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GENOCIDE EDUCATION IN CAMBODIA

TEACHING OF THE HISTORY OF DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA (1975-1979)

REPORT

CLASSROOM FORUM ON

THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING THE HISTORY OF DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA

(1975-1979)

Bak Touk High School

July 8th 2016

Report by Stephen Wu with Steven Chang, interns at DC-Cam from Tamkang University

Team Members

Genocide Education Team :

Pheng Pong Rasy

Veng Seanghai

Victim Participation/Museum of Memory Team:

Men Pechet

Sopheak Pheana

+2 interns

Media Team:

Ouch Makara

Teav Sarakmonin

+5 interns





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I. Overall Summary

The 15th Genocide Education Forum on Khmer Rouge History was held at Bak Touk High School, located about fifteen minutes away from DCCAM. This would be the last forum the Genocide Education Team would produce this year. The DCCAM staff that joined the forum consisted of three teams; the Media team, Victim Participation/ Museum of Memory Team, and the Genocide Education Team. The expected turn out for the forum was about two hundred 12th grade students. All the teams had different objectives to achieve during this forum. Some of these objectives include, conducting interviews, report writing, taking pictures, and recording material for a future film.

The forum was scheduled to begin at 0900 and end at 1100, the team packed into the Transit van from DCCAM and arrived at Bak Touk High School at 0845. The team entered a school to find students in the courtyard during their break time. As all the logistics were being set up for the forum, students slowly started to trickle into the class room. As everyone was arriving some of the team member had already begun to chat with some of the students. Some of the students stated that they were excited to be at the forum because just recently in Khmer Literature class, they had a lesson on a specific poem named “The Dark Times of the Khmer People” an excerpt from “Look at the Cambodian Land (1980)” by Chuon Men. As time was passed waiting for the rest of the expected students to arrive the time had already reach forty minutes after 0900. The total students that have showed up for the forum today would only be 25 students consisting of 12 males and 13 females.

Mr Pheng Pong Rasy would begin the forum at 0945 with an introduction to the purpose of the forum and then proceed to distribute the pre-forum survey. The pre-forum survey is used to assess the student’s knowledge on the legacy of the Khmer Rouge prior to have been given the information. At the end of the forum the students would also complete a follow up post-forum survey in order for the DCCAM team to quantify and record the data. The pre-forum survey was followed by asking students what they would like to know about the KR. This process is the “W” of the K-W-L methodology. Because of time constrains this was the only section covered since it would give the students the most information within the time allotted. After the questions that the students wanted to have answered were written on the white board, at 1015 Mr. Rasy gave a presentation that summarized the Khmer Rouge History. At 1045 Mr. Rasy went over the questions written on the white board to make sure every question was answered.

The forum concluded with a distribution of the book “ A History of the Democratic





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Kampuchea (1975-1979)” by Kamboly Dy. Mr. Rasy encouraged the students to take the time to read into this book to find out more about the History of the Khmer Rouge. The students excitingly received the books as they were completing the post- forum survey. At the end of the forum each team gathered with a few students to conduct interviews for their projects.

II. Introduction to Forum and Objectives

The forums are created in order to promote sustainable Genocide Education development for high school level students. The forums serve to reinforce and supplement the already established Khmer Rouge history curriculum. Through these forums students are encouraged to have open discussions to facilitate better understanding of the history of Democratic Kampuchea. For many of the students this forum also serves as a chance to review for their up and coming entrance exams. The main objectives of the forums are as follows:

- 1) To provide students with an opportunity to share and express their personal knowledge on what happened during the DK regime.
- 2) To let students think critically on the transitional consequences of the KR legacy and the current Cambodian society.
- 3) To encourage discussion over this legacy in families and communities.
- 4) To distribute History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979) textbooks to participating students.

The forum was led by Mr. Pheng Pong Rasy , with assistance from Mr. Veng Seanghai. Due to the short amount of time the forum was compressed into the following events.

