

បង្រៀនហេតុការណ៍ប្រឆាំងកម្មវិធីសម្លាប់ជនជាតិដើមខ្មែរ

Teaching Genocide in Cambodia Challenges, Analyses, and Recommendations

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Introduction

I asked myself whether or not Cambodian young generation believe that the KR crimes did exist in Cambodia? Do they believe what their parents and grandparents have told them about their suffering at that time? Has any author or historian written about this history for official school curriculum yet?

This is the sorrowful impression of Soh Seiha, a female Cham Muslim community leader from Kratie province of Cambodia after visiting the former Khmer Rouge (KR) central security center Tuol Sleng and the killing fields at Choeung Ek. Some members of her family were killed or disappeared during the 1975-1979 reign of the KR. Her concern about young generations of Cambodians raises a question: Should young people in Cambodia study the history of genocide, crimes and grave human rights abuses in formal classroom settings?

Genocide education is the only effective way to prevent future genocide and other grave human rights violations, foster reconciliation among victims and perpetrators, and continue to address the question of justice in countries that have experienced genocide. Cambodians cannot talk about justice and reconciliation when the suffering of the victims has not been acknowledged. In order to fight against the possibility of future genocide and other crimes against humanity, young generations of Cambodians have to understand how and why the genocide happened, to learn about the effects and the consequences. Genocide education also helps to preserve the memory of the KR atrocities, promote moral and civic values, and advance democracy and rule of law in a culture long accustomed to impunity. Moreover, understanding the important historical events enables people, especially the young generations, to participate in the process of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal which helps to promote accountability for the abuses of that period.

However, this vitally and emotionally sensitive issue remains largely absent from school curriculums in Cambodia. The obstacles to introducing genocide education into classrooms appear in several critical aspects: social, economic, political, and pedagogical.

During the 1980s, Cambodian school children were taught about the KR genocide in politically charged, propagandistic ways, which sought to instill in them a desire for violence, hatred and revenge. Because Cambodian society at that time prioritized basic economic recovery, the suffering of Cambodian people under the KR became a folktale for young Cambodians who were born after the regime collapsed. After peace was restored in 1993, the volatile issue of KR genocide was removed from curriculum for the sake of reconciliation and political stability. In 2002, Cambodian

government ordered the withdrawal on the section of Cambodian modern history (Cambodia from 1953 to the 1998 national election), which included the KR history, as a result of the intra-conflict between the two main political parties over the issue of the 1993 national election. Further research has shown that young generations know very little about the history of the KR, and many young Cambodians do not believe that their parents and relatives experienced such hardship and unspeakable suffering during that period. In addition to this political dispute, the Cambodian Ministry of education claimed that it lacks resources to teach the history of the Cambodian genocide. Moreover, teachers who are capable of conveying the history are few in number, and they lack the training to teach effectively about genocide.

The absence of genocide education is a sign that the specter of genocide continues to haunt Cambodia. Giving a full picture of what happened, why it happened, how it happened and what the consequences were will provide a foundation for students to share what they have learned at school with their parents, relatives and friends. Genocide education will also help to alleviate the suffering of survivors by enabling them to share their experiences with their children and thereby ensure that their suffering will be remembered and acknowledged. Since the absence of genocide education makes it more likely that future generations will suffer similar circumstances, this paper will examine the social, economic, political, and pedagogical obstacles to teaching about genocide in a country that has recently emerged from tragedy.

Social and Economic Challenges

The Khmer Rouge regime that controlled Cambodia from April 1975 to January 1979 destroyed almost all of the country's infrastructure, economics, public and private properties, and education system. The regime viewed education through schools and universities as a waste of time and no help to the revolution and the development of the country. As a result, the KR closed all educational institutions from primary to higher education. Teachers, doctors and other intellectuals (including those who wore glasses and spoke foreign languages) were systematically killed since they were regarded as bad elements that brought injustice, corruption and exploitation into society and made the country fall into foreign colonization and imperialism.

All children, instead of being sent to schools, were forced to labor and attend indoctrination sessions. The KR claimed that the "hoe is your pen; the rice field is your paper. If you wish to get a baccalaureate, you have to get it at dams and canals." The results were devastating. As many as two million people were put to death by execution, starvation, forced labor, torture, and sickness without proper medical treatment. The regime left tens of thousands of widows and orphans in complete poverty and illiteracy. Several other hundreds of thousands of Cambodians fled the country and became refugees. The country after 1979 was in complete unrest since people were moving around in search of their lost relatives. Civil war among Cambodian factions intensified. The KR left almost no foundation upon which succeeding regimes might begin to rebuild education in the country.

The presence of the Vietnamese forces in 1979 ended the KR terror and restored a new regime: the People's Republic of Kampuchea. People received certain basic

rights and they were able to possess their own houses, cattle and agricultural tools. Although people still farmed collectively in “mutual aid teams or solidarity groups,” and had no right to claim ownership on their land, many farmers viewed the conditions in the PRK as considerably better than those of the KR. With assistance from Vietnam and cooperation from local people, education was restored and primary schools were rebuilt throughout the country. Basic education, including education on the KR atrocities, was introduced into classrooms. Teacher training schools were reopened throughout the country and some educators were sent abroad to study in socialist countries, especially Vietnam and the former Soviet Union¹.

However, under the PRK Cambodia continued to face a severe crisis in education. Many surviving educators fled the country to the border. The PRK’s Ministry of National Education consisted of a small number of unqualified officials who had little experience in education and few specialized skills. The regime did not have professional experts to develop the curriculum. The PRK depended heavily on Vietnamese advisors to train and recruit teachers as well as to develop curriculum in all levels. The structure and the management of education were identical to those of the Vietnamese. The curriculum introduced “political morality” study which aimed at instilling in children the socialist conception in an effort to build Cambodia into a socialist state.

In the attempt to recruit more teachers, the PRK appealed to all educators nationwide to register as teachers. The government strategy to rescue national education at that time was to have “the literate teach the semi-illiterate, and the semi-illiterate teach the illiterate.” By the early 1980s, the total enrollment of students at all grade levels was more than one million, and as many as 37,000 teachers were recruited and trained. Unfortunately, only about 10% of these teachers had formal educational qualifications². They knew only what they had learned since the pre-revolutionary period (Cambodia during the 1950s and 1960s). Moreover, the experiences during the KR severely traumatized all Cambodians. Most teachers could not concentrate on their careers since they worried about the whereabouts of their family members and their day to day doing for living. Having suffered from KR persecutions and received poor training, teachers mostly conveyed the KR history in emotional terms. In addition to the poor teaching qualifications, the country faced the problem of a lack of teaching materials, educational infrastructure, teacher resources and textbooks. In higher education, about a hundred students received scholarships to study in several socialist countries, such as Vietnam, the former Soviet Union, the former East Germany and Cuba. The recruitment was very selective and carefully monitored.

