

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា Anlong Veng Peace Center

ANLONG VENG PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS STUDY TOUR

Peace Discussion

From October 18-21, 2017, a new round of the Anlong Veng Peace and Human Rights Study Tour began with 15 (11 female) university and Anlong Veng high school students participating. This program is designed to promote inter-personal and inter-community dialogue as part of our broader objectives of promoting memory, peace, and reconciliation. Students of various majors and backgrounds, regardless of whether their



Group photo in front of a community learning center

relatives were victims or perpetrators, are selected and trained to partake in the community-based reconciliation project of the Anlong Veng Peace Center.

The start of this Canadian-funded project took place during Cambodia's annual recollection of the October 1991 Paris Peace Agreement (Peace Agreement). Today, this agreement's validation is debated. It was supposed to be the official end of Cambodia's chronic conflicts. However, this has not been achieved. This year marks 19 years (1998-2017) since Cambodians could have realized peace. Peace, in this context, refers to the absence of violent conflict.

This article will first highlight the activities of the Peace and Human Rights Study Tour. Then, it will examine students' perception on peace in general, not their opinions about the Peace Agreement. And, lastly, it will focus on the students' post tour and daily reflections of the entire program.

Activities

Pre-tour meeting

On the 17th of October 2017, one day before the Anlong Veng Peace and Human Rights study tour, the Anlong Veng Peace Center's team met with the 10 participants. These participants had diverse academic backgrounds and came from many different walks of life. The meeting started with



A survivor sharing his personal story through the KR regime

an introduction of the Anlong Veng Peace and Human Rights study tour, its purposes, its previous participants, and its funding sources.

Next, the participants discussed why they wanted to join the tour. Most participants said they had many questions about the Khmer Rouge that could not be answered by studying the subject at school or by listening to stories from living relatives. The participants coveted an opportunity to learn directly from Anlong Veng, the final stronghold of the Khmer Rouge. One participant said that he wanted the opportunity to write his graduation dissertation at Anlong Veng. Aside from the four students who are studying history at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), the participants did not have much knowledge about Khmer Rouge and the Anlong Veng community generally.

When asked about what they wanted to know about the Anlong Veng community and Khmer Rouge history, their responses were as follows:

- Hul Sros said: "I want to know more about the story behind Pol Pot's grave and Ta Mok's meeting house."
- Ty Plech said: "I also want to know about the historical sites; the lives of Khmer Rouge cadres and the prejudice they faced; as well as the leadership structure in Anlong Veng after the Khmer Rouge regime [fell]."
- That Sreymab said: "I want to learn about the changes in the livelihood of Anlong Veng's people from before the Khmer Rouge regime until the present."
- Hak Delina said: "I want to know how the people of Anlong Veng feel about the Khmer Rouge and the reasons they joined the Khmer Rouge."
- Ma Sokvibol said: "I want to know why Anlong Veng became the final stronghold of the Khmer Rouge and the special characteristics of the region."
- Kheang Senghoeun said: "I want to learn about the perspectives of the Anlong Veng people toward the Khmer Rouge leaders and how these perspectives have changed over the years."

- Soy Natry said: “I want to know about the Anlong Veng people’s perspective toward Khmer Rouge in general.”



Students interviewing people

- Ren Rachana said: “I want to know why Anlong Veng lasted longer than any other Khmer Rouge strongholds and why the Khmer Rouge tried so hard to defend it.”
- Hout Senglim said: “I want to know how the Anlong Veng people know about the Khmer Rouge and where the supports Khmer Rouge got.” [Not sure what is being said here, maybe:

where the supporters of the Khmer Rouge went/are?

- Pech Marina said: “I want to know how the Khmer Rouge ruled Anlong Veng and where those Khmer Rouge came from.”

Next, the Anlong Veng Peace Center’s team encouraged the participants to write down five additional questions they wanted answered during the trip. Then, the Peace Center’s team discussed the itinerary and the requirement of the trip. The requirement was that each participant had to interview one person in Anlong Veng and write one article, and submit it to the center for publication.

