

**Genocide Education Project**

Report on Commune Teacher Training Workshop  
Mondial Hotel, Siem Reap  
March 27-29, 2010

**I. Overview**

As part of its Genocide Education project, DC-CAM in collaboration with the Ministry of Education conducted a training in July 2009 for national level teachers, followed by another training for provincial level teachers in November 2009. These capacity building efforts are designed to enhance the ability of Cambodian teachers to use *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)* in their classrooms. To date, 39 national teachers and 180 provincial level teachers have been trained in the use of the curriculum, with the support of the guidebook and student workbook produced by Dr. Phala Chea and Mr. Christopher Dearing. The present workshop and upcoming training are the next in a sequence of activities conducted by DC-CAM through its program of curriculum and training under the Genocide Education Project.

From 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> March 2010, the opening ceremony for the commune teacher training workshop was held at the Mondial Hotel in Siem Reap province. Together with DC-CAM staff, 180 provincial teachers participated in this workshop, the goal of which was to deliver comprehensive information and knowledge about the upcoming commune teacher trainings. The commune teacher trainings will target approximately 1,627 teachers, the first of which will be conducted from April 5-11 in four provincial training centers: Kampot, Preah Sihanouk, Stung Treng and Kratie. Commune teachers from Kampot, Kep, Preah Sihanouk, Koh Kong, Kratie, Mondul, Kiri, Ratanak Kiri, Preah Vihear and Stung Treng will benefit from these trainings.

**II. Summary of Program**

*Day One (March 27<sup>th</sup>)*

Participants arrived from their towns and villages to register for the workshop and find their accommodation. DC-CAM staff prepared the venue, organized materials, and concluded all final arrangements for the workshop.

*Day Two (March 28<sup>th</sup>)*

From 8:00 a.m. To 5:00 p.m., a host of speakers and trainers delivered useful information and sessions to the teachers (*see highlights below*). Lunch and dinner were provided, and the teachers were given opportunity to work in groups, engage in discussion, reflect on past accomplishments, and ready themselves for the upcoming task of conducting the commune teacher training with the support of DC-CAM.

*Day Three (March 29<sup>th</sup>)*

DC-CAM organized group visits to the ancient cultural sites in Siem Reap, including

(among many others) the temples of Ta Prum, Bayon, and Angkor Wat. On the following day (March 31<sup>st</sup>), teachers were scheduled to return to their homes and begin preparation for the upcoming trainings.

### **III. Highlights of the Workshop**

*Her Excellency Chumteav Tun Sa Im, Undersecretary of State for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports*, addressed the teachers on the importance of the new curriculum and expressed her appreciation to DC-CAM for spearheading this important educational effort. She also presented certificates to provincial teachers for their successful completion of the training held on November 23-December 4, 2009.

The newly appointed co-prosecutor for the Khmer Rouge Tribunal under the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, *Andrew T. Cayley*, spoke on the new case currently being reviewed by the court (*Case 002*), and commended the teachers on their vital social role as educators, noting that the future of the nation depends on the success of their efforts.

*Professor Sambo Manara* lectured the teachers on the role of research in education, and encouraged them to take an active role in contributing to historical knowledge about Democratic Kampuchea. He cited a number of possibilities for locally led, action-based research in the communities of the teachers.

*Mr. Christopher Dearing* delivered a stimulating paper presentation on the role of critical thinking in the classroom, which was followed by a useful model lesson on participatory learning strategies. All teachers had the chance to be involved and to become acquainted with the techniques of group work.

Three artists from the Royal University of Fine Arts (RUFA) were led a lively discussion on the play "Breaking the Silence," which all the teachers had screened during their previous training. The teachers were given an opportunity to question the actors and also to debate the various dramatic and literary components of the piece.

