

ANLONG VENG PEACE CENTER (AV-PC)

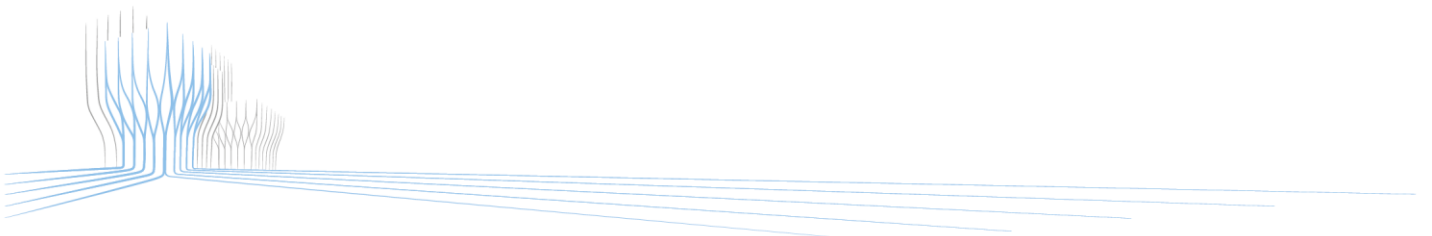
Anlong Veng: Moving Forward

By Ly Sok-Kheang
April 19-22, 2016

An effort to raise public awareness about Anlong Veng's community history and its historical sites is a bridge to promote community reconciliation and to encourage a more fruitful social integration among Anlong Veng's people. The third tour of the



Anlong Veng Peace Tour participants at Learning Center for Sustainable Development





Anlong Veng Peace Tour program on April 19-22, 2016 was organized. The tour then moved to a critical point for students to partake in this initiative: an event to voice their opinions on how the Anlong Veng people should move forward. “Historical Tourist Spot” are a consistent thought among the participants, even if they voice differing opinions as to the direction the community should take. This report will specifically highlight the guest speakers of the program and then link it to participants’ various prospects for the Anlong Veng community. The last part will touch upon their overall views toward the entire peace tour program.

Highlighting Activities

As part of this peace tour program, participants were provided with a series of presentations: the history of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979), the community history of Anlong Veng (1979-1998), the dynamics of Cambodia’s reconciliation process, 1979 to 2007, interview techniques, understandings of peace, violence, and conflict, and selected guest speakers. On the second day (April 20, 2016), the peace tour program also invited two guest speakers to share and exchange views with the participants.

Mr. Chhim Phon, 59, said:

I joined the revolution at the age of 14 years old. I lived in Tram Kak district, Takeo province. I volunteered to join the KR and served as a soldier in Tram Kak in 1973 and then to Phnom Den. I fought against the Lon Nol army. I was in Battalion T-4 of a region in Takeo. I heard about Prince Sihanouk’s appeal to join the Marky forest. I was in Svay Rieng province to fight against Vietnam in 1978. My division 912 under *Ta* Pheap was on the defensive, but never fought into Vietnam before the Vietnamese army came into Cambodia. Upon my arrival in Eastern Zone, I did not see any people as they all were evacuated. I came to live in Anlong Veng in 1981. I joined the resistant forces, which consisted of thousands of soldiers. I saw *Ta* Mok building roads, schools, and other infrastructures. I loved *Ta* Mok, [even though] I did not have any relations

with him. I got married in 1982.

My children could get an education. I became a farmer after I was demobilized in 1998. I earn an income as a simple citizen. It's much better. My opinion about the KR regime was that I felt so sad. I did not want this to happen again. I see a very big difference between the period under Ta Mok and now. Under Ta Mok, the people could live a better life, but the problem was that there was constant gun fighting in this area. But Ta Mok provided everything, even medicine; Ta Mok provided food for survival.

Ms. Uch Phirun, 1957, O-korki Kandal village, Lumtorng commune, Anlong Veng district, said:

I was born in Kratie province and then I joined the revolution in early 1971. I was 13 years old. My province was an autonomous region. I worked for the artistic unit for several months. Then I worked for the medical unit, and in 1974 I volunteered to work for this unit. I was trained for this unit for one year. I was sent to the frontline. I had to come along with soldiers as a form of encouragement. Sometimes, I was sent to the battlefield. My unit fought from Kap Srauv. My unit was divided into two: one to Ratanak Kiri and the one to the state warehouse. I was assigned to carry salt and other works. I had enough food to eat, while I did not know about the food scarcity in other villages. However, I was assigned to work so hard. After 1979, I fled to Kampong Speu, Kampong Chhnang, Battambang province and then to Anlong Veng district, Oddar Meanchey province. I was brought back from village 808, now Thailand occupied the land. I lived in Anlong Veng and worked here under Ta Mok's control. Only after re-integration could I visit my home village. I felt that Ta Mok took care of all the wives of soldiers. It's his advantage. I did not know whether Ta Mok was a butcher. Honestly, I did not know about Ta Mok. Previously I heard many people talking about him. I got married in 1980. My husband joined the KR revolution in Takeo in 1972. I lost my relatives during the war. In 1979 I stopped work as a medical practitioner. Anlong Veng now is more progressive, but some social illness continues to be very bad. Ta

Mok did many things for the Anlong Veng community. He stressed that the community needed to strengthen the economy. After he built a dam and a bridge, rice production increased, fish also increased. My most memorable thought was that death could claim my life anytime. Before I reached the Dangrek mountains after 1979, I greatly suffered from traveling by foot.



