

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

DOCUMENTATION CENTER OF CAMBODIA

**Genocide Education in Cambodia**

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

**Genocide Education Training for Pre-Service Teachers,  
The National Institute of Education, Phnom Penh  
July 23-28, 2012**

Organized by the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam)  
In Collaboration with the National Institute of Education (NIE),  
Ministry of Education and Youth and Sport (MoEYS)

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*Prof. David Chandler of Monash University, Australia, poses photo with trainees and trainers.*

## INTRODUCTION – DAY 1:

Education is a powerful medium for cultivating peace, reconciliation, and ultimately a culture that values human rights and democracy. In a post-conflict society, education also serves as a platform for engaging in a dialogue on what happened and why. Education can be a forum for memorializing the death of loved ones as well as giving somber recognition to the immense suffering of victims who survived. In effect,

Documentation Center of Cambodia ស្វែងរកការពិត ដើម្បីការធន់ទាំនិងយុត្តិធម៌  
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education becomes a bridge between courtroom testimonies and classroom debates. With these aims in mind, since 2007, the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) has been working with the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport to integrate the history of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) in all secondary education schools throughout Cambodia. As part of this work, DC-Cam will begin the *first-ever* annual training of pre-service teachers at the National Institute of Education.

The training of pre-service teachers complements the Genocide Education Project's teacher training by way of providing a pre-service baseline of knowledge on the history of Democratic Kampuchea as well as reaching out to teachers who have not been trained by DC-Cam in its previous service trainings. This training is not only critical to the Genocide Education Project's aim to institutionalize the teaching of the history of Democratic Kampuchea throughout all schools in Cambodia, but also to cultivate new dynamics within the Cambodian teaching profession.

In April 2008, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) formally endorsed the DK history curriculum, and since that time, DC-Cam and the Ministry have provided DK history training to over 3,000 national, provincial, and commune teachers of history, as well as over a hundred university lecturers and professors.

DC-Cam and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, took notice of the fact that some high school students were moving into higher levels of education before DK history was integrated into their respective high school curriculum. In order to address this cohort, DC-Cam has trained over a hundred university lecturers and professors, representing all public universities in Cambodia. Students who were not able to receive DK history instruction at the high school level will now receive mandatory instruction in DK history in their first year of university studies. Moreover, students at the university who were not able to receive this first year of instruction will have the opportunity to study DK history as an elective in the higher grades.

DC-Cam has also begun training the Cambodian Army and Police Officers. Based on an official tasking from the Ministries of Defense and Interior, DC-Cam will provide biannual training for approximately 1,000 military and police officers at their respective service academies. Officers at the Police Academy of Cambodia (PAC) and the Army Institute (AI) will be expected to understand a basic history of Democratic Kampuchea, analyze and evaluate DK ideology and policies; value survivors' knowledge; identify the root causes of genocide; examine state terror in the lead-up to the killings; evaluate the current effects on Cambodian society; foster compassion, empathy and reconciliation; and think critically about how to prevent future mass atrocities in Cambodia and in the global context.

All of these educational efforts are supplemented by an annual nationwide public education forum (implemented in various villages throughout the country). The purpose of the public education forum is to bring DK history to remote areas of Cambodia that fall outside of the public education scheme. In these forums, villagers are encouraged to contribute as mentors in the education of youth and stakeholders in their community's dialogue on what happened and why during the DK period.

The NIE training represents a critical step forward in the Genocide Education Project's ability to impact the Cambodian education system and the next generation of youths. The Documentation Center of Cambodia will provide five days of intensive instruction on DK history, including a practicum in which the pre-service teachers will practice student-centered teaching methods taught by local and foreign educators.

The National Institute of Education annually graduates approximately 1,000 pre-service teachers. Out of this graduating class, DC-Cam will provide DK history training to approximately 230 pre-service teachers, most of whom will go on to teach in the fields of high-school level history, geography, and Khmer literature. Upon completion of this training, teachers will be expected to understand basic concepts within DK history, including key ideas that underlie student-centered learning.

Educating the public, and in particular government institutions, on the controversial past is never easy. Personal trauma and political affiliations inevitably influence the ability to engage in an open-minded discussion. Indeed, we have observed these difficulties with teachers, who carry the responsibility of guiding the younger generation's inquiry into the past. And, not surprisingly, some students have even resisted acknowledging this past. As children of former perpetrators often sit (and live) side-by-side with children of victims, conflict may disrupt classrooms.

Despite these challenges, obtaining a proper knowledge of history is important for all individuals and society. As His Excellency Mr. Im Sethy, the Minister of Education, Youth, and Sport has said: *"Younger generations of Cambodians must understand and know about this grave past in order to learn from past mistakes, prevent such events from happening again, and recognize and know when to stand up for fundamental principles of humanity, integrity, and justice."*

Through this newly-endorsed initiative by NIE, DC-Cam will bring genocide education to future generations of pre-service teachers —deepening the integration of DK history within the national curriculum. Integrating DK history into the national school system is a critical step toward reconciliation and memory, but it is only a beginning. With this new initiative, DC-Cam looks forward to future projects that will stimulate even greater inquiry and debate about the past, and ultimately new

opportunities for advancing peace, reconciliation, and a culture that values human rights and democracy in Cambodia.

## **CLASSROOM REPORT – DAY 2:**



During the week commencing on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2012, DC-Cam strives to deliver an incredibly informative Genocide education programme in a concise and clear bundle, straight into the heart of the Cambodian education system. The programme is predicated along the lines of wishing to educate the 'next generation' of

Cambodian teachers in a bid to secure that they themselves will teach the children of tomorrow. Without wishing to delve into the realms of history too much, the importance of teaching Cambodian children about the Khmer Rouge, truth, justice and forgiveness through a process of Genocide education is obviously a task of enormous significance, and is certainly not one that should just be shunted to the chasms of a dusty old library, or University elective. The importance of education in such matters is still a daily issue in this beautiful country, without which, the significance of events such as the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) have very little impact at a grass-roots level.

On attending a session, it did not take long to discover that the 'general knowledge' of the Khmer Rouge, and Genocide en general, in the younger generations is less than one might expect. One might imagine that it is a topic of daily discussion, or at least a topic that is discussed at length in the right environments, e.g. middle and secondary schools at the very least, but having heard some of the comments in class today, one wonders if people ever really dedicate time in talking about the issue that is of such paramount importance in Cambodia's history. Just to give a very crude example, one student asked, 'Why did the Vietnamese support the Khmer Rouge post 1979?'. So on this evidence alone, DC-Cam has the 'unenviable', but absolutely essential, task of delivering education to the country's educators.