Generally, the development of education during the PRK regime was a slow process. The regime not only struggled to put children in schools, but also fought illiteracy among adults and older people, in addition to many other social problems, including daily incursions from KR factions as well as international economic sanctions. Due to international political conflict and the influence of the cold war, the PRK did not receive the Cambodian seat in the UN General Assembly. Nor did it receive

¹ Duggan, Stephen J., *The Role of International Organization in the Financing of Higher Education in Cambodia*, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia, 1997.

² Ibid.

international aid. The regime received only limited humanitarian aid from international organizations, such as UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross. However, those agencies could not do much to help the existing miss-oriented educational problems, including education on the recent events of the KR period. The PRK inherited the educational problems from the KR. Together with its social insecurity, social unrest, and undeveloped state-controlled economy, the PRK encountered a hard time in national as well as educational rehabilitation and reconstruction during the 1980s. The content on the KR history had not been improved throughout the entire period and was never be able to become a national concern. As emphasized in the political challenges, curriculum on the KR history provided by the PRK's Ministry of Education was a political tool designed mainly to justify the Vietnamese presence in Cambodia.

The transitional period of UNTAC also saw little improvement in education. In order to maintain a neutral political environment in Cambodia, UNTAC exercised its control over five key ministries, including the Ministries of National Security, Defense, Foreign Affairs, Consular Affairs and Finance, but not the Ministry of Education³. All political factions were more concentrated on political stability, national security, national reform, election campaign, and political as well as military power. The presence of UNTAC was solely intended to ensure the implementation of the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement on the comprehensive political settlement in Cambodia. Its mandate, according to its website, included "aspects relating to human rights, the organization and conduct of election, military arrangements, civil administration, maintenance of law and order, repatriation and resettlement of refugees and displaced persons, and rehabilitation of Cambodian infrastructure⁴." UNTAC had very little authority to intervene in education reform. The education sector continued to function under the existing SOC administration. Therefore, there were minimal changes in education during this transitional period. Students continued to study through the old curriculum. No effort was made to improve genocide education, which was not on the list of the country's priorities at that time.

After the 1993 election, the new Cambodian government made numerous efforts to improve the quality of education at all levels. As of 2007, thousands of primary and secondary schools have been built across the country, though the teaching quality and teachers' living standard have not yet put into full attention. Today, there are as many as sixty public and private universities. The Royal government appears strongly committed to achieving its strategic plan of Education for All (EFA) whose goal is to ensure that by 2015 all Cambodian children will have equal access to education⁵.

However, the Cambodian government has not yet solved its social and economic problems which bring a lot of negative impacts to its EFA goal. More importantly, if the government is not able to consolidate these problems, it is unlikely that they will

³ Yair Auron, *The Pain of Knowledge: Holocaust and Genocide Issues in Education*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2005, 155.

⁴ United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), February 1992-September 1993, http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/co_mission/untac.htm

⁵ Charlene Tan, *Education reforms in Cambodia: issues and concerns*, Policy and Leadership Studies, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University.

be able to address other imperative questions, such as educating students on the subjects of genocide and human rights which are necessary to ensure peace, democracy, respect of human rights, and the rule of law in Cambodia, and to prevent future genocide. What are the social and economic challenges for the present Cambodian government? What should the government do to meet those challenges?

Up to 2002, with assistance from the international community, especially the World Bank, the IMF, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the government managed to devote 12% of its national budget to education. However, all of the projects focused exclusively on general education, and there has been extremely little effort to put the KR genocide on stage.

Moreover, there has been little effort to foster research on KR history among Cambodian students. Since the collapse of the KR, there have been considerable numbers of publications on this issue, but all of the books were written by foreigners and in foreign languages. The books contain theoretical analyses, which are difficult for Cambodian high school or university students to grasp. Some of these books have been translated into Khmer, but they consist of hundreds of pages, which make them unlikely to be good sources since Cambodian students do not have the habit of reading. Among the twenty subjects at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, the public biggest and longest university in Cambodia, history is one of the less interesting subjects. Because of economic constraints, Cambodian students tend to study the subjects that can generate earning potential in a short period of time. Not many students enroll in history classes each year. This is one of the important gaps that the government should take measure to raise students' awareness of the importance of history and to give more incentives to students to enroll in history classes.

In addition to the absence of significant content about the KR history in the high school curriculum, university students are also given little opportunity to learn about this dark period. Within the four-year program of Bachelor of Arts in history, students are introduced to various world histories (such as Chinese history, American history, Vietnamese history and Thai history) as core courses. In contrast, KR history is integrated into Cambodian history from 1953 to the present as one core course in semester two of year four. Even though the discussions are broader and more detailed than those in high school, the content of these two different levels is the same. Moreover, the number of history graduated students who are going to teach in various high schools in Cambodia and who are capable of conveying the history of the KR is very small.

Moreover, people inhibited by the poor living standard, though many of them had come across the KR period, seem to be either not aware of the problem of the absence of genocide education or take it for granted. Parents in the countryside usually discourage their children from continuing their education to higher levels. They ask their children to help out in agricultural work or to get jobs in order to ease family burdens. In the paper "Education reforms in Cambodia," Charlene Tan argues that many children from poor families who enrolled in primary school "may not be able to complete their primary school education as many of them are unable to cope with

studying full-time and working part-time after school to support the family⁶." It is mostly female students who face this problem. Parents often send their daughters to work as garment workers in the cities, and they have to abandon their studies. Daughters are also asked to help out in family businesses so that sons are able to continue their education. This results in high female illiteracy, and high drop out and repetition rates among women and girls at all levels of education.

Corruption within Cambodian society is another social problem that leads to the low quality of education. Officials of the Ministry of Education and teachers receive salaries (28 USD per month for primary school teachers) which are too low to support their daily living expenses. Generally, teachers are not able to survive with their net salary from the government. They have to force themselves "to engage in second income-generating jobs⁷." The most popular source of income is to charge students extra fees in the classrooms, or to keep some important lessons for their private classes. Students who are unable to pay the charges may not be able to pass the comprehensive examination, which results in repetition. Unless general education is improved, genocide education will never be the next question.

