

## Report from Ratanak Kiri and Stung Treng

February 5-12, 2012

By Khamboly Dy and Sok-Kheang Ly

### 1. INTRODUCTION

On February 5-12, 2012, the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (the Ministry of Education) conducted a quality control, including classroom observations and evaluations, in Ratanak Kiri and Stung Treng Provinces. The team consisted of two of DC-Cam's staff members, Mr. Khamboly Dy and Mr. Sok-Kheang Ly, and one official from the Ministry of



**A Newly Built Cottage of Kroeung for the Daughters Who Reach Adulthood**

Education, Mr. Ly Romany from the Teacher Training Department. The team observed six actual classroom teaching sessions and conducted eighteen interviews with teachers, students, school directors, and villagers. 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 all schools. On the fourth day, February 8, the team conducted a public education forum with the Kroeung villagers in O Chum District to learn about the impressions and reactions from the villagers on the teaching of KR history in the classrooms, to learn how the Kroeung were treated during the KR regime, to encourage dialogue among the Kroeung, and to update them about the development of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal (KRT).

Ratanak Kiri and Stung Treng are among the most remote provinces located in the Northeast of Cambodia. The two provinces border with Vietnam and Laos, and many inhabitants are of various highlander groups, including Kroeung, Kuoy, Tampoun, Laotian, Prov, Kachakk, Kavet, and Charay. Most Laotians live in Stung Treng Province while most highlanders can be found

Documentation Center of Cambodia

**Searching for the Truth** ស្វែងរកការពិត ដើម្បី ការបង្ហាញនិងយុត្តិធម៌

in various parts of Ratanak Kiri Province. A number of Chinese minorities, well-known as Chen-Khe, live in Veun Sai District at the other side of Se-San River, Ratanak Kiri Province. Many Kroeung people in a commune in O Chum District of Ratanak Kiri while most Laotian highlanders live in Siem Bok and Siem Pang of Stung Treng. These are a few examples of how the two provinces are considered the multi- highlander territories of Cambodia.



**A Kroeung Man Sipping Traditional Jar Wine**

unofficial student leaves, teachers rush to finish the textbooks, which marginalize the teaching quality and the students' knowledge.

Generally, the education quality in the two provinces faces a number of critical challenges, especially education in the remote districts. Most schools face shortages of course books, teachers' guidebooks, and qualified teachers. Students have low discipline in terms of coming to class on time and regularly while teachers hardly manage the time to finish teaching the required assignments for the academic year. After semester exams, students are expected to continue their study until the small vacation period which falls in late March. However, the majority of students, specifically in the remote districts, take one week off after the first semester exam. This action disrupts the learning process and makes it difficult for teachers to conclude their teaching on time. As they do not have enough time due to so many holidays and

The integration/teaching of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) history, interchangeably used with the term Khmer Rouge (KR) history, is extremely limited in these two provinces. Teachers wait until the end of the year to teach KR history as this history appears at the end of the course book. Also, integration of KR history is done very occasionally. The table below summarizes the evaluation work in Ratanak Kiri and Stung Treng.

<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 (DK) 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 teachers</li> <li>• Questionnaire for students</li> <li>• Interview questions</li> </ul>
<b>Types of Schools</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: (1) Samdech Ov-Samdech Mae High</li> </ul>

	School, (2) Virakchey Lower Secondary School, (3) Hun Sen Phum Thmei High School, (4) Hun Sen Stung Treng High School, (5) Thala Borivath Lower Secondary School, (6) Siem Bok Lower Secondary School
<b>Average Number of Students per Class</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Between 35 and 60 students per class</li> </ul>
<b>Approximate Number of Students with Textbook</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approximately eight percent</li> </ul>

## 2. PRE-OBSERVATION AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Prior to the classroom observations, the team met with the provincial education officials and school directors to learn about and discuss the general condition in each province. In Ratanak Kiri, the team met with Mrs. Chan Kham-Khoeu, director of the Ratanak Kiri Education Office. Mrs. Chan said that Ratanak Kiri Province consists of eight districts and one city. However,



**Meeting with Education Officials in Stung Treng Province**

there are only five high schools, three of which are located in Banlung City. Only two districts (Kaun Mom and Borkeo) have established high school-level education. The other six districts (O Chum, Veu Sai, Lumphat, Andaung Meas, Oyadav and Taveng) have only Lower Secondary School level. The provincial education office plans to have one high school for each district. However, due to the limited budget and the fact that the six remote districts do not have enough students to establish a local high school, the plan has been suspended for a while. In spite of this, each district has at least one lower-secondary school which provides education from grade seven to nine.

