don't follow our example". After that they were not seen ever since. Ny said he was scared and worried, so he told his family not to walk around together with only one man and one woman.

After visiting the village in Dak Dam district, we went to Ou Reang Mountain to take some photos before heading back to the hotel.



CamboCorps group photo in front of Dak Dam Primary School (left photo) and Dak Dam Commune Hall (right photo)

-Reporting Session

After arriving at the hotel, we took some rest before starting our reporting session. All CamboCorps volunteers were required to share a two-minute presentation talking about any topics they would like to share. All of them showed appreciation to the DC-Cam for organizing such a good forum for them to have a chance to do a study tour around the province that they have never been to before. They also wish to join the study tour again if DC-Cam organizes it again. During the reporting session, they also shared their experience and the story of their interviews with survivors.

-Testimonial



Reatrey shares his perspective

Chhom Reatrey shared a short perspective on this study tour. Reatrey said that all the CamboCorps volunteers have a good sense of teamwork and each person has unique talent. Some can sing and some can dance while some prefer playing sports such as badminton. He thanked DC-Cam for organizing the forum while providing feedback that DC-Cam should organize this study tour annually. Another volunteer suggested that

instead of sleeping in the hotel, volunteers should stay with the people in the village so that they can connect with them closely. Also, he prefers having accommodations that bring all volunteers together for better networking.

SEPTEMBER 19th

-Cambodia-Vietnam Bilateral Border Checkpoint

Before heading back to Phnom Penh, we dropped by the Cambodia-Vietnam Bilateral Border Checkpoint in Keo Seima district.



CamboCorps group photo at the Cambodia-Vietnam Bilateral Border Checkpoint.

Conclusion

We concluded the study tour by selecting 10 CamboCorps volunteers from each study tour group to come and join the forum in Phnom Penh where they will meet leaders such as ambassador and government figures to learn to develop their expertise for their future work opportunities. There were 149 CamboCorps volunteers joining the whole study tour to the 6 provinces. Overall, each location contains full historical knowledge that was an eye-opening learning for all CamboCorps volunteers.



PURSAT-BANTEAY MEANCHEY



Outcomes:

4 Locations: Tuol Por Chrey, Por Keo Preah Neth Preah pagoda, Trapaing Thma Dam, Banteay Chmar temple

5 Survivors:

- Ouk Hach
- Ken Pach
- Som Pharath
- Sok Phleun
- Reun Nat

Report from 16th to 19th September 2023

SEPTEMBER 16th

On the morning of the 16th, at 5:00 a.m., CamboCorps prepared to leave for six various destinations, with three groups traveling by train from Phnom Penh to Pursat-Banteay Meanchey, Kampot and Pailin. The volunteers seemed to be excited because most of them had never ridden a train before.

CamboCorps volunteers' faces were full of joy, showing their satisfaction. Due to the scenery along the railway, there were lush forests, rice fields, and high and low mountains, so everyone could capture the beautiful scenery as a lasting memory.

A few hours later, the train arrived at the station of Pursat provincial town. All passengers on the train took off and continued their journey. After the lunch break, CamboCorps continued to Tuol Po Chrey,¹⁵ a historical site where the Khmer Rouge massacred innocent people and left their body in the pits. After the commune chief described the location and interviewed the survivors in that area, it was revealed that most of the people who were brought to be killed were educated people, such as students, teachers, and soldiers.

Tuol Po Chrey

-Ouk Hach

Ouk Hach is a 58 year old woman who lives in Kdey Chhvet village, Srae Sdok commune, Kandeang district and Pursat Province. When she was young, she could not live with her family. The Khmer Rouge took her to the school to learn and live with other children from across the country. She was ordered by the Khmer Rouge to collect manure and cut down small trees for fertilizer.



Ouk Hach was interviewed by CamboCorps volunteers to tell her story

What does she remember the most?

She lost her brother, Ouk Chert, who was accused of being a soldier. In fact, her brother was not a soldier, and they killed her brother with guns. For her, it is an unforgettable pain and injustice for her family.

