

GENOCIDE EDUCATION IS GENOCIDE PREVENTION

EDUCATION ON KHMER ROUGE HISTORY IN CAMBODIA (1975-1979)

REPORT

Classroom Forum on “The Importance of Studying Khmer Rouge History (1975-1979)”

at Prek Thmey High School

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I. Introduction

On May 31, 2017, the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) and with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), conducted a classroom forum on “The Importance of Studying Khmer Rouge History (1975-1979)” at Prek Thmey High School, about 30 kilometers from the capital of Phnom Penh.

The purpose of the forum was to educate high school students about the history of Democratic Kampuchea [DK] (also known as the Khmer Rouge [KR]), as well as to provide a forum for thought, discussion, and critical debate in order to consider how the country’s present and future challenges reflect upon its past.

The forum incorporated four activities: a presentation on Khmer Rouge history and the importance of studying this history by Mr. Pheng Pong-Rasy, a short documentary film screening, a presentation on interview techniques by Mr. Long Dany, and a tour of the exhibition “The Forced Transfer: the Second Evacuation of People during the Khmer Rouge Regime” led by Ms. Sirik Savina. Approximately ninety-one Grade-12 students attended the forum, which began at 9:00 in the morning.

II. The School

According to the current Prek Thmey High School principal, Mr. Nguon Teng, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport established a secondary school in Koh Krabei Village, Prey Thmey Commune, Kien Svay District, Kandal Province by utilizing a school building with six classrooms in order to accommodate 337 secondary school students from the communes of Prek Thmey, Chheu Teal and Kampong Svay. At that time, there were only nine teachers. In 1985, the villagers joined together and built a school constructed of wood with a tile roof and having three classrooms behind Koh Krabei Pagoda. Upon completion of the school, the secondary school students were transferred to the new building.

In 1990, the villagers built another school with three classrooms made from wood and brick next to the previous building. The construction was about 60% completed when Prince Norodom Ranariddh funded the remainder of the construction, which was finished in 1993. Within the same year, Mr. Khun Chheang and Mr. Khun Vut donated a school building with four classrooms which was made from brick and had a tile roof. In 1993, Prince Norodom Ranariddh presided over an opening ceremony and renamed the school Norodom Ranariddh Prek Thmey Secondary School. In 1998, the Prince donated another school building with ten classrooms constructed of brick with a tile roof. In 2005, an academic club in Singapore donated a brick library building with a metal roof which was equipped with five computer stations. In 2012, the school became Prek Thmey High School, which provides both secondary and high school education. In the academic year 2016-2017, the school accommodates 594 students and 64 staff members and teachers.

III. The Forum

1. Welcoming remarks

Before the forum started, Mr. Nguon Teng, the school principal, introduced the DC-Cam team to the students. He stressed the importance of studying Khmer Rouge history so that students can understand what took place during those years and prevent it from ever happening again. Finally, he thanked the DC-Cam team for their contribution to educating the young population about the history of the past.

2. Pre-forum survey

To begin the forum, Mr. Rasy introduced the DC-Cam team members and shared the agenda with the student participants. DC-Cam team members then distributed a pre-survey sheet for each student to complete in 10-15 minutes. The pre-forum survey explores to what extent the students have learned or heard about the Khmer Rouge regime, whether or not they understand or believe what happened during the Khmer Rouge regime, and how often the students discuss the Khmer Rouge regime with their family members and friends.

3. K-W-L chart

A sheet depicting the K-W-L (Know-Want-Learn) chart was distributed to students so they could fill in what they know about KR history and what they would like to learn about the topic. This activity took 5 minutes to complete.

4. Presentation of DK history and the importance of studying DK history

The first presentation was conducted by Pheng Pong-Rasy, the team leader of genocide education for DC-Cam. Mr. Rasy started his presentation with an explanation of the term “Khmer Rouge” and then gave a brief introduction of Khmer Rouge history, including the arrival of the Khmer Rouge at Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, the forced evacuation, the elimination of class distinctions in society, forced labor, torture, and the background of the Khmer Rouge leaders. In addition to his presentation, he encouraged the students to ask questions.

