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DOCUMENTATION CENTER OF CAMBODIA
Genocide Education in Cambodia
The Teaching of "A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)"

Regional Pedagogical Training Center, Phnom Penh

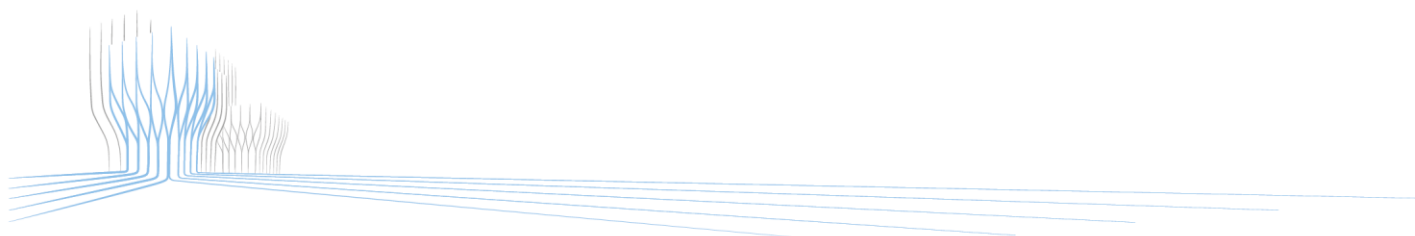
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Day 1 – May 23, 2016



Pre-service teachers and trainers taking photo in a large lecture-sized hall

In a large lecture-sized hall, with the pictures of King Norodom Sihamoni and his father and mother, King Father Norodom Sihanouk and Queen Mother Monyneth Sihanouk, respectively, at the front of the hall sat 65 pre-service teachers and eight staff members from the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. There was a low murmur among the students before the day began. They were here to learn about the history of Democratic Kampuchea (DK), in hopes that these soon-to-be teachers will go on and





teach their future students about DK's history. Most of these pre-service teachers had little to no formal education on the subject. Any information they may know was typically learned through discussions with their grandparents or parents. Today's session kicked off five days of extensive teaching on DK history and teaching methodology, including exercises where the pre-service teachers will practice the teaching methods taught to them by the trainers.

The training of pre-service teachers is necessary to accomplish the Genocide Education Project's training as it reaches out to students who have not been trained by the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-CAM) in its previous service trainings. This training not only provides the students with crucial information about their country's history but requires them to critically think and reflect on difficult questions about morality, society, politics, and humanity.

We are repeatedly told that if we do not learn history, we are doomed to repeat it. But this is not the main objective of this training—the objectives appear to be cultivating a society that values peace and empathy—empathy for both the victims of the DK and the perpetrators, particularly given those former victims and perpetrators currently live side-by-side in this culture and land of silence. With these goals in mind, DC-CAM has been working with the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) to integrate the history of the DK for pre-service training. These agencies collaborated to create a “Teacher's Guidebook: The Teachings of ‘A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)’”(Guidebook) in 2009. This Guidebook lays out lesson plans and objectives for each chapter and sub-chapter. DC-CAM also published “A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979) (History book), which gives the students more information on DK history that the Guidebook might not contain. Each pre-service teacher is given both books.

The session formally began as planned. Mr. Si Houk, Deputy Director of Phnom Penh Regional Training Center, spoke on behalf of the training center, which was created under the MoEYS. There are pre-service teachers from 5 provinces—Ratanak Kiri, Mondul Kiri, Preah Vihear, Koh Kong, Stung Treng—and Phnom Penh. The speaker discussed the importance of studying DK history, stressing that even though history might contain painful memories, education can be used to promote reconciliation. All the members of the audience appeared captivated. The speaker briefly emphasized the importance of each lesson and explains that some activities

were designed to teach empathy for former Khmer Rouge (KR) cadres and KR survivors.



*H.E Ton Sa-Im making an opening speech at
Phnom Penh Regional Training Center*

Next, Her Excellency Ton Sa-Im, Undersecretary of State of MoEYS spoke about the on-going tribunal of the main perpetrators of the DK regime. It is believed that this tribunal will reveal vital history and a greater understanding of the DK. Despite losing 9 siblings to the DK, Her Excellency spoke about the regime matter-of-factly. She reminded the pre-service teachers that each region in Cambodia has its own history, so it is not enough to merely read the textbooks. The pre-service

teachers should also do their own research about DK to become an effective, knowledgeable teacher. Teachers need to cultivate a habit of reading, writing, and researching so their understanding and confidence of the material grows, and so they can convey this knowledge to their students which will, hopefully, increase student engagement. Her Excellency mentioned that because of her extra work and preparation, when she was a teacher, students asked to join her class because they believe they would learn more. Her Excellency also stressed that a student-centered approach to teaching encourages students to think more critically.

After Her Excellency's speech, the pre-service teachers filled out their pre-training test. When finished, they spilt into groups and walked across the road to dim lit, dusty classrooms for their first lesson. I walked into the first room and Dr. Ly Sok-Kheang, Interim Director of School of Genocide, Conflict and Human Rights, began the pre-lesson. He introduced himself and DC-CAM to the class and then gave the students a brief overview of the Guidebook and what was on the flash drives they also received—which contained songs related to DK, e-books, maps of the killing fields and

maps designating the different zones the DK broke Cambodia into, documentary films, a time line of important events in DK history, a pdf of someone's journal, and many photographs depicting everything from workers slaving away in the fields to the discovery of mass graves at Choeung Ek. Kheang then asked for pre-service teacher's understanding about DK. Some of them knew a little about DK's background, such as that at one point the Prince considered them allies. Besides that relatively little



Mr. Vanthan Peou Dara at the opening ceremony

knowledge, the students either did not know much more or were not willing to share. I found that in almost all of the sessions I attended, when the teacher asked the students about their previous knowledge on a particular topic the student were reluctant to share or had no knowledge. This could be due to a number of reasons: their lack of training on the topic or the culture of silence that penetrates this beautiful country and finds its way into these dusty rooms when history is discussed. There were only a handful of times when any trainer raised their voice when talking about DK,

whether this is because of teaching etiquette I am not be sure. Perhaps it is because of their objectives. DC-Cam and the MoEYS are working extremely hard to educate pre-service teachers, to integrate DK history into the National Curriculum. This is a crucial step toward reconciliation, memory, and understanding one's past—so as to create a culture that values human rights and democracy.