She started to talk about the evacuation of people from Phnom Penh to Tuol Po Chrey, and how all evacuees were killed all over the field. Finally, she said that she really did not want this to happen again. It was a pain she did not want to remember.

¹⁵ ECCC's Doc D427, Closing Order, 15 September 2010, para. 298.

-Ken Pach

Ken Pach is a 54 year old man, who lives in Pring Khpos village, Srae Sdok commune, Kandieng District Pursat Province.

He stated, "Until now I was unable to read or write. I did not study because of this regime". At that time, Pach lived in a children's unit and was forced to collect cow dung to make fertilizer.

Pach stated that all eating and working was done in the cooperative. Pach was given only watery porridge as a meal after working long hours without rest. Pach was separated from his family. During the Khmer Rouge regime, Pach saw people forcibly transferred from many places, especially from Svay Rieng province. Due to Svay Rieng being geographically close to Vietnam, the Khmer Rouge thought they were enemies. Most people from Svay Rieng were sent to be killed at the Tuol Po Chrey execution site, which is also the place where Lon Nol soldiers were killed.

Pach's brother and his family were also killed by an accusation of being Lon Nol soldiers.



Ken Pach sits on the bench while recalling what he remembers during the Khmer Rouge era

SEPTEMBER 17th

Despite the exhaustion of the long journey from Pursat province, we went to another destination the same day. Kim Sovannpany described the goals and the next activities, then she asked all the volunteers who traveled together to introduce themselves with a description of any volunteer experience. It was during this time that everyone listened intently to each other. We continued to Preah Net Preah and Trapeang Thma districts, which are historical sites of the Khmer Rouge and we interviewed Khmer Rouge survivors.

After leaving Preah Net Preah district, we continued to Trapeang Thma Dam, located in Trapeang Thma Kandal village, Phnom Srok district, Banteay Meanchey province.

At Preah Net Preah Pagoda

-Som Pharath

Som Pharath is a 60 year old woman, and she said she only studied until the 12th grade. She said the 12th grade was equal to the 1st grade of the current curriculum. When she was 12 years old, all the houses in the village were set on fire by Pol Pot, so her family and the villagers had to move to Phnom Koun Damrey village for 10 days and then they moved to Srae Kaeut village. Pharath said, during the Khmer Rouge era, Villagers had to walk day and night under rain from Trapeang Veng village to Trapeang Thma. All people were ordered to dig the ground to build a



Som Pharath sits and talks with CamboCorps volunteers

dam, which is now called Trapeang Thma. If I had not known the history of this lake, I would not have thought that this beautiful lake was created by the suffering of the people who died while digging due to malnutrition and overwork. People from Phnom Penh were commanded to clear the forest to build houses, and those who looked more knowledgeable or educated were killed. And for children, they were also given work to do.

SEPTEMBER 18th

On the third and last day of the forum, we met another survivor. At about 10 a.m. CamboCorps arrived at the location of Banteay Chhmar temple. It was deeply saddening to see the damage of structures, such as the fine stone carvings on the wall, which are shattered into pieces and which had been damaged from their original shape.

At Banteay Chhmar Commune

-Sok Phloeun

Mr. Sok Phloeun is 75 years old, and he was born in Preah Net Preah district, Battambang province. He currently lives in Banteay Chhmar commune in Banteay Meanchey, and he is a survivor of the Khmer Rouge era. According to Ploeun, when the Khmer Rouge won, they mobilized Lon Nol troops and killed them with plows. The commune chief was also killed. Among the commune chiefs, one is his cousin, Seng Hoeung, who was also a victim. As for normal people,



A picture of Sok Ploeun taken by CamboCorps

we were all evacuated from our hometowns, but the young people were evacuated to the mobile unit, and everyone was separated from their relatives. People were scattered with only their clothes on. Moreover, the monks were captured and became farmers. Sok Phloeun was evacuated from Preah Net Preah district, and at that time he was 28 years old. He spoke honestly to the Khmer Rouge "I was captured to be a Lon Nol soldier." Because he was identified as a hard worker and he was candid in his identification as a soldier, they believed he was a loyal person, so they spared his life. But unfortunately other Lon Nol soldiers were shot dead. He said with tears in his eyes: "I lost my father and my younger brother during the Khmer Rouge era." My father's name is Sok Phlor, and he was a house builder. He was killed. My younger brother was arrested while plowing in a field and he was killed. After my brother died, they told me that they had killed my younger brother by confusion.