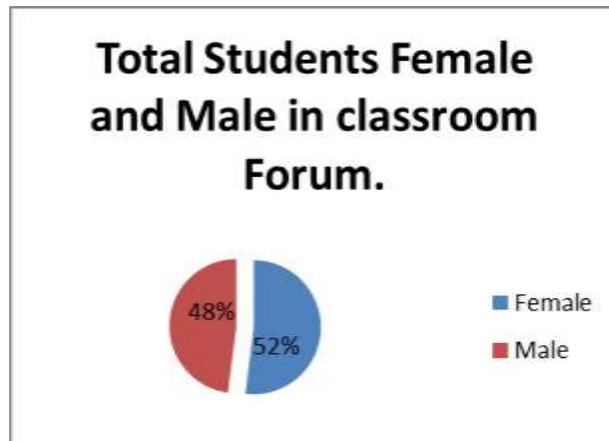
- 1) Introduction and Pre-Forum Survey
- 2) “W” Chart of K.W.L. Methodology
- 3) Presentation on History of Democratic Kampuchea
- 4) Film Screening
- 5) Post- Forum Survey
- 6) Book Distribution



III. Forum In Practice.

1. Participants

The DC-Cam team consisted of three different teams, The Media Team; Mr. Ouch Makara, Mr. Teav Sarakmonin, along with 5 interns assisting in filming photographing and interviewing. The Victim Participation Team/Museum Of Memory Team; Mr. Men Pechet, Ms. Sopheak Pheana providing exhibition items for the class room along with two interns to assist with reports and interviews. All in support of the



Genocide Education Team; Mr. Phen Pong Rasy and Mr. Veng Seanghai who organized with the school director allowing for the forum to take place. At the beginning of the forum the DC-Cam Team was expecting there to be about two hundred 12th grade students, unfortunately after the team arrived they were told that most of the 12th grade students would not be able to attend due to the National Entry Exam preparations and visitations to universities. Instead the forum was attended by 11th grade students which consisted of 12 males and 13 females. Although much less than expected, the DC-Cam took this opportunity for a more personal small group forum in hopes to share their knowledge with those that chose to attend.

This issue of attendance could have been from the timing of the event being so close to the national entrance exams for the 12th grade students. Also being the end of the school year many school staff must have been busy with many tasks such as final exams.

2. Pre-Forum Survey and K-W-L Methodology



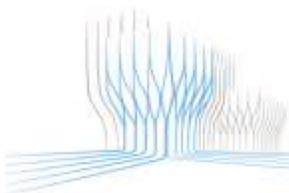
During Mr. Rasy's introduction to the forum and explaining how the following event shall proceed, the students all received a pre-forum survey. This survey serves to be the base to be used

when comparing with the post-forum survey. Once these two surveys are compared the team can properly know how much the forum has helped the students learn and develop their critical thinking. The surveys will also be collected and compiled with all the other previous and future forums for a more precise sample of statistical representation. The pre-forum survey also serves to be a 10 to 15 minute warm up to get the students thinking about the topic to be discussed and would even trigger questions from the students to be raised. By looking at the pre-forum survey the team can also be aware of how much the student already knows about the history of the Khmer Rouge. After the pre-forum survey was done the forum moved directly into the K-W-L Methodology. In the “K” section of KWL, students can share the knowledge they have already known, in the “W” section of KWL, students ask what they would like to know, and in the “L” section students share about what they have learned. Although because of time lost at the beginning of the forum the team was forced to skip to the “W” section of KWL. This allowed for students to ask as many questions and allowed for the Education team to have more time to answer all of the questions. The questions raised by the students in the “W” section of KWL are as follow:

- 1) How did the people suffer under the KR?
- 2) What could people do and what could people not do?
- 3) How was food rationing implemented during the regime?
- 4) What was the reason the Khmer Rouge happened?
- 5) What kind of torture was used?
- 6) How were the positions assigned during the regime?
- 7) What caused the Khmer Rouge to collapse?
- 8) What was the situation of Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge regime?
- 9) Why were the people killed during the regime?