During the first lesson, Kheang delivered a summary of the various teaching methodologies the students will learn, why it is crucial to learn the history of DK, and why it is important to challenge students to reexamine their own personal views to gain a better understanding of DK and the history of Cambodian society, generally. The Guidebook begins with a brief background of the DK, how they rose to power, and Pol Pot's role. With the History book and the Guidebook being so informative and easy to follow, they are great mechanisms to accomplish MoEYS and DC-Cam's objectives.



Additionally, all the trainers are either members of DC-Cam or the MoEYS so they are not only prepared to answer any questions the students may have but are also capable of giving worthwhile feedback on a particular student's teaching style. After every lesson a summary is usually given. For this lesson, Kheang briefed the important events: 1975 – the DK came to power, 1976 – the four-year plan began, January 7, 1979 – the collapse of the DK and time of integration, and 1998—the real collapse of the regime because until that time the regime survived as a rump state in and around Anlong Veng. The students pay close attention to Kheang, becoming more engrossed in their country's horrific past.

Kheang then began the lesson on Chapter 2 of the History book, concerning how the KR came to power. He broke the student's into groups (6 per group) and told them to read through Chapter 2 of the History book and discuss the main ideas with other members of their groups. The groups seem engaged, highlighting and underlining their books. Next, one person from each group asks other groups what they discussed. A few examples being: "What was the root of the KR—how did it happen?" and "Who were the members of the party at the time (1975)?" These questions ignite back-and-forth discussion between all the groups, which is fantastic. Although these questions indicate how little knowledge the students have, it also shows how much they will learn. The dynamic of the discussion exemplifies the students' enthusiasm about the topic. Kheang then asked the students to think from the perspective of the communist groups—who believed workers and farmers had been "terrorized" by the capitalists. This question aims to get the students to look at history from another angle, from the side of the losers. History is usually written by the victors but it is important for a country to learn about both sides of a struggle to learn and prosper. As the discussion ended, Kheang summarized the main points of the lessons and asked if the students had any questions. The students asked the questions: "Why was there a military coup against Prince Sihanouk?" and "Why did King Sihanouk seek help from the KR, given that they were his enemies previously? While the first question raised a point not discussed in the book and was a general political question, the second questioned was directly addressed in the book, so it appeared as if the students were not grasping some of the material in the book.

Next we discussed how DK came to power, Chapter 3 of the History book. The trainer used a different teaching method. Instead of being in groups, one student read a

section of the chapter out loud while the other students took notes. Kheang then asked a student to restate the main points made by the speaker. The focus on this chapter was on the forced transfer and how DK accomplished this. The students seem to have no knowledge on this subject and kept asking Kheang more and more questions on the matter. The students then took a 3 hour break for lunch, which was definitely needed as the temperature in the classroom became uncomfortable.

After lunch I attend another classroom where Mr. Siv Thuon was the trainer. He began by asking the students, “What do people think about Cambodia?” The students gave concise answers, such as, “Asia, Angkor Wat (which is an example of Cambodian prosperity and civilization), tourism, and the genocide.” This question made me think the trainer was attempting to remind the students that Cambodia should not solely be defined by the genocide. Considering the content that was to follow and the objectives of the training, I thought this was a brilliant move. For example, many countries have experienced mass atrocities, Rwanda, South Africa, East Timor, or Germany, and these countries are not solely defined by their respective genocides.

The lesson then focused on DK’s capture of Phnom Penh, and the trainer emphasized the photograph on page 34-35 in the Guidebook. This



Trainees inside the lecture hall

photo shows DK joyously riding tanks into Phnom Penh with many children in the photo smiling and jubilantly waving white flags. This photo is a great addition to the textbook as it demonstrates people’s original feelings toward DK. The students were dutifully taking notes while the trainer spoke but the afternoon session moves slower than the morning’s sessions. Additionally, even though the trainer seems to be exceedingly well-versed on the subject he kept looking at his book, which was distracting to the students.

The lesson then takes an unexpected turn. Before continuing to discuss DK the trainer discussed the term “genocide.” I thought this was a nice supplement to the

material, even though it is more fully discussed in Chapter 12, lesson 4 of the Guidebook. An earlier introduction to the term seems necessary for students whom are not familiar with the term; otherwise they may be confused throughout the training. The trainer dissects the terms “geno” – from the Greek meaning “tribe’ or “race” and “cide” the Latin word for “killing,” then briefly mentioned the Holocaust before moving on and discussing Raphael Lemkin—the creator of the word genocide. The students were engaged by this discussion, particularly when the International Military Tribunal for the Far East and the Nuremberg trials are addressed. Although this could be deemed to be too much information too soon, I believe it was probably enlightening and comforting to the students who do not know a lot about genocide. Additionally, by mentioning the Holocaust, it is proof that genocide occurs elsewhere—not just in Cambodia.