The style of delivering the teaching programme is very clear and very well organised. Each student teacher receives a fairly comprehensive textbook that guides them through the process with the help of a very charismatic, engaging teacher, picked by DC-Cam for that very purpose. The student teachers are actively encouraged to ask



questions, to participate in class, and share their own ideas about what it means to teach a subject that has been shied away from for so long. The textbook recommends to each student teacher that they begin their Genocide education training by paying close attention to the stipulated objectives of each chapter. Each objective is usually the culmination of 3-4 subheadings that deal with a particular issue regarding the chapter in question. The textbook then lists the materials and equipment required for that particular chapter. Finally there is a lesson plan, which is made up of 3 constituent parts; an introduction, the actual teaching plan, and finally a conclusion.



*A building inside NIE*

The class began with an interactive question and answer session with a very charismatic Ms. Sirik Savina. The intention of the Q & A session was to assess the degree of knowledge that any of the student teachers may have previously had—perhaps unsurprisingly, the questions were not particularly thought-provoking, many student teachers just wanted

confirmation on the basic knowledge that they had acquired. The textbook (previously alluded to), 'Teachers guidebook: The teaching of "a history of democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)" was then used to begin the formal teaching. Another teacher, used by DC-Cam, took the mantle of going through the book. She was clearly a competent teacher, and later it came to my attention that not only did she have 40 years experience, but she worked extensively on the Genocide Education project, and featured heavily on the editorial board of the textbook that the students were in fact using.

The style of teaching, by both teachers, was incredibly engaging, and the student teachers did appear to be engrossed in the subject matter, but one couldn't help but feel as though the entire process would have benefitted massively from visual aids. A power point presentation and visual aids would have improved the session dramatically given the nature of the subject matter. Genocide is not a subject that can be 'taught' from a textbook. To understand genocide, is to understand people, and without the use of aids, the subject matter alone can be lost in textual translation. The student teachers were asked to plan a lesson of their own, a lesson that would include a role play, where one person plays the role of the victim and the other plays the role of the perpetrator. If the class had had the facility to play a

documentary video recounting the life of a victim (or perpetrator), it may have been a much more fruitful exercise because the role's that one plays, could have been better understood in a real life context.

Having been fortunate enough to interview some of the teachers, I asked them what aids they would like to have had to enhance the programme, and perhaps unsurprisingly, both teachers thought that visual aids would help the process of teaching exponentially, but naturally funds, space and time were the constraining



*Trainees inside the classroom*

limitations. The first part of the class this morning was an hour and a half long, and in that time the training teachers were supposed to deliver a comprehensive approach to the events that took four years to occur in actuality. Their efforts were fantastic, but one couldn't help feeling like the entire process should take a little

longer. The process may also benefit greatly from being exposed to some oral histories with real life survivors sharing their stories. The enthusiasm of the DC-Cam teachers and staff must be embedded in the student teachers if they themselves are then going to deliver a comprehensive overview and understanding of the genocide that occurred in Cambodia.

The experience left me wondering what I would do differently given the same constraints, and whilst it is hard to find fault with DC-Cam's approach, perhaps the introduction of some 'hands on' experiences may leave the students with a greater lasting impression. The task that DC-Cam faces is huge, and they are coping admirably but it still shocks me that so many of these 26-7 years olds still are not aware of some rather basic facts about a period of their history that is so important, and historically speaking, so contemporary. Perhaps the addition of a survivor giving a presentation, or a video of Tuol Sleng detention centre might make the entire experience feel a little bit more real, and give the students the desire to learn the subject matter with more zealous enthusiasm.

### CLASSROOM REPORT – DAY 3:



*Mr. Siv Thuon (left) and Ms. Mom Met (right) explain trainees*

Arriving at the educational training institute for the second day, as witness to the genocide education program being conducted by the Documentation Centre of Cambodia (DC-Cam), I was struck by something that I completely failed to notice yesterday. The building in which the teacher training and the seminars are being taught is almost a complete carbon copy of one of the most notorious detention, interrogation and murder centres in the world, that of one Tuol Sleng, Office S-21. Naturally this is hardly surprising given that they are both built originally as high schools, and constructed in a similar era, but there does seem to be an incredibly cruel irony that struck me; the question of, 'how different would Cambodia's history be if an educational board had been teaching a genocide program to Khmer society since the conception of the term 'genocide'?'. Given that one of the primary objectives of such a program is to ensure that genocide never rears its ugly head again on Cambodian shores, we can only assume that Cambodia's history would have been quite, quite different.

On arriving at the new class for the day, the students that would be under the supervision of the ever capable Mom Met, Kok-Thay Eng and Savina Sirik, seemed relatively motivated and work began almost immediately. Mom Met began proceedings and instantly struck a good rapport with the students. Her warm



teaching style, and engaging manner helps to reinforce the notion that, whilst terribly harrowing, genocide education is of paramount importance in this country. Posters were adorned on the white board and the day generally felt as though it may be, visually, that little bit more interactive than yesterday. Unfortunately, the use of 'visual aids' didn't seem to transcend the boundaries of bland posters on whiteboards. Nonetheless, Mom Met delivered a lesson that, given her constraints, can only be applauded. The textbook that she used was a different one from yesterday and is entitled 'A history of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)'. It is a DC-Cam publication, and having read the English edition, it comes highly recommended as a means of conveying some fairly complicated and complex historical events to a lay reader in bite-size pieces of information. There are life histories, interactive pictures and the prose is incredibly comprehensive.

The class assessed two chapters, 'Daily life during Democratic Kampuchea' and 'The security system'. Each chapter was comprised of 5-6 subheadings. The book was used to drive the lesson, but Mom Met embellished on each sub-heading herself, and included her own personal stories and testimonies. It was impossible to fail to notice just how engrossed the students were when she was talking about issues that



*Trainee practices teaching*

affected Khmer daily lives, such as marriage and food supplies. However, with regards to issues such as the, the loss of innocence, for example, the students were less able to feel empathy. There was a fairly detailed account of child soldiers, and it seemed like a perfect opportunity for the trainee teachers to be taken out of their comfort zones, and be asked how they might feel if they were taken from their families and forced to march to the 'front' with nothing but a gun. The importance of instilling a sense of self-reflection cannot be stressed highly enough. How can these 'will-be teachers' share their newly-gained education with their own students if they cannot relate to those whom they are teaching about? No such self-reflective rhetoric was uttered, and I couldn't help but feel as though the lack of 'imagine if this was you' message was a lost opportunity.