3. Presentation and Q&A

During the filling of the “W” section of KWL, the 11th grade students did not seem shy to ask questions, curious to know more Mr. Pong Rasy continued by giving a presentation on the History of Democratic Kampuchea. During this presentation Mr. Pong Rasy





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made sure to go over the topics that could answer the questions from the KWL process. Ranging from the events that led to the rise of the Khmer Rouge to it's the collapse of the KR. Students seemed to be shocked awake when depictions of the prison tortures were shown. Often times students might get biased information from external sources, thus the DC-Cam aims to provide proper and factual information to the students. Emphasizing that learning history is crucial not only because one can learn their past but also because by learning history future generations can avoid events like the KR from happening. The whole presentation took about 35 minutes, after the presentation Mr. Pong Rasy reviewed the questions asked at the beginning of the forum, making sure every student had a deeper understanding of the history of the Democratic Kampuchea.

A few issues arose during the forum; the space provided during the time the forum was taking place was extremely noisy. This could have been due to other students playing games outside during their break. Often times the noise outside would muffle the voice of the speaker causing the students to be distracted and having a hard time following the speaker, which led to some students dozing off. Also because of limited time the film screening was skipped over.

4. Book Distribution and Post-Forum Survey

To conclude the forum each student was given the text book " A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979) ". Students were encouraged to take time and read the textbook to further push their understanding of their own history. This way student can share what they've learned with their family and friends. Many students who have family members that experienced life under KR regime might be reluctant to share their stories with them. By learning and understanding, students can then approach family members with empathy helping victims to open up and talk about their experiences which can lead to healing.

Students are also introduced to the online resources that can help them further understand why this piece of history is so important to know. A slip with many online resources such as the DC-Cam website, the ECCC and E-magazines all serve as resources for student to further explore the issues and after effects of the Khmer Rouge and Democratic Kapuchea.

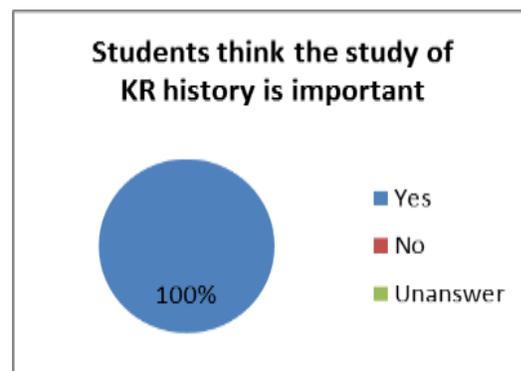
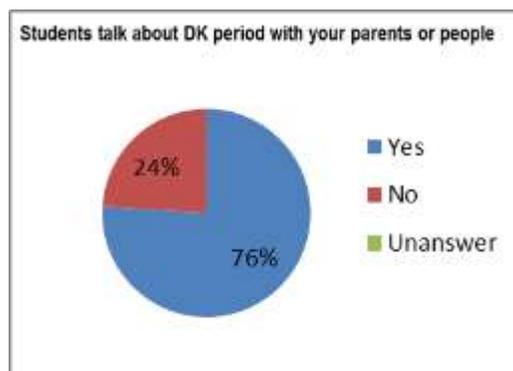
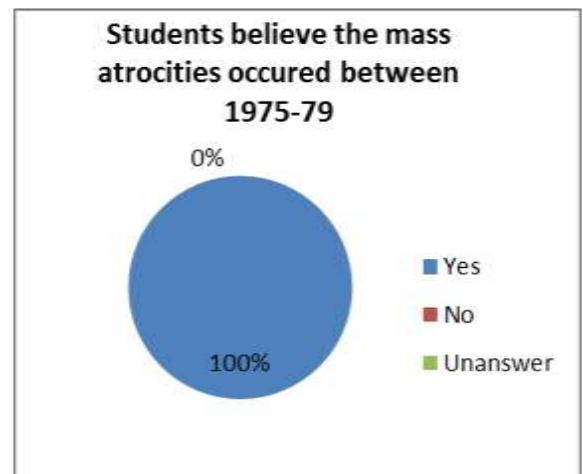
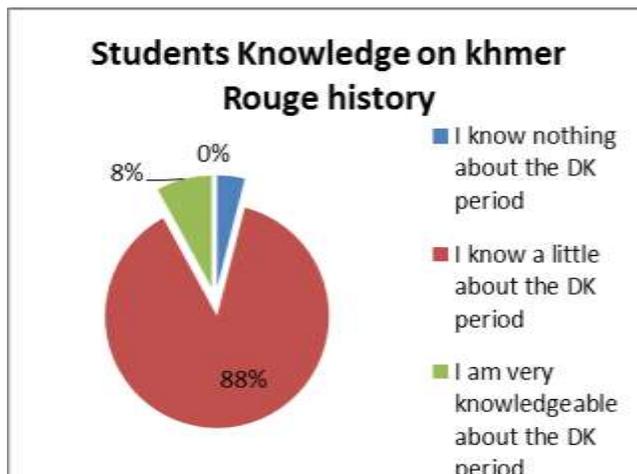
During the textbook distribution students were also given the post-forum survey to complete, during which students showed their knowledge gained from this forum. The survey would be used to compile statistical data for the team to analyze.