The trainer gets back on track, lecturing and asking the students to read out loud from the History book. The day ends with the trainer breaking the students into groups and asking them to write a brief note comparing the past to the present and what the change in Cambodia’s government means to them. Most groups do a nice job discussing this question, reporting about KR’s prison life, family separation, individuals being stripped of their lives and freedom, prohibition of religion practices and beliefs, and no freedom for leisure activities. Toward the end of the discussion some of the groups appear not to be listening to the trainer or the other groups. For this particular discussion, I think the students could have thought more critically about this question. They just repeated material in the book and did not share anything particularly enlightening or applicable to themselves. For example, under the KR all of the students definitely



Trainees taking lunch break



would not be allowed to learn to be a teacher. Moreover, they all may have been killed for being “intellectuals.” The starkness of this previous reality would have been a tangible way for the students to empathize with the victims of the KR. After this exercise the students took a break.

After break is over, the Chapter 1, lesson 1 of the Guidebook is introduced by the trainer. The Guidebook is comprised of chapters and each chapter has between 1 and 6 lessons, breaking the chapters into manageable teaching segments. Each lesson contains lists of: objectives, materials, key vocabulary and names, procedure and process, and guided questions and answers. The trainers stressed that the students should tell their students the objectives of each lesson before beginning to teach. Accordingly, the objectives of the lesson are written on a big piece of white paper taped to the white board at the front of the classroom. Having objectives on the board is good because it reminds both the trainers and students what they are supposed to be learning. The trainer also introduced the K-W-L chart (KWL): “K” meaning “what you already know,” “W” meaning “what you would like to learn,” and “L” meaning “what you learned.” The students seem attentive to this lesson and are even more so when the trainer began asking the students questions.

After the questions, the trainer began talking about forced transfers. This was done by having both the trainer and students read from the book out loud. The students were less attentive and more talkative between themselves when the trainer is reading, while they paid more attention when other students are reading. When the trainer asked the students questions the attention shifted back to the trainer. For the last exercise of the day, the trainer asked the students to pair up and write and discuss what happened during the evacuations. There are a fair number of students who appear distracted but most of the students took the assignment seriously and reported things such as people being evacuated without prior notice and that the evacuees thought they would be returning home shortly. However, during the reports students continued to talk between themselves. Concentration was waning. This was probably because the day was almost over and everyone was getting restless in the hot, dark classroom. This seemed to be a problem throughout most of the training sessions. I am not sure if it can be fixed—it is almost second-nature for students to get restless right before class is done for the day. Perhaps, talking about more interesting topics could fix this issue.



Before the trainer ended the class he asked if anyone had any questions. One student asked, “Why didn’t people protest against DK?” This question highlights the student’s ignorance of how the Cambodians felt about DK when they took-over, which can be seen in the picture of the children waving white flags and smiling. However, it is possible the student was, perhaps, asking about why people did not protest after DK took over and set-up their communist, social engineering policies. Another student asked, “Why did the KR wear black?” Those were the only questions asked as it was time to leave. It was encouraging that both questions showed that the students care and are interested in the material, from the perspectives of both the victims and perpetrators.

Day 2—May 24, 2016

The second day began in the large lecture hall again; Pheng Pong Rasy showed and explained to the students what was on the flash drive they received the previous day. After briefly going through the items, the trainer played one of the films. The particular film showed people working during the KR rule. I thought showing this documentary was a fantastic idea since the flash drive is so full of materials the students probably do not have time (particularly in one week) to go over everything and to watch all the documentaries. Showing the most informative ones or the ones that evoke the most emotion seems to be a good solution to this problem. Although during the video the students were not extremely attentive. Perhaps having a mini-quiz about the video might help keep students focused? After the video the trainer talked briefly about the importance of memory, peace, and reconciliation. He then asked if the students had questions, some questions were: “How many areas did KR control before they came to power?” and “When did the KR verbally attack the government for getting support from the Vietnamese?” The trainer answered the questions, and then briefly discussed what teaching methodology the students were learning today. After this, the students broke up into their different groups.

I decided to attend a different classroom this time. At the beginning of the lesson the students from each group were further broken up into two different groups so that the students could give their lesson to a small, more intimate class. The students taught on a lesson they had learned the previous day. The student I watched

wrote up a list of objectives on a piece of white, big paper and taped it to the board— exactly like the teacher did the previous day. The student then stated the objectives. I think listing the objectives is very important as it keeps the class on track but I do not think it qualifies as a good “visual aid.” With all the documentation that is available on this subject, it would be more helpful if the student bought in copies of photos or show photos on a screen when teaching. A photograph is a lot more powerful than a list of objectives written on the board.

The student next made use of the KWL chart, asking the students to write in their responses on the white board. I thought this was a great method as it keeps students engaged. The student then read the “known” items aloud. It was a pretty small list, probably containing 2 or 3 items. The student then asked the rest of the class to divide into pairs for “reading practice.” This consisted of the class reading designated material and then student teacher would ask a student from each group to read out loud main points from the reading. This seems like a good method for “reading-practice,” as it gets the students to do active reading. Next the student taped up another sheet of white paper on the board, where the class could write up any questions they had after the reading. The sole question was, “Why did Pol Pot change the party’s name?” After answering the question the best she could, the student asked the class what they had learned. The class greatly participated in answering this question, discussing how people thought supporting the KR would help bring the King back, who they all loved, and how Russia and China, specifically Marxist and Leninist polices influenced the KR.