Educational infrastructure in Stung Treng is more favorable. Stung Treng consists of four districts and one city. There are six high schools in the province. Stung Treng City has two high schools while the four districts (Se San, Siem Bok, Siem Pang and Thala Borivath) have one high school each. There are twenty lower-secondary schools in the province.

The table below summarizes the schools the team observed and evaluated.

No.	Name of School	Teachers	Female Teachers	Students	Female Students	Number of Classrooms
1	Samdech Ov-Samdech Mae High School	75	22	1534	635	32
2	Virakchey Lower	9	1	230	118	5



	Secondary School					
3	Hun Sen Phum Thmei High School	73	24	983	432	24
4	Hun Sen Stung Treng High School	57	19	912	427	33
5	Thala Borivath Lower Secondary School	19	7	243	140	11
6	Siem Bok Lower Secondary School	12	3	135	67	11

### 3. CLASSROOM AND GENERAL OBSERVATION



**Virakchey Lower Secondary School**

The educational infrastructure, namely the school buildings, is not satisfactory to meet the educational challenges in the provinces as the number of students increase every year while the schools do not have enough classrooms to accommodate the students. The government aims to have at least one Lower Secondary School in each commune and at least one high school in each district. However, Ratanak Kiri

does not have enough schools to meet the needs of the students in the remote areas. Students from far districts have to come to the city if they want to continue their education to the high school level. Sou Makara, deputy director of administration, personnel and training of the Ratanak Kiri Provincial Office of Education, said that his office has built dormitories for poor students from the far districts. However, the dorms have a limited number of rooms; therefore, the process to assign students a room is extremely selective. Only the poorest students whose families live in cottages are allowed to stay in the dorms. The relatively richer students have to rent their own houses in the town. Each school establishes a committee to review the appropriate students to be granted living space within the dorm.

In addition to poor educational infrastructure, the provinces do not have enough qualified teachers to ensure the quality of the teaching and the effective learning of students. According to the latest census, between seventy and eighty percent of the population and teachers are from Takeo Province and several other low-land provinces. The teachers from the other provinces are highly unlikely to stay in the remote schools for long. They stay there only for a few years and move to the economically favorable provincial town. This condition makes for a surplus of teachers in the city and shortage in the countryside. To solve the problem of the shortage of teachers in the remote districts, the Ministry of Education provides more opportunities to pass the teaching exam to candidates who are highlanders so that they return back and teach in their respective communities.

In addition, teachers do not have guidebooks to accompany the new textbook. Hout Chhaya from Hun Sen Stung Treng High School told the team that he received an unofficial notification that the Publishing House of the Ministry of Education does not plan to publish teacher guidebooks due to a lack of funding. The capable teachers at high schools in Phnom Penh have written up the lesson



**A Group of Students at Hun Sen Phum Thmei High School, Ratanak Kiri**

plans for the new program and bound them together into a copy.

Copies of this binding book are sold to teachers who are not able to produce lesson plans on their own. Chhaya bought one copy when he attended a workshop in Phnom Penh.

To introduce the new programs, the Ministry of Education has conducted workshops to inform teachers about the new program and how it is implemented. However, teachers like Chhaya claim that the workshop has little to do with content and methods. The workshop lasts for one or two days, and the teachers are not able to grasp the whole content of the new textbooks and methodology. Teachers recommend that the workshops should focus more on content and methods rather than just introducing the new program and scan through the textbooks swiftly.

