

Genocide Education in Cambodia

The Teaching of "A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)"

12th Commune Teacher Training, Battambang, January 25-30, 2014

Textbook Distribution Ceremony, Preah Monivong High School, Battambang, January 30, 2014

The Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) and the Ministry of Education are proud to announce the twelfth commune teacher training on January 25-30, 2014. One hundred participants (50 teachers from Battambang and 50 teachers from Banteay Meanchey) will receive training at the Battambang Regional Teacher Training School and on January 30, 2014, H.E. Dr. Hang Chuon Naron, Minister of Education, will preside over a textbook distribution ceremony to 3,000 high school students.

While these events are critical inputs to the professional development of teachers and the improvement of education in Cambodia, they represent far more than mere training and books. Like the Nazi Holocaust, Cambodia struggles with the painful legacies of violence, oppression and injustice. And like all post-conflict societies, Cambodia's future depends on its ability to face its past. Indeed a country that lacks the courage to learn from its past will not have the fortitude to take on the challenges of the present and future.

Between 1975 and 1979, Cambodia was ruled by a horrible genocidal regime, Democratic Kampuchea (DK), led by the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge used a language of racism, xenophobia, and totalitarian oppression to legitimize some of the most horrific atrocities perpetrated in human history. City residents, intellectuals, and the wealthy were branded enemies of the regime. Vietnamese, Cham Muslims, and others were viewed with hostile suspicion. As suspected enemies of the regime, a spectrum of different social, cultural, and religious groups were herded into hard labor camps where they were starved, persecuted and in many cases executed.

Thirty years after the fall of the DK regime, Cambodia is still grappling with the painful legacies of this genocidal regime. While much progress has been made, there is still a great amount of work that must be done. Since 2009, DC-Cam, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, has provided training to over 3,000 teachers in History, Geography, Khmer Studies, and Citizen Morality throughout the country. In addition, in the interest of broadening the impact of genocide education, DC-Cam developed curricula for many other segments of civil society and government including universities, police and military academies, and the National Institute of Education (NIE). DC-Cam and the Ministry of Education have embarked on a new program that will train pre-service teachers in all six regional training schools—Takeo, Phnom Penh, Kampong Cham, Kandal, Battambang and Prey Veng—and additional projects have been established with our sister organizations in

Myanmar/Burma, Thailand, Vietnam and Syria for the purpose of building synergies across the region and the world.

A country must deal with its past if it is to move forward, and a culture that understands and appreciates justice, reconciliation and memory is inherently related to one that values human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The space between the two is not great, and the greater progress we make in the former will have impact on the latter.

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