

## **GENOCIDE EDUCATION IN CAMBODIA**

### **Pre-Service Teacher Training**

**A teaching of a History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)**

**Regional Pedagogical Training Center, Battambang Province**

**by Sura BEZHAN**

**Day 1 – April 25, 2016**



*Students gathering the Hall for the Opening Ceremony*

### **Opening Ceremony**

Fifty students, whom are currently pre-service teachers, gathered at the Provincial Pedagogical Center in Battambang to receive a five-day teacher's training by the Documentation Center of

Cambodia in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Students from Pailin, Banteay Meanchey, Pursat, Siem Reap, Otdar Meanchey and Battambang Province gathered at the meeting hall of the Center along with two national teachers from the Ministry of Education, two DC-Cam coordinators from the Genocide Education Program, the Director of Provincial Office of Education, Youth and Sports, the Director of Provincial Pedagogical Center, the Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and DC-Cam staff. The students began to fill the hall, walking past four framed images from the Khmer Rouge era, including an image of the Sangke River where the Khmer Rouge planted land mines, an image of skulls from a mass grave at the monastery of Wat Thmei, a photograph from S-21 Prison and an image of Bokor Hill Palace Hotel that was fought over by the French, Lon Nol and the Vietnamese.

The students were given a package each containing the schedule for the five-day training, the ‘Teacher’s Guidebook’ and ‘A History of Democratic Kampuchea 1975-1979’ textbook and a flash-drive which stored many documents related the Khmer Rouge regime. Immediately after being given the packages, students eagerly flicked through the textbooks and examined the photographs throughout the textbooks.

Mr. Vanthan Peou Dara, deputy director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, spoke very brief the purpose of conducting the training for pre-service teacher and the importance of the studying and teaching a history of DK. With this important talk, Mr. Sokh Hing, director of provincial office of Education, welcomed the meeting and Her Excellency Tun Sa-Im, the Deputy Secretary of (MoEYS) and encouraged the participants to carefully study and ask questions to the trainers about the DK history as well as teaching methodology. After, H.E Tun Sa-im spoke about 45 minutes to the students about the importance of teaching Democratic Kampuchea history and her personal experiences during the Khmer Rouge regime. Following the conclusion of Her Excellency’s speech, a female student stood up and asked, “Why do we need to study Democratic Kampuchea history and why do we need to learn teaching methodologies?” Her Excellency answered that; we need to be great educators and teachers, therefore, to be good teachers we ourselves need to learn more about the Khmer Rouge regime and to learn the best ways to transfer

that information to following generations. Another student stood up to also answer the question, expressing that ‘we have a responsibility as teachers to educate the younger generations about the history of Cambodia, especially Khmer Rouge history that transformed Cambodian society. Therefore, we need to know the contents of the Teacher’s Guidebook and Student Textbook inside out’. To add to this, Her Excellency, Tun Sa-im, stated that it is critical to learn national history and by studying the Democratic Kampuchea history, it is a huge step to prevent genocide from occurring again.

Following the speeches, a pre-survey was distributed to all students and they were allocated thirty minutes to complete the survey, with many students discussing the questions amongst one another and comparing their answers.

It is important to be able to evaluate the knowledge of the students prior to the training and to be able to examine what the students have learnt and the different methodologies that they will learn throughout the training program.

Subsequent to the pre-survey, the students and teachers were divided into two groups and sent to two separate classrooms. Classroom One consisted of Mr. Siv Thoun and Mr. Pheng Pong Rasy and Mr. Ten Kimton and Mr. Vanthan Peondara conducted Classroom Two.

### **Introduction to Democratic Kampuchea History**

Mr. Rasy opened Classroom One by distributing each student with a USB that contained photos from the Khmer Rouge regime, music from the Khmer Rouge and that era, and scenes from ‘Breaking the Silence’ play for students to use as resources in their teaching practices. This is a great way for students to use materials in their prospective classes to enhance the quality of their lessons.

The presentation of the background of Democratic Kampuchea history included informing students about the main series of events, defining of key terms, key actors in that era, the main

goals and objectives of the Khmer Rouge, the targets of the Khmer Rouge, the history of the Cambodia People's Party and their development, the aftermath of the Khmer Rouge regime and how the Khmer Rouge came into power. Students were stunned by the lack of humanity that the Khmer Rouge had for the Cambodian people and were quite passive in their presence throughout the training. Mr. Rasy used a PowerPoint slide with images and information on each topic he explored, which helped the students retain information more effectively and efficiently. Students were able to follow the presentation and gain a deeper understanding and interest in Democratic Kampuchea history.

### **Chapter One of the Teacher's Guidebook**

The introduction to the Teacher's Guidebook informed the students about the techniques used to develop the textbook through using a combination of methodologies from across the world. The introduction to the Guidebook expressed to the students that there are many activities throughout the textbook that the pre-service student can use to teach Democratic Kampuchea history to their prospective students.