Sok Phloeun shares his story during Khmer Rouge era

Sok Phloeun added that Khmer Rouge guards called spies were 15 years old or older. The spy was born from the loyal people, but they were used by the Khmer Rouge ideology to turn into a savage monster who dared to raise their hands to kill their parents and relatives. He said that he saw the scene in which "a mother came home from work exhausted and she stole a crab and ate it, but when the child saw, she was arrested and her hands were tied behind her back and they took her away." At

that time, the mother cried while walking, but her son did not care. On the other hand, he raised the crab and showed it to others as a sign that the mother stole the crab. As for eating during the Khmer Rouge era, he told us that there was not enough to eat. A can of rice porridge was eaten by 10 people in groups, but not as a cooperative because the word "cooperative" must have 100 members. We did not eat even a grain of salt at that time. Whoever had a bowl of salt was considered rich in those times. He added that rice at that time was very plentiful, but they did not eat enough. And when someone was sick they were treated by injections with the same needles that were used repeatedly. At the hospital, many corpses were dragged out and buried, but because there was so little people to dig holes, some of the corpses were dragged out and buried without proper burial.

-Reun Nat



Reun Nat shared his story with CamboCorps

Nat lives in Banteay Chhmar commune Thma Pouk District, Banteay Meanchey Province. When he was 20 years old, he was evacuated to Trapeang Thma Dam for a whole day by foot, along with another 30 youths led by Pin Do to build Trapeang Thma Dam. During the construction process, a healthy person was required to dig two cubic meters per person, while those individuals identified as being unhealthy were required to dig three cubic meters. The Khmer Rouge thought that if they

were sick and could not complete the work, they would be left to die without medication and treatment. During the Khmer Rouge era, people received two meals per day: in the morning they ate rice and in the evening they ate congee. Nat said most of the victims were from Phnom Penh because they could not cope with the overwork. Their bodies were buried at the dam and people poured the soil on top of the corpses. For marriage, there was no coercion, if a man wanted a woman to be his wife, there was a mutual agreement, but after marriage, if a dispute occurred and the Khmer Rouge found out, they would be killed immediately.



Reun Nat stands and holds 'Witness to History: The Journal of Cambodia's Queen Mother' book



STUNG TRENG



Outcomes:

3 Locations: Borei O-Svay Senchey, Preah Ko Temple, Loving Longan Farm

5 Survivors:

- Kong Chanthy
- Moul Ham
- Chea Chanthay
- Meas Pov
- Sun Yung

Report from 16th to 19th September 2023

SEPTEMBER 16th

The participants that joined the Stung Treng trip were trained via Zoom and briefed about the study tour orientation several times before they set out on their journey. DC-Cam obtained the written consent of participants and their guardian's written consent in attending this study tour. After having received some tips on principles of leadership at Dr. Quach Mengly's school, the real genocide and human rights study tour began on September 16. All the volunteers who checked in Home Chic Hotel were known as the "Stung Treng Team." The Stung Treng Team consisted of 24 participants from different provinces.

The participants had an early departure for Stung Treng by bus at 5:00 a.m. Our driver and two tour leaders were ready to bring us to the study tour destination. Due to the long-distance travel, we also had two health care providers: one doctor and one nurse from KV Hospital to travel with us and check on the passengers' health from point of departure to the destination, and throughout the tour they made sure all the travelers were safe and cared for. In addition, we also had several medical students from the International University (IU) and the University of Health Sciences joined the group.