After the student was finished her lesson the trainer, Mom Met gave feedback on the lesson. I am not sure if this is done throughout pre-service teacher training but I



Trainees filling in K-W-L chart

considered the feedback to be one of the most important aspects of the training. It not only helps the students who just finished their lesson but also helps the rest of the class who have not given their lesson yet. Mom Met commented that the lesson was good, even though it was a bit short on time. She then asked for peer feedback. The class had any feedback so she asked the students to look closely at the objectives and determine if the student completed the points or not. This seemed like an excellent way to evaluate the lesson, considering how important the objectives are. After some discussion it became apparent that the class was confused about communism, and that might have been because the student teach did not explain the key words noted in the Guidebook. Mom Met also explained that the student should not ask the class to read and answer questions at the same time as this could take away from the a student's comprehension of the reading and taking good notes. Instead the teacher should first tell the students to read and then give them questions



Mrs. Mom Met, a veteran trainer

The second student of the day gave his lesson on Chapter 3, lesson 1. He did not use a piece of white paper, like the rest of students, but instead wrote his objectives on the board. This did not seem to matter. The student then gave thorough definitions on the key terms and left more space on the white board, than the previous student, for the class to fill out the KWL. He then asked the students to read the History book's corresponding chapter. After the students read, the student gave each group a different question on a piece of paper and asked for a representative of each group to answer the question. The questions were on point with the chapter material, asking about the stages of evacuation and what was done to normal citizens. The student then asked the class to write down what they had learned in the "learned" column. The student then read what the class wrote down: the reason for the forced transfer, the destruction of the Lon Nol regime, DK telling everyone that they had to leave Phnom Penh because the U.S. was going to bomb the



city, how the citizens thought they would only be gone for a short time, and the lack of food supply.

Mom Met had some good feedback for this student as well, not a lot but only that he should have wrote the objectives on a flip chart instead of the white erase board. I did not think this really detracted from the student's lesson but it did make him appear less prepared. The only other note was that the student should have asked the class to read what they wrote on the whiteboard, instead of the student reading it. Overall, Mom Met thought the pre-service teacher did an excellent job.

Next the trainer took center stage and taught chapters 4 and 5. She divided the class into groups and had each group read a portion of the reading, then a representative from each group reported to the entire class a brief summary of their reading and the things their respective groups discussed. The students were generally attentive but they did not take notes when other groups gave their brief presentations. The session ended when Mom Met asked if anyone had any questions. The only question posed was, "Why did the DK change their birthday?" Mom Met gave a good answer to this question, saying that the change in birthdate signified the change of regime structure and the shift in leadership positions within the DK. Then it was time for the lunch break.

After the break, I went back into Mom Met's room. She began by asking the students if they had questions. No students had any so Mom Met laid out the objective of Chapter 4 and 5 of the Guidebook and lectured about DK while the students took notes. She discussed the administration and divisions of the different "zones" in DK and how each zone had its own name that sometimes changed. One student had a question about why the regions were divided into zones, Mon Met said she was not exactly sure, but she assumed it was because breaking the country into zones made them easier to control, especially as each zone leader reported to DK.

Mom Met moved onto teaching the methodologies of chapter 4. Chapter 4 focused on the "survivor's box"—which I thought was a great. This activity required the students to think critically about what they would do if they were victims of DK. Mom Met explained that the teacher could bring in a box and ask students bring in actual objects to put in the box or write on a piece of the paper the item they would bring. Once everyone's object is in the box the teacher is to pick an object and ask the



person who put it in to explain why they would put it in their survivor's box and why it could save lives.

The methodologies of chapter 5, lesson 2 came next. Mom Met emphasized, as all trainers did, the importance of introducing the objectives of lesson every time students begin a lesson. For this chapter, Mon Met made a chart on the white board for the students to fill in once they finished reading. Below is an example of the table:

Names	Position	Background	Responsibilities
Pol Pot	Prime Minister of DK	Born in 1925 in Kampong Thom province, studied in Paris where he became a member of the French communist party	Formulated the party's statutes and political program Presided over DK, the totalitarian dictatorship Forced Cambodia into an agricultural society
Ta Mok	Deputy secretary of DK	Born in 1926 in Takeo province, became a communist in 1963 and was secretary of the Southwest Zone	Controlled the Southwest Zone Orchestrated massive purges
Son Sen	Third deputy prime minister in charge of national defense	Born in Travinh, Vietnam, studied in France and became a member of the French communist party	Directly responsible for S-21

The students were able to fill out the chart pretty easily and took the work seriously. I thought this chart was a great tool as a quick reference to the key leaders of the regime and their responsibilities, because all the information and names can easily get students confused and frustrated. The students were then given pieces of paper to write down any questions they had. The students quickly wrote their questions on the

paper provided and Mom Met read the questions out loud: “What is a survival box?,” “Why did the DK movement happen?,” “Why did Pol Pot kill Son Sen?,” “What is the difference between the DK and the Lon Nol regimes?,” “What were the objectives of the DK regime?,” and “What was used to influence people?” Mom Met answered these questions exceptionally, although some of the questions concerned material we had covered yesterday or today, so I wonder if some of the students were not critically thinking about their question, were not paying attention, or decided to write easy questions. The alternative is that the students might have been confused about the material, and while it is great to get clarification on a question, these questions should be asked while the material is being presented, not after everything is finished. Never did a student raise their hand and ask a trainer a question while the trainer was teaching. This strikes me as odd, but perhaps it is not how things are done in Cambodia?