The first lesson that the pre-service teachers were taught was about the notion of genocide and the origin of the word, in order for students to gain a deeper knowledge about the concept and history of genocide as a whole. The history included the United Nations' actions to introduce the term 'genocide' into International Law in order to prevent and punish perpetrators of genocide and crimes against humanity.

Students were continuously communicated to about how education and teaching is the most effective way to prevent genocide, not only in Cambodia but also throughout the world.

Mr. Siv Thoun's presentation consisted of going through the first chapter of the Teacher's Guidebook and expressing how important it is for both the teacher and the student to understand the objectives of each chapter. It was expressed to the pre-service teachers that materials are used as evidence in teaching and to make it clearer for the students, these materials include the 'A History of Democratic Kampuchea 1975-1979' textbook and the KWL charts. Mr. Thoun demonstrated to the students the difference between procedures and practice, highlighting the

significance of both. Procedure refers to the activities that the teacher asks the students to perform, such as reading a chapter and defining the key terms. Practice refers to revising the lesson to check whether the students have a clear understanding of what has just been presented to them, which may take many forms such as the teacher asking the students question or asking the students to summarize what they have learnt.

## Chapter Two of the Teacher's Guidebook

To commence the teaching of Chapter Two of the Teacher's Guidebook, Mr. Thoun asked the students to read aloud the objectives of that chapter as he stuck a poster with those objectives onto the whiteboard. He highlighted that it was important for the teacher to always have the objectives of that class written clearly somewhere in the classroom so that both the students and the teacher can follow those objectives. The key use of activity in Chapter Two was the KWL chart, which is a table that explores what the students already KNOW, what they WANT to know, and what they have LEARNED. After being told about the use of a KWL chart, one student demonstrated, drawing up three columns. She used the following example:

K	W	L
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideology of Pol Pot was evacuate people from the city</li> <li>• Pol Pot entered Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975</li> <li>• Pol Pot wanted to remove all currency, markets and education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why did Democratic Kampuchea collapse?</li> </ul>	

The 'what we LEARNED' column was left empty until the end of the class.

It was clear that not all students grasped the concept of the KWL chart, as it had to be reiterated later on in the lesson by Mr. Rasy. It was important for Mr. Thoun to ask the students questions

about whether they understood and grasped the notion of KWL charts and the importance of using them, especially when it could be clearly seen that the students were quite passive. Mr. Thoun then asked the students to read a section in Chapter Seven of the Teacher's Guidebook, which did not seem very clear to the students.

Students did some practical activities, including being placed in groups and asked to look through the 'A History of Democratic Kampuchea 1975-1979' textbook and find proverbs that the Khmer Rouge used to impose their ideology onto the Cambodian people. Students were asked to discuss the meaning of each proverb amongst each other and then as whole, which encouraged students to use critical thinking and displayed another activity that they themselves could use within the classroom with their future students.

Following the group activities, Mr. Rasy went back onto the KWL charts and explained to the students that they should only pick out the most important points and summarize those key points. He suggested that the students allocate time to each of the KWL columns, assigning the least amount of time to the 'L' column. Mr. Rasy explained that the 'K' and 'W' columns are to be completed before the start of a lesson and the 'L' column be completed following the lesson, and not to erase the K and W columns throughout the lesson as all of the W column questions should be answered before the conclusion of the lesson. With Mr. Rasy's presentation about the KWL chart, students gained a deeper knowledge of the importance of the KWL and how to use the chart effectively and appropriately.

To conclude the lesson, Mr. Thoun highlighted once again the importance of clearly displaying the objectives of each lesson in the classroom and explaining those objectives to their prospective classes before proceeding to teach. Students were each given an A1 piece of poster paper to take home and write down the objectives of the lesson for the next class's modal lesson.

Students were stunned by the lack of humanity that the Khmer Rouge had for the Cambodian people and were quite passive in their presence throughout the training. I noted that the National

Teacher did not take a very inclusive method of teaching and students were quite uninterested and quiet throughout his lesson.

## **Day 2 – April 26, 2016**

The students all eagerly waited in the Hall as we entered, excited about what the day was going to bring. Mr. Rasy opened up the second day of training by welcoming the students back to the training program and began to introduce the documentary ‘Liberation Zones in Kampong Cham Province 1973’. The documentary was a black and white film with no dialogue, only music, and it was revealed to students that the Khmer Rouge soldiers themselves had shot the footage. The songs that played throughout the documentary were based on the admiration of the people for Democratic Kampuchea, there was cursing of the United States for the bombings and encouraging the Cambodian people to hate the U.S. and devote themselves to the Angkar. Students watched in shock as the video footage showed the Vietnamese Delegation visiting the Cambodian people who welcomed them vivaciously. The Cambodian people were shown wearing their black costumes and the women had their hair short as they were working in the fields. Students watched attentively as the documentary highlighted the three main sectors that the Khmer Rouge succeeded in, including agriculture, military and economics.