Education in these provinces is also affected by the geographical condition. For instance, Veun Sai District is divided into separate areas by the Se San River. Students who live on the West side of the river have to cross the river by ferry to attend Virakchey Lower Secondary School. According to the teachers and students, most of the time, the ferry leaves the West bank late; students come to class late, and in some cases, they do not come to class at all. This dynamically increases the dropout rate in the district. Similarly, some teachers in Thala Borivath Lower Secondary School have to cross the Mekong River to teach and return back every day. Although they are given free crossing, the long daily travel discourages teachers from coming to teach on time and regularly. Likewise, teachers in Siem Bok District of Stung Treng Province have to ride motors for over twenty kilometers to teach. Keo Sovath from Siem Bok Lower Secondary School said that he spends almost the whole salary on gasoline to travel to the school. Right after finishing teaching, Sovath rushes back to fulfill another work as a security guard for a phone company.

As the provinces are rich of highlanders, the education offices decided to introduce bilingual education for the first three grades of primary school. Highlander students still have difficulty in studying at the secondary school level. However, according to the education officials, most highlander students want to learn Khmer language than their own because they believe that knowing Khmer language will help them to find better jobs.



**Kachaun Primary School, Veun Sai District, Ratanak Kiri Province**

reasons for not being able to use modern methods they receive from the training to apply in their classrooms. The most well-known reason is the large number of students per class and shortage of time. Teachers said that they found it hard to introduce group work and discussions because the condition of chairs and tables does not allow students to move around. Moreover, they will lose a lot of time if they try to use these modern methods. Other reasons include not enough copies of course books, low incentives, and inadequate subject knowledge.

According to the classroom observations, almost all teachers use the same method in teaching.

Teachers ask a few students to read loudly in the classes and then begin asking fact-finding questions to learn students' comprehension. At the end, teachers read the answers for students to copy into their notebooks or ask them to copy the answers from the board.

Teachers claim for several

Teachers usually engage in a second job other than the teaching job in order to economically sustain their families' standard of living. For example, Thoang Thon has potato farms, and he spends many hours per day on the farms. Keo Sovath from Siem Bok Lower Secondary School works as a security guard for one Telephone Company. Some other teachers possess small grocery stores at home. As they are involved in their private businesses at home, teachers spend less time to prepare lesson plans or to do research to improve the content and the quality of their teaching. Almost all teachers and school directors the team met and interviewed argued that most teachers earn less than one hundred US dollars per month; they inevitably have to engage in secondary jobs to survive.

Students also have similar issues, especially among the highlanders such as Kroeung and Tampoun. Some students live ten to twenty kilometers away from the schools. Some travel on foot while others ride bicycles. They pack rice and food with them so that they can have lunch at school and return back home in the evening. For another instance, Hat Pakk is one of the seven communes in Veun Sai District, which is about fifty kilometers from Ratanak Kiri. Hat Pakk can only be reached by boat that takes about three hours. According to Phauk Sophanna, the director of Virakchey Lower Secondary School, the only secondary school in the district, there were only five students from Hat Pakk, attending lower secondary school last year. Sophanna has not yet received new students from Hat Pakk this year. As students cannot withstand the long-distance travelling, some of them drop out before finishing lower secondary school level. Moreover, students are engaged in family's businesses such as working on the potato farms and in the rice fields. Usually, during the harvesting seasons, parents encourage their children to stop going to school for a while to help out with farming and cultivation. Mr. Thun Yon, Director of Hun Sen Phum Thmei High School, mentioned the same problem. "Students take leave for one month or so during harvesting and crop

collecting seasons. The quality of education is pursuant to this situation. The school can only give advice but not take any measures; otherwise, there will be no students in the school."

#### 4. OBSERVATIONS OF STUDENTS

Most students the team interviewed know Khmer Rouge history from their parents and teachers. Students know most of the living conditions such as killing, shortage of food, hard labor, and family separation. However, students have a hard time to understand the bigger picture of the regime. Below are some comments from students on how they understand the KR history.



**Taing Yeang Yeang, One of the Outstanding Students in Thala Borivath Lower Secondary School**

etc. She found that the regime was authoritarian and brutal, thus causing Cambodian people to die. She views the studying of history as an important element to make it clear for us to know about the past and compare it with the contemporary better lifestyle and to know about development.

