

## Report from Kampong Chhnang and Pursat, January 5-12, 2012

By Khamboly Dy and Sok-Kheang Ly

### 1. INTRODUCTION



Palm Trees in Kampong Chhnang Looking from the Top of the Mountain

On January 5-12, 2012, the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MOEYS) conducted a quality control (classroom observation and evaluation) in Kampong Chhnang and Pursat Provinces. The team consists of DC-Cam staff members, Mr. Khamboly Dy and Mr. Sok-Kheang Ly, and two

MOEYS officials, Mr. Sek Sokha (from the General High School Education Department) and Mr. Nhel Sal (from the National Institute of Education). The team observed six actual classroom teachings and conducted nineteen interviews with teachers, students, school directors, and former Khmer Rouge (KR) cadres. At the end of each classroom observation and evaluation, the team provided feedback and recommendations for improvement on teaching KR history to the observed teachers and school directors. The team also provided extra copies of the *A History of Democratic Kampuchea* textbook and DC-Cam's magazine *Searching for the Truth* to the schools in the most remote areas where access to books and information on KR history is far less compared than that in the cities. At the end of the trip, the team conducted a public education forum with villagers in Veal Veng District of Pursat Province to learn about the impressions and reactions from the villagers on the teaching of KR history in the classrooms.

Overall, teachers, students, education officials, and many residents in the provinces whom we met and/or interviewed agreed that teaching and studying about KR history in a formal classroom setting is important for genocide prevention, national reconciliation and sustainable peace building. However the actual teaching and/or integration of KR history in

Documentation Center of Cambodia

Searching for the Truth ស្វែងរកការពិត ដើម្បីការបង្កើនចំណេះដឹងយុត្តិធម៌

all observed schools is greatly marginalized by the limited time allocated by the centralized national curriculum and what the teachers called a lack of incentive. Through discussions with the teachers and school directors, incentive may refer mostly to the low salary and the poor educational infrastructure in many schools, especially the remote schools, with few exceptional schools in the provincial towns, where teachers could earn extra income from private classes and/or business opportunities. Residents in Veal Veng District, about eighty percent of whom are former KR soldiers and cadres, express greater resistance to the teaching of KR history. According to the forum and observation, teaching about the history is like scratching an old wound and making it become worse. One former KR cadre commented that, "The dead body has been buried for many years. Excavating it will spread the bad smell, and hard-to-achieve reconciliation will be deteriorated." The top KR leader in the district, Uon Yang, who is head of the District Council and former chief of KR Military Independent Division during the early 1990s, still believes in Pol Pot's policies. Yang claims that the idea of the dam construction initiated by Pol Pot more than three decades ago proves to be correct until the present day as the dams continue to benefit the peasants and farmers. In spite of adult resistance to teaching about KR history, most students in a high school in Veal Veng supported and wanted to know more about what happened during the KR regime. The table below is a brief summary of the evaluation in Kampong Chhnang and Pursat.

<b>Quality control project objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching of <i>A History of Democratic Kampuchea</i>.</li> <li>• Evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching materials: (1) Democratic Kampuchea history textbook, (2) Teacher's Guidebook, and (3) Student Workbook.</li> <li>• Evaluate the integration of DK history into the daily regular teaching in schools.</li> </ul>
<b>Means of evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-hour observation</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Surveys</li> </ul>
<b>Tools for evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom observation checklist</li> <li>• Questionnaire for teacher</li> <li>• Questionnaire for student</li> <li>• Interview questions</li> </ul>
<b>Types of school</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban, rural, and remote areas</li> </ul>
<b>Number of classes observed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six schools (Preah Bat Soramaridh High School, Bun Rany-Hun Sen Rolea Pha-ear High School, Hun Sen Kampong Tralach High School, Pursat High School, Hun Sen Phnom Kravanh High School, and Bramaoy High School)</li> </ul>
<b>Average number of students per class</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between 50 and 65</li> </ul>

## 2. PRE-OBSERVATION AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Following the administrative process of the Ministry of Education, the team met with the directors of provincial offices of education of Kampong Chhnang and Pursat to inform them about the objectives and activities of the classroom observation and evaluation. The team

handed over the permission letter from the Ministry of Education for endorsement. The heads of the education offices of the two provinces have participated in several events conducted by DC-Cam, including textbook distributions and commune teacher trainings. The education officials of the two provinces have known DC-Cam's work and the good collaboration between the center and the Ministry of Education. They said that they had received the letter from the Ministry through fax two weeks before the arrival of the team, and they had already informed the schools to be observed. Before each actual classroom observation, the team spent about one hour meeting and discussing with the school directors about the general situation of the schools. The table below gives general information about each observed school.

