

GENOCIDE EDUCATION IN CAMBODIA

**The Teaching of *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)*
Democratic Kampuchea Textbook Distribution**

**A Public Education Forum between Teachers, Students, and Parents
Inauguration of Anti-Genocide Memorial**

REPORT FROM MONDUL KIRI PROVINCE

October 25-26, 2011 -- By SER Sayana



A scenic landscape spotted on the way from Sen Monorom Town to Dakk Dam District.

In appearance, Mondul Kiri is a breathtakingly beautiful province memorialized in a popular 1960's song by Mr. Toch Teng and Ms. Mao Saret¹ about a couple who visited the province and were so fascinatingly attracted by its natural beauty and environment that they did not want to leave. The region is covered with splendid nature of mountainous areas, making one reflect on its name as the concentric mountains. Stretching across the Northeastern part of Cambodia, the province is the largest inland home to indigenous highlanders consisting of ten tribal groups, the

¹ See appendix 1

majority of which are Pnorn or Bunong that sparsely reside in the area. Besides the marvelous waterfall Bousra, the weather is also another feature that attracts outsiders and that they adore once they reach the territory: cool pleasant breezes in the morning aurora are followed in the afternoon twilight, which blow in the golden sunrays as the eyes take in the charming scenery of the forested mountain ranges, meandering valleys and the grass on the hillsides, which move in a wave-like motion. All of this beauty elicits a freshly natural touch of harmony within the viewer's feelings. Here we can enjoy the pleasant atmosphere of springtime for a six-month period from October to March.

But what lied behind this tranquil captivated beauty is hard to believe, a big ugly scar of the dark past from the Khmer Rouge (KR) is stained on the place itself and tattooed in the memories of its residents who were so pure, mild, and honest. It is difficult to imagine that such damage and pollution of the KR's destruction was stamped within the midst of such beauty and tranquility.



When beaten with a hammer or iron stick, the bell of Dakk Dam Primary School marks short breaks and announcements.

The KR occupied the province since 1970 right after the coup until 1979.² It was one of the first liberated regions, including Ratanak Kiri, Kratie, Stung Treng and Preah Vihear Provinces. As one of the four provinces in the Northeast Zone, Mondul Kiri was renamed Region 105 during the Democratic Kampuchea (DK) and witnessed the greatest number of people forcibly relocated by the KR. In 1973-1974 the majority of

² Mapping report of the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), 1999.

the province's residents who lived near the Vietnamese border in the area around Sen Monorom District were deported to the lowland rice-growing area near Koh Nhek District in the North.³ Villages with the majority of Pnornng people were told they had to move to Koh Nhek District for security reasons. At this point, their actions demonstrated that the KR began to take very strong measures against the Pnornng people. Today Pnornng survivors speak about the KR's accusation of them being Vietnamese agents. The allegation would result in death. At this point, the integrity of the Pnornng people was contaminated by the alleged Vietnamese agents. Most of them were sent to Phnom Kraol Mountain in Nang Khiloeak Commune, Koh Nhek District.



Barrels of fermented rice wine for ceremonies.



Ms. Peum Tram, Pnornng, lives in Poutrom Village, Rumnea Commune of Sen Monorom District.

Research by Sara Colm and Sorya Sim, which has focused on the executions of ethnic Pnornng people, as well as ethnic Khmer cadres, soldiers, and workers who lived in the province, has found that the KR's extensive purges in Mondul Kiri began in early 1977 when indigenous highlanders crossed the border from Vietnam and were singled out and killed by the KR. The studies also found that two top commanders of the earliest leaders and hundreds of soldiers from Division 920 from Region 105 were sent to S-21 and executed.



Play aiming goal with crystal ball during break time.

Efforts Striving for Prevention through Education and Reconciliation

In order to help cure the wounds of the past and prevent such turbulent events from harming again, it is important to learn and study the history. This requires special effort in education and creates some challenges for educators teaching the history of DK when faced with the low level of literacy, language translation difficulties - particularly for the survivor generation, as the majority understand and can speak only Pnornng language, and difficulties of communicating information across remote distances.

³ Sorya Sim and Sara Colm, *Wind from the West*, DC-Cam's research monograph.

