

# មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

## DOCUMENTATION CENTER OF CAMBODIA'S PROMOTING ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT

### INTERVIEWS WITH:

EL PHEAP, YOUK NEAM, BIN NANN, RIN KHENG and THIP SAMPHATT

Field trip note by: Long Dany

On the morning of September 10, 2011, Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) staff members Long Dany and Vanthan Peou Dara traveled to Post Chass village, Preah Neth Preah commune, Banteay Meanchey province. Over two days, Dany and Peou Dara interviewed five survivors of the Khmer Rouge period living in the area.

### **El Pheap**

After arriving at 2:40 p.m. Long Dany and Peou Dara Vanthan interviewed El Pheap, who is now 62 years old. Pheap second's wife's name is Kuy Phap and she is 60 years old. Pheap has 6 daughters and 4 sons. Pheap's father's name is Kouk Nung and his mother's name is Thet Ornn. Pheap has one sister and one brother.

Pheap went to Preah Neth Preah Primary School and dropped out of school when he was in grade 7 (old system). Pheap married to his first wife, named Borey, in 1974, when he was 21 years old.

During the Khmer Rouge, Pheap was assigned to a Plowing Unit in Post Chass village and his first wife was in a Women's Unit. In 1977, Pheap's first wife died after she delivered their second baby. Shortly thereafter, Pheap was re-assigned by his village chief, named Chhem, to transport rice by ox cart from Post Chass village to Phnom Leap commune to feed a mobile work unit. While in Phnom Leap, Pheap heard about Tra Young prison and "Yeay" ("grandmother" denoting elder female) Im Chaem who was the chief of Preah Neth Preah district.

Pheap stated that in July 2011, five people (two foreigners and three Cambodians) arrived at his house in Post Chass village. They told him that they come from the Khmer Rouge Tribunal and they were looking for a lady whose name is Phat. Pheap thinks that they may have confused his wife's name, Phap, with another a woman by the name of Phat. They told him that Phat was a former Tra Young prisoner who may know about Yeay Chaem. Pheap replied that he had heard of both Tra Young prison and Preah Neth Preah district chief Yeay Chaem. As a result, the five men asked to interview Pheap about his knowledge relevant to Yeay Chaem.

### **Youk Neam**

The next interview conducted was with Youk Neam, who is 65 years old and lives in Tra Young village, Phnom Leap commune, Preah Neth Preah district. Neam's wife's name is Leak Phoeng and she is 62 years old. Neam has only one daughter. Neam's father's name is Yuk Nhoep and his mother's name is Pech Roeun. Neam has one sister and two brothers. Neam is the youngest member of his family. Neam dropped out of school when he was in grade 10 (old system).

Neam married Phoeng when he was 20 years old and was a farmer until the Khmer Rouge came to his village in 1975. At that time, his family was evacuated to Bat Trang and Lao Te

villages and finally, Kambao village. In 1976, Neam's brother took Neam and his family to live in Char village.

In 1977 Neam was called to attend a meeting at Phnom Leap commune office. During the meeting, Neam heard that a woman who lived in a wooden house near Phnom Leap Hospital was *Yeay Chaem*, chief of Preah Neth Preah district.

After Vietnamese soldiers entered Preah Neth Preah in 1979, Neam returned to his home village. At that time, Neam went to find lumber to rebuild his house and saw two dead bodies of prisoners who were killed by the Khmer Rouge in Phnom Tra Young prison shortly before the Vietnamese arrived. Neam told us that Phnom Tra Young prison is about 2 km from *Yeay Im Chaem's* house.

Neam informed us that in 2011, two different teams came to interview him. The first consisted of six people (two foreigners and four Cambodians). This group invited Neam to Phnom Leap commune office and interviewed him concerning *Yeay Im Chaem*. The second interview was conducted by three people (one Cambodian woman and two foreigners), who arrived his home.

### **Bin Nann**

The third interview was with Bin Nann, 78, and her son Rin Kheng, 47. This interview took place in Kandal village, Preah Neth Preah commune, Preah Neth Preah district.

Nann's husband's name is Doeun Se. Rin Kheng is Nann's only son. Nann's father's name is Phat and her mother's name is Khut. Nann has five sisters and one brother. Nann was the first child in her family. Nann did not go to school when she was young. Nann married Se during the Sihanouk regime, sometime before 1970.

When the Khmer Rouge took power in 1975, Nann's family was first evacuated to Phnom Kaun Damrei, followed by Sreh and finally, Paoy Pring villages. Nann was assigned to a Women's Unit and farmed in the rice fields. Nann's husband was assigned to assist "*Ta*" ("grandfather" denoting elder male) Val who was chief of a mobile work unit in region 5.