Another particularly poignant period of that lesson, still relating to children, was the issue of education during the Khmer Rouge. Once again, there were so many obvious parallels screaming out that were not touched upon. Not talking about the issue of a lack of education leading to misunderstandings and ignorance was another huge missed opportunity in my opinion. These students should be encouraged to wear the shoe on the other foot and try to understand the situation of genocide from *all*



perspectives, not just the ones printed in black and white on embossed paper. In the defence of the very warm Mom Met, she was teaching an incredibly delicate topic, and she may have been giving the students an opportunity to digest the information that they were reading, rather than engaging them further on the issue. The students being completely engrossed by her narrative is testament to that.

As 50 minutes ticked by, without a break, the sense of restlessness was rife. There was talking amongst students and the atmosphere became much less engaging, yet the class continued without stopping. Mom Met appeared to make some light-hearted jokes, and she did, in part, regain some student's attention back to the intense task at hand. As restlessness took a hold of me, the 2 and a half hour lunch break seemingly became ever so much more excessive in my humble opinion. The next chapter was started with only a very brief window for Q & A and self-reflection. Despite Mom Met's fantastic professionalism, an hour and forty-five minutes is too long to expect to keep a student's interest. It became increasingly evident that the students were losing focus as many began to ask questions that were still related to the previous topic. One gentleman was asking questions about marriage (from the previous chapter) during the issue of execution in security centres.

Without wishing to labour the issue too much, it was also apparent how much more the class could have been enhanced by the inclusion of a short video about political indoctrination or one of the other topics discussed. After a twenty-minute break, Miss Savina Sirik referred back to the textbook that had been used on the previous day. The teaching style reverted back to an emphasis on the actual teaching of said materials, rather just information gathering. Savina's style is equally engaging and she was very competent at offering her advice with regards to interview techniques and lesson planning. Unfortunately the pandemic struck again, and restlessness became an ever-present feature of the morning. The sessions, without a break, are too long.

It became much more obvious to me today, than it had done yesterday, that DC-Cam's style of teaching is being constrained by the machine at large. The machine being the educational institute and the greater Khmer education system. DC-Cam is doing an absolutely amazing job of delivering some incredibly difficult subject matter to a mixed audience in a system that is not conducive for high efficiency levels of learning. The classes should be half the length with breaks divided equally. The curriculum, in my opinion, should be much less text-book centric, and much more 'hands on' and personal. Within DC-Cam and their associates, there is an absolute mountain of knowledge available, and yet the curriculum dictates that the textbook should not be strayed from too far. The arsenal of DC-Cam is far from being fully utilised. The students persist to ask bizarre questions, and there is a feeling amongst the camp that there is a degree of time-wasting and bad manners. A student

sauntered into class this morning 40 minutes late, and proceeded to talk to his peer for the next 20 minutes.

The afternoon, however, bore fruit of groundbreaking proportions. Through the friendship networks of DC-Cam, David Chandler came and gave a fascinating Q&A session at the institute in which there was a real once-in-a-life time opportunity for the 'will be' teachers to soundboard some of their more pressing questions, and who better to answer them than Chandler himself. His answers were concise and insightful, and hopefully, he will have given the students the encouragement to go on and take the mantle of genocide education to the next generation. The students were also able to view a video of Tuol Sleng which documented survivor's stories. There was the distinct impression that DC-Cam were finally given the freedom to 'run the show' at the institute without the interferences and bureaucracy of the institute, and it couldn't have been more impressive. I was left with the feeling that DC-Cam operates in the same way as an incredibly competent chef, with great ideas and



*Trainee practices teaching*

unbelievably rare and fantastic ingredients, which are for the most part, unavailable to most people. It is just such a pity that they are operating in a kitchen that does not always allow their potential to shine through, this afternoon however was a rare treat, and the meal served was exquisite.

#### **CLASSROOM REPORT – DAY 4:**

Today was day four of the genocide education programme, and there have been yet more surprises. I was lucky enough to voyeur a different teaching team this morning, comprising of DC-Cam's deputy director, Mr Vanthan Dara and National history teacher trainer, Kalyan (who, having done some digging, is 1 of only 39 Teacher trainers afforded the prestigious recognition of being recognised 'nationally'). The day started with the DC-Cam publication, 'A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979), by Khamboly Dy'. The chapters of interest were 'Office S-21 (Tuol Sleng Prison)' and 'Foreign Relations'.

The opening chapter regarding Tuol Sleng seemed to capture the interest of most students. The book has some fantastic photographs and offers a very coherent overview of the events that took place there. As I observed the class though, it dawned on me, 'why are we not *at* Tuol Sleng?!'. As the giant Ibis (*Thaumatibis gigantea*) flies, Tuol Sleng is less than 1 kilometre away, and would be the most fantastic venue to host the lesson. Where better to compound one's knowledge than

the site of exaction itself? As we read about the buildings, the prisoners, regulations, prison conditions, interrogation, organisational structure, leaders and execution, I couldn't help but think that we are possibly the last generation that will see the resident S-21 survivors Bou Meng and Chum Mey alive. Having one of the nation's leading History teachers team up with the survivors to convey the events of what happened at Tuol Sleng under the Khmer Rouge, *at* the place where such dreadful events occurred, is surely an opportunity that is too good to miss. The student teachers would receive an overwhelming education, and a lesson so poignant that they would not fail to deliver a fantastically insightful class on Tuol Sleng to their own students. I implore DC-Cam and the Institute of Education to make this idea a reality. It will not be long before it is not possible.

With this idea in mind, I actually spoke to a few students during their breaks, and discovered that whilst most of them have been 'fortunate' enough to visit Tuol Sleng, only 2 students out of 30 had been to Choeung Ek, better known to some as 'the killing fields'. My mind was made up, one of the genocide education days should be spent with a morning visit to Tuol Sleng, complete with a lesson taught by a cooperative of DC-Cam, Institute of education and Tuol Sleng staff, and then ideally, in the afternoon, the group would make the short journey to Choeung Ek. In this country, I don't know how you could possibly define 'Genocide Education' in a better way.

