

# មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯករាជ្យកម្ពុជា

## Genocide Education in Cambodia

### The Teaching of "A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)" Report for 15<sup>th</sup> Commune Teacher Training in Koh Kong Province

September 7-12, 2014

By Solyda Say

#### I. Introduction

The Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, recently completed six-day Commune Teacher Training session for 40 history, geography, Khmer studies and morality teachers from Koh Kong province. The main purpose of the training was to provide the trainees with a comprehensive overview of the history of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) and pedagogic strategies so that they would be able to instruct this knowledge to their students. The training was held from September 7 to September 12, 2014 in Koh Kong High School. Originally, 50 trainees were expected to participate but 10 were absent from the training due to personal issues. 7 national and provincial trainers from the Ministry of Education and 6 DC-Cam staff members facilitated the training.



Trainees and DC-Cam team in front of Koh Kong high school's resource center

The trainees were divided into three groups. The core training materials were: *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)* textbook and the Teacher's Guidebook. The additional teaching materials include: Searching for the Truth magazine issue

178, booklet on ECCC's case 002. The daily activities of each day consisted of a lecture on the Democratic Kampuchea history textbook, a presentation of teaching methodologies from the teacher guidebook and the teaching practicums done by the trainees. The training also included other activities such as film screening (Behind the Wall of S-21, Cambodian Children, and Tuol Sleng and Baset Prison) and guest lectures by Dale Lysak, international assistant prosecutor, and Dr. Kar Sunbonat, Cambodian leading psychiatrist.

Below is the report about the training activities in Koh Kong provinces. The report describes the preparation, the daily activities in each day of the training, and recommendations for future trainings.

## II. Preparation for the training

DC-Cam's staff members traveled to the training site two days prior to the actual training to prepare the ground works for the training. In the afternoon of September 6, 2014, DC-Cam team met with the national and provincial trainers in Koh Kong High School meeting hall. Mr. Dy Khamboly, DC-Cam's Genocide Education Project leader led the meeting.



First of all, the schedule of this training was almost identical to the previous training, except the guest speaker from Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) who would give presentation on the third afternoon of the training. After going through the schedule, Mr. Dy proceeded to inform the meeting about the incorporation of Chapter 3 on Force Transfer and Tuol Po Chrey Execution Site,

which were integrated into the Teacher Guidebook. The newly added chapter 3 was one of the reparation projects of Case 002/01 officially recognized by the ECCC. Then, he briefly outlined the roles and responsibilities of each trainer in their assigned group. Each trainer was responsible for presenting both the textbook and the teacher's guidebook and giving model lessons. At the end of the meeting, everyone was aware of their responsibilities and felt very optimistic about the upcoming training.

### III. Opening Ceremony

On Sunday morning of September 7, 2014, all participants attended the big hall to mark the official opening ceremony for the 15<sup>th</sup> Commune Teacher Training. The ceremony was presided over by Her Excellency Tun Sa-Im, Under Secretary of State of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. Three speakers gave welcome speeches at the ceremony.

**Mr. Chou Serya**, Deputy Head of the Provincial Office of Education of Koh Kong Province, was the first speaker at the opening ceremony. He welcomed all the



participants and expressed his gratitude to DC-Cam for choosing Koh Kong High School to host the 15<sup>th</sup> Commune Teacher Training. He then talked about the general educational condition and geography of Koh Kong province. Originally, there were seven districts but later on, one district, Kompong Seila, was split and became a part of Preah Sihanouk Province. In total, there were 23 islands and a pristine stretch of 237-km coastline in Koh Kong Province.

For pre-school service, there were 8 community kindergartens, and 10 private kindergartens for the children aged from 1 to 3 years old. The number of students attending primary schools throughout the province is 19,026 among which 8,956 are female. For general secondary education, there were 7 high schools and 20 lower secondary schools for 7,168 students. 124 administrative staffs were currently working for Koh Kong Provincial Office of Education. Mr. Chou was very proud to announce that the total number of teachers teaching in Koh Kong Province had impressively increased to 1,043. A few decades ago, there were hardly any teachers due to the inaccessible areas and difficult road to this province. The administrative and education management was more difficult than those in other provinces due to the land pattern of this coastline province, Mr. Cho stated.

Not long before, the Provincial Office of Education had no direct contact with school on the islands or mountains since these places were far-reaching and some places remain hard to get access to until now. In order to reach these remote areas, the officers from the Ministry of Education had to venture into the forest and he told the

participants that they felt like they were soldiers since they had to bring knife and few other choices of weapons to protect themselves because there was a high chance that they would come across dangerous wild animals. Before ending his speech, he again welcomed the delegates from both the Ministry of Education and DC-Cam.