No.	Names of School	Teachers	Female Teachers	Students	Female Students	Number of Classrooms
1	Preah Bat Soramaridh High School	176	65	3,233	1,514	64
2	Bun Rany-Hun Sen Rolea Pha-ear High School	89	36	1,986	920	29
3	Hun Sen Kampong Tralach High School	75	29	1,820	755	37
4	Pursat High School	114	38	2,362	1,142	54
5	Hun Sen Phnom Kravanh High School	34	9	933	484	12
6	Bramaoy High School	17	2	324	161	9

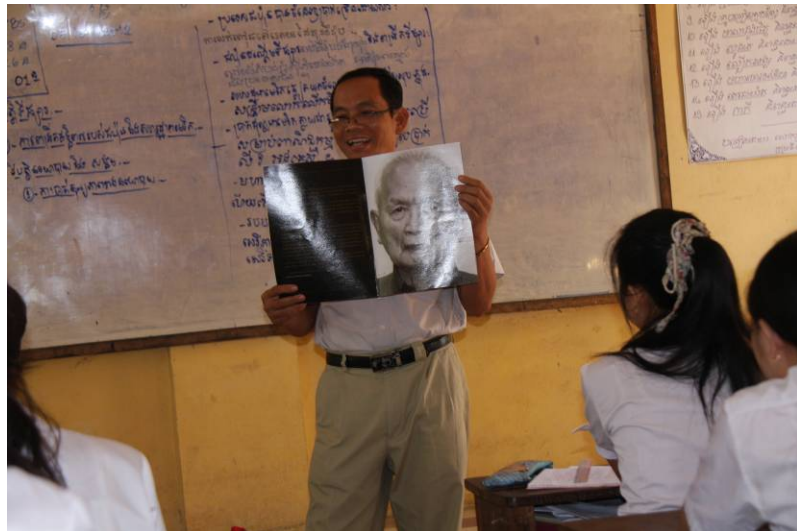
### 3. CLASSROOM AND GENERAL OBSERVATION

The conditions of the schools in the downtown areas and those in the remote areas are remarkably different. The schools in the cities have more classrooms, modern infrastructure, and facilities. Students in the downtown schools benefit from qualified teachers and a variety of learning materials. According to the observation, almost all students in the cities have one copy of the social study textbook each while three to four students in the countryside have to share one copy of the textbook. Most qualified teachers with bachelor degrees prefer to teach in the downtown schools which receive more support from the rich businessmen and high-ranking government officials. The quality of the students is also higher as most students devote most of their time in education. This is in contrast to the remote areas, where students very often take many days off to help their parents in the rice fields and farms. Mr. Sok Sophea, director of Bun Rany-Hun Sen Rolea Pha-ear High School, said that conscience on education in the remote areas is lower since the villagers are struggling with their daily living and will inevitably ask their children to help out the businesses. He said that students are reluctant to come to even the free private classes.

According to Mr. Sophea, students in the countryside have higher morality than those in the cities, some of which usually escape classes to be involved in gang activities, which undermine their education. Some city students wear too modern clothes. In contrast, the countryside students escape schools mostly to help their parents in the farms. However, Mr. Sophea reserved that his observation as a school director for many years does not apply to

all students. Sophea's reservation clause proves correct with regard to the educational discipline when the team observed a school in Veal Veng District located about 120 kilometers from Pursat provincial town. Veal Veng is also former KR stronghold until 1996 when the Uon Yang led a group of KR soldiers to defect to the government. The students did not come to class on time. When the history session started, the students entered the classroom one after another. Some students were still playing volleyball while a few others hung around at the school canteen. The school director decided to merge two classrooms together to increase number of students to forty.