Atrocities during the KR regime directly affect every single Cambodian family and indirectly affect those Cambodians who were born after the regime. Young Cambodian generation usually receive the burden in family earning since their father or adult family members died or became disabled during the genocide and civil war. The legacy of the KR has affected people and young children in many ways, especially in terms of education as emphasized earlier. Moreover, the vast majority of Cambodian people, both victims and perpetrators (former KR cadres), have developed some degree of mental problem without proper treatments over the period of almost thirty years since the collapse of the DK regime. According to a survey done by Cambodia's Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO), "81% of Cambodians have experienced violence, 28.4% suffer from Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), 11.5% from mood disorders, and 40% from anxiety disorders." This is a real social problem that the government has to cope with in order to enhance the quality of education for young children and to foster an environment of reconciliation.

Acknowledging the suffering of the victims through formal education is an effective way to foster reconciliation between victims and perpetrators. Instead of addressing the issue, however, the government appears to want to bury the past. Youk Chhang, Director of the DC-Cam emphasized that it is important that people start to tell their life stories during the KR era "no matter how hard it is or how horrible your story is." He asserted that, "the Khmer Rouge regime is an important part of Cambodia's history and has touched nearly every Cambodian.... We must also teach our children about it and make sure they learn from our suffering. [Doing so] we share the experiences of genocide with millions of other Cambodians and many more millions around the world...." Though telling about the past, as Youk Chhang puts, faces "so

⁶ Charlene Tan, *Education reforms in Cambodia: issues and concerns*, Policy and Leadership Studies, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University.

⁷ Sitha Chhinh, *Satisfaction Sources of Cambodian Urban Primary School Teachers*, a paper for Graduate School for International Development and Cooperation, Hiroshima University, 2003.

many barriers: cultural, language, personal and even political⁸," understanding about the roots of suffering is an important step to alleviate the victims' trauma and free them from the past. This also establishes a sense of empathy and reduces the spirit of hatred and desire for revenge among victims and perpetrators. More importantly, it develops interest in the KR history among students.

The Khmer Rouge Tribunal process, though some analysts believe that it may open old wounds and retraumatize victims, is a good mechanism to uncover the past and to answer questions about why this atrocity happened. The tribunal with its official name the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) will additionally function as an educational center teaching Cambodian young generations as well as people in the world about the atrocities during the KR period. The hearings at the tribunal will uncover and legitimize many of the unclear and contradicted events during the KR period among politicians and scholars.

Cambodian government has to continue to alleviate issues related to education if Cambodia is to develop on the path of democracy and rule of law. Introducing genocide education into classrooms is one way on which the government should embark to shape people's attitude toward the respect of human rights. It is one effective dynamic to develop fundamental solutions for other social issues.

Political challenge

The collapse of the KR regime and the restoration of the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) by Vietnam marked the starting point of a very controversial, political interpretation of Cambodian history, particularly the history of the KR genocide. In post-genocide Cambodia, genocide education became a political tool for parties competing for power. Children in the PRK-controlled territories were taught that the KR were inhuman devils or monsters that killed people and sucked people's blood. In contrast, children in the KR-controlled areas were indoctrinated to believe that Vietnam was going to annex Cambodia and that all Cambodian people who were killed during the war and genocide were the evil trick of the Vietnamese. As a consequence of this politicization, the tragedy of Cambodian history ultimately became a myth.

To justify the Vietnamese presence in Cambodia, the PRK used textbooks for primary school education that described the KR genocide in propagandistic terms. Children from grade one and up were taught via these textbooks to hate and fear the KR. For example, a reading textbook for grade one (published in 1979 by the PRK's Ministry of National Education) contained the following two sentences devoted to the KR period: "Our people supplied foodstuffs to soldiers who were sweeping up the traitors Pol Pot-Ieng Sary clique. United Front for National Salvation of Kampuchea eliminated the traitors Pol Pot-Ieng Sary clique⁹." While most researchers put the number of deaths during the genocide at between 1 million to 2 million, students were taught inaccurately that 3.3 million people were killed by the KR. In the reading book for 2nd grade, the following sentences appear: "Pol Pot-Ieng cliques killed more

⁸ Youk Chhang, Director of DC-Cam, gave a speech at a Global Conference on the Prevention of Genocide, October 11-13, 2007, McGill University, Montreal, Canada.

⁹ Reading book for grade 1st Part 1, Publication of the Ministry of National Education, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 1979, page 43 and 46.

than 3 million people and completely destroyed every thing in Cambodia. We are absolutely furious and strongly struggle against these atrocities¹⁰." In addition, the pictures in the textbooks included graphic depictions of the KR disemboweling people, the cruel tortures at Tuol Sleng prison and killings that are too violent for young children to grasp. These textbooks were used to teach Cambodian young generation who were born after the KR and during the period of Cambodian civil war from 1979 to 1991.

In 1991, all of the conflict parties, including the KR faction, reached a peace agreement and agreed to hold the first national election in 1993 under direct supervision of UNTAC. The election marked a turning point in Cambodian politics and in its education system. The PRK's textbooks were replaced by new textbooks. But none of the new textbooks included an account of the KR era. The government claimed that the absence of KR history was necessary "for the sake of national reconciliation." Teachers were instructed not to mention the KR in classrooms. Instead, the new social studies textbooks focused exclusively on the pre-Angkorean and Angkorean periods (Cambodia before the 12th century and later) and, in the modern period, on Cambodia during the 1950s and 1960s. From 1991 to 2000, political instabilities ensured that the account of the KR history would continue to remain absent from school curriculum, even though officials at the Ministry of Education had frequently discussed about putting the KR atrocities into school curriculum. In 1996, Tol Lah, the then-Cambodian Minister of Education had vowed to teachers and researchers that the Ministry would not take the KR history for granted. He was quoted in the local newspaper, *The Cambodia Daily*, saying that, "We will not rewrite history. History is to be history. Facts have to remain as they are¹¹." However, the question of when and how to educate Cambodian students on KR history was still unresolved.