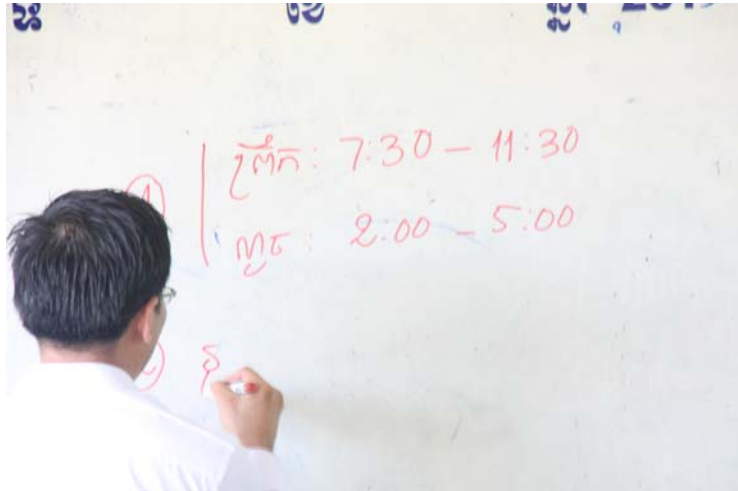
In the second half of the morning, the fantastic Mom Met returned to centre stage. Mom Met went on to give the best teaching session I have witnessed so far, along with every other student, I was completely captivated by what she was doing and saying (and considering my Khmer is dreadful, that should give an indication of just how good she is). Mom Met gave a relatively brief overview of genocides that have occurred globally and encouraged the students to openly share what they already knew. I must admit that I was very surprised when I saw a whole array of bodies dart up and start to say out loud 'Former Yugoslavia', 'Rwanda', 'Iraq' and 'Nazi Germany'. The students that volunteered answers were also encouraged to speak a little about those countries and share the knowledge that they had, and surprisingly (or perhaps, no longer surprisingly), they knew sufficiently more about the Nazi's and the Jewish persecution than Tuesday morning's students knew about the Khmer Rouge.

Mom Met organised an interactive workshop where students were divided up into 5 groups and encouraged to work as a team to take the information that they already had, and the information written in their teacher's handbooks, and write a lesson plan that they could then share with their own students. From my perspective, the exercise was a great success. I came away from the Institute of Education today more optimistic and confident in the programme than I had done previously. There truly are some fantastic staff available to the student teachers, if they were able to utilise the resources that could potentially be at their disposal (for example, Tuol Sleng),

and perhaps open a few more windows of text-bookless time, the programme will become a real winner and the future of domestic genocide education in Cambodia will be that little bit brighter.

### CLASSROOM REPORT – DAY 5:

Today was the last day that I observed DC-Cam's genocide education project. Whilst I shall give a brief overview of what I have witnessed today, I would like to pay perhaps more attention to the observations and conclusions that I have drawn from the week entire. It has been an incredibly interesting and insightful



week. Being fickle in nature, I have experienced periods of optimism for the new curriculum that DC-Cam proposes to the education board, but also periods of pessimism when I see the challenges that DC-Cam faces in disseminating this information effectively to a wide array of trainee teachers- many of whom who already have their own ideas about how genocide should be taught.

The class I attended today was led by DC-Cam's Long Dany and Ly Sok-Kheang, and the chapters discussed from 'A history of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979),' were Chapter 11, 'The Fall of Democratic Kampuchea' and the 'Conclusion'. The session was engaging and some students certainly seemed interested in the demise of the Khmer Rouge regime. A lot of time was spent discussing the issues of paddy-culture, and the issue of irrigation canal digging. It certainly was a group discussion, with quite a few students keen to ask questions. There were some comparisons drawn with the contemporary issue of rice farming, and improvements that could be made to increase modern efficiency even further. There were also questions regarding the over-investment of human capital in irrigation, and the relationship between under-production of rice and the fall of the Khmer Rouge. Finally the discussion was rounded off with a Q&A about Sihanouk's relationship with Khmer society and the factors that led to the coup staged by Lon Nol. The day, in general, was fairly similar to the days that had preceded it, but today helped to concretely establish my observations in my mind.



DC-Cam is proposing a *new* take on genocide education within the existing framework of the Cambodian education system. I stress that word again, this endeavour is *new*. DC-Cam have written and published their own teaching books and materials to deal with the issues of educating teachers who themselves will then go on and teach the subject to the next generation. DC-Cam's approach, from the word go, has been a non-intrusive, purely suggestive strategy, hoping to broaden the horizons and the outreach of today's teachers. The workshops that they have been running have carried the sole purpose of offering trainee teachers new ideas and a change of tact where methodology is concerned, should they wish to use it. The intention is to offer the teachers an arsenal of teaching strategies, to be put into practice if they wish to disseminate the education to their students in a similar way to which they have experienced under DC-Cam. Unfortunately, one cannot say that DC-Cam's strategy has been met with rave reviews and budding enthusiasts. There is an overwhelming sense from the trainee teachers that DC-Cam's new approach is so far removed from what they already know, that they shy away from wanting to learning alternative teaching strategies. The expression, 'if it's not broken, why fix it?' may spring to mind for some but, it is broken, at least in part. To have a 'teacher' stand up on Tuesday morning and ask why the Vietnamese supported the Khmer Rouge after 1979 would suggest to me that something, somewhere down the line, is very, very wrong. Perhaps this stone-headedness is actually symptomatic of some areas of Khmer society at large. On more than one occasion I have been informed by members of Khmer society that education, rather than a learning and character-building experience, is actually just a process that has to be undertaken, and the only important part of that process is the diploma or certificate that one receives at the end (I do not want to suggest for one moment though that this problem is a Cambodian phenomena as I know that it is pandemic in nature). I would certainly advocate that in this system, there should be much greater emphasis placed on why it is that we learn, and how education as an entity in itself helps to develop us as people, and mould our personal characteristics in a way that helps to perpetuate the importance of learning. Students respond to the characters of their teachers, take Mom Met for example. She is an incredibly warm and engaging teacher, and thus unsurprisingly, she has been able to get the best out of her students. The students themselves should strive to follow in her example.