According to the teachers, the education quality faces remarkable challenges. Suong Phearith from Kampong Chhnang said that the content of the social study textbooks are not coherent from one lesson to another. The school textbooks, curricula, and education system are changed very often. Recently, the Ministry just introduced



new study textbooks without teacher's guidebooks. **Teacher Suong Phearith Showing Photo of Nuon Chea to the Students**

Although teachers in the developed countries are expected to develop their own lesson plans, Cambodian teachers need more guidance from the guidebook and the training. Teachers have limited capacity and are not able to catch up with the changes. A number of donors have funded the Ministry of Education on the curriculum development section. Usually, funding encourages the changes of both curriculum and textbooks. In addition, some schools do not have enough teachers for certain subjects such as biology and economics. Therefore, one teacher has to teach, in some cases, up to five subjects.

To catch up with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Ministry of Education requires that each school has a pass rate of not lower than 93 percent. To fulfill this requirement, the Ministry has to drop the requisite passing score below the average test score by fifty percent. For example, if the average score is twenty five, the Ministry has to drop the required passing score to seventeen to ensure the 93 percent pass rate. Some teachers agreed that this decision strongly affects the quality of education. There is only quantity but not quality, and teachers have a concern that human resources cannot be sufficiently developed in the future.

As students are passed to the higher grades, they cannot catch up with the course levels and have to drop out. Mr. Sophea said that most dropouts happen in grade seven and grade ten, which is about twelve percent for lower secondary school and about nine percent for upper secondary school. Dropouts also stem from other reasons such as high immigration in the case of Hun Sen Phnom Kravanh High School. As Phnom Kravanh District is rich of forest and people benefit from illegal logging, many people migrated to live in this area. When the



forest was gone and the forest law enforced, people began to immigrate out of the areas, taking their children back with them, and this action produces a high dropout rate. In spite of this fact, the school directors are unlikely to report the actual dropout rate to the higher offices. Some teachers recommend that the leaders should not only read the report. They should study the real situation on the ground.



**Students Filling in Questionnaire**

The Ministry also divides students into two main clusters: real science and social science. Real science includes such courses as Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry while social science classes consist of History, Geography, Khmer Studies, and Citizen Morality. The Ministry hopes the division will help students to shape their future expertise and career when they enter higher education. However, the division has led to unintentional discrimination among teachers and students. The students in the real science cluster are perceived as more intelligent and well-off while those in the social science are poor and weak. For instance, the real science students are put in classroom A and B (A and B are reserved for the best students in the school) while the social science ones are put in classroom C and D. Most teachers want to teach the real

science classes as they do not have to spend much energy to teach the clever students, and they can have private classes for extra income.

All of the six observed teachers still use the traditional method for their teaching. Teachers ask students to take turn reading sections of the textbook and then ask some comprehension questions to learn students' understanding. Teachers find it hard to go beyond this traditional method. Teachers voice their concerns that if they use the methods they got from the training such as K-W-L chart or Jigsaw (teaching methods which require group discussions and critical thinking), they would not be able to finish the lesson as planned as these methods take time and involve all students. Moreover, the big number of students in each class makes it difficult for teachers to use group work and group discussion. Teacher Heng Chandara said that if teachers use student-centered approaches, they would not be able to finish the textbook by the end of the academic year.

Some observed schools have historical links to the KR regime and make up good stories for their respective students. For instance, Preah Bat Sormaridh High School was created in 1957 as a lower secondary school and became a high school in 1960. During the KR regime, the school was used as a malarial hospital where poor medical services and harsh treatment led to a number of deaths of the ordinary people. The school director Mr. Kith Minearith said that he usually mentions the history of the school to the students, and his description could be counted as an integration of KR history in his school.

#### 4. OBSERVATIONS OF STUDENTS

Students expressed interest in studying more about KR history in the classroom in addition to the information they learned from their family members, television, radio, magazines, and other publications. Rin Chan Norin, eleventh grade student of Preah Bat Soramardh High School, said that he heard KR history from TV, radio, and books. He is curious to learn about lifestyles, economic conditions, and political aspects at that time. He learned that people did not enjoy any freedom. His friend Ny Titharoath has similar information. She learns that the regime was authoritarian and brutal. The entire country was razed to the ground. She believes that the study is important in order to have sustainable peace, but she emphasized that the study should adhere to the principle of tolerance.