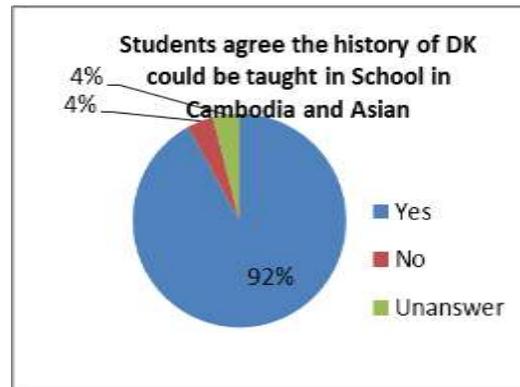
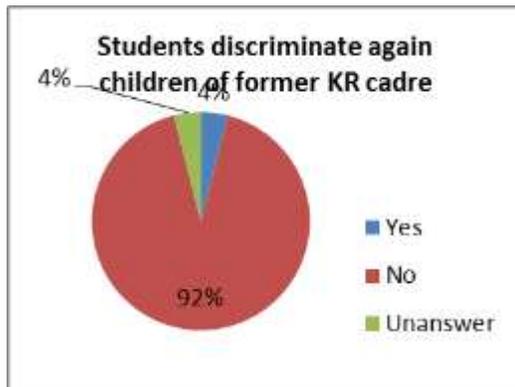


IV. Surveys and Statistics

1. Pre Forum Survey

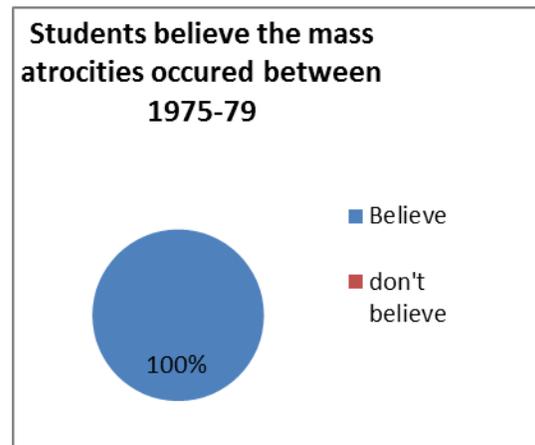
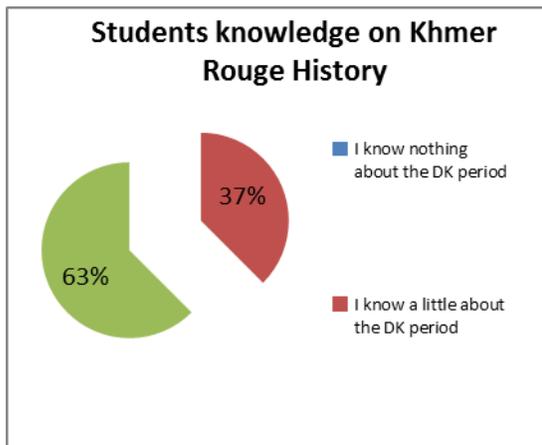
The pre- forum survey was used to gauge the base knowledge the students had prior to the forum while stimulating the students thinking in the spectrum of the topic being discussed.