An interviewee in Anlong Veng

In this individual story, the participants showed their mixed responses. While many viewed the stories as informative, thoughtful, and truthful, other participants were dismayed over the limitations of the guest speakers' responses to their questions or intentions of not answering questions. Case in point, Ms. Keo Nimol, 23, a pre-service teacher of the National Institute of Education (NIE) argued that the story telling process could reaffirm the truth about KR history and the post-KR period. She linked these narratives to what her mother told her. While she believed the narratives, she would have preferred to engage in a relatively more open discussion. Some of the participants, i.e. Ms. Pul Sany, 26, of NIE, could not digest more information from the speakers.

That is why some participants carefully followed the story telling process and provided some critical comments.

Both Ms. Rath Yuna, 20, of Royal University of Law and Economics (RULE) and Ms. Mao Kimsour, 20, a pre-service teacher of the NIE said the speakers tried to refrain themselves from sharing their stories and, at some points, avoided answering their

questions. However, Ms. Nim Manich, 19, a pre-service teacher of NIE, observed that Ms. Uch Phirun was more open in sharing her story with the participants.

However, the participants were emphatic with the speakers given that they shared the most difficult moment in their lives—enduring the civil war and genocide. They wrote that no matter if one is a victim or perpetrator, we all suffered as a nation. Anlong Veng is one of the many examples of how peace can be restored and maintained and how to progress toward socio-economic reintegration. During the third peace tour program, the participants even wished to discuss how the Anlong Veng community should move forward.

Contemplating the Anlong Veng Community



Students growing tree

While regarding the peace tour as an educational opportunity that the community has experienced, the participants even contemplated its future direction. Large portions of the participants wrote that the “historical tourist spots” show the most potential to reach a wider public sphere. Dim Seila should become one of the most attractive tourist spots where the public

could learn about its history through dialogue. In addition to Angkor Wat, the most popular destination, Nim Manith should be developed into a lively border area to attract more people to live there. Like other border areas, it’s a measure to secure our border. Both Ieng Sovann and Rath Sophal spoke in the same vein as Seila, stressing the importance of increasing local income through tourism. To achieve this end,



Sovann thought that road access improvement and security were the keys to make the public safe if they are to visit those historical sites. Restoring rainforests in the area would be necessary for its ecological impact.

Introducing Trees to Ta Mok's Meeting House

Having travelled in April, the hottest month of the year, and witnessed the loss of rainforests in the Anlong Veng community, the peace tour participants had a common proposal to use their lunch break to grow some trees in the community. The team then approached the state-run tree growing office to ask permission. Forty trees were planted in the vicinity of Ta Mok's meeting house. Sophat wrote in her daily reflection that growing trees would help our community and she hoped all the trees could grow well. She added that: "I thank the instructor for giving us a series of lectures and inspiring us to love and take care of nature because we had a chance to grow trees with a wholehearted enthusiasm." Yuna strongly hoped that those trees would provide good shade for all visitors. From this trip onwards, the peace tour program endorsed a "one-student-one-tree" program that would also provide them with the sense of ownership of their country. So, students of every peace tour program would plant one tree in this community.

Conclusion

Students of this peace tour enjoyed the privilege to learn about the historical sites, to start an inter-generational dialogue with former KR members, and to reflect on their past knowledge about the KR regime. The two speakers made their first attempt at an individual narrative. This has prepared them for an interview. As planned, each participant succeeded in engaging a very fruitful dialogue with former KR members. They then turned their interviews into articles for DC-Cam's magazine "Searching for the Truth." These students found themselves learning to unite diversity as some of them were children of former KR members. As part of the peace tour, they were even able to plant trees to restore the rainforest in the community. Such desire stemmed largely from their common understanding of its potential to become one of the most attractive tourist spots in Cambodia.



APPENDIX I: PHOTO LINK

By Soeun Minea

http://www.dccam.org/Projects/AVPC/photo/2016/Third_Peace_Tour_in_Anlong_Veng_April_19-22_2016/index.html

APPENDIX II: List of Participants

No	Name	Age	Sex	School	Level
1	Soeun Minea	20	M	RUPP	Year 3
2	Mao Kimsour	20	F	NIE	Year 2
3	Keo Nimol	23	F	NIE	Year 2
4	Nim Manich	19	F	NIE	Year 2
5	Ieng Sovann	22	M	NIE	Year 2
6	Pul Sany	26	F	NIE	Year 2
7	Roath Sophal	20	F	RULE	Year 2
8	Roath Yuna	20	F	RULE	Year 2
9	Soeun Bun Heng	19	M	RULE	Year 2
10	Lot Phat	20	F	ITC	Year 2
11	Penh Sochannary	21	F	ACI	Year 2
12	Yin You Yien	16	F	ANLONG VENG	Grade 10
13	Dim Seila	16	F	ANLONG VENG	Grade 10
14	Khin Seila	17	M	ANLONG VENG	Grade 11
15	Chan Sreipov	17		ANLONG VENG	Grade 11

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Team: Ly Sok-Kheang, Taing Gechly, Long Aun, and Sieng Chenda