5. Short documentary film screening

In order to provide a better understanding of Khmer Rouge history, the team screened a short documentary film entitled “Tuol Sleng Prison in 1979,” which was produced by the Vietnamese journalists who encountered Tuol Sleng Prison when Cambodian government troops initially arrived in Phnom Penh in early 1979 accompanied by Vietnamese troops.

6. Presentation of interview techniques

After the documentary film, the students were given a ten-minute break before the presentation on interview techniques, which was given by Mr. Long Dany, the team leader of DC-Cam's Promoting Accountability Project.

Firstly, Mr. Dany asked the students if they had ever had a discussion about life during the Khmer Rouge regime with their parents or grandparents. Among all the students, only one of them courageously raised their hand in acknowledgment. Mr. Dany then suggested that the students divide the questionnaire into three different time periods, e.g. prior to 1975, 1975-1979, and after 1979, since the purpose of the interview was for historical record.

Following his presentation, Mr. Dany asked a student to volunteer as the interviewer in a role-play with Mr. Vannak, a member of the DC-Cam staff, who would portray a former Khmer Rouge cadre. Chan Makara, a Grade-12 student, raised his hand to volunteer as the interviewer. Makara began his interview by greeting Mr. Vannak and introducing himself. While Makara and Mr. Vannak were talking to one another, Mr. Dany instructed the other students to pay attention and take notes of their conversation, for he would be selecting some of them to provide a recap of the interview.

7. A History of Democratic Kampuchea textbook distribution

About ninety-one (91) copies of "A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)" by Dy Khamboly were distributed to all student participants as supplementary reading material. The DC-Cam team also provided the school with several additional copies for its library.

8. Post-forum survey

The DC-Cam team distributed a post-forum survey sheet for the students to complete in order to evaluate their understanding of Khmer Rouge history following their participation. The survey was also designed to determine students' observations regarding whether studying Khmer Rouge history encourages reconciliation and forgiveness within Cambodian society.

9. The Forced Transfer Exhibition

To conclude the forum, Ms. Sirik Savina, the team leader of DC-Cam's Outreach and Collaboration Project, provided students with a guided tour through the Forced Transfer Exhibition panels inside the school's compound. The panels were installed inside the school's compound a week prior to the forum. Ms. Savina explained to the students how city residents were forced out of their houses and relocated to rural areas. She further discussed the issues that adversely affected people during the forced evacuation.

IV. Pre and Post-Survey Results

In order to explore knowledge of students before and after classroom forum and to ensure the effectiveness of classroom forum, questionnaire survey and observation techniques were applied. Questionnaire survey divided into two parts which are pre-forum survey and post-forum survey. Microsoft excel was used as a tool to analyze the data from questionnaires with frequency technique.