It was clear that the use of visual aids is highly effective in creating a connection between students and Democratic Kampuchea history, gaining more interest in the topics and being a source of evidence to strengthen the topics they are learning throughout the training.

Following the screening of the documentary, students made their way to the two classrooms they were assigned to from the previous day. I attended Classroom Two where Mr. Peou Dara and Mr. Ten Kimton were conducting. The commencement of the class was practicing the methodologies that students had learnt from the previous day. Bright and lively student Chhay Saksi went to the front of the classroom and sticky taped her A1 poster to the whiteboard, which contained the objectives of her lesson. Chhay stood out to me immediately as confident, energetic and passionate, which was reiterated in the way she conducted her lesson. She began by drawing up a

KWL chart, a teaching method that students were taught on Day One, confirming her understanding of the KWL chart and the proper use of it. She asked the students to review what they have learnt thus far from the training and what they wanted to learn as she wrote them up in her KWL chart.

K	W	L
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The regime was between 1975-79</li> <li>• Pol Pot</li> <li>• Many people were killed</li> <li>• 17/04/1975 – Khmer Rouge took control of Phnom Penh</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is the Khmer Rouge?</li> <li>• What type of leadership will be categorized as Communist?</li> <li>• What methods did the KR use to control the country?</li> <li>• Why did the KR prefer to use human labor as opposed to machinery?</li> </ul>	

She explains the key terms to the students, which was highlighted as being of utmost importance in each lesson and asked the students to read a portion of the chapter. As she concluded her demonstration, Mr. Peou Dara gave her constructive feedback to use her time wisely, but other than that she did an excellent job. A second student, Hoeurn Otdom, also demonstrated the teaching practices learnt from Day 1 and was also a student who stood out to me as being captivated by the training and information, he was always attentive through the class and



answering questions posed to the students. During one the breaks, I interviewed both students, which I will reveal in the latter.

Mr. Peou Dara explained the first group activity to Classroom Two, who were assigned to groups of five or six in order to discuss Chapters Four and Five, whilst writing down the key points to present to the rest of the class. Students were each allocated a role to fulfill throughout the activity, which consisted of Team Leader who was in charge of taking all the documents and sharing it with the students, Minute Minder who was controlling the time, Motivator which helped students who were struggling with the task, Note Taker was to take notes of everything the students present, and Reporter whom reports on everything they have learned. The objective of the group activity was for students to gain the skills of the role they were given and is able to reciprocate those skills in their prospective classrooms.

Just before the lunch break, students are given a quiz that test what they have learn thus far in the two days of training, which is a great way to test the progress of the students' knowledge and to examine whether the training has been effective up to now.

After the students return back to the classroom from their lunch break, it is the National Teacher's turn to take over the class and Mr. Ten Kimton really did make an impression. His lesson consisted of inclusiveness, excitement, lighthearted humor, passion and plenty of student learning approach. Mr. Kimton's passion was easy to feel as he consumes the class with his energy and disseminates his enthusiasm to the students. His teaching efforts must be commended as he easily keeps the students interested in the content and creates discussions between students without any use of visual aid. Mr. Kimton can easily connect the students on an emotional level to the Khmer Rouge regime by talking about his personal experiences and assigning group activities. To transport students to the Khmer Rouge regime, Mr. Kimton asks students what materials they would take along with them during the evacuations to the countryside. This exercise allows students to use their critical thinking abilities as well as demonstrates an activity that the students themselves can use in their future classrooms. By consistently assigning group activities, the students do not lose interest and feel as though they are putting the teachings into practice. The

class is split into two groups and each student is handed a colored piece of paper to write down one object that they would take with them if they were under the control of the Khmer Rouge regime to help themselves along with their families. The students are then asked to stick those papers onto the whiteboard and explain why they would take each object. The table below shows the answers of each group.

Group 1	Group 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Rice, Pan and Lighter</i> – to avoid starvation</li> <li>• <i>Medicine</i> – to help people when they are ill</li> <li>• <i>Clothes</i> – to avoid wearing one set of clothes every day</li> <li>• <i>Gun</i> – to protect oneself and their family</li> <li>• <i>Knife</i>—to use for protection and hunting for food</li> <li>• <i>Fish net</i> – to catch fish for food</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Rice</i> – to avoid starvation as it is a great source of food</li> <li>• <i>Dried food such as fish</i> – the food does not go rotten and is a great source of food</li> <li>• <i>Knife</i> – to protect themselves and hunt for food</li> <li>• <i>Salt</i> – can be used as food as well as to help the injured people</li> <li>• <i>Clothes</i> – to change</li> </ul>

This exercise was a great way for students to put themselves in the shoes of the Cambodian people who were under the Khmer Rouge rule, helping students connect closer to the victims of the Khmer Rouge regime. Following the completion of the activity, students were asked to reiterate what they learnt from the exercise, which included understanding that there was a lack of food that resulted to starvation, many encountered untreated illnesses, there was no education provided, people were separated from their families, the people had to perform strenuous labor, Cambodians were suffering tremendously, religious activity was prohibited and many pergodas became the base for prisons or military centers, and infrastructure throughout the country did not advance and stayed the same. The next lesson consisted of learning about the key leaders of the Khmer Rouge, which the teacher could have linked the students on a provincial basis as Brother Number Two from the Khmer Rouge was born and raised in Battambang. This could have been a strong point to

make in order for students to feel some form of concern or have a reaction to how close the Khmer Rouge were to their home.