Ken Kanha studies in twelfth grade at Samdech Ov Samdech Me High School. She has yet to receive any textbook on the DK history. The way that she learned about the DK is through her teachers and media. The teachers often incorporate the history in such subjects as Khmer literature, history, and geography. In addition to her parents' description, she believed in oral accounts on the worst living conditions, forced marriage, collective working conditions,

Chraing Vin, a Tum Puon highlander, studies in twelfth grade at Samdech Ov Samdech Me High School. Although he has no copy of the DK textbook, he learned of the history through teachers and parents. Some teachers keep reminding and asking students about that history. What he remembered the most was the evacuation of people from cities to rural areas. They were thus compelled to do hard back-breaking work. Some managed to escape to neighboring countries such as Vietnam and Thailand. Mass execution became widespread. Anyone targeted to be killed was merely told that they would be sent for re-education. His parents, Tum Puon highlanders, occasionally told him of the history too. Asked about the importance of learning history, Vin replied that we could avoid repeating any tragic past, while the good history deserves more endorsement.

Srey Ratanak Pisey studies in eleventh grade at Hun Sen Phoum Thmei High School. She has a copy of the DK history textbook as her father brought it from the Provincial Office of Education. She has read and remembered the dates of the KR coming to power and being toppled. The regime turned the entire country into an agrarian society. All the people were moved to farmer status. They had insufficient food to consume. Her teachers often told



about the bitter condition of life. For her opinion, studying the history would enable students to know about the governing structure of the regime. This would educate students about thinking twice before choosing a leader. What she expects teachers to do more when teaching history is that they should narrate their personal stories to allow students to know about how they were ruled and separated and what they were assigned to work. Being asked if she discriminated against any friends whose parents were KR cadres, she replied "NO" without hesitation. She added that the younger generation has nothing to do with the past history. However, it would be also impossible to develop a sense of hatred for their parents as they were under superiors' orders.

Kun Chheng Try studies eleventh grade at Hun Sen Phoum Thmei High School. She got to know the history of DK through her studies. She realized that the Cambodian people have suffered from tremendous torture and overwork. Her history, morality and geography teachers always talk about this history. She believed in it. Especially, she has taken interest in the *It is a not Dream* program on Bayon TV. Despite the fact that she has not gone through the regime, she said she could feel how family separation affected the people emotionally. In regard to her desired point of focus, she would like to know about the people's way of life.



**Students Working in Groups to Produce Answers on the Flipcharts**

## **5. INTEGRATION OF DK HISTORY COMMENTARY**

The integration of KR history into the regular classroom teaching is extremely limited in the two provinces. Teachers conduct the integration only to show to the observation team. Most integration is conducted in the form of oral descriptions either at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the teaching. Teacher Thoang Thon of Samdech Ov-Samdech Mae High School told students that the KR was crueler because the KR killed their own people. He asked if the students knew the period in which the KR controlled Cambodia. The students answered, "17 April 1975-7 January 1979." Mr. Thon showed the cover of the KR history textbook and described the picture to them. He described black clothes and red scarves on the necks. Then Mr. Thon went on to explain about the purposes of the cooperatives, mass weddings, and mass work. Turning the textbook to page 40, Thon showed the photo of a KR wedding. He told students that there was no traditional ceremony and that Angkar appointed the couples.



Kim Hun from Thala Borivath Lower Secondary School, Stung Treng, also taught the whole chapter one from the DK history textbook. There are twenty-nine students of which nine are male. Hun borrowed twenty-nine copies of the DK history textbook from the school library and distributed them to his students. Hun began his teaching by asking four students to take turns to read aloud to the class and the rest read through the book silently. Two students hardly read the text fluently and accurately. After that the teacher wrote several key terms on the board including Khmer Rouge, four-year plan, Leninism, and United Front. He then asked students to define the terms based on the reading. Without waiting for the answers, Hun read the answers for his students who wrote them down into their notebooks. Next, Hun asked students to turn the book to page 39, and he interpreted the meaning of the photo of the KR art and wedding on the next page. Hun asked students if they knew how the KR arranged the wedding. One female student said "in mass ceremony, the couples did not have chance to see each other in advance." He then asked students to turn the book to page 59. Seeing the photo, all students shouted loudly "Tuol Sleng prison in Phnom Penh." As time was coming up, Hun concluded the lesson by reading his own opinion which was already drafted. Students recorded his dictation down in their notebooks. At the end Hun asked several comprehension questions to summarize students' learning.



