

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា  
Anlong Veng Peace Center

Anlong Veng Peace & Human Rights Study Tour

**Anlong Veng: A Community of Understanding and Healing**

By: Ly Sok-Kheang

July 16-19, 2018

From July 16-19, 2018, a group of twenty-four students from the Royal University of Law and Economics (RULE) and Anlong Veng High School participated in a study tour aimed at providing them with basic knowledge of the history of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979), Anlong Veng community history (1979-1998), and also core concepts of peace and reconciliation. In particular, these students had a chance to learn directly from the personal experiences of villagers in Anlong Veng. This inter-generational dialogue is a way to understand the past, to negotiate the differences and to promote tolerance, peace, and reconciliation in the community.



*Group photo in the garden of Anlong Veng Peace Center*

This report attempts to highlight: first, the discussion with the participants before embarking on the trip; second, the presentation and group discussion concerning peace, and third, the field research the students did in the two villages of the Anlong Veng district. The final part will briefly touch on the extra work the participants did by contributing to the “Garden of Healing” inside the compound of the Anlong Veng Peace Center.

## Pre-Study Tour Activities



*Video interview with villagers*

On July 12-13, 2018, the students of RULE came to DC-Cam's office to participate in a pre-trip meeting and also to hear about trip activities and other assignments. The group consisted of twenty carefully selected students. The meeting started with an overview of the daily itinerary for the study tour and then we stressed that each student would select a topic to explore during the 4-day program. Each student responded with their topic of interest. Three were interested

in learning more about the daily life and main sources of living for the Anlong Veng people; while another three wondered when Anlong Veng was established, how they suffered under the KR regime, and why the KR movement chose Anlong Veng as its final stand against the government. Nine students were curious about Ta Mok's personality and his war strategy. Two participants wished learn more about Ta Mok's ability to mobilize the support of the people, how he organized Anlong Veng as a small community along the border, and how he commanded an army that retained control over Anlong Veng until 1989. Two students desired to learn more about the conflict between Ta Mok and Pol Pot and the acts that led to the final reintegration of Anlong Veng in 1998. One participant came up with an interesting idea to examine the tactics used by Ta Mok to win the people's support for his anti-government war. With these topics in mind, each participant was instructed to start thinking of five major questions they wanted answered during the trip. Accordingly, a series of questions were created and shared prior to the trip.

One student's, Tuon Reaksa, thoughts resonated with those of her friends' writing that: "I want to get a better sense of what the community is like and interview those who lived through the KR regime." Each participant greatly appreciated and looked forward to a face-to-face discussion with former KR members. Additionally, the students were also expecting to learn more about the legacy of Anlong Veng's infrastructure, the existing 14 historical sites, long-held KR ideologies, characteristics of the KR leaders, i.e. Ta Mok, and the possible adverse effects of the regime when considering the current social fabric. The study tour was also meant to have students work in groups with the local students, and learn about research methodologies. Ret Meng Hai and Sen



Kimlang anticipated a certain degree of truth being told and then wished to turn that information into a research paper.

### **Journey into the Landscape of Healing, Anlong Veng**

In the early morning of July 16, 2018, twenty students showed up and went on the mini bus to Anlong Veng, the former final stronghold of the KR. On the way, Kimi Takesue, professor of Arts from Rutgers-Newark University, U.S., followed and filmed their activities. Some students talked with each other, while others fell asleep only a few hours after departure. Immediately after their arrival in Anlong Veng, the students were led to some historical sites such as the former school and hospital of Ta Mok and O-Chik bridge. However, the itinerary had to be cut short after visiting the school because of the heavy rain during the evening. Everyone rushed to take shelter and waited for the next day's activities.

All the participants started the new day by heading to the top of the Dangrek mountain and turning right where there is a beautiful cliff and the Anlong Veng Peace Center, the former meeting place of Ta Mok. Stepping out of the mini bus, they caught a glimpse of the cliff and could not wait to take photographs. Later, they walked into the Anlong Veng Peace Center for the very first time and took a seat for the day's session.



*Students leveling the soil at the garden*

The sessions covered the learning objectives of the Peace Study Tour: the history of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979) and the Anlong Veng community, interview techniques, and also the critically important concept of “peace.” Instead of giving a direct presentation for this session, the students were divided into four groups and discussed the meaning of peace and the ways it can be achieved.

After 20 minutes, each of the groups presented very similar ideas of how to define “peace,” but, the groups differed in how they believed “peace” is reflected in real life. Group 1 conceived of peace as a peaceful life without any discrimination, violence or war. To achieve this, the group explained that freedoms and rights to life, expression, and assembly should be respected as stated in the principles of domestic and international laws. The group argued that rights and equality should be the backbone of democracy, and that past human rights violations should be documented, studied, and shared in order to raise public awareness and to prevent it from happening again. In a similar vein, group 2 viewed peace as a state of “no war, no chaos, no invasion, and no discrimination.” To help clarify this, the group emphasized three components: political stability, culture, and religion. The group also commented that peace can be in danger if people are “greedy.” Group 3 was a bit different from the other two groups, arguing that peace can be achieved in physical, mental, and economic sectors. The group believed that the mental component should be to have no malice against each other; no physical

violence should be resorted to. Additionally, the group stressed that living conditions cannot be separated from peace.