During one of the breaks, I asked two of the most active and eager students from Classroom Two to be part of an interview that I conducted on them individually. Chhay Saksi, a twenty-one year old female student has been the biggest contributor to discussions in Classroom Two and one of the most eager to learn, as well as Hoeurn Otdom, a twenty-one year old male student who also contributes largely to class discussions. I asked the both of them the same questions but in an individual setting.

**What are you hoping to achieve from the five-day training?**

Chhay: *I hope to get new experiences and learn new teaching methods and skills to teach my future students.*

Hoeurn: *I hope that the training will help me become braver and gain new experiences as well as enlarge my knowledge of Democratic Kampuchea history.*

**Do you believe it is important to study DK history? Why or why not?**

Chhay: *It is very important to learn and teach because they are real events that happened in Cambodia and many suffered, especially the elderly. Our elderly suffered from separation, starvation, and executions. Although I was not alive during the regime, I have to learn it well in order to teach the next generation because the next generation will be even further from the time of the regime as myself, the ways that they will know and hear about the Khmer Rouge will be less and less. I do not want the history to die.*

Hoeurn: *It is very important because it helps the generations to know what happened to Cambodia during that time and how Cambodian people suffered bitterly during that time. Most importantly, it can help the prospective leaders from the new generations following the same steps of the Khmer Rouge leaders and also could help to prevent that cruel regime from taking place again.*

**What is the important of education? What is the importance of education specifically in Cambodia?**

Chhay: *The most important part of education is the ways knowledge transmits from one to another because education can let the people see the situations that happened in society. Education builds the mindset of people and they could gain critical thinking skills when situations around them occur.*

Hoeurn: *There are two main points: firstly, to train the youth to be the future of human resources, and, secondly, to improve the country.*

**Why do you think the majority of students are passive?**

Chhay: *It is the first time for us to be trained and therefore we are quite nervous, but our national teacher's teach very well, it is just our nerves.*

Hoeurn: *Because the teacher is not very interesting as well as the lack of methods to attract students to learn.*

**So far, how could the training be improved?**

Chhay: *I would like for them to screen more films during that era to show us how the Khmer Rouge regime was during that time. The time used for showing the documentaries was not enough and more time should be allocated. I also feel that there should be more training at my school because one training session is not enough.*

Hoeurn: *Instead of using the teacher techniques, I prefer to have more group discussions and activities.*

It is clear from the teachings throughout the day and the interviews from Chhay Saksi and Hoeurn Otdom that there needs to be more use of visual aid to support the lessons of the teacher, to enhance the learning of the students and help students understand how to use visual aid in their prospective classrooms. There has been an increase in the amount of group activities today as opposed to yesterday's introduction to the training and it was clear that the two classrooms produced very different energy levels. Classroom Two and Mr. Kimton produced a very active and eager classroom that was very verbal and attentive throughout the lesson as opposed to Classroom One's passive students.

### **Day 3 – April 27, 2006**

National Teacher Mr. Kimton begins his class by asking the students what they have learnt thus far in the training program as each student stands from their seat and states one point they have learnt. After students have run out of things to state, Mr. Kimton gives a summary of all main points that the students have been taught, which is a great way to refresh their memory and put them in the mindset of the training program once again. Mr. Kimton writes down the key dates on the whiteboard in an effort to make sure the students are not confused and brings his family's personal experience, stating that Mr. Kimton's father was against Lon Nol and the coup, therefore he believed in the Khmer Rouge before he found out the Khmer Rouge's true intentions. This is another demonstration of Mr. Kimton's powerful teaching methods, by giving personal, real life experience; it demonstrates to the students that these events really did occur and highlights the mindset of the Cambodian people during that time.

DC-Cam's Mr. Long Dany took over the class and went through Chapters Six, Seven and Eight with the students, which consisted of the Khmer Rouge's Four-Year Plan and Daily Life during the Khmer Rouge. To commence Chapter Six, Mr. Dany asks the students "What did the Khmer Rouge first do after they gained power?" which was an effective method to both test the students of their knowledge as well as a great way to introduce the topic. Following the students answering Mr. Dany's question, he proceeded to give his lesson about the Khmer Rouge's Four-Year Plan, constantly asking the students questions and asking them about their family's experiences in the

Khmer Rouge regime in a great attempt to establish the emotional and personal connection that is needed to keep students interested and attentive.