Many students have never received the DK history textbook, but they used to read the book in library. Many of them said that their teachers integrated the KR history into the teaching on several occasions, which helped them to learn a lot. Two general questions that many students have doubts in their minds about are: 1) How did the KR come to power? 2) Why did they kill people? Yim Kimlong from Pursat High School said that his teachers used to tell the students about how the Vietnamese defeated the KR regime. His teachers also talked about the condition at Tuol Sleng Prison. *(For more information on students' reactions, please see appendix one.)*

#### 5. COMMENTARY REGARDING THE INTEGRATION OF DK HISTORY

Taking into consideration the objectives of the project of achieving genocide prevention, national reconciliation, and peace building, the integration/teaching of KR history in the classrooms is remarkably limited in all observed schools. The teaching of KR history will not be conducted until late in the academic year in June as the KR history is incorporated into the Ministry's social studies



**Mr. Sek Sokha, a National Teacher, Leading a Questionnaire with Students**

textbook at the end of the syllabus. From the beginning to late academic year, teachers can only integrate KR history into the regular lessons such as world history.

According to the classroom observations in Kampong Chhnang and Pursat, the integration of KR history was mostly done through oral descriptions and comprehension questions at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the session. Teacher Heng Chandara from Pursat High School integrated KR history through a few fact-finding questions including:

When was the KR regime established? Who are the KR leaders? Dara said that he could not integrate much KR history into his regular teaching; otherwise students would not be able to pass the exam since the exam questions are about other histories, not just KR history alone. He told the team frankly that “I integrated a lot today because the observers from DC-Cam came to observe the teaching.” Teacher Khem Vanthai from Bramaury High School in Veal Veng District also used comprehension questions to teach KR history for the whole session. He did not ask students to work in groups or do a discussion. He wrote the answers on the board and asked students to copy into their notebooks. Although he distributed copies of the DK history textbook to the students, he did not make use of the book. He did not point out where the content of the book was during the teaching.



**Teacher Chea Thida Explaining History to the Students**

Mr. Suong Phearith of Preah Bat Soramaridh High School better integrated the KR history by using questions to link the history of the dictatorship regimes after World War Two to that of the KR. Phearith used the Ministry’s social studies textbook to show the photos of Hitler and Mussolini while presenting the photos of the KR leaders by using the

booklet on case 002. Some students were able to

identify the four KR leaders currently in the Khmer Rouge Tribunal (KRT) detention center. Students called out the names of Ieng Sary, Khieu Samphan, Nuon Chea, and Ieng Therith. However, Phearith did not go deeper than the basic information of the four surviving KR leaders. He asked students to wait until they reach grade 12 to cover more accounts of the KR. In addition to the KR history integration, Phearith also integrated the concept of democracy and genocide prevention. He asked students to basically compare democracy and communism and to show the advantages and the disadvantages of the two political regimes. He also introduced forgiveness and tolerance to the students.

Teacher Chea Phal from Bun Rany-Hun Sen Rolea Pha-ear High School went on further to compare the living situation of the people in the Soviet Union and the living condition during the KR regime. He used the comparative method he gained from the training. After discussions, each group selected one representative to present their finding to the class.

Most teachers blame the lack of integration on their limited knowledge of KR history and time constraints. Phearith said that although he participated in the teacher training, he still did not have enough confidence to explain to students to a satisfactory degree. Therefore, he dares to integrate only limited content of the KR history in a few occasions. Chea Thida from Kampong Tralach High School said that if she talked much about the KR at the beginning of the year, she would not have anything to tell the students at the end of the academic year. Moreover, the time allocated for history subject is very short. Real science



classes receive only three hours per week for history class while social science classes receive five hours. The integration is more likely to be conducted in the social science classes than those of real science. If teachers integrate KR history into regular teaching too often, they would not be able to finish the textbook on time. Teacher Heng Chandara said that the Ministry has added a lot more texts in the social study textbook. Dara said that “Don’t depend on the integration because there are too many lessons. Teachers cannot finish all the lessons and they have no time to integrate.” Teacher Chea Phal commented that the wider integration of KR history depends much on the desire and commitment of the teachers. Teachers can integrate in many occasions during an academic year as long as they have the desire to do so.



**Stupa To Preserve Skulls and Bones at Khsach Sar Hermitage in Kampong Chhnang Province**

her school had attended the teacher training workshop in Pursat but has no idea about the integration of the KR history in her school. In addition, the transferring of teachers from one school to another, especially from the remote schools to the downtown schools, occurs frequently. For instance, the history teacher at Phnom Kravanh High School had moved out. The newly arriving history teacher has not received training yet, so the teaching/integration of KR history does not exist in the history class.