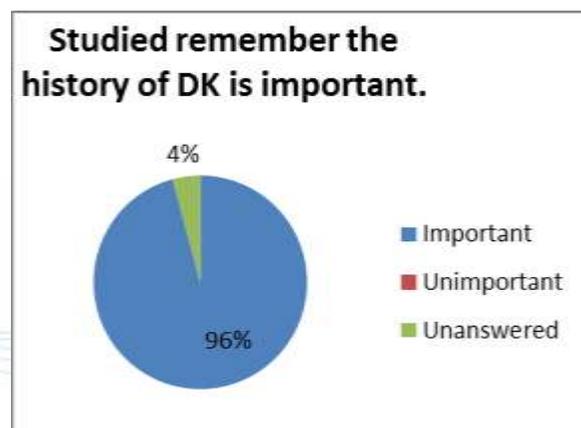
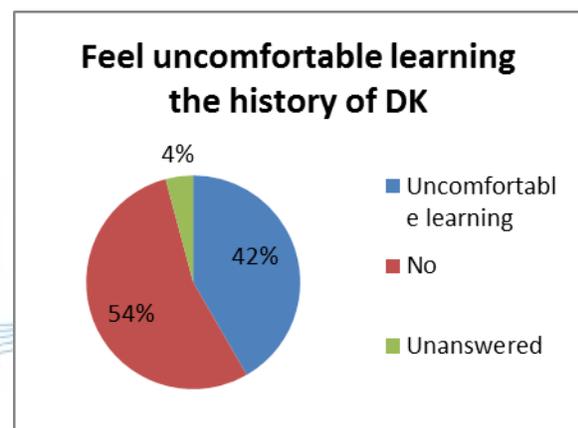
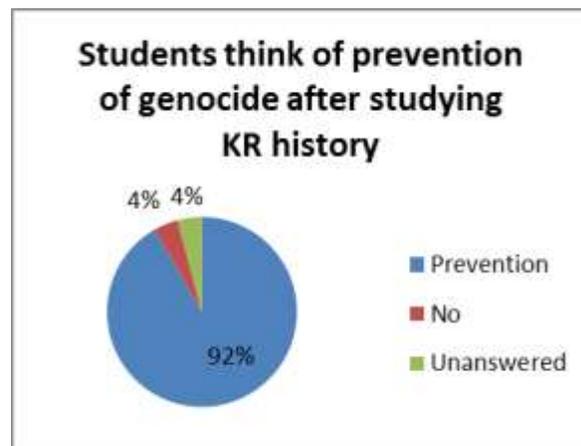
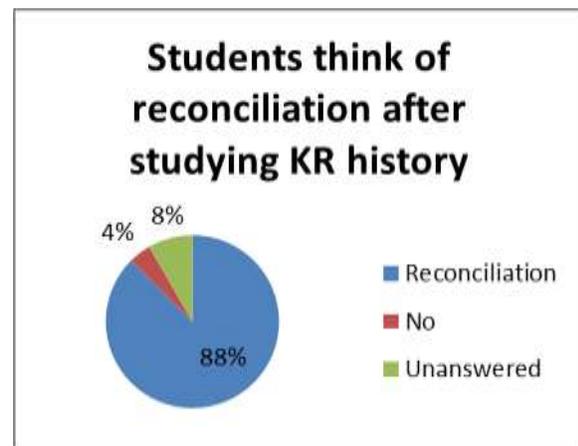