As an education system, there certainly is a sense of 'we have always done it this way, and who are you to tell us differently?'. Please allow me to tell you why I think this attitude should change. DC-Cam is filled to the brim with highly-educated specialists who spend their lives dealing in matters that relate to the Khmer Rouge. They have connections with world-leading historians such as David Chandler, and they have more source material than any other organisation in the country. It should be an honour for these trainee teachers to have received any kind of guidance from this team of enthusiasts.

One wonders what the students will have taken away from this experience given that so many of them seem to be stuck in a perennial cycle of refusing to at least entertain the idea that there may be more than one way of doing things. It certainly left me questioning their intentions as to why they



may have wanted to become teachers in the first place. Do some of these trainees really relish the opportunity to educate Cambodian youths or is education to them just a hoop jumping exercise? DC-Cam's methods are questioned before they're even tried. The enthusiasm that the DC-Cam trainers bring each day is particularly admirable given the challenge that the face.

But who's to blame? Is blame even the right word? The department of education should be whole-heartedly supporting such a proposal. The institute of education should be jumping for joy at the prospect of being given such an opportunity, but the sad reality is that DC-Cam seems to be running up a mountain. The attitude of the trainee teachers seems to be indifferent at best. There certainly are students who have been incredibly engaging and I have personally interviewed some trainee teachers that I am sure will at least try these new methodologies and techniques, but for the most part, one is certainly left with the impression that genocide education at the lower levels will not be changing anytime soon.

Perhaps I could offer some advice to these trainee teachers? I have been in education now for 21 years and the windows of opportunity that present themselves to me are incredible and constantly life-changing. But to claim that this is all due to my own merit would be a lie. I have been extremely fortunate in my life to have had teachers that have cared about what they are teaching. An enthusiastic teacher who is prepared to leave their comfort zone and try new methodological approaches (that is to say, make the learning of a subject more interesting) is one of the most important things that a teacher can offer a student. The knowledge that they disseminate will remain with that student and one prays that in years to come, that student may use that knowledge to change someone else's life-maybe in the capacity as a teacher, or maybe as the CEO of a multinational corporation. Teaching should be seen as more than just 'a job'. It is a vocation, and as bastions of the educators of tomorrow's children, it should be regarded as an honour. So to return to a point made previously, there are parts of the system that are broken, and burying our heads in

the sand will not fix it. Opportunities that present themselves, no matter how foreign they may appear on the surface, should be given a chance and tried. It boggles my mind that a teacher cannot appreciate the importance of dynamic education. But what do I know?

## KEYNOTE PRESENTATION – DAY 6:



*Dr. Kar Sunbonath answers trainees' questions*

Dr. Kar Sunbonath, Head of Mental Health Department of University of Health Science, started his presentation by saying his inspiration to study psychology came from his own personal experience of witnessing people who had themselves suffered from trauma, so much so, that they had become destitute and were subsequently living on the street. Dr. Kar quickly opened the floor to

students. The first question posed was that many Cambodians suffered from a serious mental health issues, Dr. Kar duly acknowledged that some Cambodians suffered from trauma, while many others did not. The trauma did not take place after the Khmer Rouge regime alone, but was in fact tracked back to the period of the Second World War. The constant sense of fear was one of the root causes during the Khmer Rouge period, which perpetually ties survivors to a sense of relentless fear. The post-Khmer Rouge sense of distrust was a circumstance in which people keep silent to protect themselves. So, circumstances such as the Second World War, the Khmer Rouge regime and its aftermath, caused the people's mentality to change.

## CLOSING CEREMONY

Saturday afternoon was the very last day of the six day training. Officials from relevant institutions came to give an encouraging speech to the trainees to effectively convey the history of Democratic Kampuchea to high school student for generations to come.



*H.E. Ton Sa-Im gives a talk to trainees*

Mr. Vanthan Peou Dara, Deputy Director of DC-Cam, gave a speech about the close collaboration between DC-Cam and the National Institute of Education (NIE). Pedagogical students have represented our ongoing educational targets that have been aimed at future high school teachers across Cambodia.



*H.E. Dr. Sieng Sovanna gives a speech*



*Mr. Vanthan Peou Dara does his presentation*

H.E. Dr. Sieng Sovanna, Director of NIE, said that it had been a great honour for the Institute to preside over the ceremony of the training of teachers on Democratic Kampuchean history. On behalf of my colleagues, I'd like to thank H.E.

Ton Sa-Im for coming to this institute. Democratic Kampuchean history makes a great contribution to what they have learned. Dr. Sieng Sovanna supported the idea of organizing this training in the proceeding years. With regards to justice and reconciliation, it's even more important to have this training.

H.E. Ton Sa-Im took to the floor and stated the importance of why each student should learn about the history of Democratic Kampuchea. There are many survivors, including herself. H.E. Ton Sa-Im said studying history is to focus on real facts that everyone should engage with and not just come to uneducated assumptions.

Learning about the past is to learn how to prevent a future reoccurrence. Now that reconciliation becomes a focal point of rebuilding our society. DC-Cam has set up an anti-genocide slogan, 'If a country experiences war, there will be no development at all'. H.E. Ton Sa-Im reminded us that transferring knowledge to students is very important to make students understand and learn the lessons from our history. H.E. Ton Sa-Im said that all the trainees should be proud of their careers, and proud to serve the nation's interest. They should act as good role models to guide students and society. H.E. Ton Sa-Im suggested that DC-Cam should pay more attention to provide annual training to NIE to sustain the momentum of this important work.



## CONCLUSION

The first training for over one hundred pedagogical students ended as a great success, despite some intentional and unintentional challenges. This is attributed to a variety of factors. As the DC-Cam team have discussed and agreed in principle, the training's objectives and the close collaboration between DC-Cam and NIE, an educational branch under the MoEYS, have been clearly emphasized in each of the four classrooms which consisted each of 40 trainees. Half of the trainees seemed to grasp the instruction in a clear and convincing manner and never missed the classes, as shown in the attendance list. They have seen the importance of the training, whilst the other half paid very little, if any at all, attention to it.

Controversies over the study materials, in particular the methodologies in the *Teachers' Guidebook*, was an unexpected challenge. Although trainers take great pains to provide a clear-cut and comprehensive explanation about the materials, trainees seemed to have already made up their minds and to have judged that the Guidebook is of less value and less well-suited to their current level of education. However, one important thing to note is that most trainees found those methods completely new to them. That's the reason H.E Ton Sa-Im encouraged the trainees to learn about the new techniques and materials. Her message is that: "What Mr. Chris Dearing and Dr. Chea Phala have written about is that each pedagogical student should think of how to pick some points to include in their lesson plan. Trainees could learn a new way of thinking. It's a kind of bringing us new knowledge to do research."