In 1996, the government was negotiating peace with the KR faction as part of its policy of reconciliation and national unity. At that time, a large portion of the KR, led by former DK foreign Minister Ieng Sary, agreed to dismantle their armed forces and defect to the Royal Government of Cambodia bringing with him tens of thousand of KR soldiers and cadres back to the government. In 1998, three other senior leaders (Khieu Smaphan, Noun Chea and Ke Pauk) defected to the Royal Government leaving only a small faction of the KR forces near the Thai border. This development created a pause on the consideration of teaching young children about the KR. "For the sake of national reconciliation," the government, during this interval period, ignored this important issue.

Following the defection of the KR, civil society began to demand that curriculum be revised to include an account of the Cambodian genocide. The Ministry of Education finally revised the existing curriculum in 2000-2001 and published new social study textbooks for grades 9 and 12. The new textbooks included an account of Cambodian modern history, from Sihanouk's regime up to the recent 1998 national election, and an account of the Cambodian genocide. But although the Cambodian government,

¹⁰ Reading book for grade 2nd, Party 1, Publication of the Ministry of National Education, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 1979, page 59.

¹¹ "Textbook Delay Reflects Sensitivity of Cambodia's Recent History," *The Cambodia Daily*, March 23-24, 2002, Pin Sisovann and Matt Reed.

via these textbooks, introduced KR history into classrooms, the account was shockingly brief, far too brief to ensure that young generations of Cambodians understand what really happened at that time. Indeed, the 9th grade textbook devotes only five sentences to the KR era:

From April 25 to April 27, 1975, the Khmer Rouge leaders held a special general assembly in order to form a new Constitution and renamed the country "Democratic Kampuchea". A new government of the DK, led by Pol Pot, came into existence, following which the massacre of Khmer citizens began¹².

In the 12th grade textbook, the Chapter on KR history extends to three pages in the Khmer language (about one and a half pages in English). This chapter briefly discusses the political conditions, the formation of the DK government and economy, and how people lived¹³. But the textbook omits the important historical events during DK, and fails to describe who the KR were and how they came to power. The textbook neglects to mention the KR four-year plan, the forced labor, purges and massacres, and other grave human rights abuses that characterize the period. Moreover, the short chapter ends by echoing the same skewed number of deaths given in the PRK's textbook: "This regime had more than three million innocent people killed...the DK plunged the entire country into a real catastrophe in only three years, eight months, and twenty days¹⁴."

The inclusion of a brief account of KR history in the textbooks shows that Cambodian leaders and educators of the Ministry of Education see the importance of genocide education differently. The way to deal with the past, for them, is to forget the past. In Omsameng, the Chairman of the committee for curriculum development, said that the texts do not discuss the killings in detail because "we don't want Khmer children to repeat the bitter history. We try to bury even the smell¹⁵." This comment echoes Hun Sen's remark that "it is time to dig a hole and bury the past even when we consider that the past is for thousands of Cambodians an unbearable burden¹⁶." Similarly, former DK Head State Khieu Samphan, though denying that he knew anything of what happened during DK rule, apologized for those who died and suffered during DK and called upon the Cambodian people to "forgive and forget¹⁷." Yet members of the Ministry of Education, especially teachers, have the responsibility to convey the KR history, especially the events that are still controversial today, so that students are able to find out the truth. Rather than limiting the content, the committee should have allowed the debatable topics to be depicted in the textbooks more broadly. Moreover, Cambodian politicians have to be brave in facing the

¹² Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Royal Government of Cambodia, Social Study textbook, Grade 9th Lesson 12, page 169, Edition 2000. (Unofficial translation by Bun Sou Sour, Documentation Center of Cambodia)

¹³ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Royal Government of Cambodia, Social Study textbook, Grade 12th Lesson 4, Edition 2001. (Unofficial translation by Bun Sou Sour, Documentation Center of Cambodia)

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ The Cambodia Daily, "Textbook Delay Reflects Sensitivity of Cambodia's Recent History," March 23-24, 2002.

¹⁶ Suzana Linton, "Reconciliation in Cambodia," Documentation Center of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 2004, page 84.

¹⁷ Rasmei Kampuchea Daily, "Khieu Samphan: Sorry and Please Forget the Past," January 1, 1999.

history and allow professional and pedagogical experts to decide what should be put in the curriculum.

Teaching the Khmer Rouge history of genocide in classrooms remains an issue in Cambodia today. The key decision-making about the content of curriculum still lies in the hands of politicians, and the depiction of modern Cambodian history in the two social studies textbooks remains politically controversial. For example, while the 12th grade textbook did mention the Cambodia's People Party's (CPP) victory in the 1998 national election, it neglected to mention that the Royalist Funcinpec Party won the first national election in 1993. Prince Norodom Ranariddh, then head of the Funcinpec party and President of the Cambodian National Assembly, criticized the content of the book for failing to mention his party's victory, and called for further revisions. In response, officials of the Ministry of Education agreed to review the textbook and add more information on the section of the Khmer Rouge history¹⁸. Yet subsequent discussions between the two key political leaders, Prime Minister Hun Sen and Prince Norodom Ranariddh, led to even more omissions. The section on Cambodian modern history, including the account of the KR era, was removed entirely from the 12th grade textbook. The new edition of the textbook was thinner and focused almost exclusively on histories of foreign countries. Later, in the middle of the school year in 2002, Hun Sen ordered the withdrawal of all 12th grade social studies textbooks. Minister of Education Tol Lah confirmed the confiscation of the book but could not answer the question of how long it took to bring the book back into school¹⁹. It was the question beyond his authority.

Up to the present day, Cambodian students study history without a textbook. The Association of Independent Teachers has unsuccessfully appealed many times to the Ministry of Education to return the book to schools. This decision to withdraw the textbook has been seen by many educators as a violation of civil rights and freedom of the press and publication. Moreover, the decision ethically, though not technically, overlaps the mandate of the Ministry of Education that has professional expertise in developing curriculum. Perhaps, rather than removing Cambodian modern history from the school curriculum, the Prime Minister should have suggested that the Ministry of Education review and improve the accuracy and the validity of the content of the history.

Seeing this important gap in governmental responsibility, the DC-Cam, which has been independently documenting the KR genocide since 1995, approved the establishment and implementation of a Genocide Education Project. The aim of the project is "to enhance the capabilities of teachers and the Ministry of Education to convey the regime's history through the provision of ideas, materials, recommendations on curricula, and a short text on the history of Democratic Kampuchea²⁰." The project started in September 2004 and ended in March 2007. The result of the project was a 100-page history book called "A History of Democratic Kampuchea²¹". Coinciding with the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, copies of the book have been very well received by students, teachers, researchers and the public. 1,500

¹⁸ "Prince Ranariddh Slams New History Textbook," *The Cambodia Daily*, April 27-28, 2002, by Lor Chandara.