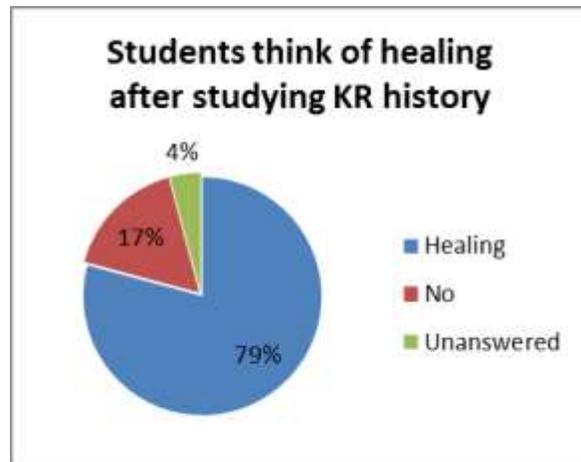
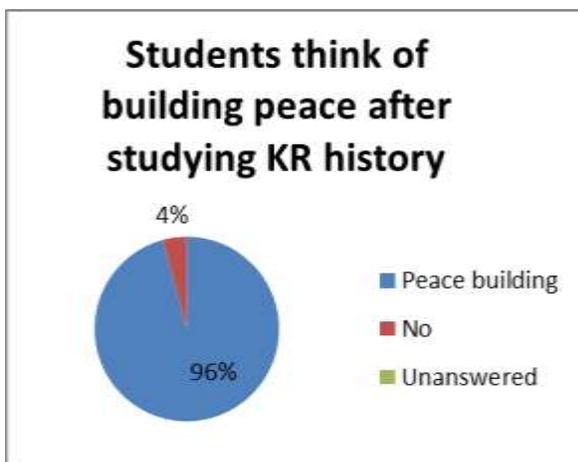
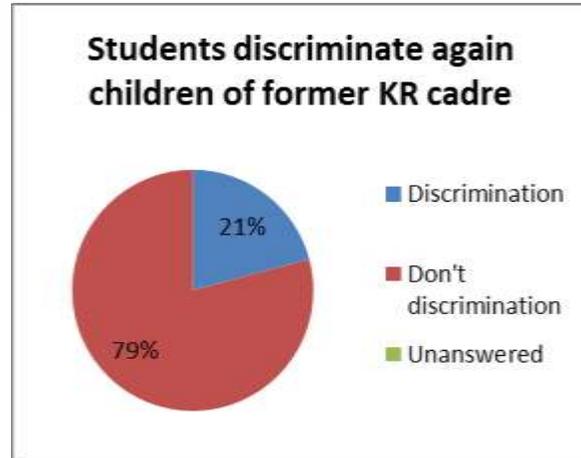
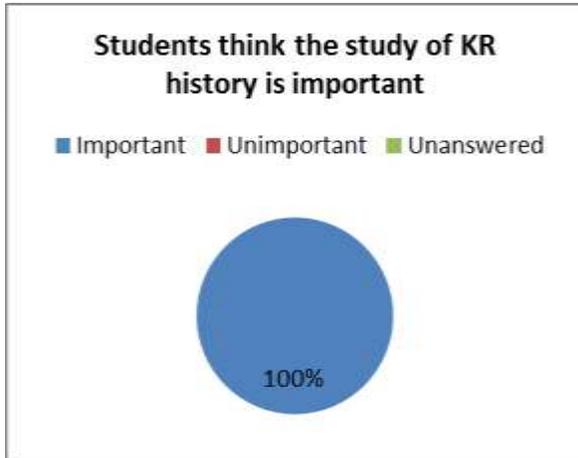




