

Presentation at Cambodian University for Specialties, Banteay Meanchey province

Banteay Meanchey province was separated from Battambang province in 1988. The province during the Khmer Rouge regime was controlled by Moul Sambath alias Ros Nhem, Northwestern zone leaders. It was one of the regions that contained the highest rate of death, partly due to the harsh policy of the Khmer Rouge's Party Center setting high quotas for agricultural production from the region. Though the region had vast land for agricultural production, the limited labour and prohibition of machinery usage prevented the region to achieve the goal. Thousands New People from cities and towns were evacuated to do hard labour in this region, and subsequently died of inadequate food, health care, exhaustion, and execution.

With this important site, on December 14, 2014, the Cambodia Tribunal Monitor (CTM) Project of the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) conducted a workshop at Cambodian University for Specialties, Banteay Meanchey province. The workshop focused on the history of Democratic Kampuchea, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, and the resources provided by the CTM website. The workshop will be conducted from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. with the participation of 100 students most of whom are primary school teachers and government officers.

To begin, Nong Thy, director of Cambodian University for Specialty in Banteay Meanchey, gave an opening speech and introduction to the team. This is the first time that the university hosted this kind of workshop. He hopes that students will take part in discussion actively, and transfer what they will learn to the students they are teaching.

After screening of a documentary film about the Tuol Sleng prison or S-21 in 1979, Chea Phalla presented history of the Khmer Rouge starting from the formation of the communist movement against the French colonization to the Khmer Rouge period. Before the break, Kim Sovannpany introduced students the Cambodia Tribunal Website where students can conduct research on the Khmer Rouge tribunal. She then showed a footage when Nuon Chea testified at the ECCC, and reactions of people against his testimony. Most students watched the footage tentatively as they have never been the ECCC. Last, Lim Cheytoath presented update of the ECCC focusing on charges on the accused, challenges of the trials including financial shortfall and old age of the accused, and reparation projects for victims.

Ly Sokhim a first year student at CUS sobbed when she saw footage of S-21 taken by the Vietnamese in 1979 soon after the regime collapsed. Her father had worked for late king father Norodom Sihanouk, and thus was sent to kill at S-21. She had a hard time living without her father. As a high school teacher, she will keep telling her students about her time during the Khmer Rouge.

Chhuon Chamroeun said he was ashamed that he didn't know much about the regime though he experienced the regime. The meeting this morning provided him an update of the trials the KR leaders, and precise history of the KR.

Khut Chamne requested the team to keep doing this important work. It is extremely useful for students especially those who was born after the regime and do not know much about this. He was not interested in the KR history until today. The event has changed his perception, and encouraged him to research more.

Chhay Vantha, grade-5 teacher at Phnom Dey primary school, said the presentations are informational, while materials provided are important educational tool. She learned very little about the KR when she studied in high school. All she knew was from her parents. Her younger sister does not even believe that the regime existed.

Selected questions from students:

- 1) Was King Sihanouk involved in killings of Cambodian people during the KR?
- 2) What are the benefits of the ECCC given that the accused are old?
- 3) How did the Khmer Rouge policy of eliminating classes resulted in mass killings?
- 4) Why starvation still existed after the KR collapsed?
- 5) What is Khmer-Vietminh?
- 6) What was KR involvement with China?
- 7) What were the differences between Case 001, 002, 003 and 004?
- 8) Did the UN know about killings during the KR?
- 9) KR policy focused on agriculture, so how did starvation occur?
- 10) Why religious practice was forbidden during the KR?

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