H.E. Ton Sa-Im implied that upon their return to their schools, they should be creative and make their own decisions on which teaching methods may work for them, practically and constructively during the teaching. Given the importance, H.E. Dr. Sieng Sovanna made a precise speech stating that such training on the history of DK is of tremendous benefit and importance to pedagogical students.

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## APPENDIX– SUMMARY:

*By Ly Sok-Kheang*

A six-day training organized by Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) in collaboration with National Institute of Education (NIE) has been conducted to give 158 (36 females) pedagogical students an insight into the Democratic Kampuchea (DK) history complete with new methodologies written and published in the Teachers' Guidebook. To fulfill this objective, DC-Cam has sent its 10-member team and four educational, historical, and psychological experts to provide a variety of lectures and to do a Q&A session. The big challenges during the training are that some trainees could not come and join the training on time. This makes for frequent interruptions to the teaching.



### 1. Activities of the Training

The term “history” has been the key theme of discussion in relation to the six-day training, which involves approximately 158 pedagogical students. Mr. Chris Dearing wished to know from the students, exactly what history meant to them and thus asked them how they felt about the idea of history. At that point, around ten students responded by saying that learning history is ‘to learn how to prevent the tragic past from happening again’. However, one trainee, from Kampong Speu province, expressed his reservations by saying that, discussing history would cause an exposure to politics that could possibly represent a threat to the personal safety of teachers.

Another trainee commented on the fact that teachers of history will naturally be different from one person to another, that is to say, the subject matter may

change from individual to individual. History has become a thing that has taken place in the past and our understanding of such events will obviously differ. A further problem arose when discussing the issue of clarification in terms of improving our understanding of history, and one of the main issues was the shortage of materials which caused trouble for history teachers. Another point that was raised was the fact that Cambodia's history has been long studied by foreigners rather than Cambodians, thus there was an impetus to encourage those students who study history to actually be able to visit the real sites of historic places. In general, it was mentioned that social sciences do not have value that real sciences do and those 'real' or 'true' sciences should be focused upon more. However, Mr. Lun Sokhy said to get students to understand history is by making the social science seem more 'technical' by using the mediums of: 1. Physical evidence; 2. Research papers; and 3. Survivors.

Overall, Mr. Chris Dearing made an incredibly critical point with regards to the abovementioned comments. He stressed that students should realize that they need to know how to do research and develop critical thinking if they are to become good teachers of history. Additionally, Mr. Siv Thuon took to the floor to explain to the students about the issue of history. He said that humans have lived on this earth for nearly one million years. Every generation has been born and died like the light "Ampil Ampech." History is a means of bringing the past back to life. So, students need to be open-minded, in order to improve their own knowledge and the knowledge of others.

In response to this Dr. Chea Phala commented that teachers should bear in mind at least seven points to teach their students, as follow:

1. Be open-minded
2. Be curious
3. Be creative
4. Be tolerant
5. Be resilient
6. Be compassionate
7. Be able to think critically.

Dr. Chea Phala asked her trainees to repeat her explanation by asking a trainee Mr. Bou Sovannarith from Pursat province to give more details.

Questions that trainees have been posed with were responded to with great appreciation and the explanations were very detailed.

1. Why did the KR need to divide administrative branches into zones, regions, districts and others? Why were autonomous zones established (it is independent from the zone, but under direct control of Office 870)?
2. Why did the Khmer Rouge starve the people if the four-year plan produced three tons per hectare?
3. Where were private properties collected?
4. When was the Khmer Rouge's currency printed out and why did the Khmer Rouge standing committee prohibit it?
5. Will the impact of survivors' mental health on their own children and KR's legacy impact upon the current issue?
6. Can anger be driven away from a person's mentality?

### Guest Speakers



*Dr. David Chandler answers trainees' questions*

During the training, methodologies that DC-Cam has brought into the NIE are actively followed. For example, guest speakers have been selected, and presented their stories about life through the KR period. Mr. Chhorn Chheng Lun said: "before the KR's victory, I fled my village many times. In 1974, I moved out from my village. My family could not move to live in liberated

zones as we feared the killings. In 1974, my family resettled in Kampong Speu town. In 1974-75, airplanes dropped food for Lon Nol's soldiers. My father hid himself inside a sack to avoid being conscripted into the military. People scuffled over the rice. In April 1975, my family was evacuated to the North. We could not move any quick speed. When we got to Chan Thnal, city dwellers suffered from great pains. He said her grandparents died, but he could organize a religious ceremony. It was possible as the first month of the KR's victory did not prohibit that yet. He mentioned that people incurred malaria. The medication was inappropriate as they injected it into the human body. However, when he was with the child unit, he observed that at least three or four children died. He was among ten children who were assigned to make fertilizers."

Each trainee listened attentively to the speakers and took note of information she heard. Then two note takers came to the white board and presented what they



had recorded. This is the methodology that the trainees practiced amongst themselves.

## **2. Observations of facilitators**

Group Practice went well with some feedback taken from trainers. For example, a representative of group one did the teaching practice, while others paid attention to it. Mr. Nhil Sal, a trainer from NIE, commented that the group needs to act in a more confident way. However, there are some trainees who failed to prepare their lesson plans. This made them teach a wrong lesson during the practice. By engaging students engaged in the discussion, there are constructive comments on the teaching practice in a very constructive way.

- Trainers committed to encouraging all students to submit their lesson plan. Ms. Chea Kalyan found that it was a failure. However, she was not provided with a daily comment to improve it on the next day.
- National teachers suggested that senior teachers should be involved in the training for the first time. Why they are important? They had a lot of experience to do the teaching.
- Time management for national teachers when they do the teaching is really constraining. They are so tired of spending most of the time doing the teaching.
- The use of the word “role play” is a problem as students wonder if the student needs to play like an actor/actress.
- Substance of DK history: Mr. Cheng Hong said the trainees are BA students. They focus more on the content of the history. He suggested while teaching and discussing the history in class, trainees should not be asked to close the book and pay attention to trainers. Mr. Cheng Hong commented that trainees should have the rights to read it while teaching. Mr. Cheng Hong said history should have a clear answer but not an abstract answer. History needs to be absolute.
- Seriousness of the clarification: National trainers suggest that DC-Cam needs historians and experts such as Prof. David Chandler and Dr. Kar Sunbonath to lecture and answer trainees’ questions.
- Methodologies—there needs to be a new methodology taught to the trainees at NIE. The methodology in the Guidebook’s Teachers is conflicting with that of the MoEYS. The Guidebook is “limited” to the knowledge of the trainees. But Mr. Hong said his students found it hard for the trainees at the NIE to accept the new idea. Mr. Hong said it’s not a success as time per diem was

constraining. DC-Cam's ability to teach methodologies: Mr. Cheng Hong said he provided no exact answer.