¹⁹ "Prime Minister Orders Recall of Textbooks," *The Cambodia Daily*, April 29, 2002, by Pin Sisovann.

²⁰ DC-Cam's proposal on Genocide Education Project, implemented from Sep. 2004 to April 2007.

²¹ The full text of the book in PDF files can be found at: <http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/English.htm>

copies were delivered to 259 high schools throughout the country. At this movement, the government seemed to open more opportunity and removed the barriers to the way of educating Cambodians students about genocide. This act could be considered as the first time that the government allowed such a political issue to be published and disseminated throughout the country. This was the first prolific move toward genocide education in Cambodia.

The Khmer Rouge period is a politically significant event that links Cambodian history from one regime to another. When talking about KR history, one cannot avoid discussing events during the French colonial period, Cambodia under Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the Khmer Republic regime and the American bombings. Nor can one stay away from discussion of the PRK regime, the State of Cambodia (SOC), the transitional period of UNTAC and the second Kingdom of Cambodia. Generally, the Cambodian situation from the French colonial period up to the present day is an inseparable collective event, and the KR history is the integral part of this event. The full dimension of the KR genocide is hardly to be understood unless it is presented in the framework that highlights the emergence of the communist movement in Cambodia from the 1940s up to the time of its total collapse in 1999. This way can allow students to grasp the full picture of the KR regime and enable them to trace the development of the KR movement and to link this movement to other historical events for further research and broader understanding.

History, by its nature, is always problematic. However, our understanding of the history shapes the way we deal wisely with problems in the present. Therefore, the absence of an account of Khmer Rouge history in textbooks and school curriculum presents dangerous possibilities. Historical research, such as the history book published by DC-Cam, should be accepted as part of the country's historical truth for teaching history. Philip Short, author of the book "Pol Pot: The History of a Nightmare," was quoted in the *International Herald Tribune* claiming that the new-published history book "is an accurate and objective account of a very complex period, and it therefore deserves to be not merely an approved textbook for Cambodian schools, but a compulsory text, which all Cambodian school children should be required to study²²." This historical research should be used in order to formulate historical memory and historical consciousness so that history will not repeat itself, and Cambodian young generations are able to get out of the shadow of the past and find a way to build a better nation. As such, the truth of the Khmer Rouge history is preserved from generation to generation, which is an effective measure, as Yair Auron said, to prevent "the forgetting that is always present along side the memory²³."

Officials of the Ministry of Education said that the Ministry plan to revise new curriculum and bring the book back into school in 2009. David Chandler, scholar on Cambodian history, gave his impression as quoted in *the Associated Press* that, "the government seems unwilling to produce such a text, or at least does not share a sense

²² "New Text Gives Cambodians Glimpse of Khmer Rouge Period," *International Herald Tribune*, by Ker Munthit, *The Associated Press*, June 18, 2007.

²³ Yair Auron, *The Pain of Knowledge: Holocaust and Genocide Issues in Education*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2005.

of urgency about exposing this period of the past²⁴." Political and financial issues may stall the process, and teachers will continue to address KR history informally or convey the history inappropriately in class. DC-Cam has extended its genocide education project to 2010 in the hope to cooperate well with the Ministry of Education in order to secure that KR history will be formally put into school curriculum. However, political will is the key factor in solving this problem.

Pedagogical challenges

To introduce KR history into high school classrooms in Cambodia, producing a short, simple, accurate, unbiased, and understandable textbook of the history of Democratic Kampuchea is the first crucial step. It is important to make sure that the Ministry of Education reforms high school curriculum so that the content on KR history is integrated. Moreover, teaching methodology, the way teachers deliver KR history to students, is the second important step.

As emphasized earlier, KR history is politically and emotionally sensitive; therefore, introducing this controversial subject can either foster or undermine democracy, peace and unity. The outcome hinges largely on pedagogy. How should the history be taught? What kind of textbook should teachers use to convey KR history in classrooms? Can teachers use other materials besides the state-approved textbook? What is the amount of training that teachers should receive? How much time should be devoted to this subject? How can teachers be protected in the environment where this politically sensitive issue may produce violence? What are the roles of history teachers?

Currently, the Ministry of Education's resources (both human resources and teaching materials) are thin. The number of high school teachers who are capable of delivering KR history appropriately and professionally in class is very small. The number of students who have received degrees in History is small. These students who are going to be high school teachers nationwide are trained in various Cambodian, Asian and world history. The history course was developed in 1980 and has been updated gradually with assistance from foreign countries and donors. Moreover, most research books are written in English and French, which makes them even more difficult for students to comprehend. The KR history is integrated as a small part in Khmer history in semester two of year four forming a limited knowledge on this critical subject. Both history graduate students and current high school teachers need a generally acceptable history textbook, study plan, and other supplementary materials with accurate historical narratives that do not instill political bias and generate hatred and a desire for revenge.

Providing training on the KR history to teachers nationwide is important to ensure that teachers have the necessary knowledge, skill and confidence in the field to convey their country's history in the most objective way and that they are able to provide the answers accurately and to assist their students to address the past in a critical and impartial manner. This teachers' training will also enhance the realization of genocide education in social reconstruction since most post-conflict countries, as

²⁴ "New text gives Cambodians glimpse of Khmer Rouge Period," *The Associated Press*, June 18, 2007, by Ker Munthit.

Elizabeth A. Cole and Judy Barsalou, in their report *The Challenges of Teaching History in Societies Emerging from Violent Conflict* claim, emphasize “subjects seen to have practical value, such as foreign languages, math, science, technology, and vocational training²⁵.” Shall teachers be not well trained, even the most objective and accurate textbook might be useless and Cambodia might face similar circumstances or new forms of social problems.

In addition to teacher training, the Ministry of Education may need to focus on some degree of pedagogical reforms which concentrate on the question of what levels of students should be allowed to study KR history and whether this study should be incorporated into or go along with human rights study. These are also one of the remarkable issues in teaching about genocide, crimes and violence. Some analysts believe that it is better to introduce the subject in the primary level since the correct attitudes are formed in the early stage of life. However, in Cambodia, primary school students are too young to grasp the KR history and too early to study about torture and killings. With respect to the high illiteracy and high drop out rate as well as the on-going crimes and unjudicial killings happening everyday, young children and the drop-out students are likely to imitate the lessons from classes. Other analysts believe that students should attain a certain degree of “emotional maturity and intellectual sophistication in order to comprehend the enormity and magnitude of the genocide²⁶.” In this sense, only secondary school students are mature enough to understand, analyze, and handle the lessons appropriately.