### **IV. Detailed Synopsis of Workshop**

#### *Opening*

The workshop was formally opened by Mr. Dara P. Vanthan, Deputy Director of DC-CAM, who welcomed the gathering and reviewed the agenda for the day. Mr. Vanthan explained the primary objective of the workshop, which was to provide the teachers with a practical model lesson, and to introduce the upcoming commune teacher training. He mentioned that the upcoming commune teacher training would focus on 1,627 commune teachers, most of whom are history teachers. Mr. Vanthan reiterated DCCAM's appreciation for the support of Minister H.E. Im Sethy of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, as well as the generous financial sponsorship of SIDA, the Norwegian Government, DANIDA and USAID. He then invited H.E. Chumteav Tun Sa-im, Undersecretary of State for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, to deliver a formal speech.

*Speech and Delivery of Certificates by H.E. Tun Sa-Im*

H.E. Tun Sa-im expressed her support for the project, and once again thanked its donors. She mentioned her pride at witnessing the participation of all the provincial teachers in this workshop. The work being done by DC-CAM is vital to the future of Cambodia, she noted, and hence the Ministry of Education has given its full support. She noted that many commune teachers would be waiting for the expertise of these provincial level trainers, and would be eager to learn more about the history of their nation from 1975 to 1979. Education in general, and in specific the Genocide Education Project of DC-CAM, she commented, can prevent genocide from reoccurring in Cambodian society. H.E. Tun Sa-im explained the connection between the Khmer Rouge Tribunal and the Genocide Education Project, telling the audience that the main purpose of both these efforts is to teach the next generation about the past. H.E. expressed her wishes that the upcoming training would be a success, and added her pleasure at the fact that some teachers are visiting Siem Reap for the first time. Building up a sense of camaraderie and networking among the teachers gathered today would also be a valuable output of this training, she added. H.E. Tun Sa-im emphasized that not only should the selected teachers benefit from this training, but also the Cambodian nation as a whole. She concluded her speech with thanks to all the organizers. Following her speech, H.E. Tun Sa-im was invited to deliver certificates to provincial teachers, after which she departed the event.

*Speech by Andrew T. Cayley of the ECCC*

Andrew T. Cayley was then cordially invited by the host Mr. Vanthan to deliver remarks on the work of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. He underscored that this hybrid tribunal, where a combination of international and domestic law is being applied, is a first for the international legal community. As a result, the entire world is closely monitoring the proceedings and outcome of these trials. Cayley formerly served as a prosecutor at the International Criminal Court and in the cases of Yugoslavia, Uganda, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Referring to the teacher's guidebook, he noted his surprise that a number of cases cited as examples were ones with which he had had direct involvement. Cayley reminded the teachers that "there is nothing more honorable than teaching the young . . . but in particular in teaching them about their past." In order to illustrate this point, he told the story of his involvement with the war crimes tribunal for Srebrenica, where Bosnian Serbs had killed 8,000 Muslim men, women, and boys in a genocidal act of repression. When he visited the site some 4 years later, he was shocked to find that the history was not being taught at all in the classrooms. This, he gravely emphasized, is the reason why Cambodia must press forward with its project of educating its youth about the Khmer Rouge.

Cayley then returned to the Cambodian context, stating that the educators and civil society organizations in Cambodia were well-advanced in their recognition of and teaching about the past. As support for this claim, he brought up the example of Northern Ireland, where peace has recently been established but actual reconciliation has still not been achieved. "Your work . . . is fundamental to

reconciliation in this country and is an extremely courageous act.” With specific regard to Case 002 and its importance, he cited the objectives were: 1) to prove the facts, 2) to bring to account those responsible for these actions, 3) to settle accounts between perpetrators and victims, and 4) to learn from the past to create a better future for our children. After explaining some of the procedural aspects of the KRT work, he added that the decision in the 1<sup>st</sup> case (against Duch) is expected within several months. Investigative work in Case 002 has just concluded, moreover, and a decision might be expected by the end of 2010. Cayley mentioned that one of his important roles would be to ensure the fairness and the integrity of the trial. In addition, he predicted that many of those tried would attempt to blame the dead for their acts, a tactic which he has witnessed in other such trials. He concluded by again reminding the teachers of the importance of their work, telling them that “the work you are doing is very important and you are setting an example for the rest of the world.”