Mr. Dany moved onto Chapter Seven – Daily Life During the Khmer Rouge – and once again asking the students if they knew how people lived during the Khmer Rouge regime. One student stood up and answered that during that time, they were forced to live in units that consisted of a leader that strictly controlled their freedoms. By asking the students questions, it allows them to be able to connect the previous chapters and topics with new ones, which requires critical thinking of the students. Chapter Seven covered the topic of wedding ceremonies during the Khmer Rouge regime, mentioning that the Khmer Rouge considered themselves the parents of the Cambodian people, therefore they thought they had the right to choose people's spouses. Only the handicapped and the Khmer Rouge cadre were able to pick their spouses and many of the traditional customs of Khmer weddings were removed. It would have been powerful for students to have a visual of what weddings during the Khmer Rouge regime consisted of, perhaps exposing students to images of groups of Cambodians lining up to be married in front of the Khmer Rouge soldiers. Aside from visual aid, it would also have been affective to demonstrate just how irrational the Khmer Rouge's idea of marriage was by asking students to line up in two rows, the first row only for the boys and the second row next to the boys, the girls could have lined up. The teacher could have explained that sometimes during the Khmer Rouge regime, marriage ceremonies and the picking of spouses were done through whom you happened to line up next to. This small activity would have demonstrated to the students the unfairness and abuses of human rights that the Khmer Rouge committed as well as getting the students involved to be rekindle their attention.

Mr. Dany continued to teach the students about forced labor, abuse of children, and the filtering and mass executions and continued to Chapter Eight to teach about Security Systems.

Once Chapters Six, Seven and Eight were taught, Mr. Kimton gave his lesson about life during the Khmer Rouge regime and assigned the students homework to ask their parents and family

members about their experiences during the Khmer Rouge regime as the students do not have any personal experience during that period. By allocating this homework, students are able to hear real accounts of those closest to them and understand the struggles that their own family experienced, which is the most powerful story each student can hear.

Mr. Kimton explains an activity that brought about excitement and laughter throughout the class, it was role-play time. Students were to pick a testimony from the ‘A History of Democratic Kampuchea 1975-1979’ textbook and act that statement out and trying to incorporate emotions that would have been felt by the people who gave those testimonies. Unfortunately, all three students who took part in the role-play chose only the testimonies of the victims, though it would have been beneficial to students to see and experience both sides. Mr. Kimton asked the students what they learnt through the testimonies and role-play of the students, with the answers revealing that students gained a clear understand of what life was like during the Khmer Rouge regime. Once again to display his influential teaching abilities, Mr. Kimton articulated to the students his very own personal story about life during the Khmer Rouge regime. Mr. Kimton expressed to his students that he was a very young boy during the Khmer Rouge regime and due to the lack of food, he used to steal food and consume it during the night to prevent the cause of suspicion, but the Khmer Rouge cadre began to smell food and came to his house to question him. Mr. Kimton denied everything and even asked the Khmer Rouge cadre to look around the house to see if they could find any food but they did not find any traces, therefore he was let go. The short personal stories that Mr. Kimton voices to his students gains the students’ interest and personifies the Khmer Rouge genocide and the inhumanities that the Cambodian people endured during the regime. Hearing stories first-hand makes students realize that the genocide was not that long ago and affected all Cambodians who lived during that era.

Students are given more group activities to complete by being split up and given a section of the chapter to read about S-21 Prison and write key notes about, groups all come together and then present their key findings to the whole class.

Learning about Tuol Sleng or S-21 Prison requires visual aid for students to be able to visualize the horrors of the prison. There is one photograph of Tuol Sleng Prison is one of the classrooms, but unfortunately the teacher did not make any use of that image.

Following the conclusion of the day's lesson, the four teachers stayed back to discuss the progress of the training and the challenges they are each facing in their classrooms. Mr. Sok-Kheang asked the national teachers to explain what they felt were the challenges and many issues rose to the surface, which I wrote up in the table below and the solutions that teachers discovered to overcome the challenges.