Day One

Much of the first day was spent travelling from Phnom Penh to Anlong Veng. Upon arriving in the evening, the participants had the chance to take a quick tour around some of the historical sites in Along Veng (including Ta Mok’s school, hospital, bridge, and lake). They also could visit the Anlong Veng Peace Center which is located on top of the Dangrek mountains. There, the participants saw for the first time the calming and peaceful atmosphere of the Center and Anlong Veng. The participants had a brief, yet meaningful, discussion inside the Center. Discussing various topics such as: how to think critically, what is education, what are the obstacles the Along Veng currently faces, what impact can each participant bring to the community, how to further promote peace and reconciliation, and what can be done to further develop Anlong Veng and preserve its historical significance.

Day Two

The second day started by meeting with 5 other Anlong Veng students. We had a quick breakfast at a nearby restaurant, and left for the community house located in O-Korki Kandal village where most of the day’s activities happened. The Anlong Veng Peace Center’s staff started the session by getting everyone in the room to introduce themselves. This was followed by a brief presentation about the objectives and trip agenda, as well as a short video about the Anlong Veng Peace and Human Rights Study tour. The Anlong Veng Peace Center’s staff continued to give presentations on various

topic concerning the history of Anlong Veng and Khmer Rouge generally. Questions and discussion from the participants came afterward.

After the presentations, the participants were divided in 3 groups, consisting of 5 people per group (each group included a leader, a recorder, a motivator, a timekeeper, and a reporter) to discuss and present ideas on two questions: What factors are required to achieve peace? How is peace sustained?

Group Discussion on “Peace”

The fifteen students put peace in context by providing ways it could be maintained. The three teams, shared two common thoughts: that only through “the people” and “education” could peace be secured and stability established in contemporary Cambodia. However, the teams also came up with other, unique factors. One team believed that leadership levels should play a decisive factor. Considering this, the fragility of peace would be dependent upon the will, commitment, interest, or greed of the leadership. Another team believed rule of law is a main focal point of peace. This team asserted that individuals deserve equal treatment before the law; and that a reliable justice system would reduce the possibility of social unrest. Finally, the teams valued information as playing a critical role in protecting peace. It should be noted that the students did not mention some of the negative sides of that medium, i.e. misinformation and provoking.

Additionally, based on the teams’ common recommendations to safeguard information, the teams valued the idea of building up mutual trust and understanding, promoting tolerance, endorsing an extremism-free environment, increasing a sense of solidarity, and crafting peaceful settlements concerning any rising disagreements or conflicts, as well as upholding human rights and socio-economic standards and development for all people.

During the afternoon session, a brief presentation was given about how to interview people; and the 15 participants were divided into 4 smaller groups for the field work. Guest speakers were invited to speak to the students so that they could practice working together before going to a village. It served as a sample of how they work together at a village. For the last activity of the day, the students toured the historical sites guided by two tour guides, who were trained in August 2017.

Day Three

The participants were taken to a local village called Lumtong Chas to engage in an inter-generational dialogue with the locals. Working in groups of 3 or 4 members, the participants succeeded in collecting individuals’ narratives concerning his or her life during the Khmer Rouge rule. Additionally, each student took a photo with the village residents. For most, this was the first opportunity they had to directly interact with the local people. Each participant’s article will be published in the local newspaper Reaksmeay Kampuchea and DC-CAM’s “Searching for the Truth” magazine.

Day Four



Students doing group presentations

The students left Along Veng to visit the Wat Thmey pagoda in Siem Reap. There they received a short introduction to exhibitions on “Forced Transfer,” “Phnom Penh in 1979,” and “Wat Thmey information during the KR regime.” After that, the participants did a final reflection, comparing the dark history of the Khmer Rouge with the glorious legacy of Angkor Wat at the reading hall inside Wat Thmey.