### 3. Interviews of participants



*Trainee reads DK textbook*

Mr. Sor Vin, of Takeo, taught at Hun Sen Koh Andet high school. First I can earn more knowledge and I can spread the information to the students. I can integrate some of this history in my classroom. I can present the facts such as Tuol Sleng. And I will encourage students to talk more to their parents. Second, I used to read this DK history through some books and learned from my parents. My father produced palm juices. When starvation took place, he collected ripe palm fruit to make food. Third, I taught Khmer literature and my second subject is history. But I can integrate this history as it related to the history.

### 4. Challenges/Limitations

- The content of the DK Textbook and the Teachers' Guidebook: The students wondered how the Teachers' Guidebook was applicable at NIE. National teachers should give a clear-cut instruction to get a good response from the trainees' questions.
- A few students came in late and interrupted the other students. It happened almost every day even though trainers reminded them frequently to be on time.
- Inspiration of Students: It's important to show the importance of learning the KR history and then stressing that it'd be significant to use it as a core reference to conduct the class
- The Problem of Absence: A few of the trainees took a leave of absence without any notice. There were two main problems that made the students frustrated. First was about snacks, and that there was insufficient for them on the first day. Second, daily presence was requested, arguably in compensation to their study. In response, what the trainers reminded them of was that the training was an opportunity to get new ideas and teaching methods. They

should be proud of the methods that no one else knows. They should be open-minded.

- Group Practice: Trainees said the group practice could not be implemented for everyone due to time constraints. As the DK history is long, the trainees worried that upon their return to their high school, they would have not enough time to teach this at high school. However, trainers tried to explain to them as to how to make the best use of their time.
  - Teaching Practice: Trainees are quick to understand the new methodologies that DC-Cam's Teachers' Guidebook has. Representatives of the four groups on day two were able to follow each step and guide the other trainees. However, a notable problem is that when the trainees have selected their representatives, they seem to take little care of the practice. That's why trainers chose a flexible strategy by asking other people rather than those who volunteered to do the teaching practice. This is a kind of surprised re-arrangement that makes other classmates satisfied with it.
  - Comment on History: A trainee wished for clarification on the distinction between ethnic minority and hill tribes. Thus she proposed that there should be a categorization of such people into a clear group, and that that would be helpful.
  - Techniques of interview: Trainees said 'to what extent our interviews are genuinely true?'. Trainers took turns to explain that experience becomes effective in attempting to ascertain the 'truth'. The most important thing is to get along with them, either victims or former KR cadres.
  - A trainee said the methods are different from those of the MoEYS. A trainer attempted to explain that the Teacher's Guidebook does not meet with the standard. But asked what they mean by "standard," as there is no exact explanation. The trainee asked the trainer to show what the difference was. However, as explained, DC-Cam has made great efforts with the national trainers such as Ms. Chea Kalyan, Mr. Cheng Hong and Ms. Nhil Sal of NIE to develop the Guidebook, a co-operation sought from DC-Cam. Ms. Chea Kalyan took to the floor and explained, but she said the corrections she made before the publication failed to follow her writing. Mr. Cheng Hong said "standard" means that UNESCO used four factors "learn to know, learn to do, learn to be, to live together." These are what UNESCO teaches students. Sometimes the teachers used only three factors. That is the principle that MoEYS has conducted. Mr. Cheng Hong suggests a new version of the Guidebook; otherwise, it's hard to get into the NIE's educational system.
1. Learn to Know (knowledge):
  2. Learn to do (practice)

3. Learn to be (attitude): The change of people's characteristics. Love and take care of. Most of the objectives in the Guidebook missed one objective "attitude". That should be improved in the Guidebook. There is very little in the Guidebook. Each objective should start with "verb", *for example, 1. describe, 2. explain, 3. love, prevent and admire, 4. unite, take care, and reconcile etc.(but every lesson could not have attitude, but most have it),* to get students understood. To make a sentence represents "love."



*Trainee inside classroom*

Dr. Chea Phala said: point 2 and 3 already existed in the DK textbook. Mr. Siv Thuon said we needed to have shown clearly in the Guidebook. For example, Mr. Thuon said if we had a banana, we needed to feed him. NIE will take the lead in restructuring the education sector to put the "verb" in the front of sentence.

4. Learn to live together (unity, solidarity, reconciliation)

## **5. Recommendations for improvements**

- Facility is a big challenge that should be improved. There's a need to have a meeting hall to explain the materials and objectives of the training on the first day.
- Patience should be enormously encouraged to make sure that the training goes smoothly and with everyone's cooperation. Politeness, tolerance and respect should be the prime solution to the problem.

## **Dr. Chea Phala**

### **Below are Dr. Chea Phala's recommendations**

1. Get background information of institution and participants. Find out what the institution wants for outcomes. Sign an MOU with the institution receiving the training.
2. Inform the institution of the objectives and training agenda/program in advance.



3. Get full support and buy-in from the institution.
4. Ask the institution to share the training information and expectations with the participants in advance.
5. Provide an agenda/program and expectations to participants in advance (or on first day of registration) with a list of trainers/presenters and their short bio.
6. Provide the trainers/presenters with the agenda/program and any follow-up meeting dates and times (translated) in advance to eliminate guessing games and surprises.
7. Inform the trainers/presenters about what is expected of them (i.e. attendance, punctuality, teamwork, unity and commitment).
8. Double confirm everyone and everything in advance. There should be a checklist of things to do.
9. Inform everyone involved of any changes.
10. Meet with all the trainers in advance to go over the training agenda/program, expectations, logistics, and training materials.
11. Start on time and end on time.
12. Bring mini microphones/hand held microphones to avoid the "microphone problem". Also bring an LCD/projector.
13. Bring enough training supplies/resources distribution, including films.
14. Have an opening ceremony and closing ceremony.
15. Introduce presenters/trainers to participants.
16. Follow proper protocol.
17. Have at least one representative from institution present during the training to help take care of logistics, answer questions and to be a presence.
18. Have one facilitator from DC-CAM (free from training responsibilities) help take care of logistics, answer questions and be available.
19. Have a follow-up discussion with the institution to assess training outcomes.