A question and answer session followed, where teachers were given the opportunity to seek clarification from the co-prosecutor. Among the questions were concerns by the teachers that an adverse decision against the accused would bring instability to the country. Cayley assured the audience that the Khmer Rouge Tribunal is focused on the most senior leaders, and that the court has no intent to bring any further discord to the nation. The fact that perpetrators and victims are coming together in discussion and developing shared understanding is extremely important, he explained. This is a sign of healthy recovery, and an indicator that civil society is taking the lead in reconciliation. To another question asking what would happen if any of the accused passed away during the trial, Cayley replied that the proceedings with the remaining leaders would carry on. Another question focused on the effect of Duch's apology to the people and to the court, and what impact that would have on his sentencing. Cayley explained that this matter is with the trial chamber, and they would decide. He explained his desire that the trial be conducted fairly and properly, that Duch take responsibility for his actions, and that he be sentenced to an appropriate term of imprisonment. In passing he made a reference to Tuol Sleng, noting that “everybody should be forced to take a visit [there].”

#### *Lecture by Prof. Sambo Manara on Research*

Following Mr. Cayley's session, Professor Sambo Manara was invited to deliver a presentation on research methodology and historical documentation. Geared towards *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)*, Prof. Manara's remarks focused on the need to strengthen local research initiatives. Firstly, he explained, we need to identify the purpose of our research. Then we need to secure adequate funding to proceed. We also need to be very objective in our research. Likewise, we have to be careful to validate information, he warned, and cross-check interviews with other sources of information. The most crucial characteristics for any researcher, he explained, are: honesty, morality, management of knowledge, education and economic involvement. We also need cooperation from the Ministry of Education.

He urged the teachers to become involved at their village levels to discover the truth

about what had happened during the period of Democratic Kampuchea. Only then, Professor Manara stated, will we be able to gather sufficient evidence to convince our students of what really happened during that period. To demonstrate his point, he spoke of a small prison in Kandal province which was housed in a former pagoda. "How many teachers are away of this fact?" he asked. If we discover the truth of what happened through documentation, then we can ask the students to become more interactively involved, for example to perform dramas about it. This had already been done, he noted, with the dramatic presentation of *Breaking the Silence*.

An important distinction exists between original and secondary documents, Professor Manara continued. In connection with original documentation, he spoke at length about the role of DC-CAM in compiling and preserving its considerable archives of documentation which are presently being used by the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. Finally, speaking of reconciliation, he noted the example of DC-CAM Director Youk Chhang who was a victim during the Khmer Rouge time. Despite this, Mr. Chhang had always advocated for peace and reconciliation. Professor Manara reminded us that we must teach our youth that revenge is not the goal, but peace and harmony.

Following his presentation, there were no questions.

#### *Summary of Points for History of Democratic Kampuchea*

Subsequent to Professor Manara's presentation, Mr. Dara Vanthan reviewed a list of important teaching points for the provincial trainers. A summary of these points is as follows (*translated from Khmer by DC-CAM staff*):

- There are now new strategies for teaching *A History of Democratic Kampuchea*.
- All teachers have more than 10 years' experience; therefore they may take whatever they find useful from this curriculum.
- The goal of *A History of Democratic Kampuchea* is to heal the Cambodian suffering. The Ministry of Education together with DC-CAM plans to reach 1,000,000 high school students through the printing and distribution of this textbook.
- Students will learn about this important past, and then by talking with their parents about the past, this will encourage reconciliation to emerge.
- DC-CAM will train 3,200 commune teachers (1,627 from history subjects and the rest from other subjects).
- All students are not expected to learn the entire history of Democratic Kampuchea. At least 10% of the students should understand and learn the history.
- DC-CAM will ensure quality control measures to ensure that the project is meeting its objectives and that teachers and students are actually learning the material.
- From 180 teachers, 33% of them are women.
- The purpose of teaching this history textbook is to heal, to reconcile and to

- prevent genocide from happening again in Cambodia.
- Teachers are invited to construct their own ways of teaching the history. They are not compelled to use the books; they may do their own research as they see fit, or use a combination of tools provided.