Participants’ Reflections

In their reflections, all the students wrote that they felt the trip was informative, educational, and significant. The historical sites and dialogue in Anlong Veng drew collective attention. Ty Plech, 4th year student majoring in history at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), wrote: “it is extremely important to strengthen our knowledge of the KR history. This will broaden our understanding, thus enabling us to think critically.” Like Plech, That Sreimab commented on the face-to-face meeting with the Anlong Veng residents, writing that: “many of our Cambodian people perished during the KR period. As part of the younger generation, I will make a strong appeal for an effective prevention of such heinous crimes.” Besides the substance of the program, the participants also valued the team spirit and the opportunity to share their various thoughts on relevant topics. Soy Natty, 2nd year student majoring in International Relation at the Institute of Foreign Language (IFL), wrote: “History teaches us about what is right or wrong. It has thus left us to remedy the mistakes so that our country can live in peace and prosperity.”

APPENDIX: List of Participants and Backgrounds

No	Name	Age	Sex	School	Biography
1	Kol Dalin	18	F	RUPP	Kol Dalin was born in Kompong Cham in 1999. She is a second-year student majoring in Japanese at the Institute of Foreign Languages, and a first-year student majoring in International Business Management at Royal University of Phnom Penh.
2	Kheang Senghoeun	23	M	PUC	Born in Kandal province in 1994, Kheang Senghoeun is a senior student at Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia majoring in International Relations.
3	Pech Marina	17	F	RUPP	Pech Marina is 17 years old (born in 2000). She was born and raised in Phnom Penh. She is a second-year student at the Institute of Foreign Languages studying Japanese. She is

					also a second-year at ACILIDA Institute of Business, majoring in Banking and Finance.
4	Soy Natty	19	F	RUPP	Born in 1998, Soy Natty is native of Banteay Meanchey. She came to Phnom Penh to pursue her education. Natty is a second-year International Relations major at the Institute of Foreign Languages.
5	Huot Senglim	19	M	RUPP	Huot Senglim, born in 1998, has lived in Phnom Penh his entire life. He is currently a first-year English major at the Institute of Foreign Languages.
6	Hak Deulina	17	F	RUPP	A native of Banteay Meanchey province, Hak Delina was born in 2000. Lina is a second-year student of Royal University of Phnom Penh majoring in Tourism Management and English.
7	Ty Plech	22	M	RUPP	Originally from Svay Rieng, Ti Phlech is 22 years old (born in 1995). He is in his fourth year of higher education at Royal University of Phnom Penh majoring in History.
8	Hul Srors	22	M	RUPP	Born and raised in Prey Veng, Hul Sros is 22 years old History major. He came to Phnom Penh to continue his education at Royal University of Phnom Penh.
9	Thatt Sreimab	22	F	RUPP	Thatt Sreymabb was born in Oddar Meanchey Province in 1995. Presently, Sreymabb is History major, senior student at Royal University of Phnom Penh.
10	Rin Rachana	23	F	RUPP	Rin Rachana is 23 years old, born and raised in Prey Veng province. After completing her high school education, Rachana moved to Phnom Penh to continue her education. Currently, she is in her senior year at RUPP majoring in History.
11	Chhuot Chanra	17	F	Anlong Veng	Chhuot Chanra, born in 2000, is an Anlong Veng resident who is in grade 12 at Anlong Veng high school.
12	Von Sokoam	20	F	Anlong Veng	Von Sokoam is 20 years old (born in 1997). She is a resident of Anlong Veng and in grade 12 at Anlong Veng high school.
13	Khin Sreinet	17	F	Anlong Veng	Currently a senior student at Anlong Veng high school, Khen Sreynet is a resident of Anlong Veng. She was born in 2000.
14	Chroek Phearatt	16	F	Anlong Veng	Chroek Phearatt is a 16 year old girl (born in 2001). She was born and raised in Anlong Veng. Phearatt is in grade 11 at Anlong Veng high school.
15	Seu Sreinich	16	F	Anlong Veng	Born in 2001, Seu Sreynich is a resident of Anlong Veng and is in grade 11 at Anlong Veng high school.

TEAM: Ly Sok-Kheang, Phat Bora and Chan Late

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DONORS: CANADA and USAID