**Mr. Vanthan Peou Dara**, Deputy Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, took the floor after Mr. Chou's welcoming speech. First and foremost, he thanked Mr. Chou Serya for giving such detailed introduction of the educational situation in Koh Kong Province. Mr. Vanthan told the participants that the 15<sup>th</sup> Commune Teacher Training was the last training of 2014. The Commune Teacher Training was a part of Genocide Education Project which commenced in 2004. The first achievement of this project was the launch of the DK textbook. The book took three years to complete and publish. More importantly, the Ministry of Education officially recognized the textbook as supplementary material for teaching the Khmer Rouge history in high schools throughout Cambodia.

In 2009, DC-Cam published *the Teaching of "A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)* alongside the history book. In the same year, DC-Cam conducted the first ever National Teacher Training. The participants of the training were the officers from the Ministry of Education and DC-Cam's staff members. Subsequently, the Provincial Teacher Trainings were conducted for 186 history, geography, literature, morality and philosophy teachers from all 24 provinces of Cambodia; the training provided provincial teachers with the skills necessary to train other commune teachers. Mr. Vanthan told the participants that three provincial trainers and four national trainers would instruct them.

Apart from the teacher training workshops, Genocide Education Project also organized annual teacher workshop which provided the opportunities to the teachers from across the country to meet and share their experiences. So far three annual teacher workshops were convened. Another activity of the project was hanging up anti-genocide slogans in high schools throughout the country. The two slogans are: *Talking about experience during the Khmer Rouge regime is to promote reconciliation and to educate children about forgiveness and tolerance; learning about the history of Democratic Kampuchea is to prevent genocide.* He added that the participants could find these two slogans hung in front of the entrance of Koh Kong High School meeting hall. All of these activities were efforts to prevent the genocide from happening again in the future.

**Her Excellency Tun Sa-Im**, Under-Secretary of State of Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, was the last speaker of the opening ceremony. Firstly, she would like to thank DC-Cam and donors for organizing all the teacher trainings. DC-Cam had done a very good job in compiling the documents regarding the Democratic Kampuchea. "Hard work never goes waste because in the next five year or so, we are going to have Sleuk Rith Institute in which one of the pillars is a school that will offer courses on Khmer Rouge history, genocide studies and human rights." she told the participants proudly. H.E Tun Sa-Im placed a very great emphasize on studying

and teaching genocide. Genocide were not committed only in Cambodia but in many other places around the world despite the establishment of Genocide convention. She believed learning about genocide would halt this brutal crime in the future. For this sole reason, Sleuk Rith Institute was going to be one of the greatest achievements and all the participants as a teacher had a very important role in teaching Cambodian high school students about genocide in Cambodia.



Participants in the opening ceremony

#### **IV. Activities in the Training**

From the second to the sixth morning of the training, the trainees received intensive lectures on the KR history and the teaching methodologies. Every afternoon except the third and fifth ones, the trainees were divided into small groups to do teaching practicum by using the teaching methods that they had learned from the morning session. For the third and fifth afternoon, the trainees watched the documentary films and listened to guest speakers.

#### **Some Highlight of Presentation on DK textbook**

*Presentation on Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of DK textbook by Mr. Ly Sok-Kheng*

Mr. Ly Sok-Kheng, national instructor from DC-Cam gave a presentation of the first two chapters of DK textbook. He started the class by giving self-introduction since it was the first session. Mr. Ly told the class that although the first chapter was a bit short; nevertheless, it was very important since it wrapped up all the main points in

the book. "What is Khmer Rouge?" he asked the class. One student answered that the term referred to the communist movement while another trainee said that the KR was a name given by King Sihanouk. Mr. Ly told the class that both answers were correct.

Then, he went on telling the class to make a clear distinction between the term Khmer Rouge and Communist Party of Kampuchea because they were going to hear these two terms a lot throughout the training. Based on the DK book, Khmer Rouge was the name King Norodom Sihanouk gave to his communist opponents in the 1960s and their official name was the Communist Party of Kampuchea. It was not hard to tell that most of the trainees in group two had a lot of knowledge about the KR history because they asked quite challenged questions. The questions were: Would the Khmer Rouge still in power until today if the Vietnamese army did not defeat them? After Holocaust, there was a genocide convention so why the genocide still happened around the world after that?