*Paper Presentation and Model Lesson By Christopher Dearing*

After lunch, Mr. Christopher Dearing took the floor with three objectives: 1) to present a paper about the importance of critical thinking skills to Cambodian students, 2) to deliver a model lesson explicating the technique of participatory learning (*or group work*) in the Cambodian classroom, and 3) to provide room for follow up discussion. Mr. Dearing's paper included several important discussion points, and was intended to provoke thought on the role of education in transforming future leaders of the nation to be more critical and independent thinkers. Keen to engage his audience, Dearing opened his paper with the following questions:

- 1) "If you give a child money without teaching financial management skills, how do you think will the money be spent?"
- 2) "If you give a child a book but he can't read, will he be able to gain knowledge from it?"
- 3) "If you give a child everything, will he be successful on his own?"
- 4) "If you give a child a car, but don't teach him how to drive, how likely is it that he will have an accident?"

In doing so, Dearing emphasized that a teacher should not be authoritarian, simply handing out rote knowledge to her students, but she should be a skilful convener of dialogue. As teachers we must open student's minds to new fields and new realities. Essential to this pursuit is the development of critical thinking skills. Critical thinking skills, he explained, allow us to engage in abstraction - which is the core faculty of critical thinking. He likened it to moving up and down a ladder - engaging in more details and nuances as we descend, and more higher order, categorical thinking as we ascend. Critical thinking allows us to gain distance from our object of inquiry, and to produce valuable inferences, predictions, and classifications. Dearing illustrated the use of critical thinking skills with several hypothetical scenarios. He further noted that literacy is the foundation for this 'consciousness of the abstract,' and therefore it is critical that students master the alphabet and reading before acquiring these skills.

Moving into a more concrete example, Dearing explained that critical thinking skills are necessary for reading and understanding the text of *A History of Democratic Kampuchea*. He developed an extended analogy between bullying in schools and the persecution of the Chams by the Khmer Rouge. By building on the relationships between these two events, he demonstrated to the teachers how a number of questions could be asked that link the two events. For example, "How is taunting the same as persecution? What does it mean to be different?"

Dearing then approached the poem 'Searching for Dad' which is in the guidebook, and showed the teachers how to delve into a critical analysis of the poem which would stimulate student thought and discussion. He opened the discussion by querying the teachers, "Is this poem a metaphor for what's happening in Cambodia today?" When examining texts, poems, or even films, he reminded them that it is just important to ask questions about what you saw as well as what you did not see. In connection with *The Killing Fields*, the famous film about the Khmer Rouge, Dearing encouraged teachers to ask about the point of view of the filmmaker, or the tone of the movie. By doing so, we can stimulate students to think reflectively and to ask questions about motivation, bias, or even historical accuracy.

By using all these techniques, by provoking critical thinking among your students, Dearing continued, "in this way you will not only teach history, but teach students how to question the history you teach." In returning to his three original questions, Dearing emphasized that we cannot give students this freedom or liberty (a car, money) without the ability to manage them. Just as giving a child a car without teaching him to drive might cause an accident, he explained, in the same way giving a student un-processed facts without the ability to analyze them could have unpredictable results.

Upon finishing the paper, Dearing moved into the demonstration of the model lesson. When dealing with large classes of 60-70 students, he began, some of us may feel that participatory learning is not possible. With carefully structured exercises and techniques such as group work, however, it can be achieved. The values of group work, he summarized, are as follows, it: 1) allows teachers to manage large groups, 2) gives students responsibility and leadership, 3) allows students to practice group learning, and 4) gives students a vested interest in learning. Using 5 key roles and responsibilities, Dearing showed how to constitute such a group, and focused his model lesson on Chapter 11, Lesson 4, Topic 2 from the teacher's guidebook.