Ney Mao, director of Hun Sen Kampong Tralach High School, said that he has little knowledge on how teachers from his school who were trained by DC-Cam and MOEYS teach or integrate KR history in the school. He said that as the leaderships did not attend the training, they had difficulty in tracing the development of the integration process. Mrs. Kuch Sithal, director of Pursat High

School, has a similar comment. She just knows that three teachers from

## **6. TEXTBOOK, GUIDEBOOK AND WORKBOOK AVAILABILITY AND USE**

Among the DK history textbook, teacher’s guidebook, and student workbook, all observed teachers used only the textbook to distribute to the students. Two teachers made use of the methods in the guidebook (comparative study) but none of the teachers used the workbook during the teaching/integration.

The number of copies of the DK history textbook is not enough for all the observed schools. The number is around forty copies for each school. For instance, Bramaury High School that consists of 324 students has only forty copies of the DK history textbook. The team gave another 150 copies to the school for the library reference so that all students and the new comers are able to access the book. All schools still need a great number of copies of DK history textbook to ensure the effectiveness of the teaching. For instance, Preah Bat Soramardh High School consists of 3,233 students, and the school has less than a hundred copies of the textbook. The school needs at least close to one thousand copies of the



textbook to benefit all students.

## 7. COMMUNITY OBSERVATIONS/INTERVIEWS

All teachers and students the team interviewed, discussed with, and observed agreed that the teaching of KR history is important to guide the younger generation away from the similar violent acts perpetrated during the KR.



**An Old Woman Staying in a Pagoda and Cooking Food for the Monks**

In spite of this claim and desire for a wider teaching of KR history, some people, especially the former KR cadres who are living in the former KR strongholds such as Veal Veng District, express their reluctance in talking about and teaching KR history in the classrooms. A few others showed their objections to the teaching and suggested that the history should be buried completely. Kuch Sithal of

Pursat High School talked about her husband who had been killed during

the KR. Her family was part of the new people evacuated from Phnom Penh. Being so hungry after work, her husband talked about wanting to eat noodle soup; his incautious talking was overheard by a cadre who reported this information to the district chief. The chief accused him of being an American CIA agent and ordered his arrest. He was detained in Koh Chum Security Center and executed shortly after. Recalling the story with tears, Sithal told the team that she did not want to recall this bitter memory. She wanted to completely cover it up and keep it to herself for the rest of her life. Being asked if she wanted to publish her husband's story for the knowledge of the younger generation and as a dedication to his spirit, she shook her head and said no. Though she did not want to recall her past, she agreed that the students should learn about it. She said she used to narrate this story to her only son but did not want to publish it for further dissemination than this. During Pchum Ben, the biggest Buddhist ceremony in Cambodia, Sithal always goes to the pagoda to offer food to the monks to dedicate to the spirit of her husband. One lay man in Koh Chum Pagoda is former KR security guard. However, she believes that not all KR cadres are bad people. "But he is a good person," said Sithal.

**KR History from the Perspective of a Former Middle-Ranking KR Cadre:** Mr. Uon Yang, former chief of the KR Independent Military Division and currently chief of Veal Veng District Council, did not express his reaction on the teaching KR history in the classrooms but explained KR history from the perspective of KR leaders to the team. Receiving two copies of the textbook *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)*, Yang saw a photo of people in black uniforms digging a KR canal and began to extensively discuss the positive aspects of the dam construction at that time. Yang equated the advantages of the dams and its potentiality to those of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century ancient temple of Angkor Wat. Yang explained that Angkor Wat is one of Cambodia's marvelous heritages. It was built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by a

great Cambodian King Jayavarman VII, and its glory continues to stand out to win the world's



**Uon Yang, Former Chief of KR Military Independent Division**

admiration until the present day. The visitors, both Khmer and foreigners, can only touch the stone and admire this great achievement. At this movement, Yang asked a question, "Can people generate food to eat out of the Angkor temple?" Without giving the answer to the question, Yang began to discuss what he called the great benefits from the massive dam construction projects nationwide during the KR regime. The dams provide long-term benefits across generations. People use the water in the dams for the rice fields and farms. People drink, fish, and cook food every day. People wash their clothes and feed animals such as cows and buffaloes. Yang stressed that this is an undeniable fact that no one can distort and change. Yang said that Pol Pot's idea on the dam constructions was correct and is still correct today as these dams continue to serve the villagers today. He said if one idea stays correct for more than thirty years, it is called a wise and brilliant idea. He asked several questions to support his argument. Were there any engineers, computers, and modern equipment during the Angkorian period? Were there any PhD people at that time? *"The answer is, of course, no. But how could our ancestors build such a great temple which excites the world? The same applied to the construction projects during the KR regime. At that time, we built the dams from bare hands with only knives and axes within a short period of time."*