*Presentation on Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 of DK textbook by Mr. Seng Sovan Mony*

Mr. Seng Sovan Mony, a provincial teacher of group two, gave a presentation on chapter 3 and chapter 4 of the DK textbook. Before starting his presentation, Mr. Seng did a quick review of previous lessons by asking quite challenging questions in which most of the trainees were able to answer correctly. Once Mr. Seng begun his presentation, one could not help but gave all their attention to him. He presented all the main points in the chapters in very details. On top of that, he also shared his own personal experience. "I was just a boy during the force evacuation. I remember seeing a crowd of people wondering along the road and there were these people dressed in black uniform armed with gun shouting at people to move", he said. All the trainees were mesmerized by his story. His class ended around 9:30 a.m.

### **Some Highlight of Trainees' Teaching Practicum**

*Chapter 5: The Formation of Democratic Kampuchea*

*Lesson 2: Mapping of Khmer Rouge Leaders*

*Taught by: Chhin Sophany*

Before starting the class, Mr. Chhin Sophany stuck poster containing the neatly written objectives of his class and then he asked one students to read them out loud. He told the class that at the end of the class they would be able to describe the roles of the KR leaders in Democratic Kampuchea, identify key KR leaders, explain the historical and social contexts in which Democratic Kampuchea was formed, and create a map of KR leaders listing names, positions, roles and background.

"Can anyone tell me what Angkar is?" he asked. Immediately, one of the trainees in the front row of the class raised her hand and told the class that Angkar referred to the members of Communist Party of Kampuchea. Satisfied with the answer, Mr. Chin asked the class another question: who were members of the Central Committee? One trainee said the members were Pol Pot, Noun Chea, Vorn Vet, Ke



Pauk and Khieu Samphan. Not really satisfied with the answer, Mr. Chin asked the class whether anyone would like to add a few more people. A trainee from the third row raised her hand and said So Phim, Ieng Sary, Son Sen, Ta Mok and Nhim Ros were also members of Central Committee.

“So now you know the names of all the members in the Central Committee.

Let see whether you know how they look,” Mr. Chin said. He asked the class to open their Teacher Guidebook to page 53 and identify all the portraits of former KR leaders. All the trainees were able to give the correct name to all the portraits.

After that, he adorned the whiteboard with another poster containing a chart with four columns. The first column was the name of five members of the central committee, the second was their roles, the third was responsibilities and the last one was their background. All the trainees had to draw a chart similar to the one on the whiteboard on their notebook. Once they finished, they had ten minutes to fill each columns. Surprisingly, all the trainees completed the chart less than 9 minutes and all their answers were correct. Toward the end of the class, Mr. Chin did a quick review of what they had learnt in the class.

**Comment:** Ms. Mom Met, the national teacher, praised Mr. Chin Sophany for achieving all objectives of the lesson and finished his class on time. His style of delivering the lesson was impressive and that was a reason why most of the students were so attentive and active in his class. But there was one thing that he had to keep in mind when he taught this lesson the actual students. The trainees here had already known about the background of the former KR leaders because of this morning class; however, the actual students might not have learnt about this and thereby it was impossible for them to fill in the roles and responsibility of the KR leaders. In this case, he should give some time for the students to read the KR leaders’ background before filling the chart.

*Chapter 1: Summary*

*Lesson 1: Actively Reading Chapter 1*

*Taught by: Hang Sambath*

Mr. Hang Sambath started his class by explaining the objectives of the lessons and the activities of today lesson on the poster that he stuck on the whiteboard. While he was explaining, one could not help but noticed that he was a bit nervous. However the nervousness disappeared when he started to teach. Instead of drawing the K-W-L chart on the whiteboard like most trainees and instructors did, Mr. Hang distributed a handout contained K-W-L chart to all the students.

Then, he gave the class about a minute to fill out the K (What I Know) chart. When everyone finished, two students were selected to tell the class what kind of information that they already knew about the KR history. The first student said his parents told him that life under the Khmer Rouge regime was very harsh while the second student told the class two things that he already knew about the KR history were the forced marriage and evacuation. "Since most of you already fill in the K chart, now let write what you want to learn from today class" Mr. Hang said. Once everyone finished, he asked the students to read biography of Ieng Thirith, testimony of a Courier for Ieng Thirith, and a testimony from a woman from Takeo on page 17 and 18 page in the teacher guide book. While reading these articles, the students had to write a paragraph about their opinion regarding the two polar opposite testimonies on Ieng Thirith.

Ten minutes past, all the students finished writing their reflection paper. Mr. Hang selected one student to stand up and read her paper. To her, it was very hard to decide whether Ieng Thirith was a villain or not because the first testimony was more in favor of Ieng Thirith while the second one talked about the cruelty under the KR regime. After praising the student for writing such a good reflection paper, Mr. Hang explained to the class that different people have different experience under the infamous KR regime. Some were fortunate than the others so the students needed to look from different angle to understand the history better.