With this complexity, lessons on KR history, pedagogically, should either be incorporated into or go along with human rights study. The combination of study between genocide and human rights allows students to make comparisons and, as Schwartz argues, allows students “to draw insights concerning conditions that give rise to mass killings, and helps them understand something about the behavior of the perpetrators and victims of inhumanities.²⁷” This would not be a big challenge since human rights studies are widely introduced in the current curriculum of the Ministry of Education and the issues concerning human rights are broadly expressed and taught to people by many NGOs in Cambodia.

At the same time of teaching KR history objectively, teachers may face conflict of understanding or conflict of perceiving the history, not only between teachers and students but also between teachers and teachers due to different experiences, knowledge, and political interests and trends. For instance, in Cambodia, some teachers believe that the presence of the Vietnamese in Cambodia is in the form of invasion while some others see it as an intervention. In a politically-charged situation like this, as Cole and Barsalou claim, history teachers face a “threat to physical safety and generally are under enormous pressure...to play too many roles—from psychologist and guidance counselor to conflict resolution expert and mediator.” Therefore, before instilling in students the knowledge on KR history, it is crucial to

²⁵ Cole, Elizabeth A and Barsalou Judy, *Unite or Divide? The Challenges of Teaching History in Societies Emerging from Violent Conflict*, Special Report to the United States Institute of Peace, 2005.

²⁶ Schwartz, Donald, *Who Will Tell Them After We're Gone? Reflections on Teaching the Holocaust*, The History Teacher Journal, Volume 23, Number 2, February 1990, California State University, Long Beach.

²⁷ Ibid.

instill in teachers the wider knowledge and understanding on this sensitive subject and highly ethical issue in teaching and conveying KR history. History teachers need strong support from people, and particularly from the government, to be able to teach KR history objectively and with no fear.

To overcome this challenge, the Ministry of Education is in a better position to seek assistance from outsiders for training the Ministry staff, undertaking teacher training, developing teaching materials and improving teaching methods and interests to make sure that teachers have both passion and capacity to teach. DC-Cam has played a key role in this process since the beginning. DC-Cam has offered teaching resources to the Ministry and agrees to help train teachers as well as to develop a guidebook. More importantly, resources provided by non-governmental organization are more accurate, objective, and politically unbiased than the ones produced by the government. However, these two institutions have to cooperate well together.

Recommendations

There is an urgent need to introduce genocide education in Cambodia. KR history has to be fairly and accurately presented, not to be interpreted and placed upon by those in the political authority. Politicians have to stop using the suffering of their people as a political tool and allow practitioners of the Ministry of Education to redraft school curriculum, initiate the plan to train history teachers to be able to teach KR history, and improve teaching methodology to be in conformity with this change. It is necessary to help students uncover the truth and realize that Cambodian genocide is not the designed fate from God or any other magical powers. It is clearly the result of the utopian and radical ideologies of a group of Cambodian leaders who are the architects of this genocide. Students need to understand how the highly cultural Cambodia could commit crimes and kill more than a million of its own. To meet these challenges, the following recommendations should be considered and undertaken.

Political will: Sustainable development and enforcement of solutions to these challenges are largely a matter of political will. First and foremost, politicians have to remove all of the barriers, restrictions and pressures that obstruct the path to genocide education. The government should create a secure environment so that writers, authors, and educator feel safe to address this politically controversial issue. Most analysts believe that adequate security is highly unlikely to be accomplished in this politically-charged society that has just emerged from conflict and violence. However, political will and political devotion are the keys to remove those barriers. Only when these barriers are open, can we proceed to other steps, which are the matters of technical solutions.

High school curriculum reform: The Cambodian Ministry of Education officially adopted DC-Cam's KR history book "*A History of Democratic Kampuchea: 1975-1979*" as a core reference to write KR history for integrating into national high school social study textbooks, which are planned to be revised in 2009. If that happens and since the Ministry of Education criticized that DC-Cam's history book is too long, the Ministry should extract from four major chapters including: chapter 2 (*who were the Khmer Rouge? How Did They Gain Power?*), chapter 3 (*The Khmer Rouge Come to Power*),

chapter 6 (*The Four-Year Plan*), and chapter 7 (*Daily Life during Democratic Kampuchea*). Moreover, the curriculum reform committee should not make many unnecessary changes to the original content of these chapters if the new reform is to serve its prime objectives. The new textbooks should be politically neutral and should serve to advance students' knowledge on the period rather than limit their understanding. In other words, the textbooks should pave the way for a greater insight that can lead students to new understandings which students can enhance their knowledge and, as Schwart puts, have "the opportunity to react and express their feeling and to listen to the sentiments of their classmates." Therefore, the historical narratives have to be as clear, precise, concise, consistent, and cogent, accurate and unbiased as possible.

In addition to the accuracy of the text, the amount of the text devoted to KR history has to be broader than the previous ones. It is understandable that the Ministry Social Study Textbooks from grade 9 to grade 12 comprise of many important lessons and consists of over 200 pages. The reviewing committee of the Ministry of Education has raised the concern that incorporating too many pages of the KR history may overload the textbooks and that students may not be able to finish their history study within the academic year. Moreover, the pedagogical research committee of the Ministry of Education needs to balance KR history with other history lessons, and not allow one lesson to overload the others. However, the coverage devoted to KR history should be around 20 pages in each grade. In addition, the new curriculum should include some supplementary materials, such as books about survivors' stories, if students are to fully understand this dark period.

University curriculum revision: The Department of History of the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) needs to revise its curriculum to enable the Ministry of Education to reinforce its high school curriculum reform. These two factors are strongly interconnected. It will be useless if the amount of KR history in high school is increased but the capacity of teachers in teaching the history remains the same. History Departments, which have the responsibility to produce history teachers, have to increase both study hours and the quantity of KR history. The Department should design the study on KR history as one core course of its four-year undergraduate program. Moreover, these history graduate students should be provided the opportunity to visit some important genocide sites, such as the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum and Cheung Ek killing fields to visualize the artifacts, skulls, mass graves, torture tools and victims' photos. They should have a chance to screen original documentary films. Perhaps the History Department can develop a program in collaboration with DC-Cam to show KR films to history undergraduate students. These will help them to learn more about the KR regime, and thus enable them to function more effectively as future teachers.