*Mr. Christopher Dearing (left), Mr. Ly Sok-Kheang (middle) and Dr. Chea Phala (right)*

Note: The seminar at the Army Institute went rather well considering that we had such a full agenda for that one day. It was successful in part due to the presence of the commanding officer hosting

and facilitating the day with DC-CAM. In addition, the speech of the General at the opening helped set the stage and encouraged participants' commitment.

As for the training at NIE, improvements can definitely be made following the 19 recommendations above. For future trainings at NIE or at other institutions, have the hosting institution help take care of logistics and be a supportive presence...not a fellow trainer. One needs to let participants know who we are. I wish we had the closing ceremony (I enjoyed and appreciated the speeches made by Bong Dara, the Director of NIE and the Deputy Minister of Education) at the beginning and a social gathering at the end. We could have avoided a lot of problems. It would have been perfect also to have the presentation of the Professor from the medical school on the first day to help set the stage. I hope DC-CAM will continue to invite him to present because his topic is one of the main reasons for having genocide education.

## **Mr. Christopher Dearing**

### **Below are Mr. Christopher Dearing's observations/recommendations**

1. Trainers were very flexible with alternating schedule amidst absent national teachers and student teaching teams.

Recommendation: None.

2. The daily post-training day meeting was very useful in relieving issues and identifying concerns of teachers and students. Recommendation: Continue.
3. The division of classes into smaller rooms appeared to be more effective than large group sessions. While the beginning of the training should have included a large group session to establish student norms, clarify expectations and objectives, and define value of training, the smaller classes were conducive to the student-centered methods and it also allowed for trainers to rotate through groups. Recommendation: Continue (if possible)

### **Improvements/Recommendations**

1. DC-Cam staff appeared to have conflicts with students as well as national teachers.

Recommendation: I took notes from a meeting with Je Hong. I believe that some (though not all) of the conflicts could have been, if not avoided, at least mitigated with more clear protocols on communication and roles/responsibilities. With respect to conflicts with students, I can discuss face-to-face, and, if it is appropriate, I can provide a brief session on different ideas on 'conflict mitigation/resolution' strategies in context of classroom management (if interested).

2. National teachers did not appear to adequately teach certain methods. I obtained only a limited observation on this but it appeared that certain methods are still not embraced by national teachers.

Recommendation: DC-Cam staff should provide additional input (offline) to national teachers to facilitate their understanding of the methods.

3. Students appeared to be relying on others within groups to do the work (during team-teaching session).

Recommendation: Identify who wants to present the lesson for each day, per team. Upon raising their hand, the facilitator should then explain that someone else in the group, other than the one who raised his hand, will present. This forces all students in a group to come prepared for class.

4. Students appeared to know each other very well and thus coalesced against the presenting teacher.

Recommendation: Break up students regularly each day, moving certain students to one room and vice versa to mix up the cliques that may have formed in the respective class.

5. Students appeared to ask tough questions to question the knowledge of

the trainers.

Recommendation: If the trainer chooses to address the question, then this would be ideal, but if not, the teacher should immediately defer the question to the Saturday (final day) discussion, when more detailed, complex questions can be dealt with en-masse, as opposed to in the smaller groups.

6. Schedule appeared to change significantly with little warning to trainers. I was notified that I had to be on platform by phone at DC-Cam with a 10-minute notice.

Recommendation: While flexibility should be a norm, scheduling issues should be brought up in the post-training day meeting so that trainers are advised of last-minute changes.

7. Schedule for final day was not communicated to Phala or I. We were told that Saturday's session ended at 12 noon, and no information on a closing ceremony was communicated until Friday evening.

Recommendation: Advise on the details of schedule before Day 1.

8. While I only participated off/on in NIE training, I perceived an overall tone of negativity that flowed from students with regards to training. Most of this negativity appeared to rest on misunderstandings on issues of per diem, value of training, and misinformation from aggrieved national instructors.

Recommendation: Hold an en masse meeting before training to clarify expectations, objectives, and standards, including per diem issues (and value of training). It would be advantageous for senior-level administrators to give a speech to set a tone for the training and define DC-Cam's expertise and value to participants' learning.





## **Trainees' Overall Comments**

On the fifth day, all the trainees are asked to express their comments, suggestions and feedback by filling in the evaluation form. They can write down their views without the need to put their names in the form.

Trainees were preoccupied with per diem, although DC-Cam's team has made it clear at the beginning that no per diem would be provided.

Trainees made a strong complaint about insufficient snack that was prepared by people of National Institute of Education (NIE). DC-Cam's trainers conveyed their complaints to NIE officials.

However, there were also trainees who expressed great appreciation to DC-Cam for organizing this training. They have learned extensively about DK history. It covered DK textbook, Teachers' Guidebook, outstanding guest speakers (Prof. David Chandler, a Cambodia Historian, and Dr. Kar Sunbonath, Head of Mental Health Department). What trainees commented is that DC-Cam's trainers should behave properly to show respect and honor to the trainees. That's why DC-Cam convened a meeting to discuss extensively about how to manage classrooms in an effective and polite way. It's undeniable that it's necessary to see the pedagogical students acting in a similar manner.

## **Trainers**

Mr. Ly Sok-Kheang (DC-Cam)

Mr. Long Dany (DC-Cam)

Mr. Vanthan Peou Dara (DC-Cam)

Mr. Nhean Socheat (DC-Cam)

Mr. Dy Khamboly (DC-Cam)

Ms. Sirik Savina (DC-Cam)

Dr. Chea Phala (Author/teacher: Guide book for teachers)

Mr. Christopher Dearing (Author/teacher: Guide book for teachers)

Ms. Mom Met (National Teacher – Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport)

Mr. Cheng Hong (National Teacher – Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport)

Ms. Chea Kalyan (National Teacher – Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport)

Mr. Eng Kok-Thay (DC-Cam)

Mr. Nhil Sal (National Teacher – Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport)

Mr. Siv Thuon (National Teacher – Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport)

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