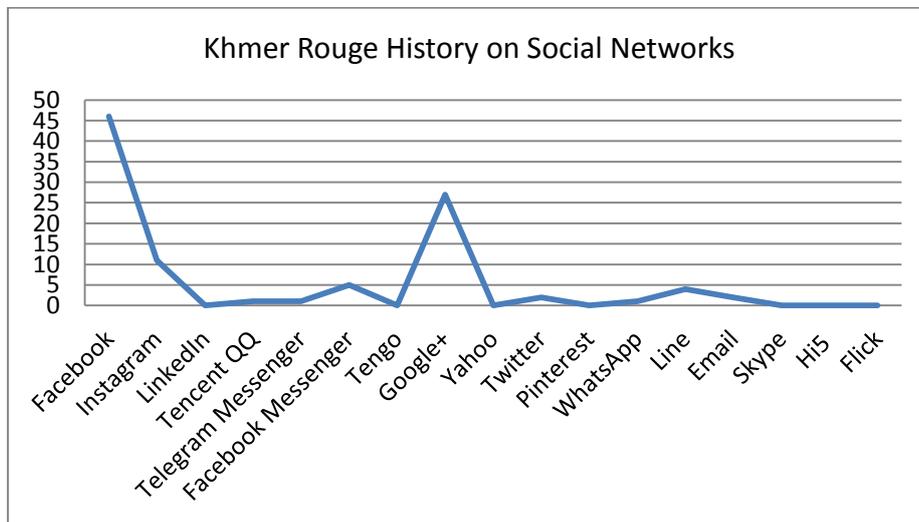
1. Pre-Survey Results

According to Table 1 (Appendix 1) show that students who knew a little about the DK period are 61 (94%), very knowledge about the DK period are 3 (5%) and know nothing about the DK period is 1 (2%). Second question, all students believed about the mass atrocities occurred during the DK regime. Third question, 56 (86%) students have talk about DK period with their parents or people who lived during this time, 8 (12%) students never and 1 (2%) student did not answer this question. Forth question, 64 (98%) students agreed that the study of a history of DK is important and 1 (2%) did not answer the question. Next question, 59 (91%) students agreed not to discriminate against their friends if they are children of perpetrator, 5 (8%) students chose to discriminate and 1 (2%) student did not answer this question. Sixth question, 43 (66%) students believed that a history of Democratic Kampuchea could be taught in high school, 12 (18%) students chose junior high school, 7 (11%) students chose primary school and 3 (5%) students did not answer. Seventh and eighth question, 64 (98%) believed about the forced transfer and the families were broke up during DK regime and 1 (2%) student did not answer these questions.

2. Post-Survey Results

As the results that shown in Table 2 (Appendix 2), students who very knowledge about DK period are 42 (65%), know a little about DK period are 19 (29%), know nothing about DK period are 3 (5%) and 1 (2%) student did not answer this question. Next question, all students believed about the mass atrocities occurred during the Khmer Rouge regime. Third question, 63 (97%) students agreed that the study of a history of Democratic Kampuchea is important and 2 (3%) students think that it is not important. Forth question, 57 (88%) students disagreed to discriminate against their friends who are the children of perpetrator, 7 (11%) students said that they would discriminate and 1 (2%) student did not answer this question. Fifth question, 62 (95%) students believed that the study of a history of DK encourage them to think of building peace in Cambodia, 1 (2%) student did not believe about that and 2 (3%) students did not answer the question. Next question, 61 (94%) students agreed that the study of a history of DK regime encourage them to think of healing, 2 (3%) students disagreed and 2 (3%) students did not answer. Next, 63 (97%) students agreed that the study of a history of DK encourage them to think of reconciliation, 1 (2%) student disagreed and 1 (2%) students did not answer this question. Eighth question, 59 (91%) students believed that the study of a history of DK encourage them to think of prevention of genocide in the future, 5 (8%) students disbelieved and 1 (2%) students did not give the answer. Next question, 54 (83%) students did not feel uncomfortable when they are learning history of DK, 9 (14%) students felt uncomfortable and 2 (3%) students did not answer this question. Tenth and eleventh questions, all students believed about forced transfer and forced separation of families happened during Khmer Rouge regime. Next question, 62 (95%) students believed that history of Khmer Rouge regime should be posted on social network for additional learning materials and 3 (5%) leaved this question with no answer. Fourteenth question, 59 (91%) students like this forum and 6 (9%) students did not answer this question. Fifteenth question, 57 (88%) students agreed that this classroom forum was good and really help them to develop their knowledge on DK history, 8 (12%) students did not answer this question. Last question, 56 (86%) students believed that classroom forum help them to develop their knowledge, to remember about history of Khmer Rouge and encourage them to have feel of empathy and tolerance. In addition, there are 4 (6%) students believed this forum encourage them to have feel of empathy and tolerance, 3 (5%) students believed this forum help them to remember the history of DK and 1 (2%) student believe this forum help them to develop their

knowledge about Khmer Rouge history. Base on result from graph below, 46 (79%) students believed the history of Khmer Rouge regime should be posted on Facebook follow by 27 (35%) students chose Google+, 11 (14%) students chose Instagram.