The division of responsibilities was as follows: 1) timekeeper, 2) student leader, 3) reporter, 4) recorder, 5) motivator. While first demonstrating with 5 willing provincial teachers, Dearing then expanded his lesson to the entire 180 teachers, having them follow along with the lesson as well, having been divided into groups. He concluded his presentation by noting that the way to manage large classes and still preserve student-centered learning is through group work. In the follow up, he posed some possible challenges and then solutions for the teachers to be aware of. For example, if students are answering incorrectly, we should encourage their colleagues to correct them through peer learning.

As a final note, Dearing presented suggestions to the provincial teachers for the upcoming teacher training: 1) remember this is a TOT; we must therefore concentrate on both history as well as pedagogy, 2) try to make sure the trainees are becoming actively involved, 3) teachers must practice both teaching and evaluating, 4) we are not here to be didactic, but to introduce new pedagogies. Dearing closed his presentation with the remarks that education is more important to a nation than wealth, natural resources, peace, or security. He encouraged the teachers to do their

best, and wished them luck in the upcoming training.

#### *Discussion on 'Breaking the Silence'*

Following Mr. Dearing's presentation, a panel of 3 artists took the stage to field questions from the teachers on the play, *Breaking the Silence*, which had been screened by all of them at the last teacher training. A summary of the questions and comments is as follows:

- 1) A teacher wanted to know more about the dancing monkey on the stage. The answer was given that the monkey represents the Khmer Rouge cadres who always jumped from place to place and ordered people around. Basically, the monkey emphasizes the loss of rights by normal citizens.
- 2) A teacher asked why the costumes of the cast were not black to match the period of the time. This was the subject of several questions, and an ensuing debate. One of the actresses concurred that the costumes should in fact be black, another teacher mentioned that the essence of the drama is the message, not the costumes. It was noted that everyone realizes that clothes of the period were black, so the costumes themselves don't really need to be black in the play. Another concern, however, centered on the youth and whether they would understand the history of the period without the black costumes, as they did not live through it themselves.
- 3) When speaking of the tone of the play, the lead actress noted that it is a light-hearted one because the playwright did not want to bring more sorrow through the performance. Enough of the audience would have already had experienced that sadness firsthand from their life under the Khmer Rouge, so the play (*for example, the songs in them*) aspired to be less somber. The object of *Breaking the Silence*, she noted, is reconciliation.
- 4) One teacher commented that due to the fact that the play is authored by a foreigner, and the use of certain techniques unfamiliar to the average Khmer audience, she was unable to grasp the message clearly. At this point, Mr. Youk Chhang intervened to explain the importance of *Breaking the Silence* and the 7 stories which are included therein. He emphasized that it would be up to the teachers to choose which stories they would choose in the classroom.

During the course of the Q&A session, the artists performed several songs for the audience which were taken from the play, including "Blood River." They also performed a short scene about a young 15 year old woman who became a doctor during the Khmer Rouge, and the guilt she had to face about not being able to treat her patients. She recalled with remorse that she was just like "a bird in the cage." After these important performances, Mr. Chhang addressed the audience again about *Breaking the Silence*, requesting that if any teachers wanted to use this material in their classroom, they are invited to contact DC-CAM. DC-CAM would help to arrange for artists to assist with this. Also he reminded teachers to focus on the meaning of peace and reconciliation, rather than the details and techniques of the play.

#### *Explanation of training schedule by Mr. Vanthan*



Following this interesting discussion, Mr. Vanthan divided the provincial teachers into groups, and explained the schedule of the upcoming teacher training. He reviewed the cultural program for the following day, and gave necessary instructions about logistics.

*Closing remarks by DC-CAM Director Youk Chhang*

To close the workshop, Mr. Chhang thanked all teachers for their participation, and then expressed his hope that all teachers would benefit from the training. He spoke a few words about DC-CAM and its other projects, and then invited all teachers to visit the new permanent center in Phnom Penh once it is built. He mentioned that if funding permits, perhaps the families of the teachers could be invited to such a workshop in the future. Finally, Chhang invited teachers to continually provide constructive feedback to the DC-CAM workshop organizers, in order to improve such events in the future.