Challenges	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students have lack of experience</li> <li>• Students have very little foundation of knowledge about DK history</li> <li>• They are too young</li> <li>• Have difficulty with the terminology</li> <li>• Students seem to think that some of the content is not real</li> <li>• When students do their demonstrations, they follow the techniques that the teacher has presented and do not try any new methods of their own</li> <li>• Teachers observed that the majority of the students were female – imbalance of gender</li> <li>• Some students do not have time at home to review the content they</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group discussions have helped tremendously</li> <li>• National teachers found that asking the DC-Cam staff to help with the presentations also helps them to learn</li> <li>• Student demonstrations have helped students retain information</li> <li>• The best way to make use of the DK history textbook is to allow students to ask question, pose questions to fellow peers, and do pair and group readings as well as present the key points</li> <li>• Teachers have been starting to help calm the nerves of students and help them be more confident.</li> </ul>



have learnt.	
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Through today's training session it is evident that students have started to grasp the importance of learning about Democratic Kampuchea history and have taken a keen interest in the lives of the Cambodian people living through the regime. Once again, visual aid would be powerful evidence and learning material for the students, especially when the lesson is about the cruelty and inhumanity of Tuol Sleng or S-21 Prison. There are many images and sources that could have been shown to the students for them to gain a clear understanding of the monstrosities of the prison. I also think it would be beneficial to both students and teachers to rearrange the tables of students in a more circular setting, this would ensure all students are included and would spark more discussions amongst students.

#### **Day 4 – April 28, 2016**

Students all gathered in the Hall to begin the fourth day of the training program and awaited our arrival to commence the day. Students became excited as DC-Cam started to set up and the projector and show the students two documentaries related to the teachings of the previous day. The first documentary screened to the students was 'Behind the Walls of S-21' which consisted of the stories of two survivors from the prison and one of the Tuol Sleng prison guards. The documentary described the life of the three individuals before the Khmer Rouge regime, their experiences of torture and life inside S-21 and life after the Khmer Rouge regime. Throughout the documentary, students were dead silent and watched in horror as images of dead corpses were displayed and the victims stories of being forced into an inaccurate confession to stop the torturing. The two survivors of the documentary explained how it was their skills that saved them; one was an artist and the other a mechanic, who were both called to help the Angkar while they were imprisoned in S-21. Both of the survivors had their families also taken to S-21, with one survivor having his whole family executed and the other was never reunited with his family and not certain of what happened to them. The survivors shed tears while talking about the nightmares

they still have years after their horrific experiences in S-21, there were not a peep made from the students during that scene. It was evident that the documentary was crucial to the students' learning experience as they were hearing the real life accounts of real people during the Khmer Rouge regime.

The documentary also had an account of a guard from S-21 who expressed that he did not agree with what the Khmer Rouge were doing in the prison and he never wanted any part of it but was forced to for his own security. This account gave students a perspective of the perpetrator as well as the victims during the Khmer Rouge regime.

As the documentary concluded, Mr. Sok-Kheang asked students to discuss the documentary they had just watched and he also began to ask the students questions but they were all quiet and still in shock about what they had just heard and witnessed. Mr. Sok-Kheang posed another question that grabbed the attention of a few students, 'can Cambodia be reconciled?' One student stood up and answered that though Cambodian society is a mix of former cadre and survivors, they can reunite together as long as they themselves make an effort to do so. Mr. Sok-Kheang continued to ask the students if they have heard of the country Armenia, which students answered no with puzzled looks on their faces. It was later understood that Mr. Sok-Kheang was setting the students up for the following classroom lessons. He introduced Armenia to the students in the hall by bringing up an article based on Mr. Youk Chhang's meeting with the Foreign Affairs Minister of Armenia. Kheang described to the students that 1.5 million people were killed in a short amount of time, with his main contention being that if we do not prevent genocide, it will continue to occur and take the lives of millions of innocent people.

Following the background of the Armenian genocide, DC-Cam began to screen a documentary about Anlong Veng that was produced by DC-Cam's very own Makara Ouch. The documentary explored the last stronghold of the Khmer Rouge, which was the province of Anlong Veng. Two students stood up and stated that they were from that province themselves, which was great to see as it meant there was some sort of a connection. It was quite clear to see the difference of reactions

and feelings of the students between the two documentaries, as students were more talkative and giggly throughout the Anlong Veng documentary, as opposed to dead silent in the Tuol Sleng documentary. It was great that the two documentaries were screened to the students as it gave them different perspectives about the Khmer Rouge and the different opinions of people about Khmer Rouge cadre. The Anlong Veng documentary allowed the students to think about the concept of reconciliation, which sparked a lot of discussions amongst the students. Both of the documentaries were effective uses of visual aid and sources that affected the students emotionally and academically.

Following the screening of the two documentaries, students made their way to their assigned classrooms, where I decided to observe Mr. Thoun's class once again. Students were learning about Foreign Relations and the Collapse of the Khmer Rouge Regime before student demonstrations began once again. Students are asked to read the chapter individually and write down the main points, then ask one another questions to rest each other. Once again, Mr. Thoun seemed to be teaching straight from the textbook, as though he was just reading rather than teaching, which students could feel. The excitement and enthusiasm that was consumed in Mr. Kimton's class was absent in Mr. Thoun's class, resulting in the lack of interest of the students. Commencing Chapter Eleven and as students were dismissed to lunch, a handful of female students stayed back in class to ask Mr. Thoun where they were able to locate resources and documentaries about the Khmer Rouge regime. This was a huge breakthrough for the training program; it symbolized students taking a keen interest in Democratic Kampuchea history and wanted to pursue this interest outside of the classroom.