**Comment:** One of his fellow trainees advised Mr. Hang not to write the whole lesson plan on the poster. He should have just written the objectives and then explained them to the class in great detail. Another trainee told Mr. Han that his class would be better if he made more eye contact with the students and moved around a bit instead of just standing still near the whiteboard.

### **Guest Speakers:**

#### **Dr. Kar Sunbunat**

In the afternoon of the fifth day, Dr. Kar Sunbunat, Cambodia leading psychiatrist, gave a presentation on disaster and mental health in the meeting hall. The first point that he presented was disaster. According to Dr. Kar, any large-scale destruction resulted from a catastrophe was an event that most people defined as disaster. Not every awful disaster causes negatives impacts on people directly because some disasters occur far away from people lived but if someone unfortunately encountered it- what they experience had a deep and lasting impact.



The occurrences of disaster were caused by both nature and human. The nature disasters ranged from flood, drought, lightening, storm, and a deadly natural disaster known as volcano. The lava coming out of the volcano was as hot as two thousand degrees so it technically destroyed everything on its path. Kidnapping, rape, burglary and homicide were in the category of human disaster. Both the victims and their family equally suffered from such offense.

The victims of natural and man-made disaster were prone to suffered mental disorder known as “trauma” in the case that the degree of disaster was so severe. Trauma is a kind of mental illness caused by severe shock after a dreadful disaster that its harmful effect last for a long period of time.

Mental illness is very difficult to spot because it did not appear on appearance like physical sickness did. As a psychiatrist for such a long time, Dr. Kar could say that both rich and poor people suffered mental illness equally and most people in Cambodia immediately assumed that the patients who had mental illness were crazy. He stressed that this assumption was totally wrong and everyone should not be afraid or ashamed if they go to consult with psychiatrist when they felt like they need one. In Cambodia, there was a misconception about the medicine treating mental illnesses which most people regard it as addictive drug. Dr. Kar stated that this belief was wrong. People would not be addicted if they took the medicine as prescribed by the psychiatrist. The main problem was most patients took more than prescription because they believed by taking more pills, they would get better soon.

Before wrapping up his presentation, Dr. Kar allowed some time for the questions. The inquiries from the participants were:

1. What triggers fear? Is there any ways to prevent fear from happening?
2. Are there any cures for those who always feel suffocating and hallucinate?
3. When I think too much during the day, I would dream a lot in my sleep. Is it a symptom of mental illness?
4. Why people tend to get more temperamental when they are getting older?
5. Which sex suffers mental illness the most? Is it men or women?

### **Mr. Dale Lysak**

Dale Lysak, international co-prosecutor, made a presentation on trial proceedings and judgment in Case 002/01. Firstly, he told the participants that it was a great honor and pleasure for him to be invited to the 15<sup>th</sup> Commune Teacher Training as a guest speaker and then, he proceeded to give a quick self-introduction. He emphasized that all the participants had a very important job because they would teach Cambodia younger generation about the Khmer Rouge regime.

The main focus of this presentation was on the judgment in Case 002/01 delivered by ECCC about a month ago, Mr. Lysak said. Instead of presenting the judgment immediately, he gave a brief summary of the ECCC establishment and some

information regarding Case 002. ECCC was set up in 2006 to prosecute senior leader and those most responsible for crimes committed under the KR regime. There were 4 cases in the KR tribunal and the first case against Kaing Guek Eva alias Duch was already completed.

Four former Khmer Rouge leaders were originally the defendants in Case 002 for three charges: crimes against humanity, grave breaches of the 1949 Geneva Convention and genocide of the Cham and the Vietnamese. The four defendants were Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan, Ieng Thirith and Ieng Sary; however, the proceeding Ieng Thirith were stayed and the charges against her severed from the case after she was found unfit to stand trial due to dementing disease and Ieng Sary's death in 2013 extinguished all criminal and civil actions against him. So, there were only two accused in Case 002 and they were Nuon Chea, and Khieu Samphan.

Because of the size and complexity of the Case 002 and the age and health of the accused, the Trial Chamber severed the proceedings in Case 002 into a series of smaller trails. Besides, the Trial Chamber limited the scope of the first trial in Case 003 to crimes against humanity alleged to have been committed during the evacuation of Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975 and movements of population in other regions of Cambodia from September 1975 until December 1977.