Yang said that the dams are so valuable. If one dam is calculated into cash, the car that I drove to see him would not have enough space to store the paper money. However, *"we built the dams without a single penny."* Yang continued to try to convince me and the team

by providing many explanations in the form of questions. *"If Pol Pot's idea on the dam constructions is incorrect, why do people continue to use the dams today? Why don't they destroy these dams? Why does the government continue to develop many former KR dams such as Trapaing Thmor in Banteay Meanchey, Kamping Puoy in Battambang and 1 January Dam in Kampong Thom Province? Why after*



**Uon Yang Granting an Interview to the Observation Team**

*over thirty-seven years since 1975 do the dams continue to play an important role in the country's agriculture and for the peasants?"* His questions led me to recall the KR national anthem. One phrase states that *"Long live 17 April, the great victory! More wonderful and much more meaningful than the Angkor era!"* Yang may want to explain to me that the KR dams are greater than Angkor temple.

Unconvinced of what Yang had explained, I cut in the middle of his long explanation and asked my first question to him. I asked if the dam was so great and provided massive benefits to the people, why did the rice cultivation during the KR period fail and allow many people starve to death? Yang explained that the dam provided long-term benefits. Within the short period of only over three years, the dams would not produce fruit as yet. *"One can see the result today, but one could not see the result within one or two years after the completion of the project. Moreover, Cambodia in 1975 was just emerging from the civil war and regional conflict. The country's infrastructure had almost been completely destroyed. War with Vietnam continued to persist. The situation was so complicated and required a lot of attention. Therefore, some mistakes would inevitably occur."* At the end of the discussion on the dam constructions, Yang said that Pol Pot did this [building dams] for the sake of the nation and the people. If Pol Pot needed water for his personal use, he could just build a small well which was enough for him to take a bath and do the washing. Pol Pot did not need hundreds of dams in many parts of the country.

Without commenting on Yang's explanation about what he called "Pol Pot's correct idea on the dams," I continued to ask my second question to Yang. I told Yang that I had been traveling to all Cambodian provinces, talking to students, teachers, and the villagers about the KR history as part of DC-Cam's Genocide Education Project. Very often, I encountered one simple question which gave me a hard time to provide the answer. Instead of asking why so many people were executed during the KR, the meaning of which may have intimidated Yang, I asked why survivors usually said that there were a lot of deaths during the KR regime.

Yang looked down to the ground and listened to my question carefully. Immediately after I finished my question, Yang laughed derisively and pulled himself back to lean against the arm chair. Then he moved forward and said, "You wrote a history book. You must know the answer. What is your answer?" As I was thinking on how to respond to him, Yang asked me another question "How many people died at that time?" I told him there are many different estimates on the number of people who died during the KR. The estimate ranges from 700,000 to 2.0 million and even up to 3.3 million. Yang said even after over thirty years, the answer to this question has still not yet been found. So these numbers are just rumors. It is not true. Then Yang turned to my question about the deaths of the people. Yang asked me again, "What is this?" He pointed to his bottle of mineral water on the table. I said, "It is a bottle of mineral water." Then he pointed to a bottle of balm oil; "What is this?" I said "It is a bottle of balm oil." After that Yang turned to my friend who was sitting on his left hand side and asked the same questions. My friend gave the same answers to Yang. Yang explained that "You can tell what the two bottles are because you see them with your own eyes, and it is easy to identify. You cannot say the bottle of water is the bottle of balm oil and vice versa. You can easily measure the water in the bottle, but it is hard to measure the fact." Yang said that the country at that time was in chaos and was still at war with Vietnam. It required a lot of effort and time to recover in all fields. Therefore, unusual deaths had to occur inevitably. Moreover, people also died from natural causes daily. Yang reemphasized his answer "unusual death was inevitable."