The history of DK is a mandatory part of the Cambodian national curriculum and a necessary element of national healing. Survivors' voices should be heard as a way of expressing sadness and this process of sharing with children and others, and learning from and talking about the past, is not to forget what happened.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS), the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) has established a number of special activities under the Genocide Education project, including holding public education forums in remote areas, distributing the history textbook of DK, launching anti-genocide slogan memorials in 1,700 high schools and training workshops to more than 3,000 teachers, university lecturers and some other agents, such as military officials.



Dakk Dam Primary School children playing rubber band leaping during break time.

On October 24, DC-Cam's Genocide Education team of six travelled to Mondul Kiri to hold an inauguration ceremony of an Anti-Genocide Memorial at Hun Sen Mondul Kiri High School and lead a small discussion as part of the public education forum in Dakk Dam School to coincide with collecting names for a memory book of ethnic people who died or disappeared during the KR reign. This followed up on a more public education forum that was conducted on April 26, 2011, in Wat Sen Monorom located in Monorom Commune, Sen Monorom District, Mondul Kiri Province. Approximately one hundred and eighty participants, including one hundred and twenty students, fifty villagers, and six teachers, attended the April forum.

The Forum

The public education forum is designed to discuss the experiences of the people's lives under the KR, and also to encourage the younger and the older generations to discuss the importance of genocide education and enable survivors to share their real life experiences under the KR.

On October 25, our team conducted a Public Education Forum in a classroom of Dakk Dam primary school, in Dakk Dam Commune, O Raing District of Mondul Kiri Province. The forum was attended by twenty-five villagers, five teachers, and twenty primary students. The project's team members distributed fifty copies of the textbook "A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)", DC-Cam's *Searching for the Truth* magazine, KR Tribunal Case 002, ECCC Observation booklets, anti-genocide slogan posters, and discussed a chapter from the textbook. Mr. Ly Sok-Kheang led a discussion on chapter eight from the textbook.



Mr. Ly Sok-kheang and Ms. Nhran Bora, who shares her experiences about the KR with the forum.

The forum started with Mr. Ly introducing the team and DC-Cam's publications to the participants. He asked the group if there are Cham in the class and the group answered that there is none - that there are only Pnong. He continued with another question of if the students had ever heard of Pol Pot and if their parents talk about the KR? A few said yes. To give more background into the KR history to the group, Mr. Ly invited a female village participant to talk about her experience during the KR period. Ms. Nhran Bora is a Pnong who can speak Khmer told the group that during

1970-75, her mother told the families that they could not stay in the village anymore because they heard stories and were afraid of the Vietnamese cutting their stomachs open and tucking grass inside. Pol Pot told the people to move to Koh Nhek District and that they would support people with everything including food and transportation. People were told to walk first and that there would be trucks to pick them up after 100 meters walk. But instead the people were forced to keep walking without food and some cried for missing their homes and properties.

Ms. Nhran pointed out a few short experiences she saw at that time: The children were separated from their parents, there was not enough food and no rice-they could only find cassava, a young comrade determined in a meeting that he would not follow his father's acts and ordered his father to be taken to be reeducated (killed). She also gave a brief point of the forced labor upon her, including having to dig a pit of ten square meters for two nights and actually the pit was for self-burying, not for escaping from the Yuon (Vietnamese). The KR told people to jump into the pit when they saw the Yuon and to jump in the stream if the pit was full. She was in a big cooperative of Nang Khiloek and was moved around several times to different places in Koh Nhek.

Mr. Ly then asked the students to each give an impression of the experiences. Several students stood up and talked briefly on notes they took from Ms. Nhran Bora's story.

Another survivor raised his hand and gave a brief talk: "My name is Ngom Kres, sixty-three years old. I heard about the KR revolution only because I left my hometown in 1973 and returned in 1974 and heard of Pol Pot in 1976 or 1977 through the Revolutionary Flag magazine. I was accused of being part of Yuon's network and almost got killed while in Koh Nhek from 1974 to 1979...The KR hate Yuon and Sihanouk's regime because it represents capitalism and feudalism..."

After the speech, Mr. Ly asked the group again if they had any questions for Mr. Ngom. Mr. Vanthan P Dara added more information related to Koh Nhek as he mentioned about the ECCC that is now working on an investigation on mass killings in Region 105, present Mondul Kiri because there was a tight arrest and kill in Phnom Kraol prison. He stated to the group to do not be shy if they want to speak or if they have any questions.