Teacher training and teaching manual: Assuming the Ministry of Education includes, in whole or in part, DC-Cam's history book into school curriculum, and teachers are permitted to use other supplementary sources for reference as discussed above, the next question is, how? This is almost parallel to the activities in university program development, but we go more deeply to develop teachers' capacity building to be able to use history textbook objectively and to give instruction in class appropriately. Workshops on teaching KR history should be convened on a national

scale. History teachers throughout the country will be invited to attend the workshops and share their experiences and the challenges they encounter teaching KR history. This will allow teachers to form a general policy to deal with those difficulties and develop new teaching strategies. At this stage, teachers will also be updated on newly produced materials and provided more training on KR history and genocide in other countries to reflect their understanding that genocide not only existed in Cambodia but also happened in many other countries throughout human history.

This training can be done by DC-Cam in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and other foreign institutions who are experts in genocide studies. During the workshop, teaching manual will be put for discussion among teachers and experts so that they can develop an appropriate guidebook that can be applied to the way of teaching in Cambodian education system. The guidebook will help teachers in preparing lesson plans and teaching methodology.

Research and publication: The Ministry of Education should encourage researchers and students in higher education to do research on Cambodian conflicts, war, and genocide to help them shape their own attitude on how they perceive their own country's history and how they find way to deal wisely with these issues. Moreover, the government should create an environment that allows researchers to share their findings with policy makers and educators at the Ministry of Education, which is very urgent to shape the way how educators of the Ministry of Education should do to construct curriculum reforms to be in accordance with the history education objectives which is not only to preserve the memory of the past in the most objective way, but also to promote social reconstruction and to build internal empathy and moral development among students. In other words, the dialogue will enable researchers and educators to integrate genocide education, human rights study and peace and democracy education in order to promote genocide awareness, genocide remembrance, and rule of law, respect of human rights, peace, democracy and national reconciliation as well as national unity. This environment will also help the Ministry of Education reduce the burden of its professional work because the Ministry lacks a lot of resources to write or produce objective lessons or textbooks on its own. The Ministry's request to DC-Cam to help produce KR history lesson in 2000 was the important step showing how officials of the Ministry of Education work well with independent researchers to produce the urgent lessons for school children.

Cooperation with NGOs: The Ministry of Education should continue working closely with nongovernmental organizations that have expertise in KR history. DC-Cam has done research and collected documents from KR era since 1995. Millions of pages of documents, thousands of interview transcripts, and hundreds of documentary films as well as research monographs, are housed and being preserved in the center's archives. Students, teachers, researches and the general population can view and do research on these archives. Particularly, the Ministry of Education can seek support from DC-Cam to train teachers. Working toward genocide education is a long-term process, not unlike the process undertaken by the Cambodian government, international communities, and non-governmental organizations in the establishment of a judicial organ to prosecute high ranking members of the KR. This

process needs a concerted effort among government, NGOs, people and international community. We need government's willingness to address the problem, people's awareness and participation in solving the problem, support from NGOs, as DC-Cam has done to support the KR Tribunal, and financial and technical assistance from foreign donors.

Unlike one or two decades ago, the Cambodian government now has the resources necessary to facilitate the teaching of KR history to young generations. Many researchers and scholars, both foreigners and Cambodians, have written and published articles and books which can be used as both teaching resources and supplementary materials. In addition, the Tuol Sleng genocide museum, Choeung Ek memorial site and other memorials, as well as former prisons and killing sites throughout the country, are the invaluable resources in teaching KR history. More importantly, Cambodia still has living witnesses, victims and perpetrators who survived the KR killing fields. These living documents are the best resources for consultation and informal discussion.

Financial improvement: In addition, the government should enhance the national budget for educational development and pedagogical research, to ensure that educators are able to use the history books appropriately. Educational reform and development is timely and costly; it is a long-term process, which consumes a lot of concerted effort and finance. Therefore, the government should establish the environment that education is free from financial disruption, which is one of the major problems in Cambodia today. One of the urgent needs to improve the quality of teaching-learning is teachers' living standard. Low salaries discourage teachers from doing more research to improve the quality of their teaching.

Conclusion

It has been almost three decades since the collapse of the DK regime. Education on critical events of the KR period has resulted in unresolved conflict over its content and has never been put accurately, appropriately, professionally, and pedagogically in Cambodian public education. The important historical events have been interpreted and defined from a number of political perspectives depending on the political atmosphere and political trends. Political climates shape the way the writers, authors, and writing and reviewing committees of the Ministry of Education convey the history of the KR era. Historical depictions in school textbooks have to represent the interests of the ruling political leaders. If this is absent, history will never be endorsed into school textbooks, and students will never be able to grasp historical truth in which history finally becomes mysterious and historical facts are manipulated and incline through political climate.

The absence of KR history in public education allows politicians to interpret, modify and manipulate the history to convey political messages, rather than historical facts, to people, especially the young generations. On the one hand, Khieu Samphan, in his latest interview with Voice of America (VOA) in October 2007, claimed that without the KR revolution Cambodia would become Vietnam and that the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement would not be reached since its faction was one of the big dynamic forces behind the negotiation. CPP senior leaders, on the other hand, in many public

hearings, especially during the 1980s and 1990s, have emphasized very often that without “7 January” the KR would continue to hold power and hundreds of thousands more people would have been killed and that Cambodia today would not exist. So what is the truth behind this political propaganda? This is a sense of vicious circle that students find it hard to distinguish without proper education.

Through observation and research on various textbooks produced for formal school curriculum since 1979 up to date, all of the history school textbooks mention about the glorious events of the succeeding regimes and talk all the bad things about the defeating regimes. The writers include no controversial point for debate or discussion in classrooms. Rather, the writers present clear judgments on the debatable issues which give the sense that students, rather than having the responsibility to debate, discuss, or find out the truth, have to accept the coined points of view as valid historical facts. History, emphasized by Cole and Barsalou, should be taught “in a way that inspires young people to believe in their own ability to effect positive changes in society and contribute to a more peaceful and just future²⁸.”

The controversial points in the Khmer Rouge history are the best examples of this issue. Giving fair accounts of all historical events will face political pressure since many politicians in Cambodia are not yet able to accept some facts as historical facts, as discussed earlier. This is one of the big crises of the Cambodian education system, which needs strong political commitment and devotion to challenge this obstacle.