## **V. Strengths**

The workshop had many strengths. They are briefly summarized as follows:

- Conference location – both venue and food were appropriate, with enough space and appropriate audio-visual facilities being provided. The food was excellent, and well-catered by the hotel during both tea breaks and lunch time.
- Conference site – Siem Reap (*in particular Angkor Wat*) was an attractive destination for many teachers, some of whom had never visited the city before.
- Organization of DC-CAM staff – all DC-CAM staff seemed to work together well and efficiently to manage all aspects of the conference – from participant needs to distribution of materials to translation.
- Format of the workshop – the 3 day format of the workshop, with an intensive 2<sup>nd</sup> day followed by a 3<sup>rd</sup> day of sightseeing, seemed to suit the participants (*Note: this writer was absent for the 3<sup>rd</sup> day*). The organizers were thus able to maintain the enthusiasm and active participation of all teachers during the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of intense activities.
- Variety of presenters and lecturers – from Cayley to Dearing and Prof. Manara, the participants were treated with a variety of lecture styles, content, and approaches. This served to reinforce the message in different ways, and to ensure that the interest of the participants did not decline.
- Discussion and Question Time – the workshop organizers took care to insert ample time for teachers to provide their feedback on all the

lectures/presentations/speeches, and also to question (*and in some cases criticize*) the presentations being made. This was important to make them feel included and to validate their opinion.

## VI. Challenges

The workshop also had its challenges. They are summarized below:

- Some representatives from the local and international peace corps were in attendance, but it did not seem that DC-CAM had a staff member assigned to dealing with public relations queries. This could be improved in the future, as media publicity is important for the success of the project.
- Only a selected number of teachers were able to receive certificates from H.E. Chumteav Tun Sa-im. The distribution of certificates itself could have been better organized. Perhaps time was a factor in this decision, but it would have been ideal to distribute certificates to all in attendance, if necessary by another individual in the absence of H.E. Chumteav.
- Perhaps the presenters/speakers could have made better use during presentations/speeches of the audio-visual equipment on hand. Teachers, like students, learn through a variety of ways (auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, and visual). To the extent that the first and last were lacking, these could have been improved. In addition, it seemed that a large amount of printed materials were handed to the teachers, but seldom reviewed or referred to during the workshop.
- It might have been useful to review in detail the agenda/schedule for the first round of commune teacher training program in Kampot, Kratie, Preah Sihanouk, and Stung Treng Provinces. The teachers may already be aware, but a review of roles and responsibilities can certainly always be helpful.
- The *Breaking the Silence* discussion was very lively and engaging; several teachers seem to have criticism of the play which could have best been fielded by the playwright herself, or perhaps a director at the RUFA. This could be taken into consideration next time.
- If (*and perhaps they have not*) provincial teachers have been teaching this material in their classrooms, already, a brief feedback session on the challenges they have faced would have been most useful as a way to brainstorm strategies for improvement.

## VII. Conclusion

The Genocide Education Project, and its teacher training and curriculum program stands at the critical crossroads where the knowledge of the trainers is ready to be transferred to the teachers in classrooms across the country. The impact of the

project will depend upon commune teachers' ability to understand, synthesize, and deliver relevant and engaging material to their students. DC-CAM's efforts to build the capacity of the teachers, to enhance their pedagogical depth, and to make them aware of and familiar with the DK history are critical precursors for achieving an impact through the Genocide Education Project.

This 3-day workshop fulfilled its objectives of renewing the teachers' commitment to the project, providing them with practical teaching techniques and orienting them for the upcoming training session. An added advantage was the location, which served as a novelty for many teachers who had not visited the province of Siem Reap before. The energy and enthusiasm of the provincial level teachers seems to be strong, and this will be crucial to the success of the upcoming teacher training efforts at the commune level.