Our driver always maintained the speed limits to ensure our safety and stopped for a rest several times to avoid exhaustion. After five hours of travel, we reached Kratie provincial town at 10:30 a.m. and we took pictures of the Mekong riverbank. We then had lunch at a local restaurant opposite the riverbank.

While travelling in the bus, the volunteers were briefed about April 17, 1975, and the Khmer Rouge evacuation of people out of the city to the countryside in which people were forced to leave their homes. Then the volunteers were asked to reflect on the forced evacuation and imagine how they might adapt themselves to a situation where they did not have their everyday items with them.

Along the way, volunteers enjoyed taking photos and videos of the rice fields, flooded areas, roads, smiling faces of people, and singing on the bus to make friends and familiarize themselves with the tour.

After 10 hours of travel from Phnom Penh, we arrived in Stung Treng provincial town and checked in at 3:20 p.m. At 5:00 p.m. we gathered and listened to our health care providers about health care tips and first aid during travel. The helpful tips read:

- Drink enough water.
- Avoid fermented food or snacks.
- Have a good rest at night.
- If you are car sick, take the medication 15 to 30 minutes before travel.
- If not feeling well, consult with doctors.

At the end of the meeting, the volunteers were briefed about tomorrow's field trip to Borei O-Svay Senchey and Thalaborivath districts to listen to survivors' stories, learn about the area and distribute DC-Cam's publications to the villagers as well as discuss their assigned group work that will be presented on day 3 (September 18).

SEPTEMBER 17th

- **Borei O-Svay Senchey District**

O-Svay village is situated Borei O-Svay Senchey district, which borders Cambodia and Laos. It is 433 kilometers from Phnom Penh along the way from National Road 7 and then ASEAN road 11. According to the villagers, the village was created in 1966 by our late King Norodom Sihanouk to protect Cambodian territory from being encroached. He appealed to Cambodian people from various provinces to settle there and he offered land, housing, and salary in the amount of 700 riel per month at that time. With this affirmative policy, many people including Khmer Rouge survivors interviewed came to live in this area. Below is a list of Khmer Rouge survivors who shared their stories with volunteers. The survivors discussed their experience living in and growing up in the village, their experience under the Khmer Rouge, their current health conditions and current day living.

- **Kong Chanthy**



CamboCorps listening to Kong Chanthy

Chanthy is a fisherman and farmer. He was born in Prey Kabas district, Takeo province and he came to live in the village with his parents when he was very young. He said his parents received a parcel of land and a monthly salary to support their living and they were known as *Kalong* during Sangkum Reastr Niyum. Chanthy said that some other families from his hometown also came to live in the village. During the Khmer Rouge period, he was assigned to a children's unit and moved from one to another location within the province. He had to work very hard to survive.

After the regime, he returned to live in his village.

Chanthy believes in education, so he sent all his children to school regardless of any obstacles. He said education brings us a good future. He is proud of living near the Mekong River as it is a

great natural resource—biodiversity—and good sources of income for him and the villagers. However, currently he and his villagers are facing shortage of fish, the river is getting shallower every year. He said, “although the river belongs to all countries (China, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia), we should be aware of our actions and projects—whether it affects the life of other people in other countries.

He asked all of us to help protect the river, conduct more research, and try to restore it. He closed with a clear message, “if we in this generation destroy it, we become the prisoner of history leaving adverse effects on our children and future generations. However, if we restore and fix the problems, we will become a hero for our family and nation.”