Next Mom Met moved right along to chapter 6, 7, and 8. Chapter 6 focuses on the 4-year plan and how DK desired the entire country to be agricultural-based, so they forced the city-dwellers to various parts of the country without any major items. The idea was that “when there is nothing, you start from farming.” The DK also collected everyone’s property and set up communes. The students were captivated, as, this is why the genocide occurred. The students were broken up into groups and given questions to answer. The questions were: “What were people asked to do?,” “What were people given to eat?,” “What did the leaders do to prepare for the four-year plan?,” and “Was the 4-year plan successful?” The most interesting answer among these questions was that the 4-year plan was not successful because too much was being asked of people and people were not given enough food.



A trainee practicing his teaching



While this is the correct answer, it could have been expanded upon by explaining the separation of families, the lack of medicine, killing the intellectuals who probably could have helped the regime, and the purges. Mon Met then summarized and expanded on the student's answers, adding that lack of medicine also contributed to the 4-year plans failure. She also pointed out that everything depended on nature, even the roads were covered by rice fields, and DK had not developed a way to encourage or create progress.

Toward the end of the session, around 4:00, the students started to lose attention. Which was not surprising, they covered a lot of material. But Mom Met continued on, with as much enthusiasm as before. She split up the material into smaller points, and began by explaining the difference between "base people" and "new people." She also touched on the forced marriages and that a woman had no choice in who she married and if she refused she was often killed or tortured. Mon Met then gave groups different questions, and asked the students to read first and then begin discussing the questions in small groups.

One of the more interesting questions was, "What immoral things were taught to children?" The children were taught to spy on their parents, their education was shaped to respect the state, and only the state, schools were destroyed when DK first came into power so the children were educated under trees, and they were taught that enemies were everywhere, especially "new people." The students seemed too focused on their own questions to listen to other groups' responses. Perhaps giving the students more time to read and answer their questions would fix this. The rest of the discussion centered on the security system: prison without rules, prisoners tortured and forced to work sometimes, S-21 was the cruelest prison, and going against the team/commune led to torture, beatings, or prison. Basically, individual people had no value. Moreover, when one "traitor" was captured they were tortured and interrogated until they named other people that were involved in treacherous activity as well. The DK did not want to catch just one person, they wanted to catch and destroy the entire network of "traitors." These interrogations typically led to false confessions and the naming of innocent people. But the KR did not care, one of their slogans being, "It is better to arrest ten people by mistake than to let one guilty person go free." And with that, the day was over. I think ending on a sobering, poignant note is good as it brings

the students” attention back to the trainer and, perhaps, get across crucial messages to students.

Before discussing day 3, I would like to mention how wonderful the pre-service teacher training is going. This material is beyond difficult to listen to—as all Cambodians suffered immensely under DK’s policies. While it is easy to characterize the cadres and the leaders as “evil” or “psychopaths,” this would be a mistake—except the terms might apply to a few people—people are more complicated than this. As demonstrated by the Milgram experiments, the Stanford prison experiment, Christopher Browning’s book “Ordinary Men,” and Arendt’s “The Banality of Evil” ordinary men (and women) have been perpetrators of mass atrocities almost since the beginning of time. Genocide and crimes against humanity are not new—they just now have a title. Although the Guidebook does talk about the other, recent genocides, it does not discuss the possible motivations of the perpetrators—which in most cases was duress or following orders. I think these materials should be introduced to the students because understanding the “why” is just as useful as learning about the horrific history so that history does not repeat itself. Moreover, a better understanding of the

perpetrators might make it easier to empathize with them.



Mr. Pheng Pong-Rasy leading discussion inside a lecture hall

It may also be useful to mention individuals or groups who fought against specific unjust regimes, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Muchtar Pakpahan, the White Rose, or some of the people in American who protested the Vietnam War. Civil disobedience, of course, is a topic that could take up an entire

course, and might have not worked against the DK regime as individuals who practice civil disobedience accept the punishment the regime designates for their breaking of the rules. Of course, since so many people were dying from DK's policies, the loss of life from civil disobedience might have been less. Most importantly, while it is easy to mention civil disobedience it is particularly hard to implement and is dangerous. I am not saying that the citizens under the DK should have or could have implemented civil disobedience, merely that it might be an interesting and enlightening topic to introduce to the students.

Day 3—May 25, 2016



Mr. Chum Mey, a survivor from Tuol Sleng prison, narrating his personal experience.

Day 3 started off similar to day 2, except I visited a new classroom, with trainer Cheng Heng. As I walked in, the student who was supposed to give his lesson that morning was practicing and preparing. He wrote the objectives of his lesson on a large piece of white paper taped to the white board. This student taught the lesson with the "survival box." He had an interesting approach and asked the class what they would do to save someone in an emergency situation (like a car

crash). After some discussion, he then asked the students to write down what they would put in a "survival box." The few answers we looked at were: money, dry food, rice, and a rope. The student quickly moved on and lectured about life under the KR regime. I was a bit disappointed he did not focus more on the "survival box," or, better yet, incorporate items from the "survival box" to talk about life under the KR regime. The trainer then gave some feedback, first asking for peer feedback. The class had



anything to say. The trainer thought the lesson was good. He said writing things on a piece of paper is okay depending on the ages of your students. But if you have young students, you should use more visual aids or objects.

The student taught the class about Chapter 5. She also had the flip chart with objectives taped to the board and another chart that outlined her lecture plan. She had the difficult task about discussing the leaders. Instead of creating a chart, she told the students to turn to page 22 in the History book and she read aloud from the book. She must have created her own summary from the red boxes in the History book as she explains the background of the DK leaders easily. She then asked if anyone could summarize her lesson and two students gave summaries. I think this is a great idea, to occasionally ask students to summarize what they have been taught. It helps keep the lesson in a student's memory. The student ended her lesson by asking if anyone had any questions. Someone asked if DK leaders followed the Constitution they created. The student gave the correct answer: "No."