V. Discussion on Results of Pre and Post-Forum Survey

Based on results from Table 1 & 2, majority of students who participated in classroom forum already had knowledge about Khmer Rouge regime before they were joining classroom forum. Students who know a little about DK period decreased from 61 (94%) to 19 (29%). However, the students who chose a statement “I am very knowledgeable about DK period” increased from 3 (5%) to 42 (65%) after joining classroom forum. These results showed us that after two hours classroom forum the number of students who very knowledgeable about DK period had increased significantly. As for pre and post-survey, the results did not change. All students believed about the mass atrocities really happened during Khmer Rouge regime. The students who disagreed to discriminate against children of Khmer Rouge cadre decreased from 59 (91%) to 57 (88%) after the forum. The level of discrimination is still small. However, students still need an explanation more about the purpose of study this history.

The majority of students believed that a history of Democratic Kampuchea should be taught in high school. Most of students agreed that the history of Democratic Kampuchea really important to study. In addition, students who agreed that the study of a history of Democratic Kampuchea help them to think of healing (94%), reconciliation (97%) and the prevention of genocide happened in the future (91%). However, there are some students (14%) felt uncomfortable when they are learning this history because of cruelty of this regime. All

students believed about the forced transfer and forced separation of families occurred during Khmer Rouge regime. Majority of students agreed that history of Khmer Rouge should be posted on social network such as Facebook (79%), Google+ (35%) and Instagram (11%). After joined this classroom forum, most students really like this forum and believed that its help them to develop their knowledge on Khmer Rouge history. Lastly, majority of student believed that classroom forum help them to develop their knowledge, to remember about the history of Khmer Rouge and help them to have felt of empathy and tolerance.

VI. Reaction from participants

Chann Lyna, 18 years old, a grade-12 student participant told the DC-Cam team that she used to hear from her parents about their life under the Khmer Rouge Regime. Additionally, she used to watch TV program on the Khmer Rouge history. Lyna thought that the living condition of people during the Khmer Rouge Regime was different from one place to another.

Ha Sok Heng, a grade-12 student, expressed his feeling that the learning about the Khmer Rouge Regime encourages young people to understand their parents' suffering. Sok Heng recalled his mother's experience during the Khmer Rouge Regime that she was assigned to work in a cooperative kitchen. His mother was not provided enough food. Consequently, she had to eat tree's leaves in order to fulfill her hunger. After the Khmer Rouge Regime collapsed, Sok Heng's mother returned to her hometown. When she arrived, her neighbors were surprised. They thought that she were death, for they had not heard any news from her for many years during the Khmer Rouge period.

Tau Srey Khuoch, a grade-12 student, explained that as a Cambodian young generation, she has to learn about the Khmer Rouge history because it is very important to understand what happened in the past in order to build peace and prevent genocide in the future. Srey Khuoch reminded that her grandmother does not want to talk about the Khmer Rouge Regime, for what her grandmother had endured was horrible. Srey Khuoch informed the DC-Cam team that her grandfather was killed during the Khmer Rouge Regime.

VII. Conclusion

In conclusion, the classroom forum on 31 May 2017 by DC-Cam genocide education project team provided a good opportunity for students to learn to discuss about History of Democratic Kampuchea as well as an invaluable interview experience that benefited them in many ways in the future study and career. Encouraging young people to study Khmer Rouge history is an important initiative. If students do not have a clear knowledge of their own history, it is more likely that history could repeat itself in the future. However, if they learn and understand their own history, it will enable them to effectively distinguish between what is beneficial for society and what is not. As an observation, most students attending this classroom forum were respectful to the presenters and like this forum. The DC-Cam team members were very enthusiastic to share their knowledge with students.