- **Moul Ham**



Moul Ham telling Story to CamboCorps

Moul Ham was born in O-Svay village, and she is now 57. She is the eldest sister of two siblings. She is half-blood Khmer and Lao. Her mother is Khmer, and her father is Lao. Both her parents were engaged in business before the Khmer Rouge came. Her father hesitated to go back to Laos given that the whole family lived in Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge accused him of being feudalist and in 1976 he was taken away. Ham said she did not know whether he was still alive or died as of today. Later in 1977, the Khmer Rouge also took her mother away leaving her as an orphan. She was 10 years old, and her brother was about 4 years old. Without parents, she felt very lonely. Due to her family background and the allegation, she and her brother were discriminated against and separated from other villagers. As for food, she was given 1 can of rice per day. Due to her young age, she was not able to cook it well. Sometimes, they had raw porridge. Later, she was assigned to chase parrots, dove or sparrows from the rice fields with a lunch

box, consisting of rice and salt. Her brother stayed with her grandmother. In 1978, her grandmother begged the Khmer Rouge to take Ham to live with her and she guaranteed, “if my granddaughter commits anything wrong, I will assure you, my death.” They all moved to live in Nheun and their names no longer existed in their hometown. After 1979, Ham was still waiting for the return of their parents, and she kept crying every day until having had a chronic disease. She said she never forgets them and is still waiting for them. This emotional feeling led her to think and call others her parents.

- ***Chea Chanthay***



Chea Chanthay is 67 years old and lives in O-Svay village. She was assigned to work at a dining hall during the Khmer Rouge regime. Her most memorable experience was when she was assigned to work in the kitchen and served food to the King Norodom Sihanouk and the Queen Mother during their trip to Cambodia in 1973.

Chea Chanthay telling CamboCorps about her story

Link: <https://youtu.be/d129MdejnbM?si=pTvusXvAw89BFtHD>

Preah Ko Temple, Thalaborivath District

At 3:30 p.m. we left for Thalaborivath district where we visited Preah Ko temple. The temple is about a 15-minute drive from the provincial town. Upon arrival, the volunteers worked in groups and brought with them the publications to be distributed to the villagers. The volunteers interviewed the villagers about the history of Preah Ko temple, the background on the name of Thalaborivath district and their experience living under the Khmer Rouge. Two of the volunteers interviewed a villager named **Meas Peou** whose story is in the link below. **Sung Yung** was also briefly interviewed.

About Thalaborivath

Link: <https://youtu.be/MdXeFDcYeDI>



Sun Yung



Meas Peou

SEPTEMBER 18th

- ***Loving Longan Farm (Suon Sne Chamkar Mean)***

On the morning of September 18, we left for Loving Longan Farm, which is about a 7-minute drive from the hotel. The farm is located on kilometer 4 on the way to Preah Vihear province. One could explore a variety of things at this tourist site, such as a rabbit farm, cycling, scenery, and a longan farm. This place can be used for pre-weddings, camping, and gatherings.

Our main purpose for this morning's gathering was to help our volunteers relax and have a chance to discuss their health with our travelling doctors. For us, it is like a healing garden where we can enjoy the scenery and have a relaxing, informal health information session for the volunteers.

We enjoyed ourselves with the beautiful scenery and we did not forget to promote our T-Shirt and Hat, a newly design and printed materials for our genocide and human rights study tour cambocorps.

After a short rest, we re-convened where the volunteers were broken down into two groups. Each group was coordinated by a doctor and two medical students. Medical specialists and DC-Cam staff provided the volunteers with a brief overview about health care and DC-Cam's newly printed health booklet for Khmer Rouge survivors. This forum motivated the volunteers to tell us about their current health conditions and raise questions on health-related issues to the doctors. Our doctors listened to the concerns and questions carefully and responded accordingly. Stress is the main cause of mental and physical health. Our morning session was concluded with a group photo from above at the farm and we all returned to the hotel.

- ***Afternoon: Leadership Session***

One of the main goals of this study tour is to offer a platform for the volunteers to exhibit their leadership skills and select the top 10 out of the participants for a Cultural Diplomacy Forum in Phnom Penh. We guided the volunteers through several topics related to leadership, public service, and health information, and we allocated time on day 3 of the trip for the presentation and selection.

After returning from the farm, the volunteers were given time to wrap up their assignment and ready for a group presentation in the afternoon. Our meeting started at 2:30 p.m. in the hotel's meeting room. There were five groups covering the genocide and human rights study tour.