**Students Filling in Questionnaires**

Hout Chhaya from Hun Sen Stung Treng High School said that he only integrated KR history in grade 10 and grade 11 as grade 12 classes will benefit directly from the social studies textbook in which KR history is printed in the book. The KR history is part of Cambodian modern history which is taught at the end of the academic year.

Phauk Sophanna from Virakchey Lower Secondary

School said that he has screened the film *Behind the Wall of S-21* and *Breaking the Silence* for students. However, according to his observation, students in his school appear to have less interest in studying KR history. Sophanna took liberty to personally conclude that as Ratanak Kiri was among the first five liberated provinces of the KR movement in 1970 and as people in this province did not suffer much, they are unlikely to narrate interesting stories to their children. In spite of this fact, his students did ask such interesting questions as, "Why was there such a regime?", and "Why was there killing at that time?"

Among the six observed teachers, two teachers taught directly from the DK history textbook, which the observers knew to be just for show. Nhanh Yun from Hun Sen Phum Thmei High School picked up chapter three from the DK history textbook. He started the lesson by asking several questions about the general events during the KR period. Then he asked one student to read section one loudly in the class. After the reading, Yun asked the other students to write down on the board what they remembered from the reading. Finishing these activities, Yun moved on to other sections and did the same things. The activities



**Liem Sovannarith, Director of Hun Sen Stung Treng High School**

repeated several times. A few students read loudly in the class and the teacher asked fact-finding questions to ensure the students remembered the information from the book. In many cases, the teacher asked questions and provided answers immediately without allowing time for students to think critically. Without providing time and opportunity to students to discuss and interact in the class, Yun summarized the chapter and concluded that the killing during the KR regime was because of revenge.

Yun went on to use his family's story during the KR regime as an example of how revenge became the key engine for killing. Yun taught students from personal judgment and emotion. Yun was a young child during the KR. He said that his father and uncle did not get along well before the regime. When the KR took power, his uncle became a unit chief in the village. At one point, his father became so ill and needed a hammock carrier to deliver him to the hospital. Yun's uncle denied the family's request to borrow a hammock carrier. He believed that his uncle wanted to take revenge against his father.

From personal experiences, Yun concluded that the killing of millions of Cambodian people resulted from the sense of revenge.

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

Some schools receive a few copies of the DK history textbook while others have never received a single copy. DC-Cam has delivered the copies of the textbook to all provincial education offices since 2009. Most offices have further distributed the copies to all lower and upper secondary schools. However, as the number of schools increases every year, some schools have not received the copies according to the original divisions. For instance, the director of Samdech Ov-Samdech Mae High School claimed that his school had never received any copy of the textbook. Other schools have about forty to sixty copies. The team brought 200 copies and gave extras to the schools that have less copies of the textbook.

According to the observation and student questionnaire, very few students actually possess copies of the textbook. Most often, teachers borrow the textbook from the library and distribute it to students to read ahead of the observation. After that, the copies are collected back and kept in the library. For effective dissemination of information and knowledge on KR history, the copies of the textbook are best distributed to students who will share the copies with their siblings, parents, and relatives. However, to serve the purpose of effective teaching of KR history, the copies should be kept in the library, and teachers can borrow the textbook for their students during DK history sessions. Moreover, students are required to borrow the textbook to read at home.

With regards to the teacher guidebook and student workbook, only teachers who attended the training receive these two kinds of teaching materials. According to the interviews, teachers rarely share these materials with their fellow teachers who appear to have less interest in learning about these new materials unless they are given the opportunity to attend the training. Therefore, teacher guidebooks and student workbooks are limited to the trained teachers only.

## **7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Teachers' performance in the classroom is strongly marginalized by a number of key challenges, ranging from relatively poor educational background to lack of teaching materials and economic constraints. This performance has strong implications on the students' knowledge, some of whom are already discouraged by their families' economic



**Sekong River in Stung Treng Province**

responsibilities. To improve the quality of students and the quality of education at large, community participation is crucially important. The communities need to be made aware of the value of education so that they will refrain from asking their children to quit school to help out in farming and home businesses.