The Trial Chamber held initial hearings in June 2011 and opened the first trial focusing on forced evacuations and other related crimes against humanity in late November 2011. Over the course of 20 months of evidentiary hearing, the Trial Chamber heard the testimony of 92 individuals, including 3 experts, 53 fact witnesses, five character witnesses and 31 Civil parties. More than 5,800 evidentiary documents were subjected to examination and admitted, totaling over 222,000 pages; the Chamber admitted 1,124 written statements and transcripts of witnesses and Civil Parties who did not appear before the Chamber in place of oral testimony. The hearing of evidence in Case 002/01 concluded on 23 July 2013. Closing arguments took place in October 2013 and on August 7, 2014, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan were found guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Before ending his presentation, Mr. Lysak mentioned briefly about Case 002/02. The accused persons in the second phase of Case 002 and they were Nuon Chea, and Khieu Samphan. The following were alleged crime sites and factual allegations in Case 002/02:

- + Genocide against the Cham and the Vietnamese
- + Forced marriages and rape
- + Internal purge
- + S-21 Security Center; Kraing Ta Chan Security Centre, Au Kanseng Security Centre and Phnom Kraol Security Center
- + 1<sup>st</sup> January Dam Worksite, Kampind Chhnang Airport Construction Site, Trapeang Thma Dam Worksite
- + Tram Kok Cooperative
- + Treatment of Buddhists

## + Targeting of former Khmer Republic Officials

Because of the time constraint, only three questions were allowed after Mr. Lysak finished his presentation. The questions were:

1. Some of the former KR leaders are now holding high position in our royal government. The question is why ECCC does not prosecute them?
2. Why the KR tribunal took so long to establish?
3. There were a lot security centers throughout the country during the KR regime so it meant there were also a lot security center chiefs too. Why the KR tribunal prosecuted only Duch, the S-21 chief?

## Film Screening

From 2 to 3 p.m. on the third afternoon of the training, three documentary films were screened to provide more background knowledge regarding Democratic Kampuchea to the trainees. The films included: Behind the Wall of S-21, Cambodian Children, and Tuol Sleng and Baset Prison. Mr. Dy introduced the background of each film to the participants so they had basic knowledge about the films before they watch.



Participants are watching Behind the Wall of S-21

## VII. Conclusion and Recommendation.

Overall the 15<sup>th</sup> Commune Teacher Training in Koh Kong completed a lot of compliments on the areas of historical content, teaching methods, and knowledge on the related topics. Both national trainers and provincial teachers were very well prepared with their lessons. They were able to finish their classes on time and left some times for questions and discussions.

Mr. Roerng Makara, a grade 12 history teacher, was very stratified with the training. He gained more knowledge on both the Khmer Rouge history and teaching methodologies more than he originally anticipated. He added that he felt very confident in teaching the KR history now. When asked what would have been done to improve the training, he suggested that the organizers should have conducted the training in different season. This season was a raining season. Most of the participants found it difficult and dangerous to travel from their villages which are far away from the training site during the raining, and it rained almost everyday throughout the training.

**Appendix:** Mr. Mam Sovann, Genocide Education Project assistant, was featured in VOA Khmer news *available at* <http://m.voacambodia.com/a/koh-kong-teachers-trained-in-khmer-rouge-curriculum/2446332.html>

### **Koh Kong Teachers Trained in Khmer Rouge Curriculum**

11 September 2014

by Suy Heimkhemra

About 50 middle and high school teachers in the coastal province of Koh kong have attended training on how to present Khmer Rouge curriculum.

The six-day training, organized by the Documentation Center of Cambodia, helps teachers understand the history of the regime and provides them with material to present to students.

Many younger Cambodians do not know what happened during the Khmer Rouge, often because their traumatized parents or grandparents are reluctant to discuss it.

This is the 15<sup>th</sup> time since 2011 teams from the Documentation Center have trained teachers in rural areas about its Khmer Rouge curriculum. Some 3,000 local teachers have been trained, said Mam Sovann, of the center's genocide education project.

The course includes a history book and a teaching guide, which help explain how the Khmer Rouge came to power, the atrocity crime it committed, its fall and its dark legacy.

"It's essential to ensure that local teachers comprehensively understand the history, alongside with techniques in teaching Khmer Rouge history, in order to make sure

that there's no repetition of such a tragedy, as well as to reconcile Cambodian society," Mam Sovann said.

Roeurng Makara, a high school history teacher who attended the training, said he had garnered useful tips in teaching about the Khmer Rouge.

"I didn't experience how brutal the regime was," he said. "Often, I find it difficult to explain it to my students about why the Khmer Rouge killed its own people. Sometimes they don't believe me."