The trainer then critiqued the student. I thought all of the trainer's comments were spot-on and very thoughtful. He said that in the future the student should use the KWL method and must teach the lesson based on the objectives (which she did not). The KWL is not just important for teaching, it is also important for application. He also suggested that the student should create a map or chart of the leaders like what is done in the History book—basically he suggested that more visual aids would be better. Besides just giving feedback on the teaching methodology, the trainer also gives a brief lecture. He explains that ideology can be strong and potentially dangerous, and was during the Cold War and WWII. Ideology can kill just as many people, if not more, than an atomic bomb. When people become indoctrinate it can have devastating effects. Although this point is implicit whenever DK history is taught, saying it bluntly like trainer Heng did was great and I think should, perhaps, be a lesson in itself as it was so critical to DK's power and control.

Next, the trainer gave the methodology lesson. The trainer first expressed the importance of laying out the objectives at the beginning of the lesson and that the teacher should also present 2 or 3 main points the lesson with focus on and the importance of visual aids. Furthermore, after a lesson, the teacher should synthesize the material and always have a question and answer session. The trainer then started the lesson on Chapter 6 in the Guide book. First, the key vocabulary was discussed and

then the trainer asked the students which leader controlled each zone. The trainer also stated that asking a student to summarize a lesson once it is finished is also important. And that graphic organization or some kind of visual aid would be extremely useful for this particular topic.

Chapter 6, lesson 2 was next. This lesson focused on role-playing: one person playing a victim and another playing a KR cadre. The trainer demonstrated to the students how things should be read so they are believable—the importance of inflection and tone. Some students found this silly and soon the class began to laugh.



Mr. Siv Thuon (left), a veteran trainer, and Mr. Chum Mey (right)

The trainer picked two students to role-play, and the two students do not show much emotion. The role-play exercising is not anything special or interesting. Although the students were attentive, I think the role-playing methodology needs to be fixed. It is extremely difficult to imagine yourself experiencing the horrific events KR survivors and cadres went through, unless something similar has happened to you. If it is difficult to just imagine yourself

involved in a mass atrocity, it is almost impossible to know how you would actually act. And even though the students have testimonies from survivors to read, I think it is too onerous to ask a student to act out something as horrific as these events. Perhaps having a survivor come in and talk about their experience themselves or even a tape recording of the survivor telling their story would be more beneficial. Asking students to role-play, indeed, is meant to create empathy for both survivors and cadres, but this exercise does not seem to be the proper medium to accomplish this. Even merely having students critically reflect and write a brief piece about “their experiences” as a cadre or victim would be better because when students role-playing in class people get

nervous or do not have enough time to critically think about their character, all of which leads to the lesson not being taken seriously.

In the afternoon, I visited another classroom with trainer Mr. Nhean Soheat. This trainer was extremely active with the students and very energetic; it is a different vibe from the other classrooms. He asked the students more questions as a group than individuals and writes down notes from their responses and other facts about the lesson. This approach seems effective, as the students took a lot of notes and were attentive. As the day comes to an end, however, once again, the students became less serious about learning. I found this a bit distressing as this chapter dealt with mass atrocities in other countries.

The Guidebook is extremely informative on this subject matter: giving background, first-hand accounts, photos, and commentary on the other atrocities. However, while I find all this incredibly fascinating, a student might not. I think the material in the Guidebook is fantastic but when material is actually taught, the teacher should



A trainee posing a question to Mr. Chum Mey

briefly focus on the other genocides and not bog the students down with too many details. This is difficult but critical subject matter to cover and it is necessary to make sure the students are paying attention as this can help establish empathy for other cultures and humanity as a whole, both for perpetrators and victims. Perhaps the best idea is to break the class up into groups and have each group give a brief presentation over a specific genocide. This way, students will at least be responsible for knowing about one other genocide.

Day 4—May 26, 2016

The day began with a documentary about S-21, it shows the prison when it was discovered after the Day of Liberation. It is a stark and sobering way to show the students S-21. It also proves that the KR documented their victims, even in their deaths. The documentarian even comes across dead men in some of the cells, with their legs shackled and hands bound with handcuffs. It is a grisly sight and not for the faint of heart. It is reminiscent of Alain's Resnais famous *Nuit et brouillard*. The students are fixated on the film. As the documentary ends, the trainer spoke about the video and asked the group a series of questions. Next he showed two other documentaries: one shows civilians working in their communes and the other consisting of 3 oral testimonies from 2 survivors of S-21 and one former KR cadre. The students are attentive but they become restless near the end of the films. When the trainer asks questions after the film, only one student responds. All of these films are extremely crucial for the training, but showing one once a day might be better than showing them back-to-back. Furthermore, showing the S-21 video or the 3 oral testimonies might have more impact if they were shown at the beginning of the training, adding a shock value that could help keep the videos in the student's memories. Moreover, seeing and hearing the heinous events that occurred earlier in the training might make the students more open to empathizing with the KR's victims—their own people.



A trainee posing a question to Mr. Chum Mey

The morning session began and the students teach their lessons. The concern I mentioned earlier about the role-playing became real. It is hard for a class of soon-to-be teachers to take role-playing seriously, so I can only imagine it might be harder for potential students to take it seriously. There is a lot of laughing during the role-playing



and ultimately the student picked to perform merely recited her character's background which is given in the book. The role-play is good for one thing though: it gives information. The student asks the class to note important points from the role-play. The class responds that they are able to feel both pity for the cadre and victim, pity for the life at that time—the civilians lived in fear and followed others in the pack, women were not treated well by the KR and even had to ask permission before they gave birth.