Following Mr. Vanthan's speech, Mr. Ly linked the information to Chapter Eight by having two volunteers read the section of "The Enemies of Angkar" and give the definition of being the internal enemy that included Minority Groups. And then another student read the testimony of Phsos Prai from the chapter.

A few questions were raised to Mr. Ly and Mr. Vanthan in the discussion. The questions included: Why the history of DK was not included in the student book of the school curriculum?

Mr. Ly concluded the forum with the note to the students that the DK history textbook does not contain all information that the students may want to know, but that they can ask or talk to their relatives, parents, and villagers for answers.

Challenges, Observations, and Impacts

The forum faced several challenges as it was held unexpectedly, without much preparation. The forum was conducted within the compound of the primary school. The noise of the school children could distract participants' attention away from the presentation and discussion.

The majority of the villagers are Pnong who could understand Khmer language but found it hard to reply to the team. So, Mr. Ly needed to communicate with some other villagers through an interpreter, Ms. Nhran Bora. Communication challenges in the form of language have already prevented them from exploring the exact nature of the KR atrocities, let alone the literacy level.

Nonetheless, the team received good cooperation from the school director to help collect students and allow us to use one of the classrooms of the school.

Ms. Nhran was a key participant to help make the forum run smoothly with her translation during the guest speaker.



Ms. Peum Tram, Pnong providing interview about her life experience under the KR.

When they heard that our team was conducting a forum, a group of dental staff who was providing education on the dental care to Dakk Dam villagers on the same day that the forum took place, asked our team for several sets of publications and also told their clients to come to the forum.

After the forum, the team made short interviews with the villagers for collecting names and stories of their lost relatives. And in the afternoon, after lunch, the team continued to interview villagers in a few villages of Dakk Dam District and Sen Monorom town.

The Inauguration of the Anti-Genocide Memorial

As a part of the Genocide Education Project, the Anti-Genocide Slogan Memorial is created for the purpose of promoting forgiveness, tolerance, education, and reconciliation. The slogans also help to recall the past and generate interest in the upcoming trial of the four surviving senior leaders of the KR. Both sides of the Anti-Genocide Memorial are embroidered with two carved lines of slogans that read: (1) "Talking about experiences during the KR regime promotes reconciliation and educates children about forgiveness and tolerance," and (2) "Learning about the history of DK helps prevent genocide."

The team has worked closely with Mr. Keo Vibol, deputy director of Hun Sen Mondul Kiri High School, to prepare for the inauguration ceremony of the Anti-Genocide Memorial.

The event was held in the morning of October 26 with Her Excellency Ton Sa-Im, Undersecretary of State of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports, and Mr. Toem Sang Vat, head of Mondul Kiri's Provincial Education Office, serving as the guests of honor. DC-Cam's deputy director, Mr. Vanthan P. Dara, explained to the students about the up-to-the-date information of the KR Tribunal and Ms. So Farina also offered a brief introduction to the ethnic minorities in Mondul Kiri and the Cham Muslim projects.



The Anti-Genocide Slogan Memorial stands at Hun Sen Mondul Kiri High School.

Hun Sen Mondul Kiri High School is located in the Northeastern part of Cambodia. It is situated in Kandal Village, Spean Meanchey Commune, Sen Monorom District, Mondul Kiri Province. The school consists of students with ten different ethnic minorities, the majority of whom are of Pnornng minority. The other minorities are Khmer, Chinese, and Cham. According to Mr. Keo's remarks given at the event, the school was built in 2003, and is the largest school in the province with a total of 1,146 students in the 2010-2011 academic year, 521 of whom are girls. Mr. Keo further remarked that the school produces a lot of students, who go on to serve as human resources to develop the country and educate the younger generation about KR history, which contributes to preventing genocide and building peace and reconciliation.

Following Mr. Keo's speech, Ms. So Farina made a short remark on the definition of ethnic minorities that means the indigenous highlanders or hill tribal people. The Cham, Chinese and Vietnamese are also categorized in the minority groups. People of the Northeast are regarded as honest people, but during the KR they suffered a lot of persecution and evacuation to Koh Nhek, and were accused of being traitors and part of the Vietnamese network. Ms. So stated that to learn about the persecution of the ethnic minorities is to understand the KR and turn the rage to reconciliation.