These include:

Group 1: Photography and Caption

Group 2: Interview and Survivors' stories (I)

Group 3: Interview and survivors' stories (II)

Group 4: Study Tour Video

Group 5: Book reading and summary

First, we informed all the groups about the selection criteria, number of candidates selected from each group and how they would be selected. In this regard, voting is the main criteria for selection of both each group leader and individuals. This method is to allow each individual a chance to be elected by their peers. We announced that each group has 10 minutes to present and 10 minutes for Q & A and we asked for a group volunteer to go first. Group 2 consisting of 4 members started first.

Topic: Meas Peou: Horse Cart Reminds Me of My Father's Death

Link:

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipPUrSR4X05Vb7WUxzXVtQE8G_YVtmRarERPJu8hcFwwMP9WFfNliin1zKouAsZNRa?key=R0pKXzhYM0tOaG11eGVyemJ5b0V2QUIzbEtLaThn

After the presentation, there is a question from the other group.

Q: What brought her luck while the rest of her family was killed?

A: She worked hard, and her fate is not there yet. God bless us.

Next, group 4 on Study Tour Video presented the video to the group.

Link: https://youtu.be/BG4O8-9bn_M?si=mRopEQt0rh0aHV5F

Group 3 consisting of 5 members wrote a story of Moul Ham of O-Svay village and presented the story to the participants.

Link: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/jArcHN72vK81hySU6>

Group's Reflection

This story is very touching as it expresses her most memorable experience and shows how she becomes an orphan of the regime. The trauma of this experience left behind emotional scars which still affects her mental and physical health today. This story gave us an important chapter of history and it raised our awareness on how to prevent such atrocities from recurring.

After the presentation, there was a question on trauma and mental health from their peers: If she is in that situation, how reliable could her story actually be?

Answer: We look at the flow of the story and the facts. Those are consistent. This is an important issue that needs to be addressed carefully. We also referred this to DC-Cam's newly published health booklet which contains a section on mental health.

Group 1: Group Photo and Caption

Group 1 took and compiled some photos of the study tour and provided a caption of each photo. Link: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/KzZuYqhnjtb7L8Px7>

Group 5: Witness to History Reading and Summary

Group 5 read a copy of the Witness to History and provided a summary of the book.

Link: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/Lr2aV8kYZQfreQAU9>

There was a lot of interest from the participants in the facts, locations, and the Queen Mother's dedication in writing about the trip in the middle of the war, which described the experience of living in the jungle. The volunteers wanted to learn more about the historical background and wanted to see the film produced during the trip.

After all groups delivered their presentations and addressed questions and comments from the audience, the first top 5 were elected by their group members. Another top 5 were then elected from each group by the larger group. The selection is very competitive, and it is based on their leadership skills, including knowledge, capability, interpersonal communication, responsibility, good time management, and other soft skills. In addition to the top ten, we also had four more candidates who received similar votes on our waiting list.



Leadership Session led by team leader, So Farina



SEPTEMBER 19th

The team had breakfast early in the morning and was ready for the return trip to Phnom Penh. Before our departure, each volunteer and our doctors received a scarf and had group photos in front of the hotel's swimming pool. We all left at 7:30 a.m. and had lunch in Kratie. After spending 9:00 hours driving, we arrived in Phnom Penh at 4:00 p.m. and rushed to meet the Director who was waiting to see all of us. The team reunited with over 100 volunteers returning from Kampot, Mondulkiri, Pursat, and Pailin (Ratanakiri team were still on the way).

PHNOM PENH EVENING, SEPTEMBER 19th

- *The Visiting of CamboCorps at the Queen Mother Library and DC-Cam's Headquarters*



DC-Cam Director Chhang Youk and CamboCorps at the DC-Cam's Headquarters

On the evening of September 19, 2023, after the return from the three days field trip, CamboCorps volunteers had the opportunity to meet with the Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, Mr. Chhang Youk at DC-Cam's headquarters next to the Queen Mother Library in Phnom Penh City. CamboCorps gathered around the Director to listen to his personal story and related details about the DC-Cam and the foundation of the Queen Mother Library.