The trainer gave valuable feedback, explaining that the role-play should involve an interaction between the cadre and the victim, not just the victim reciting her life story. The trainer also stressed that each child belonged to the state, but yet, when they were sick it was the parent's responsibility to take care of them, one of the many contradictions in DK.

The student taught about DK's slogans. She broke the students into groups and gave each group a different slogan, asked them to analyze it, and be ready to give a thorough meaning to the class. While I am not going to go through the entire list of slogans in the Guidebook (pg. 72), I will focus on two in particular that are contrary to many judicial systems in the world. "It is better to arrest ten people by mistake than to let one guilty person go free" and "To dig up grass, one has to remove even the roots." The meaning of the first slogan shows the KR's paranoia and devaluation of individual life. The idea is that the one person that goes free can be the most dangerous as they can indoctrinate others to go against the state, which is why it is safer to kill more people than less. The next slogan is related to the first because if one person has done wrong, it was the cadre's job, through torture or interrogation, which usually lead to false confessions and death to find everyone that was connected to that person. This was an excellent lesson and all the students seemed interested. The trainer only had one main point of feedback: the student should have stressed the moral issues of each slogan: if this happened to you, how would you have felt? This would have generated more feelings of empathy and encourage the students to look at the slogans from a different point of view.

As we were nearing the end of the week, the two students gave their lessons, both were good and they received great feedback from their trainer, Rasy. The day ended with Rasy and Mom Met lecturing about the fall of DK. They point out 3 reasons why the KR fell: 1) dilapidation of people: inadequate food, overwork, separation of



families; 2) purges: killing of KR cadres, transferring of civilians, evacuations of KR to other places, and 3) conflict with Vietnam. The trainer stressed that #3 was the main cause of the fall and then went on to discuss the KR post-1979, the trainer gave the students a lot of information but here are a few main points: the KR still held a seat in the U.N. until 1990, many of the KR main leaders did not defect until the 90s, even though a different government had taken over (they existed as a rump state). The KR occupied a village, Anlong Veng until 1999 when Ta Mok was arrested. (Interestingly enough, the trainer did not speak about all the good things Ta Mok did to the village of Anlong Veng, which would have been a fascinating discussion.) When the leaders of the KR defected to the new government, some were given positions in the new government; this is known as the win-win policy. I think more time should have been spent on the win-win policy, discussing the pros and cons and challenging the students to think critically about it. As with all forms of transitional justice, it is crucial to concentrate on what is best for the community and society, and you can only find that answer by studying society and asking critical questions.

The trainer then briefly outlined the fall out from the KR: Cambodia basically became nothing since schools, hospitals, temples, and buildings were destroyed, it is considered one of the worst crimes of the 20th century, approximately 2 million people were killed, many widows and children were left as most of the men were killed, mines remain throughout parts of Cambodia, Cambodia is still trying to recover economically, and many thousands of people live with the scars of DK—both physically and mentally.

The day ended by discussing international relations and the day of liberation. Students talked about Cambodia's international relations pre-1975, during 1975-1979, and after 1979. I think it would be fascinating here to have a brief lesson of how DK was able to cut off contact with most of the world during 1975-1979 and, particularly, why no one seemed to notice or care. Also why the countries that did have contact with Cambodia were not bothered by the situation (perhaps due to China and North Korea's violations of human rights at the time). When discussing the day of liberation, a student read aloud what is in the Guidebook and instructions on how to teach it. While this is useful, what is even more powerful is Mom Met's own description of the day of liberation. I think the best way to teach this topic would be to try to gather a first-hand account. As time continues and survivors start to die, video or voice recordings would also be an equally effective option.



Day 5—May 27, 2016

Day 5 begins with possibly the best way to teach the students about the KR genocide, having a survivor speak. Chum Mey is 86 year-old man with a genial disposition who managed to survive S-21. He probably survived because of his competence in machine repair and, therefore, was useful to DK. He does not appear sad or angry as he began his talk, only soft-spoken. The students were very respectful and took notes and listened closely to Mey's tragic account. Chum Mey has written a book detailing his time under DK control and goes around the world sharing his story. He began by saying the KR moved him and his wife and his son. After just two days of traveling together one of the cadre's shot his wife and son, right in front of him. Yet, he continued on, having no choice. Chum Mey does not only speak about his experience but also bends down and acts out certain parts, explaining that when he got to S-21 he was handcuffed and blindfolded. They also measured his height and took photographs of him; lastly they took of his clothes and put him in a room for interrogation. The cadres continually interrogated him, demanding to know if he was a CIA or KGB agent. At the time, Mey did not even know what a CIA agent was. When he repeatedly denied these allegations, he was tortured; the cadres removed his fingernails and put a device in his ears that caused electric shocks and rendered him unconscious. This happened for 12 days and 12 nights, he eventually lost hearing in one of his ears. Chum Mey was spared from death because he could fix typewriters, which was crucial for taking down confessions. He also was able to fix sewing machines, used to make uniforms for the KR. After he finished his narrative, the floor opened for questions. I will only recount what I found to be the most interesting here:

Q: What was your most unforgettable memory?

A: How much control the DK had. Pol Pot used his ideas—ideology—to destroy everything: hospitals, schools, food for the civilians, and hope. There was no chance of escape as the communes contained a certain number of people so people knew if someone went missing.

Q: What did you see/feel on liberation day?



A: When KR fell, I moved west. But no one knew where to go and no one had any food so they continued farming to create a food supply, the Vietnamese even helped cook rice. Life back then consisted of so much suffering and no one wants it back. He is satisfied with the country right now, mostly because he not under the KR's control.