The integration and teaching of KR history in the classrooms is limited. The observed teachers conducted the whole teachings and, in some cases, integrations only to show the observation and evaluation team. According to interviews with students, teachers had never taught the whole chapter from the DK history textbook before. However, teachers did occasionally talk briefly about the KR history during their regular teaching.

A feeling of political sensitivity is still flying around to some extent, but not as great as before. Deputy Director of Stung Treng Provincial Office of Education said that he dared not

say much about the history as its content conflicts with the current society. Being asked for details on what he meant, the deputy director said that, "If the book does not say something, we dare not say it." Not many teachers express this kind of opinion. However, according to the observations, teachers almost never go beyond the textbook, claiming that they cannot even finish the textbook alone properly in each academic year. Some teachers request the Ministry of Education reduce the amount of texts in the textbook.

### **Appendix One: Public Education Forum with Kroeung Highlanders in Ratanak Kiri Province**

On 8 February 2012, the quality control team conducted a public education forum with Kroeung highlanders in Kalai Village, Kalai Commune, O Chum District, Ratanak Kiri Province. There were about eighty participants in the forum.

Mr. Sok-Kheang Ly led the discussion with Kroeung people. Mr. Ly introduced the magazine *Searching for the Truth* and the DK history textbook *A History of Democratic Kampuchea* by Khamboly Dy. Hearing the name of the author, one Kroeung recalled a famous English newspaper *The Cambodia Daily*. This appears to suggest that they have access to such information. Then Mr. Ly explained about the work of DC-Cam. He said that DC-Cam has been working to collect documents on the Khmer Rouge (KR) regime. As the participants were more familiar with the name "Pol Pot," Mr. Ly decided to use the term Pol Pot regime. Mr. Ly asked what religion they practiced. They said that they have mixed belief, both Brahmanism and Buddhism. However, now people are more adhered to Buddhism. Before going into deep discussions on the KR history, Mr. Ly asked some questions with regards to the history of the Kroeung.

The participants said that the Kroeungs are living dispersedly in all eight districts of Ratanak Kiri Province. Ta Kalai was the big chief of the Kroeung. Kalai Commune was named after him. In the past, there were nine villages, but now there are only three villages of the Kroeung remaining. Before settling down in Kalai, the Kroeung lived in Veun Sai District near Sesan River. In the past, Kroeung was in battle

with Tampuan highlanders in order to fight for power. They used bows, arrows, and other traditional fighting tools in the wars. The Kroeung and other highlander groups struggled in several stages of Cambodian history. They also joined the Issarak movement. They participated with the independent movement launched by Prince Sihanouk. They took on the wooden guns to fight against the French.

One participant said that the Kroeung knew how to speak Khmer language when the KR came into their villages in around 1962. Many of the Kroeung highlanders joined the KR



**Kroeung People Attending the Forum**



movement to fight against the Lon Nol regime in the early 1970s. The KR leaders trusted the highlanders. They realized that the KR leaders could make use of them because they were illiterate. They were indoctrinated to believe and follow the political line of the KR movement. However, during the regime, the highlander people were evacuated to Veun Sai District. Chak Ngeul was one of the evacuees to Veun Sai. Some were evacuated to Kaun Mom and Lumphat Districts. They were forced to plant rice and to build dams such as O Ta Toeng and O Treum Dams. Mrs. Chhil said that she ate collectively in the communal hall. However, they were not targeted for execution because they were Kroeung. This applied to other highlander groups as well. Mr. Ngach Voeun said that one of his nephews became Pol Pot's body guard. The participants also briefly discussed the movement of FULRO fighting forces that were funded by the United States to fight the communists in Indochina.

To learn more about the fate of the highlanders during the KR, Mr. Ly asked one participant to read section two in chapter eight. The man read loudly and the rest read through the textbook. After the reading, Mr. Ly asked how the KR thought of the highlanders. One participant said that the KR "asked us to live and eat equally. It may not have been something to do with the high-ranking leaders. The low-level cadres and militiamen in the communes conducted the execution of the villagers."