However, it is understandable that post-conflict and divided-society like Cambodia is, of course, subjected to many kinds of political influences in which the interests of the groups are prioritized over the national interests. Even if these facts are put to study, they are usually biased which promote only how those who are in the current positions and who were able to end the conflicts, colonization, genocide or invasion to reconcile and reconstruct the country. Moreover, it is hard for Cambodia, a deeply damaged country, to introduce accurate and unbiased account of KR history immediately after emerging from civil war since there has been no agreed upon consensus among politicians and educators on how and in what way the KR history as well as other Cambodian modern history should be presented. Cole and Barsalou note that “in societies recovering from violent conflict, question of how to deal with the past are acute, especially when the past involves memories of victimization, death, and destruction so widespread that a high percentage of the population is affected²⁹.” In spite of this, according to the real circumstances in Cambodia, the question of whether or not this controversial history should be integrated into school curriculum rests on the willingness, commitment, devotion, and concession among key politicians.

The Khmer Rouge history is politically and emotionally sensitive because it touches and links all parts of Cambodian histories, from the French colonial period up to the present day. It is very important that young children in this and future generations

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

fully understand how Cambodian leaders in each regime shaped the country. It is crucial for students to perceive how some former Cambodian leaders interjected powerful ideologies into the social web which influenced the entire population.

One of the best mirrors to reflect violent conflicts, war, and atrocities in the past is given by David Ayres in his work *Anatomy of a Crisis*. Prince Sihanouk, who ruled Cambodia from 1955 to 1970, was determined to “mold Cambodians into good Buddhist socialists committed to the [absolute] monarchy and the struggle against underdevelopment,” while his coup-successor Lon Nol from 1970-1975 embarked on transforming the people into “Neo-Khmer Republicans,” and totally denied the ideas of monarchy and socialism. In contrast, Pol Pot (1975-1979) aimed to abolish all old models and brought Cambodia back to “year zero.” He wanted to achieve a utopian ideal of collectivization and make Cambodia independent politically, economically and culturally from foreign influences. Heng Samrin and Hun Sen from 1979 to 1989, as David Ayres mentions, “attempted to rescue the communist cause in Cambodia” in the hope that Cambodia could become a socialist country like its neighbor Vietnam³⁰. Finally, awakening from civil war, after the 1993 national election, all Cambodian political leaders, with guidance from international communities, agreed that Cambodians should walk on the path toward multi-party democracy. The incapability to discover the past problems will widen the gap and allow the old corrupted social structures to recover and reoccur, which is harmful to people and society as a whole.

The research on history of violence, conflict and genocide during these regimes, especially the KR regime, has to be thoroughly conducted and taught to students as soon as possible. The matter of timing is likely to change the meaning and value of history and shape different perspectives of students on history. For this generation in the year 2000s, high school students can talk and share what they have learned at school with their parents, grandparents, or relatives who survived the KR period. In one or two generations, students may perceive KR history as well as Cambodian modern history more generally, differently, and may find it irrelevant to their real lives. More importantly, though the KR regime ended, the legacies of those atrocities still remain. These are new crises in which Cole and Barsalou claimed that, “conflict almost always continues at some level and violence takes new forms in the present.” The old forms of violent conflicts should be studied in order to form a basis to prevent them in the future and, if they reoccur, deal with the new forms of violence and atrocities. They continue to argue that, “if the regime does not address the origins of the conflict effectively, they tend to be the bases of future instability and conflict.” In Cambodia, power struggles, sexual abuses, prostitution, gangs, domestic violence, social injustice, human rights violations, corruption, illiteracy, and impunity continue to be major social issues. These problems existed in previous regimes, and some of these problems are worse today.

Generally, social, economic and pedagogical challenges to genocide education in Cambodia are not as outstanding forces of obstacles as political challenges. When political issues are solved, other challenges seem to be easily resolved or at least do

³⁰ David M. Ayres, *anatomy of a Crisis: Education, Development, and the State in Cambodia, 1953-1998*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2000, page 186-187.

not consume much concern since they are largely matters of technical and professional expertise. If the political institutions do not support the goal to provide genocide education, the challenges are highly unlikely to be met and the obstacles overcome. The genuine problem in the present time is that the government does not share much concern of the urgent need of genocide education. Though the government, with both encouragement and pressures, agrees to take the issue into the agendas, they justify their decision to exclude the KR history from official curriculum as the lack of resources and finance to do more thorough research and publication. And even when the research and publication (KR history book) are filled by outsider, such as international organizations, NGOs, or research institutions who have expertise in the field, the government has no political will to incorporate this research into school curriculums. As time passed, and with the existence of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal and the demands from students, teachers, and the general population to learn about the history, the government has reluctantly agreed to use the existing history book done by DC-Cam, but with a condition that the Ministry of Education exercise full rights to modify over this book without outside intervention or firm participation. In the end, the Khmer Rouge history seems to remain a political tool.

Up to the present, the circumstances concerning the teaching of KR history, both formally and informally, have improved significantly. Although the government did not agree to endorse the inclusion of the KR history book produced by DC-Cam into high school curriculums, they did consent to discuss and share some concerns, which have allowed DC-Cam, and NGOs working on educational issues to form a foundation on how to reconcile the concerns and to solve the problem. Moreover, the reviewing committee's decision to officially allow DC-Cam to publish the history book, and distribute to high schools throughout the country, marks the first time that the Cambodian government has allowed such a politically controversial publication in the Khmer language to be disseminated.

Genocide Education is the only way to establish a society free from human rights violations and the wide scale violence of genocide. Cambodia and her people have suffered from war, genocide, conflicts and violence for many decades. It is time we learn from our past to build our future and use our past experiences as mechanisms to instill in our young generation to introduce social cohesion so that the rhetorical meanings of democracy, peace, reconciliation, and rule of law, respect of human rights, and national unity employed by Cambodian politicians can be put into practice. Teaching KR history to young generations of Cambodians serves the collective interest of all Cambodians and all humanity. It is our history, and it is our responsibility to learn. No one has the right to deprive our children of the past that belongs to our collective memory. Putting KR history into the history book for students is not only to acknowledge the suffering of the old generation but also to shape young generation's attitude to be good future leaders. Understanding the full dimension of Khmer Rouge history will enable young generations of Cambodians to physically, emotionally, legally, morally, culturally, and psychologically engage in solving social problems and participate in the process of national development.

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