Q: Did you ever feel guilty about when you told on people during interrogation?

A: I felt so guilty; I could not sleep at night. But someone else probably said his name to get him put in S-21 to begin with. He never saw anyone he told on at S-21.

Q: Why did Pol Pot hate teachers?

A: Pol Pot hated teachers because they could help the country develop, which was dangerous for DK. Duch was even a former teacher and he was crazy, he was highly educated and did not do anything with his education [Chum Mey's voice raises when he speaks about Duch].

Q: Cruellest impact he experienced from the KR?

A: Removal of nails, water torture, and electric shock. Everyone that was accused and did not answer the questions by the interrogators received such punishments. He also received injuries on his back that kept him from sleeping.

Q: Is he satisfied with the tribunal?

A: No. When Duch was first sentenced he only received a 35-year prison sentence, which Chum Mey appealed, and eventually the sentence was extended to life in prison. Chum Mey does not understand why the punishments are so lenient. He is a civil party in case 002 but has no intention of being a civil party for other cases because they might continue indefinitely and he wants to live his life.

After Chum Mey finished his incredibly narrative the students thanked him and took pictures with him. I asked a few students how seeing Chum Mey made them feel? They replied they had a lot of pity and sympathy for Chum May. Even if the students knew about the genocide before, hearing a detailed account by a survivor made the experience more vivid. I thought Chum Mey's visit was extremely important for the students and presented them with an invaluable learning opportunity, it was definitely one of the highlights of the training. The only addition I would make is that, because

the objectives of the program are to promote empathy with both victims and perpetrators, it might be beneficial to have a perpetrator give a first-hand account as well. I think having a former perpetrator speak could give the students further insight into how this horrendous period happened and ways it could have been stopped. Learning stories of survivors is critical but trying to understand the “why” is equally important, if not more so.

When the students were done taking pictures and speaking to Chum May, it was back to business as three more students gave their lessons. These lessons were all good, as the students were able to use the advice given to the previous students to create lessons that lined up more with what the trainers wanted. The most interesting lesson focused on what could be done on local, national, and international levels to prevent genocide? The students had very interesting ideas: local level: village leaders need to plant the idea of preventing genocide in their peoples’ minds, teachers need to emphasize a love for democracy and one’s country, encourage involvement in politics; national level: leaders and government officials must tell people through advertisements and politics the horrible effects of genocide, everything should be done with peace as the goal, and the people need to be able to participate themselves in the political process; international: send soldiers on humanitarian missions, help with mine exploration, advertise Cambodia’s genocide to other countries—like to Japan and have an open dialogue focusing on the prevention of genocide, and give food to those experiencing mass atrocities.

For the afternoon session the students met up



A trainee practicing his teaching through Teacher’s Guidebook



again in the large lecture hall for the conclusion. The students were asked to write questions on pieces of paper and then the trainers picked about 15 questions to be answered. The questions I caught were:

- Q: Why did KR kill people?
- Q: Why did the KR have a conflict with Vietnam?
- Q: What did Cambodia need to rebuild after the fall of the KR?
- Q: Why did the U.N. support the KR?
- Q: Why did the Vietnamese cause the fall of the KR?
- Q: Was the creation of the KR a mistake by the King (because he gave them a name)?
- Q: Why did Pol Pot want a revolution?
- Q: What countries supported the KR?
- Q: Who was leading the liberation army in 1979?
- Q: Why did the KR make people wear black clothes?
- Q: Why did the KR educate only children?
- Q: When teaching a lesson how should one come up with a goal?
- Q: Why did Pol Pot make the zones independent?
- Q: Why was there a special zone?
- Q: Is the Cambodian genocide taught elsewhere in the country?
- Q: What were the main goals of the KR?
- Q: What did the KR think about people who studied in Vietnam and Vietnamese people?
- Q: What units were the communes spilt up into?

And, finally, the pre-service teachers took their post-test and evaluated the lessons and trainers.

Conclusion:

Overall, the training seemed very successful. The students were attentive through most of the lessons and did a great job teaching material they had just learned the previous day. A few of the comments I had to improve the training are written throughout the report but there are a few more I would like to discuss or further emphasize. It appeared as though the trainers had additional knowledge, or perhaps, more knowledge than the book could provide, this information was raw and



sometimes contained emotion—it was powerful. It should be encouraged whenever possible. Also I did not think there were not enough important visual aids. The students had flash drive at their disposal and did not take advantage of them (perhaps it would have been too difficult), but I think this point should have been stressed by the trainers—that when the students actually teach photographs, recordings of testimonies, documentaries, and first-hand accounts can be the most effective learning tools then simply writing words on a white board. Also, if possible, a visit to the Killing Fields or S-21 would be a great addition to the training. Furthermore, there should be more accounts by former cadres; it is hard to empathize with both the victim and perpetrator if you mainly hear the narrative through the victim’s eyes.

Lastly, there should be more discussion on the ECCC and how victims and perpetrators are coping after the fall of the KR. Understanding what Cambodia is doing to perpetrators is important for the students to understand what “justice” consists of in their country. The ECCC should be compared to other tribunals and cases at the International Criminal Court, so students can critically reflect on their countries’ response to genocide and crimes against humanity. A responsible, informed citizen is someone who knows what is going on in their country and this is crucial for society to prosper. Additionally, focusing on this would also help students see the vast, uncontrollable effects of genocide on local, national, and international levels, which could help prevent history from repeating itself, but, more importantly, encourage and promote empathy and peace.

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