I questioned in my own mind whether this a valid and acceptable answer? Regardless of hundreds of books published on the accounts of KR atrocities, I have talked and interviewed a number of people, both victims and perpetrators. For example, a cadre who oversaw Trapaing Thmor Dam recalled tens of thousands of deaths during the dam construction. He



also talked about the arrests and executions when the cadres from Southwest Zone took control of the Northwest Zone in early 1978. The victims may not give value to the dams that were built out of a number of ordinary lives. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of innocent people were falsely accused of being American CIA, Soviet KGB, or Vietnamese spies and were executed. People also died from forced labor, starvation, malnutrition, and diseases without medical treatment. Many scholars and survivors agree that these massive deaths resulted from the harsh policies and radical communist ideologies developed and adopted by the KR leaders. However, I did not explain all of these statements to challenge Yang. I wanted to know the KR history from the perspective of a former middle-ranking KR leader.

## 8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS



**Boat Villages in Kampong Luong Commune, Krakor District, Pursat Province**

Most teachers, students, and villagers the team observed and interviewed in Kampong Chhnang and Pursat agreed with the teaching of KR history in formal classrooms. Education officials in the two provinces provided collaborative facilitation to the team to conduct the classroom observation and evaluation. They also believed in the importance of teaching KR history in the classrooms. Students showed great interest in learning more about the KR history and they have learned a great deal of information on the KR accounts from their parents, older neighbors, TV, radio, magazines, and books.

However, the teaching/integration of KR history in all observed schools is considerably limited. There are a number of challenges leading to insufficient integration in each school. The general education challenges in Cambodian schools as described in section three above counts as one cluster of challenges. Secondly, the trained teachers have not had enough confidence to teach this history more widely as they know only basic information of the historical events. Third, teachers do not have enough time to integrate much KR history into their regular teaching as they are struggling to finish the Ministry's social study textbook within the academic year. Fourth, each school does not have enough copies of the DK history textbook to distribute to the students during the teaching. Last but not least, only one or two teachers have received training on methods to teach KR history. The rest is highly likely to ignore the integration though they are obliged to teach the KR history at the end of the academic year since the text has already been incorporated into the Ministry's social studies textbook.

Teacher Mae Simak suggested that to improve the teaching of KR history in the classrooms, each school should have at least one master trainer who provides training down to the new



teachers and other untrained teachers in the school. More teachers need to be trained, and more copies of the DK history textbook have to be distributed to the schools.

### **Appendix One: Reactions from Students**

1. Ms. Ny Titharoath, Grade 11, of Preah Bat Soramaridh: "I heard about the Khmer Rouge history through my parents and studies. I observed that the regime was authoritarian and brutal. The entire country was razed to the ground. Thus, I think it is important for us to study about the regime. The idea is that we need to adhere to the principle of tolerance for the sake of the stability and peace of the country. Teachers should incorporate KR history as much as possible. I also want to know what the previous King has built our country."
2. Mr. Rin Chan Norin, Grade 11 of Preah Bat Soramaridh: "I heard about the KR history through TV, radio, and books and also about the KR trial. I took interest in the KR history. It made me curious about the Cambodian lifestyle, economic conditions, and political aspects. After I read those materials, I found that the people did not enjoy any freedom, including politics. For my future career, I wish to be a historian because it makes me think in a broader way. We need to know about how our country made good progress and how our country fell down."
3. Ms. Kunthea Krisna, Grade 11, Preah Bat Soramarith High School: "I used to learn about the KR history through my grandparents and TV. I feel that the history should be remembered. It was the problem that led our country to become a third world. It made the economic, social, and political aspects collapse. The people were allowed to enjoy no rights. I feel that our history became complicated during the Lon Nol and Pol Pot regimes. So, I wish to make it clear with that part of history. If I was asked about our history, I can explain about all the historical facts that I know, but I would feel uneasy to talk about this past. It is that we are one of the world's countries, but why the KR led our country in a very strange way. In the future, we need to avoid such a mistake. We need to support the royal-democratic principle that ensures our good progress of our country. For my future career, I would like to study and work in the agricultural sector."
4. Ms. Keo Sokuntheavy, Grade 12, Bun Rany Hun Sen Rolear Phieat High School: "I studied about the KR history since I was at secondary school. Teachers always incorporate the history in each lesson. I really want to know about the policies and living conditions of the people at that time. As a Cambodian, I wonder what the KR leaders think and why they concocted a very brutal policy. I also want to know how the people led their lives. I used to read the history book at the library but not often as I need to help my parents work in the rice field to earn the living. In the future, I want to become a medical doctor."
5. Ms. Chhay Kimhor, Grade 12 of Bun Rany Hun Sen Rolea Phiet High School: "I never received the history book. I learned a little about the history since I was at primary school. I can understand a lot from it. What I want to know is why the war erupted and the KR came to power. It was hard for me to understand why Khmer killed Khmer. I want to become a teacher in the future because my family is not so rich. If I pursue a medical subject, it will cost me a lot."
6. Mr. Ry Efary, Grade 11 of Hun Sen Kampong Tralach High School: "I never saw the history book, but used to read other books. I want to know about it as it was a brutal scenario that the Cambodians suffered from. I want to learn about the governing

