

**DCCAM'S PROMOTING ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT:**

**Field trip's note in Kampong Cham Province**

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*By Long Dany and Seang Chenda*

On June 13<sup>th</sup> 2016, PA team (Long Dany, Sok Vannak and Seang Chenda) had a one-day mission in Kampong Cham province in term of investigating and interviewing Khmer Rouge cadres. As a result, we were able to interview 2 cadres serving and working in Region 41 of the Central Zone. As planned, we were looking for On, a former region 41 soldier, but we could not find him; we kept asking local people if On is one of their inhabitants living in Khnul Dambang commune, until finally a village chief told us that On had died since the KR era. Nonetheless, we still had some new persons previously working in region 41. Below is a brief summary of the interviews:

- ◆ **The first interview** was conducted with 60-year-old Veong Vin, male, (Former Chief of Region 41's Kiln), a farmer, currently living in Veal village, Khnul Dambang commune, Cheung Prey district, Kampong Cham province. Vin is married to 60-year-old Sarim Him and has 3 daughters. A son of a farming family amongst 4 siblings, Vin did not have a chance to go to school, but instead was able to receive an education in the pagoda. Studying in the pagoda for years, Vin could actually read and write. Later, Vin decided to become a monk in his late 10's. Vin had been a monk for 3 years by the time the 1970 coup to depose King Sihanouk took place. By 1973, his village was liberated by the Khmer Rouge, and he forcibly quit monkhood. After leaving the monkhood, Vin was assigned to a mobile unit. In the meantime, in the south of his village, a battle between the Khmer Rouge soldiers and Lon Nol soldiers broke out. Vin was assigned to carrying ammunition and injured soldiers. Vin served in the mobile unit until Phnom Penh was liberated. After the April 17, 1975 liberation, Vin was sent to build a dam and carry earth in Khnang in vicinity of the western Skun. His unit belonged to Khnul Dambang sub-district. Having been in Khnul Dambang sub-district unit for a year (in 1976), Vin and several others were selectively transferred to the regional Chamkar Kabas [Regional Cotton Field]. Before continuing his transfer to Chamkar Kabas, Vin arrived and worked in the regional office situated in Prey Torteong. Hundreds of people were gathered in the regional

office. A few months later, the southwest cadres were transferred and placed in charge of Region 41, as a result many arrests occurred whilst [Ta] An was regional chief. Long after sjoining the productive labor cooperatives in the region, Vin and others, including his friends Oeung and Phoeung, were dispatched to Chamkar Kabas [Cotton Field] located near Andaung Kralong. They were to be tempered by clearing forest in order to plant corns and kabas (cotton), under the control of female comrade Met and Sun, both of whom were from the southwest, while Dy, a chief of Chamkar Kabas, had been arrested and taken away. In Chamkar Kabas, Vin was assigned to take control of the children unit under female comrade Met's supervision. During that time, Vin was summoned to a meeting along with others including [Ta] An. The meeting was about nothing besides developing an agricultural strategy to grow kabas. In the meantime, Vin was able to point out a few key persons during the meeting:

- Aun was a chief of regional office
- Try and Sokh were chiefs of regional soldiers

In late 1978, Vin and Oeung were selectively assigned as chiefs of a regional kiln unit in Anlong Chrey in eastern Skun. Vin assumed that he was transferred to take charge of the kiln unit because he had a relation with Met, who was a chief of Chamkar Kabas [Cotton Field]. While in the kiln unit, Vin was able to visit a home village and learned that people were put to death there. A month and a half later, the Vietnamese soldiers arrived in Cambodia, stirring Khmer Rouge cadres to flee. Vin and Oeung decided to secretly return home.

**Observation:** The latter half of the interview went well because Vin narrated his life experience during the KR. Nonetheless, he seemingly felt strange about this first-hand interview; that's why we did not meet answers that we expected to acquire regarding the region 41. However at the end of the interview, in order to help us acquire information about region 41 Vin gave us a sourceful clue, a person named [Ta] Kann, a former deputy chief of region 41 logistics/economy.

- ◆ **The second interview** was with Son Kann alias [Ta] Kann, reaching the age of 65, Watt Veal [Pagoda] Committee, currently living in Veal village, Khnul Dambang commune, Cheung Prey district, Kampong Cham province. [Ta] Kann

has been divorced for years but has 1 daughter. Born 2<sup>nd</sup> amongst 5 siblings in a farmer family, Kann did not go to school, but was also able to acquire an education in the pagoda. Having studied in the pagoda a while, Kann decided to become a monk for 3 years. After a coup in 1970 broke out, the condition in his village was chaotic; therefore he decided to leave the monkhood. By 1972-73, his village was already liberated, so Kann was assigned to a mobile unit to carry earth. At that time the district chief was Sao. Until early 1975, Kann was transferred to the frontline to carry injured soldiers from battle near Phnom Penh. After Phnom Penh was liberated on April 17, 1975, Kann and 11 others from the district were selectively recruited as workers to the region. In actuality, instead of being assigned as a regional worker, Kann became a staff of the regional economic office, particularly Logistics of Region 41, located in Prey Torteong, while the rest of them were sent to a variety of units. The chief of regional logistics was Hao. Kann served in regional logistics until the southwest cadres were transferred to the region 41 in early 1977. Then, the arrest began. Hao was arrested and taken away, and Koan (female) was put in charge of regional logistics instead. In addition, Kann also witnessed Sao, a chief of Cheung Prey district, being captured by [Ta] An's soldiers and put in Jeep to be taken away. Kann does not know where that Cheung Prey district chief was taken. In 1978, [Ta] An took his soldiers equipped with guns to arrest Kann, but they failed. [Ta] An accused him of transporting 40 trucks of rice to the enemy. Having no choice, Kann bravely replied to [Ta] An, "I do not transport only 40 trucks of rice, but indeed, I do more than this for all workers in Chamkar Kabas. Thus, do you regard them as enemies?". [Ta] An remained quiet and Kann continued, "If you like to arrest me, it is fine, but it won't end like this.". In reality, Kann only said this because he had no other way to survive. After Kann said this, [Ta] An remained still and showed him a sealed letter of the arrest. [Ta] An and his soldiers then went back without conducting any arrests. Kann affirmed that [Ta] An's guards/soldiers were recruited after his arrival in the region 41, most of them were from the southwest. After the transfer of the southwest cadres, all conditions worsened terribly until the Vietnamese soldiers arrived in early 1979. Kann, along with other Khmer Rouge cadres, escaped to Raut in the north, near Tonle Sab. Later, he and his friend decided to return to their village in secrecy, travelling for a few days until

arriving home. In 1980, Kann married but was later divorced. Kann has continued his life as a committee member of Watt Veal Pagoda until now.

**Observation:** Not long after learning about Kann, a former deputy of regional logistics living in the pagoda, we went straight to meet him. Once we arrived in the pagoda, he came across us and we began talking with him. In actuality, Kann has been blind for years, so he could not see us; nevertheless, we tried to convince him of our purpose. Ultimately, Kann conceded to let us interview him. He was approachable and very direct. As a result, he proved to be a much more fruitful source relating to the region 41. In addition, we also received considerable information on a former chief of regional logistics, Koan, who married Soth, currently living in Kang Meas district. All in all, Kann was not hesitant in sharing what he had been through in its entirety.