**Mr. Sok-Kheang Ly Addressing the Participants**

painful experiences. Without answering Sokoeun's question, Mr. Ly asked for comments from the other participants. One said that, "If we don't study, we won't be able to know the regime and cannot prevent it from happening again." Mr. Ly added that the teaching aims to educate the younger generations to have tolerance and forgiveness toward each other. The purpose of the teaching is not to allow children to hold anger, hatred, and ideas of revenge. He stressed that it is important to compile the history for future research and knowledge of the younger generations. Mr. Ly also told the participants about the Genocide Education Project which has trained thousands of teachers, military and police officers. The teachers will provide education down to the students. Moreover, Mr. Ly informed the participants about the genocides that have happened in other countries, such as Rwanda and Germany.

Sokoeun asked a second question about the justice from the Khmer Rouge Tribunal (KRT). He asked if the United Nations and the Cambodian government could find justice for the Cambodian people who were killed during the KR regime. Before answering this question, Mr. Ly asked if the participants could define the term "justice." Sokoeun explained that

In terms of education, there are only a few people who graduated from high school and are now working in the provincial town. Only one Kroeung with the help of the Christian church is able to attend university in Phnom Penh. There is one primary school in the commune.

Mr. Sokoeun said that the forum may create tension and pain among the children and the population when they recall the

Kroeung does not have the equivalence for the word “justice.” Sokoeun assisted in explaining the term “justice” in the lay language in Kroeung. As the participants understood the term, Mr. Ly explained that the term “justice” has been defined differently depending on the locations and concepts in each locality. He then gave some examples of how different people perceive justice differently. Mr. Ly informed the participants about the prosecution of Duch, Chief of Tuol Sleng Prison (Office S-21). Duch was prosecuted and given a sentence of life imprisonment. He said that “this is one kind of justice.” However, the Kroeung people may define justice differently. As Sokoeun said, the court should provide compensation to the civil parties in order to claim that justice is achieved. He said that the court could not satisfy everyone. Ngach Voeun said that at least the court can show the young leaders that they will be prosecuted if they commit crimes.

Mr. Ly opened the magazine and showed some of the photos of KR leaders, including Nuon Chea, Ieng Sary, and Ieng Therith, to inform them that these leaders will be prosecuted in Case 002. Some participants said that they have followed the information about the KRT through radio. Mr. Ly asked if the participants knew who the witness at the KRT was on Monday. As the participants did not know the detail, Mr. Ly said that Mr. Youk Chhang, DC-Cam’s director, was requested to testify in front of the court on the authenticity of the documents.

After the fall of the KR, the Kroeung were still living dispersedly. Only until 1986 did they gather together to live in Kalai Village. All participants said that they had lost family members during the KR. The villagers performed a special spiritual ceremony to call upon the spirits of the dead to return back home. Traditionally, the ceremony appealed for the dead spirits and the disappeared to come back to their home villages.



**Traditional Tools of Kroeung People**

In the present day, the former KR cadres who had committed the killing are still living around in the commune. The commune chief said that he dared not comment on how to deal with those former cadres because he drinks coffee with them every morning. However, right now through the reconciliation policy of the government, the villagers would not take revenge and want to live together in the same communes peacefully.

At the end of the forum, Mr. Ly summarized the purpose of the forum again. He stressed the importance of knowing how the KR inflicted harm on the highlander people who suffered during the KR like the rest of the Cambodian people although highlander groups were not targeted for execution. He mentioned the strong effects of the KR atrocities on the Kroeung and the Cambodian population as a whole. There are a number of different ways to reconcile with one another. Mr. Ly encouraged the participants to read the book and share their

experiences with the young children. Mr. Ly thanked all the participants, the commune chief, and the commune councils for making this forum possible. Finally, the commune chief gave a final remark to formally end the forum. He said that he was so happy that the team came to Kalai Commune to disseminate the information on KR history and the KRT. The forum encourages the young to learn more about the KR history so that they will not repeat the same mistakes again. He stated, "We encourage the young children to attend schools in order to preserve the identity of the Kroeung highlander as well as build up the commune and the country to be more prosperous." The chief thanked the participants for listening to the forum attentively. He announced the closing ceremony.

**END.**

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**Evaluation Team:**

**Mr. Dy Khamboly**

**Mr. Ly Sok-Kheang**

**Mr. Ly Romany**