In 1977, Nann's husband escaped to the Thai border after Khmer Rouge soldiers from the Southwest Zone arrested *Ta Val*. The Southwest Zone cadres then arrested Nann and her son and sent them to Phnom Tra Young prison. There, Nann was forced to work in the rice fields and making natural fertilizer.

Nann's son, Rin Kheng, told us that he was around 10 years old when he was imprisoned with his mother at Phnom Tra Young prison. Kheng was forced cut small a small plant (*daem an-treang khet*) to produce natural fertilizer with other children in the prison. He was provided one plate of watery rice porridge for lunch and another plate for dinner. Also, while detained at the prison, Kheng saw prisoners housed in a long cottage. These prisoners were chained from their ankle to a bar running down the middle of the cottage and were never allowed outside.

Kheng told us that Soeun was chief of Phnom Tra Young Prison.

Nann told us that recently a group of foreigners and Cambodians arrived at her house and interviewed her. However, she told them that she did not know much about the prison and *Yeay Im Chaem* because she is old and lost some of her memory and is also illiterate.

### **Thip Samphatt**

The morning of September 11, Dany and Peou Dara traveled to Serey Sophoan Market in Kampong Svay village, Kampong Svay commune, Serey Sophoan district, Banteay Meanchey province. There, they met and interviewed Thip Samphatt, who is 54 years old and lives in Kandal village, Preah Neth Preah commune, Preah Net Preah district. Phatt's wife's name is Chann Saody and she is 47 years old. Phatt has two sons and three daughters. Phatt's father's name is Thip Phan and his mother, Lap Phuoy. Phatt has two brothers and three sisters. Phatt is the third child in his family.

Phatt went to Preah Neth Preah Primary School and dropped out of school in 1974 when he was in grade 7 (old system).

In 1975, Phatt was forced to join a mobile work unit which worked in Kouk Rumchek and Prey Moan. In the unit, he was forced to carry earth to build a dam and dig a canal. In 1976, Phatt was sent back to his home village and assigned to a plowing unit. At that time Phatt was selected to be a medic in Preah Neth Preah commune and was sent to train in the malarial section at a hospital in Svay Sisophon (Svay) for three months. Later, Phatt returned to Preah Neth Preah district office for a few months before he was sent to a hospital in Phnom Leap. Ly was chief of the hospital and *Ta Kann* was chief of Phnom Leap commune. *Yeay Im Chaem* was chief of Preah Neth Preah district and Chaem lived in a wooden house near Phnom Leap hospital.

In August, 1978, Phatt and two other men named Nouv and Yet were arrested and sent to Phnom Tra Young prison because they criticized the Southwest Zone cadres who eat only rice and chicken while villagers could eat only porridge. Soeun, the prison chief asked Phatt "do you know why were you arrested and sent to this prison?" Phatt answered "I don't know!" Then, Soeun took a letter out and showed it to Phatt. The letter mentioned that Phatt, Nouv and Yet had betrayed the revolution and therefore had to give their blood to the revolution. The letter was stamped and signed by *Yeay Im Chaem*.

Phatt told us Soeun liked Nouv, Yet and him. Therefore, Soeun allowed Phatt to stay with him and assigned the other two men to a Fishing Unit. When Phatt first arrived in the prison, there were around one hundred prisoners. However the prison population increased to approximately one thousand families within a few months.

Phatt, just as Kheng, also saw approximately 90 prisoners held in a long cottage with their legs chained. Phatt was forced to dig a 3 meter by 3 meter square pit which was 1.5 meters deep with other Khmer Rouge cadres. After the pit was dug, the Khmer Rouge cadres forced all of the 90 prisoners from the long cottage to kneel surrounding the pit. One by one, the prisoners were executed by being struck with a hoe. They were then buried in the mass grave soon after the Vietnamese entered Cambodia in 1979. Phatt saw the cadres strip the female prisoners naked before they were killed.

Phatt also saw *Yeay Im Chaem* and her messenger ride an old-fashioned "CL" motorbike to see Soeun inside the prison. *Yeay Im Chaem* wore a black shirt and skirt, with a scarf tied

around her neck. *Yeay Im Chaem* was pregnant at the time. Her visit to the prison took place shortly before the 90 prisoners were executed.

Phatt added that *Soeun* also sometimes ordered him to take two bottles of diesel to *Yeay Im Chaem's* house and so he knew that the house was 1 to 2 km from the prison.

Phatt stated that two men in a Lexus SUV came to see him around 8 pm in the evening a few weeks ago. They told him that they were from the Khmer Rouge Tribunal and wanted to ask him about *Soeun's* address. Phatt answered that he didn't know *Soeun's* address. The two men then invited Phatt to come to their guest house to be interviewed for around two hours. Phatt declined the invitation for that evening and the two men told him that they would return the following morning to conduct the interview. However, they never returned and Phatt has not seen them since.

END.