strategy of the regime. I can compare the economic condition of that regime and now. I used to ask my parents about the history. I believe in it as everyone speaks the same. Teachers incorporate the history. What I want to know the most is how to make our country develop. I want to become a tour guide as history might help me on this work."

7. Mr. Lach Sinat, Grade 11 of Hun Sen Kampong Tralach: "I know about the KR regime. I feel so shocked. I also heard about the KR trial. I do wish my teachers to incorporate the history. In the future, I would like to pursue the subject of biology as I want to become a medical doctor. I want to help treat the people. However, it depends on my destiny if I can lead my country. I will try my best although I may experience difficulties. To be a future leader, I will equip myself with high education and morality."
8. Ms. Sum Ratha, Grade 12 of Pursat High School: "I never received any history textbook. But I used to read it at the library and see it on TV. Teachers also teach us about the history. There are other subjects: literature and geography which incorporate the KR history. What I want to know the most is why the regime separated the people. If my classmates' parents were former KR cadres, I would not discriminate against my classmates."
9. Mr. Yim Kimlong, Grade 12 of Pursat High School: "I never received the history textbook, but I learned the history through my parents. They told me that the regime mistreated the people. I lost many relatives to the regime. Teachers used to tell me about the Vietnamese defeating the KR regime and Lon Nol regime. The teachers also talked about the notorious condition at Tuol Sleng Prison. I believe in the history as I can see it by own eye on TV, especially during the January 7 anniversary. Teachers of history, geography, and morality used to incorporate the history as they talked about the repression of the people's rights and freedoms. Geography teachers mentioned about the evacuation of people from town to countryside. But the incorporation of the history is not sufficient because I have many doubts on it. So, I want more documents. In others word, I would not discriminate against my classmates as they had nothing to do with the past."
10. Ms. Keo Raksa, Grade 12 of Hun Sen Phnom Kravanh High School: "I received the history textbook. I have read it through once. But I did not understand much about the security system. Teachers of Khmer literature and history used to incorporate the history subject. They teach about the DK regime. I want to know clearly why people dared to kill people. I lost my grandfather when the KR occupied Phnom Penh. If I got to know the person who caused his death, I feel that I would dislike that person."
11. Ms. Lim Mary, Grade 12 of Hun Sen Phnom Kravanh High School: "I received the history textbook. I am about to finish reading the entire book. I observe that the regime totally repressed the people. Teachers used to incorporate the history. It is my first time to study the subject at this high school. Teachers always talk about why the regime took place and the people were divided, who liberated Cambodia. Previously, when I read the history, it sound like a folktale. But after teachers and parents narrate this history, I begin to believe in it. In the future, I want to become a medical doctor because I want to help and save the people. I feel so sorry when I see my neighbors, who are poor, lying down at home without any money to visit a doctor. No one helps them. So, my wish is to help them. In fact, there are plenty of medical practitioners in our country, but they seem to pay no attention to the actual health condition of the people. To be a good medical doctor, knowledge cannot be inseparable from

morality. As a medical doctor, one needs to obey the moral conduct and treat patients equally without thinking of money. They should bear in mind that it is their obligation to take care of and treat any patients.”

**END.**

**The Project is funded by Open Society Institute (OSI) with the core support from USAID and Sida (Sweden).**

**Evaluation Team:**

**Dy Kamboly**

**Ly Sok-Kheang**

**Nhel Sal**

**Sek Sokha**