Director Chhang Youk expressed his appreciation for the commitment, dedication, and contribution of our volunteers, as well as the challenges that CamboCorps volunteers faced throughout the forum. He also expressed his gratitude for their determination in making this forum end successfully. During that opportunity, the volunteers were able to tour the Queen Mother Library. The Director gave a personal tour through the all of the facilities, providing insights on the priceless artifacts, artwork, and books that were displayed in the rooms. He also explained the meaning of the different items and how they reflect upon the past—both cultural and historical identity of the Cambodian people.

Each fine art or craft has its own meaning, including the logo of DC-Cam. Based on the design of Director Youk, “The mythical flying creature takes the form of both man and bird. Traditionally, in the Hindu religion, Garuda existed on mount of Vishnu. In the DC-Cam version, Garuda is looking back while holding a Preah Khan Reach or Khmer sacred sword aloft in one hand and a flower of the jasmine tree in the other.”¹⁶ It says that the sacred sword represents “justice” for those who passed away in an unjust way. The flower symbolizes the unforgettable “memories” of the Khmer Rouge survivors.¹⁷ The unforgettable memories are those same memories that CamboCorps volunteers heard during their field trip in the rural communities. The effort and the journey of DC-Cam throughout the years was also an interesting topic of CamboCorps.

As a Khmer Rouge survivor himself, he empathizes with the Khmer Rouge survivors and wants to create a program that could advance the rights and to improve the health conditions of the survivors. That was why this forum was organized. Director Youk marked that the participation of every one of the CamboCorps volunteers is a matter that is important to the future of Cambodia, and that is why this project is also focusing on leadership skills, starting with the development of each individual. He also wants this opportunity to allow all the fellow youths to have a renewed sense of purpose after visiting and listening to the story of the Khmer Rouge survivors.

On this occasion, Mr. Chhang Youk also praised and gave his respect to the vital role of women during the wartime period, especially his mother. He suggested this will be part of a new book that will soon be released titled, “My Mother.” He also praised the contribution of Her Majesty the Queen Mother, Norodom Moni Neath Sihanouk, the first and only dignitary leader who wrote the history by herself. Her Majesty's book is titled *Witness to History* and it was distributed during the trip with the assistance of CamboCorps volunteers. The sacrifice of women during wartime should be remembered over her pain and hardship of losing her family member, her child, and her dignity.

For her Majesty’s sacrifice to the country during wartime she should be honored and remembered by all of us. The Queen Mother Library was named in 2021 as an honor and memory for her Majesty's decades long sacrifice and contribution to the peace and stability of Cambodia. The Director noted that the Queen Mother Library was officially opened on September 20, 2020, by the Queen Mother, Norodom Moni Neath Sihanouk. This year marked the 3rd anniversary of the opening of the Queen Mother Library.

CamboCorps volunteers truly appreciated the DC-Cam and Director Chhang Youk for providing this opportunity for all of them to enhance their education and build their leadership skills

¹⁶ Taing Rinith. (2023). New DC-Cam logo remembers Khmer Rouge victims and survivors. Khmer Times. <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501362464/new-dc-cam-logo-remembers-khmer-rouge-victims-and-survivors/> [27 September 2023]

¹⁷ Ibid. Rinith.

throughout public service to Khmer Rouge survivors and CamboCorps volunteers eagerly look forward to the Cultural Diplomacy Forum that will be held in Phnom Penh. CamboCorps volunteers also shared their experience about their work activity and their time during the forum with Director Youk.

CONCLUSION



CamboCorps Forum 2023 concluded with a sense of achieving positive progress toward advancing the rights and improving the health conditions of the Khmer Rouge survivors. In addition to supporting survivors, the forum gave Cambodian youth an opportunity to develop teamwork and leadership skills in public service in remote and marginalized communities. This forum allowed the volunteers to meet Khmer Rouge survivors who taught them about the history as experienced by them. The

volunteers were taught how to conduct active listening with empathy and compassion, and they were given an orientation in basic attributes and competencies related to leadership, public service, and basic health information. As part of their leadership training, they became familiar with the importance of teamwork, working and partnering with the community, and how to think creatively to overcome challenges in their public service work.