Appendix 1

Table 1: Pre-Forum Survey Questions & Answers

Questions & Answers	Frequency	Percentage %
1 How would you describe your knowledge of the DK period?		
I know nothing about the DK period	1	2
I know a little about the DK period	61	94
I am very knowledgeable about the DK period	3	5
I know enough about the DK period to teach others	0	0
2 Do you believe that mass atrocities occurred during the DK regime?		
Yes	65	100
No	0	0
3 Have you ever talk about the DK period with your parents or people who lived during this time?		
Yes	56	86
No	8	12

Unanswered	1	2
4 <i>Do you think the study of a history of DK is important?</i>		
Yes	64	98
No	0	0
Unanswered	1	2
5 <i>If one of your friends is a son/daughter of a perpetrator, would you discriminate against him or her?</i>		
Not discriminate	59	91
Discriminate	5	8
Unanswered	1	2
6 <i>Does the history of DK could be taught in school in Cambodia?</i>		
Primary school	7	11
Junior high school	12	18
High School	43	66
University	0	0
Unanswered	3	5
7 <i>Do you believe about The forced transfer during the DK regime?</i>		
Yes	64	98
No	0	0
Unanswered	1	2
8 <i>Do you believe about the families were broken up during the DK regime?</i>		
Yes	64	98

No	0	0
Unanswered	1	2

Appendix 2

Table 2: Post-Forum Survey Questions & Answers

Questions & Answers	Frequency	Percentage %
<i>1 How would you describe your knowledge of the DK period?</i>		
I know nothing about the DK period	3	5
I know a little about the DK period	19	29
I am very knowledgeable about the DK period	42	65
I know enough about the DK period to teach others	0	0
Unanswered	1	2
<i>2 Do you believe that mass atrocities occurred during the DK regime?</i>		
Believe	65	100
don't believe	0	0
<i>3 Do you think the study of a history of DK is important?</i>		
Important	63	97
Unimportant	2	3
<i>4 If one of your friends is a son/daughter of a perpetrator, would you discriminate against him or her?</i>		
Discrimination	7	11
Don't discrimination	57	88
Unanswered	1	2
<i>5 Does the study of a history of DK encourage you to think of building peace in Cambodian society?</i>		

Yes	62	95
No	1	2
Unanswered	2	3
6 <i>Does the study of a history of DK encourage you to think of healing?</i>		
Yes	61	94
No	2	3
Unanswered	2	3
7 <i>Does the study of a history of DK encourage you to think of reconciliation?</i>		
Yes	63	97
No	1	2
Unanswered	1	2
8 <i>Does the study of a history of DK encourage you to think of Prevention of genocide in the future?</i>		
Yes	59	91
No	5	8
Unanswered	1	2
9 <i>Do you feel uncomfortable learning the history of DK?</i>		
Yes	9	14
No	54	83
Unanswered	2	3
10 <i>Do you believe "Forced Transfer" was happened during the Khmer Rouge regime?</i>		
Yes	65	100

No	0	0
11 <i>Do you believe "Forced separation of family" was happened during the Khmer Rouge regime?</i>		
Yes	65	100
No	0	0
13 <i>Besides studying Khmer Rouge history inside classroom or in public space, do you think this history should be posted on social networks for additional learning and learning materials?</i>		
Yes	62	95
No	0	0
Unanswered	3	5
14 <i>Do you like this classroom forum?</i>		
Yes, I like	59	91
No, I don't like	0	0
Unanswered	6	9
15 <i>What do you think about this classroom forum?</i>		
Good and really develop my knowledge on KR history	57	88
Not good and don't help anything to me	0	0
Unanswered	8	12
16 <i>What does this classroom forum help you?</i>		
Develop my knowledge about KR history	1	2
Help me to remember the history of DK	3	5
Encourage me to have feel of empathy and tolerance	4	6

All three above	56	86
Unanswered	1	2

Team: Pheng Pong-Rasy, Long Dany, Sok Vannak, Ouch Makara, Sirik Savina, Min Sanas, Men Pechet, and Song Sal.

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