Her Excellency Ton Sa-Im (purple skirt and pink silk shirt) with DC-Cam staff and the students posing after the inauguration and DK history textbook distribution.

Afterward, Her Excellency Ton Sa-Im gave remarks on the inauguration: "This province has beautiful scenery and is so rich in potential and nature. But who can answer why we are meeting here today?" She asked the group of students who were

standing in queues on both sides of the national flag in front of the tent stage. "To inaugurate the slogan" was uttered from the crowd. H.E. continued to another question of what the slogan means. One little girl came to the front, holding the microphone and answered that the slogan is the word line written to give as advice to educate people. Another girl said the slogan is any word line with two meanings, the straight meaning and the metaphor. As an example: To look up is fruitless, to bend down is fruitful. H.E. then continued to mention that the slogan can have one or two meanings, straight or metaphor as the slogan today is to remember the genocide that happened in Cambodia, for the students to learn from it, and study about the genocide in order to know how to protect the country and prevent such crimes from happening again.

In the end of her speech, Her Excellency Ton Sa-Im expressed gratitude to DC-Cam that has made many efforts and achievements to create activities such as the publication of the DK history textbook. DC-Cam staff members accompanied H.E. and teachers to see the slogan, and distribute the history textbook to students.

After the returning of Her Excellency, the program continued to a Question and Answer session led by DC-Cam's deputy director Mr. Vanthan P. Dara, followed by distribution of DC-Cam's publications, the anti-genocide slogan posters, ECCC *Observation Booklets*, *Searching for the Truth* magazine, and ECCC *Case 002 Booklet*, to mark the conclusion.



Questions from the students:

- 1) Why did the KR mistreat the Cambodian people?
- 2) What are the crimes to be persecuted in Case 002?
- 3) For how many years will Duch be imprisoned?
- 4) How did the KR come to power?
- 5) Why the ECCC does not persecute Duch to the death penalty? Why not execute him, rather than give him a life sentence?
- 6) What should we do to, and how can we, prevent such a regime from happening again?

The slogans are being mounted with financial support from DC-Cam and participation of teachers and students of the Hun Sen Mondul Kiri High School.

During the three day trip to mount the Anti-Genocide Slogan Memorial and inauguration in Mondul Kiri Province, the team collected eighty-six names of the Pnornng tribal group who killed or disappeared during the DK and conducted one family tracing.

APPENDIX 1

Tik Chruoh Bousra (Bousra Waterfall) By Toch Teng and Mao Saret

- Teng: Hold my hand, dear girl. Listen to the cicadas singing and the bees sipping flowers.
- Saret: Was (this) a dream or luck, knowing the water of Bousra, the mountain ranges.
- Teng: Follow (me), with me, crossing the limpid water. Play by dipping the water with your hands, listen to the pleasant music.
- Saret: (It) is the music of the waterfall from the chain of mountains, flowing playfully to dissuade our journey.
- Duet: Oh...oh...oh...oh...breeze of Mondul Kiri. Flourishing flowers spread their fragrant smell everywhere, attaching us to passionately remember.
- Teng: Don't want to leave, go back at all.
- Saret: Nostalgically missing only Bousra waterfall. Being the water to accompany lovers.
- Duet: Sip the natural taste of our love. Sip the natural taste of our love.

Khmer song "Tik Chruoh Bousra" visit:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8yn4pw_gZc&feature=related (viewed on October 26, 2011)

APPENDIX 2

Announcement of Missing Uncle and Cousin

My name is Nheut Ky. I am forty-five years old and a teacher at Dak Dam Primary School. I live in Pou Leh Village, Dak Dam Commune, O-Reang District, Mondul Kiri Province.

I want to seek my four relatives who went missing in the 1970s. They are:

- 1) Kvar Kamleng, male, a paramilitary during the Lon Nol regime who went missing in the 1970s.
- 2) Chhal Teng, male
- 3) Kuk Kleuk, male
- 4) Reut Yak, male

I miss them and want to know if they are still alive. If so, please return to our village. Contact information: 088 882 6937

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TEAM MEMBERS IN THE FIELD:

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