2. Post Forum Survey

The post- forum survey was used to gauge the knowledge gained by the students after the forum. The pre and post forum survey are used to compare and measure the effectiveness of the forum.





V. Data Analysis



Analyzing the data collected from the pre-forum survey we can observe that 88% of the students knew very little and only 8% were very knowledgeable about the Khmer Rouge History, but after the forum most of the student showed to have gained more knowledge increasing the very knowledgeable percentage to 63%. Also to something to note is that at the beginning of the forum 92%

selected to not discriminate against children of Khmer Rouge Cadre with 4% choose to discriminate. The number of students who choose to discriminate against the Khmer Rouge Cadre increased by 17%, the reason for this could possibly because the students felt some negative feelings after learning the impacts of the Khmer Rouge on their society thus feeling indifference towards Khmer Rouge cadres.

VI. Success Story

After the forum, the Media team conducted an interview with an 11th grade student that participated in the forum. The following is a transcript of their conversation.

Q) What is the importance of leaning about the Khmer Rouge?

A) It is important to us because we can use the information in the future but also because we can share with our lower classmen.

Q) What was the most interesting thing you learned today?

A) First would be the situation of Phnom Penh when the Khmer Rouge came to “liberate” and the situation of Cambodia after the regime.

Q) Do your parents share their stories of the Khmer Rouge?

A) Not often only during road trips to the provinces do they talk about it a little. My parents



never experienced the tortures but they say they have witnessed people being taken away. I cannot imagine being separated from my family; if I were in that situation, I would feel so sad and stressed all the time.

Q) Do you think the history curriculum is important?

A) Learning about history is about the future and reconciliation!

Q) What do you think of the Khmer Rouge cadre?

A) I believe many of them are good people just following orders.

Q) What if in your neighborhood there are former Khmer Rouge cadres?

A) I would not discriminate because they are of our society.

From this short interview, one can note the effects of learning about the history of the Khmer Rouge; many students might never get information from their own parents. The fact that she found a few points of interest shows her desire to explore more. In the interview the student, also expresses desire to share this information with other students and to also promote reconciliation in her society. Her attitude towards the past show what this forum aims to achieve.



VII. Conclusion

Although the forum turnout rate did not meet expectations, the team continued with those students that took the time to show up. Also due to the waiting of the students the forum began almost 40 minutes after the planned time many sections of the forum were left out. Despite these issues, the students who did arrive were very curious and eager to learn. From the moment, they were asked to provide questions everyone seemed very eager to contribute to the list. Some students did lose focus and fall asleep and some were distracted from the ruckus outside the classroom but overall it seems like many students took away at least a few things





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from this event.

This forum is the 15th forum held by the Genocide Education team, and it would be the last one held this year. 2016 has been the first year the Genocide Education team with the collaboration of the Ministry of Education of Youth and Sport produced these forums to be held in high schools throughout Phnom Penh.

At the beginning of the year, the team was not expecting students to know much but later found out that each student all know of the Khmer Rouge just at different levels of understanding. Data shows that after the forums the student understanding increases exponentially which took the team leader, Mr. Pong Rasy, by surprise. Mr. Pong Rasy states that curiosity and interest level also play a big part of these forums. At the beginning of the year the students seem to be more interested and more attentive, during the middle of the year interest is still there but at the end of the school year it seems like students schedules get extremely busy and the forum is not as interesting for them. After this year, it appears that the way coordination with each school will be changed, and the timing of the forum will be changed so to not interfere with the end of school year. According to Mr. Pong Rasy, he also wishes to adjust the structure of the forum, such as allowing students to choose which chapters and topics they most wish to understand more of, rather than spending too much time on each topic briefly.

VIII. Article: “We are not observers”

By Steven Chang

Something passes in an instant; some stories become the gossip in our leisure time. But those we call history will keep in our mind forever.

After the genocide in Khmer Rouge regime, it was likely to have the most severe impact on the people living in that regime. They were evacuated from their hometown; they were forced to work in poor working conditions; others lost their savings and loved ones. It’s difficult to conceive of this tragedy.

Forty years later, the tragedy became history. It seems peace in Cambodia nowadays. Nevertheless, the trails are still continuing, the value system is still shaped by the past; we’re still searching for the truth and justice. Even the next generation has already grown up and lived in Cambodia for a long period. In some way or another, everyone’s lives were affected by this;





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we are not observers at all.

During my interview with the students in Bak Touk High School, Phnom Penh. I realized that most students first heard DK regime history from their parents. Many of them couldn't believe the history because it was too cruel to imagine. They didn't experience the cruel past, however, the emotions of shock, anger are real. They have their own feelings to express as well. After the students learned about the Khmer Rouge, they may start to connect everything around their daily lives. They begin to know what ECCC stands for, they start to know better about the background which their parents grew up in. They'll know what happened in Cambodia before.

We can't just look at the surface to be authentic. After analyzing the events, except for learning lessons from them, we documented, we sought for the truth and the justice, we reconciled and we healed. These events later became our history, and the history also influenced us in the end. We're no longer observers as long as we live in Cambodia.