Returning from the lunch break, it was time for student demonstrations where it was evident that the students have been using the exact same methodologies that the teacher has displayed rather than using any of the other one's they have learnt. The second student to pursue her student demonstration started her lesson by asking the students about the documentary about Tuol Sleng and used that as a visual aid to present her lesson, displaying other methodologies. Subsequent to the student demonstration, Mr. Thoun separates the students into groups to discuss the ways in

which Cambodia can strengthen its foreign relations with other countries, by writing these suggestions down and presenting them to the class. The next group activity was quite interesting and helped put the students in the shoes of those who lived through the Khmer Rouge regime. Students were asked to write down how they imagined it would be like to return back home, helping students to change their mindset to that of the survivors and trying to feel the emotions the survivors felt during that time.

Following the great exercise, Mr. Sok-Kheang took over the class to teach them about mass atrocities and he jumped straight into a group activity to lift up the energy of the students. He explained the nine steps to the students in order for the students to gain a clear understanding of the group exercise. Kheang split the students up to ensure that they were not just working with their friends and they had to interact with other fellow peers that they had not worked with previously. The groups were each given a genocide to read about and summarize the key points, including the Rwanda genocide, Armenian, Germany Iraq and Yugoslavia. This exercise also asked students to compare the genocides and find the similarities and the differences, circulating critical thinking and broadening the history of genocide.

To end the day, students were given an exam to complete in half an hour to test the students about what they have learnt throughout the four days of the training program, it was no surprise to me that Chhay Saksi was the first to complete the exam and leave. Throughout the student demonstrations, I noticed that all students tend to repeatedly use the teacher's methodologies rather than use other techniques that they have learnt in other classes. The demonstrations have become quite repetitive as students just copy one another. To change this repetitive behavior, teachers need to communicate to students to use different techniques and not just the ones that the teachers themselves have displayed.

It was also quite evident the impact that the two documentaries had on the students, which was required from the very beginning of the training program, but taking into consideration the time

and the resources that DC-Cam had available, they made remarkable use of the textbook and their time.

### **Day 5 – April 29, 2016**

Today is day five and the last stage of the training program for the fifty pre-service teachers in Battambang and to begin the day, students all met in the hall for the second last time. Mr. Sok Hing, the Director of Provincial Pedagogical Institute of Battambang, the two DC-Cam teachers and Haji Supiyan, joined the students in the hall to commence the day with guest speaker, Haji Supiyan giving a speech about his experiences throughout the Khmer Rouge regime, especially as he is from the Cham community. The Cham people are the Muslim community of Cambodia who were targeted by the Khmer Rouge, which means that the Cham were double targets, for being Cambodian and secondly, for being a minority group. Haji Supiyan is the religious leader for Muslims in the Battambang Province and was thirteen years old when the Khmer Rouge gained power of the city. Haji Supiyan began by giving the students a brief introduction about himself prior to the Khmer Rouge regime and then began on the horrors that the Khmer Rouge regime brought to both him and his family. As he began to tell the students about his story, Haji Supiyan broke down into tears and the only sounds throughout the hall were his sobbing and the sounds of the birds chirping outside. There was not a peep of sound from the students as they were all awestruck by the clear affects of the Khmer Rouge regime on the Cambodian people. Haji Supiyan told the students about his separation from his parents during the regime and how females were taken to be raped and killed, including three of his aunties. He spoke about the starvation during the time, the brainwashing of the children to spy on their parents, how fortunate he was to have an intelligent Unit's Chief that let the boys eat more than they were allowed to, and how he did not discriminate against any religion as he wanted any god to save him. The whole time that Haji Supiyan expressed his story, the students and myself were completely captivated by his story and he continuously advocated the students that what happened were real life events.

This was perhaps one of the greatest parts of the training, where students understood the reality of the Khmer Rouge regime and importance of the training program in order to be able to teach their

prospective students the way the training has taught them. The affect of guest speaker Haji Supiyan was evident during question time, where many students raised their hands to ask the Haji questions that related to the children during the Khmer Rouge regime, the difference between the zones, whether he has thoughts about getting revenge, and the illiteracy of the teachers educating the children. I was so captivated by Haji Supiyan's, I decided to ask him a few questions myself during questioning time. I asked him 'Does the genocide still affect you today?' to which he replied that it strongly affects him and although the tribunals took place, he does not believe it was just and enough punishment as you can never take away the pain and the suffering of the people. My next question was 'If you met a Khmer Rouge cadre, what would you say or ask him?', he responded by saying that all the former cadre that controlled him during that time have now become passive and if he were to come face-to-face with one now, he would talk to them normally.

Lastly, I asked Haji Supiyan 'What advice would you give the children?' and he simply replied by telling the students not to follow in the steps of the Khmer Rouge.