Some of the obstacles and challenges the volunteers observed, if not had to directly overcome, encompassed such areas as: engaging with people from diverse backgrounds, including disabilities and significant medical conditions; overcoming the reluctance of local authorities to assist the volunteers out of fear of political controversy; enduring through adverse weather conditions and long days while still completing the assigned tasks; and working in teams to accomplish products under significant time constraints. Some volunteers experienced more unique challenges such as navigating the religious and cultural sensitivities of volunteers of a different religion (Cham and Khmer volunteers) or overcoming unforeseeable events (e.g., one member of CamboCorps was bitten by a cobra, and fortunately she recovered a few days later).

During the five days of the CamboCorp Forum, we have learned so many things with both staff, students, doctors, and nurses. On the first day of the forum, we learned about leadership through Oknha Dr. Mengly J. Quach. He thoroughly explained leadership to the students, and he encouraged the students to pursue further education through scholarships he was providing. We ended the trip with a remarkable meeting with the students at night and talked

about the upcoming events that DC-CAM is going to hold in the future. Finally, some students shared their thoughts about the trip. The feedback was that they were happy about the trip because they learned a lot about the survivors through their various experiences. Some were not happy with the regime while they were listening to the survivors talking about their experience. Most of CamboCorps volunteers mentioned they were able to make friends on the trip and improve their interview skills as well. The request to have such forum in the future was heard from every group.

CamboCorps volunteers also came from different backgrounds, especially from Monduliri, Ratanakiri, Stung Treng and other places. It is a chance for our volunteers to get to know about other cultures, to be able to work together as a team without discrimination including the indigenous and hill tribe people such as, Phnorn, Kreung, Kuoy, and Jarai. DC-Cam hopes that this forum allows youth from different backgrounds and provinces to connect and understand the diversity in our country which is often unnoticed for those who live in the urban environments. CamboCorps is not only an opportunity, it is also a meaningful moment, a cultural exchange, a time to build friendship, and an opportunity to discover oneself while filling an important public service need. This is the vision of the CamboCorps Forum—a forum that creates life-changing experiences for youth by helping the less fortunate.

DOCUMENTATION CENTER OF CAMBODIA								
ADVANCING THE RIGHTS AND IMPROVING THE HEALTH CONDITIONS OF KHMER ROUGE SURVIVORS								
CAMBOCORPS								
City/Province	G1	G2	G3	G4	G5	G6	G7	Total
Banteay Meanchey	20	2	8	8				38
Battambang	29	9	1	6			2	47
Kampong Cham	12	1	6	2	3	9	100	133
Kampong Chhnang	30	3	13	5			1	52
Kampong Speu	4	12	3	12	1	1	2	35
Kampong Thom	4							4
Kampot	10	1	5	1	6		8	31
Kandal	12	3					2	17
Kep	15	1	10	6				32
Koh Kong	13		2					15
Kratie	28	7	10	2	1	1	7	56
Mundol Kiri	14	2		2	1	1	4	24
Oddar Meanchey	24			9		41	56	130
Pailin	19	9						28
Phnom Penh	30	8	6				18	62
Preah Vihear	23	19	7				4	53
Prey Veng	10	4	3	4	2	5	69	97
Pursat	7	7	10	12		3	63	102
Ratanakiri	35		9	5	7	5	25	86
Siem Reap	7	3	7	3			19	39
Sihanouk		20						20
Stung Treng	21	11	7	3	11	11	5	69
Svay Rieng	24	8	6	3			2	43
Takeo	20	10	17	6	1	7	69	130
Tbong Khmum	19	12	16	5	12	12	59	135
Total	430	152	146	94	45	96	515	1478