Group 4 went the furthest to define peace by laying out six points for peace to be maintained: first, negotiation among the conflicting parties; second, encourage tolerance and compromise instead of any violence; third, “full independence of the country” is the key to see whether the country is at peace; fourth, there is great importance of “putting national interest at the highest level;” fifth, “the process of accepting truth” is a way to resolve any conflicts; and sixth, education can equip people with knowledge and foresight to make any decisions. Overall, the group concluded that peace can start humbly from each individual.

After the presentations, the participants divided into three groups to hear the narratives of two civil parties to Case 002 at the Khmer Rouge tribunal, and a local resident spoke about her life during the KR regime and under Ta Mok’s rule. One group stayed inside the Anlong Veng Peace Center, and the other two went outside under trees to hear the narratives. Each group asked questions to get a better sense of the personal history. The session was wrapped up in about half an hour.

The final session of the day detailed how to produce a short documentary film. The film crews provided careful guidance about how to become a film maker in 5 minutes. Each of the 4-member film crews became a cameraman/woman, note-taker, mic controller, or interviewers. To prepare for the next day, each team practiced using their own equipment and did tests to make sure their practice was on the right track. As planned, three teams were sent to two villages, O’Angre and Tuol Prasat of Trapeang Tav commune, Anlong Veng district. They effectively performed their recently learned jobs. The local residents also collaborated to share their personal histories with the students. In other words, twelve other participants shared their testimonies and were able to make their voices heard in the pieces of writing.

After such diligent interviews, all the participants worked collectively on the garden at the Anlong Veng Peace Center. They leveled and cleared the soil. It took about two hours. Before getting it got dark, they planted corn and bean seeds in the fields. Planting crops is part of our effort to make the once abandoned areas into a green garden where visitors can enjoy organic fruits and vegetable.

The Anlong Veng Peace & Human Rights Study Tour wrapped up with visits to Son Sen’s Cremation Site, Ta Mok’s stupa, and Ta Mok’s museum, Ta Mok’s former house. The participants returned to Phnom Penh with wonderful memories of Anlong Veng.



*Sen Kimlang*

*Sie Kimcheng:* “I liked planting the vegetables in the Anlong Veng Peace Center.”

*Chip Sathavy:* “I learned a tremendous amount about Anlong Veng—it was the Khmer Rouge movement’s last stronghold along with many social experiences.”

*Rim Sokheng:* “Our Anlong Veng rests on the beautiful mountainous landscape filled with many historical narratives.”

*Sen Kimlang:* “I liked the uniqueness of the programs designed by the Anlong Veng Peace Center. The programs not only inspired me to learn more about our history but also encouraged me to open myself up to the Anlong Veng community.”

*Sreu Penh Chet:* “I will always remember the warm and beautiful smiles of the Anlong Veng residents. It inspires me! I want to go back there again.”

*Mut Chanrina:* “Besides learning about our history, I also learned how to use a video camera to produce a short documentary film about what I have witnessed in history. I have some skills now.”

*Soeun Chantheng:* “Sea of Green Forest is Peaceful in my heart ... You Are Anlong Veng!”

*Sim Ra:* “The Peace Tour allowed me to expose myself socially and academically to a new understanding of our history.”



*Venerable monk Sim Ra*

### **APPENDIX: Photo links**

Anlong Veng Peace Center. Peace and Human Rights Study Tour: Students of the Royal University of Law and Economics

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/tvtBUqjWogMTKvye7>

Anlong Veng Peace Tour: A BEAUTIFUL LIFE IN THE RAINS.

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/3tJqERf9oxxsoBcC9>

### **APPENDIX: List of Participants on July 16-19, 2018**

<b>No</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>School</b>
1	Tuon Reaksa	F	Royal University of Law and Economics (RULE)
2	Chip Sathavy	F	RULE
3	Sen Kimlang	F	RULE
4	Sie Kimcheng	F	RULE
5	Vy Thany	F	RULE
6	Sim Ra	M	RULE
8	Khom Kimva	M	RULE
9	Chhuon Champei	M	RULE
10	Ret Menghai	M	RULE
11	Khorn Borei Ratanak	M	RULE
12	Sreu Penh Chet	M	RULE
13	Peou Deyven	M	RULE
14	Top Chan Ratana	M	RULE

15	Sim Kimhav	M	RULE
16	Tim Ponleu	M	RULE
17	Rim Sokheng	M	RULE
18	Mut Chanrina	F	RULE
19	Soeun Chantheng	F	RULE
20	Prum Kitmann	M	RULE
21	Rit Sophal	F	Anlong Veng High School
22	Kan Sreidoch	F	Anlong Veng High School
23	Kim Sovanlida	F	Anlong Veng High School
24	Sa Moninich	F	Anlong Veng High School

**TEAM:** Ly Sok-Kheang, Phat Bora, Sout Vechet, San Bunsim, Ouch Makara, Nguon Lina, Hean Den, Un Vey and Kimi Takesue.

**REPORT:** Ly Sok-Kheang

**Donors**



Activity supported by the  
Canada Fund for Local Initiatives  
Activité réalisée avec l'appui du  
Fonds canadien d'initiatives locales

Canada