To conclude the guest speaking part of the program, the Director of Provincial Pedagogical Institute of Battambang, Mr. Ny Set, thanked DC-Cam for the training program and stated that it was a great experience for the future teachers who were not alive during the Khmer Rouge regime. He continued by mentioning that he himself experienced the horrors of the regime and was so starved that he began to steal food. One day the Khmer Rouge cadre found out and chased him and shot at him, but fortunately he was not hit or hurt. He reiterated that these events are all real life experiences and studying the history of Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge is not to political sway students, but to simply educate them about the facts. At that moment I had somewhat of an epiphany that almost every Cambodian over the age of 41, would have some recollection and experiences during the Khmer Rouge regime. You could see by the facial expression of the students that having a guest speaker tell their story directly the students had a huge impact and it would have been more beneficial to have more guest speakers or more people telling the students about their experiences. After the dismissal of the students from the hall, refreshments were awaiting them outside and a member of the school staff who made all the refreshments possible for students throughout the training program also joined us. She started to open up and tell us her

experiences throughout the Khmer Rouge regime and it would have been very beneficial to the students if she were able to talk to them for a few minutes, to give the students another perspective, especially that of a woman who endured the Khmer Rouge regime.

Students made their way to their assigned classrooms following the refreshments and began student demonstrations for the last few students who were yet to demonstrate to the class. The student demonstrations continued to be repetitive of the last few days and were only copying the teaching methods that the teachers themselves were displaying. It was the teachers' job to announce to students that they need to incorporate other methodologies, rather than just copying one another. After the all the students had completed their student demonstrations, Mr. Sok-Kheang asked the students to evaluate themselves and to my surprise, the students were quite critical of themselves. Kheang continued by stating that throughout the training, students were not only being taught different methodologies, but also were advancing their note-taking skills that will help them throughout their University as well as life.

Following the lunch break, students once again met in the hall for the very last time of the training session to complete the post-survey and the evaluation. After students completed the survey and evaluation, they were given the option to ask any questions they may have or any clarifications needed in regards to the content. Most of the questions were regarding the role of Vietnam during the Khmer Rouge regime and the freeing of Cambodia. Students also asked about the lack of involvement from the United Nations, this question was a breakthrough for the training as it meant that students were critically thinking about all the content they learnt and were trying to understand the role of the international community aside from just Vietnam. To conclude the whole training, Mr. Sok-Kheang thanked all the students and re-stated what the purpose of the training was, which was to teach student about Democratic Kampuchea history in order to get them to think about reconciliation and healing. He stated that as long as the next generation knows the history, they will not repeat history by making those same mistakes and ultimately, to prevent genocide from occurring again. Kheang told the students he would look into organizing a trip for them to visit Tuol Sleng (S-21 Prison) in Phnom Penh.

Before the students all left the hall, I managed to get four volunteers (two females and two males) to ask them a few questions about the training program. The interview is outlined below.

**Have you visited any of the killing fields in Battambang?**

Three of the students stated that they had never heard about it and one student had heard about it but he has never visited.

**What was your favorite part of the training program?**

The evacuation of people and the cruelty of the Khmer Rouge as well as the reconciliation between survivors and former Khmer Rouge cadre. Students mentioned that they were all interested in the torture methods and Tuol Sleng Prison as well as the background of the key Khmer Rouge leaders.

**How did you find the teacher's methods? Were the teachers interesting?**

All the students stated that the teacher's methods were very interesting and they could clearly comprehend the teacher's methods and techniques. The students discuss how the methods that were introduced to them throughout the training were all very new to them and they will employ those methodologies when teaching prospective students.

**What would you change about the training to make it better?**

The four students discussed amongst themselves and stated that they would like more films, documentaries and photographs to be incorporated in the training and that the training program should be longer as they thought they could learn more. The students also suggested visiting a mass grave site or a visit to S-21 Prison to be able to see the cruelty of the Khmer Rouge first hand.

**Do you feel more confident about teaching Democratic Kampuchea history to your prospective students?**



All four students replied that they were confident. One student stated that he is 95% confident in teaching his students and has boosted his confidence in general as a future teacher. Students believed that they are very knowledgeable about DK history and they will continue to research independently about the Khmer Rouge regime for their own interest as well as to increase their knowledge to teach to their students. One female student stated that she will use the USB flash drive given to her on the first day of training in order to help teach her students, and she will print out the images and use the visual aid.

It is clear from the interviews and the reactions of the students today that more visual aid and personal accounts was required throughout the training as it helped students to gain a better insight into the Khmer Rouge regime and the treatment of people and their lifestyle during that time. I also was shocked to find out that many students did not know about the killing fields in their own city and it would have been a tremendous impact on their education and personal lives if a trip to the killing fields could have been set up. I believe the students have been learning best and more engaged when they are able to connect, which has been done best through guest speakers and visual aid.

End.