

Genocide Education Project
Teaching the *History of Democratic Kampuchea*
(1975-1979)

Report on National Teacher Training for Lower and Upper Secondary
Schools of Cambodia
June 29-July 7, 2009
Senate Library, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

The Documentation Center of Cambodia in collaboration with the Ministry of Education,
Youth and Sport

I. SUMMARY

The Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) collaborated with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport to conduct training sessions for 24 Cambodians officials from the Pedagogical Research Department, National Institute for Education, General High School Education Department and Teacher Training Department of the Ministry of Education as well as 14 staff members from DC-Cam. The participants met at the Senate Library in Phnom Penh, Cambodia from June 29 to July 7, 2009 to attend a seven-day training seminar designed to offer pedagogy instruction on ways to teach Democratic Kampuchea history in Cambodian high schools using Kamboly Dy's textbook *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)*. During the training workshop, Kamboly Dy and David Chandler went over all chapters in the textbook while Christopher Dearing and Phala Chea presented the teacher's guidebook that accompanies the text. Films, songs, field trips, and guest lectures were also incorporated into the training.

The National Teacher Training workshop was the first step in a tri-partite process to train history, language, and morality teachers throughout Cambodia to teach DK history. Together with local and international experts, the trainees received in-depth training in order to serve as core "teacher-trainers" in subsequent training workshops.

The following report details the various activities that took place during the National Teacher Training. It also outlines the objectives and strengths of as well as challenges faced during the National Teacher Training Seminar.

II. STRUCTURE OF PROJECT

The curriculum and training program revolves around DC-Cam's (Kamboly Dy's) textbook *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)*, which was approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport to be used as a primary text in Cambodian schools in April 2007. The textbook has received plaudits from around the country and the world, and is the first of its kind in Cambodia that accurately details the events and contexts of Democratic Kampuchea. To help support the use of the Documentation Center of Cambodia

(ស្វែងរកការពិតដើម្បីការចងចាំនិងយុត្តិធម៌)

textbook in the classroom, Dr. Phala Chea and Chris Dearing authored a Teacher's Guidebook and a Student Workbook to accompany the textbook.

Moving forward, the 38 National Trainers who attended the National Teacher Training workshop will help train 186 trainers at the provincial level on November 16-29, 2009. Then in December 2009, National and Provincial trainers will help train over 3000 Cambodian high school teachers at the village level. This "trickle-down" training approach provides an opportunity for Cambodians to train each other, thus taking ownership of and responsibility towards their national history.

III. EXPECTATIONS

The expectations of the project were three-fold. First, we hoped that National Trainers would come out of the project with a clear understanding of the history of Democratic Kampuchea. Second, we hoped that the National Trainers would know how to use appropriate pedagogical structures in order to train teachers in the next training and ultimately teach students. Finally, we hoped that the National Trainers would know and understand the importance of genocide education in Cambodia and be able to think about its implications on the society today. Below are the objectives set forth in the Ministry of Education and DC-Cam's Memorandum of Understanding for the entire Genocide Education Project:

1. Introduce Kamboly Dy's textbook and the Teacher's Guidebook/Workbook to Cambodian schools grades 9-12;
2. Teach DK history to 3,000 history, morality and literature teachers;
3. Improve teaching skills and knowledge base of the history of Democratic Kampuchea;
4. Apply scientific and modern way of teaching;
5. Respect Ministry's protocol and procedures;
6. Convey expertise on education and history to Ministry officials;
7. Ensure the effectiveness of the teaching of the history of DK.

IV. ORIENTATION

All National Trainers and international participants traveled to the Senate Library on June 26, 2009 for an official opening of the National Teacher Training workshop. Participants received a welcoming speech from Kamboly Dy and Youk Chhang, who both explained the purpose and logistics of this training and subsequent trainings. Mr. Deap Sophal, a national participant, commented, "I've waited 30 years for this education." This was also a time for international scholars and national participants to introduce themselves to each other.

After a welcoming lunch at the Juliana Hotel, all National and International Participants met with H.E. Im Sethy, the Minister of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, to kick off the training. The Minister gave an inspiring speech to all participants. He explained to the group that this project strikes a very personal cord with him as he has pursued genocide education for over 15 years, often meeting with the Australian government and the US State Department. He spoke of the struggles to rebuild both the society and the educational system as the Khmer Rouge killed

almost 80% of teachers. Despite the struggles of the past, H.E. Im Sethy believed the political and social climate is right for the history of Democratic Kampuchea to enter into the curriculum. He told the group that Cambodian society has played “a dangerous game of ignoring or denying the genocide, dangerous not only for Cambodia, but also for the world.” He added that, “the younger generations who were born after the Khmer Rouge, especially those in the city, have everything. They have plenty of everything--plenty of food, plenty of money, etc, but the younger generations must understand that there were times when we had nothing, when it was all striped away.” He closed the speech by encouraging all participants to take the training seriously and thanking them for their time in this very important project.

V. ACTIVITIES DURING TRAINING WORKSHOP

Each day the participants met at the Senate to go over historical details, receive pedagogy training, and listen to a national or international scholar lecture on a specific topic. National Trainers also broke out into small group sessions once a day to practice or mock lessons. Film, song, and plays were also incorporated into the training.

A. History Lessons: Khamboly Dy and David Chandler

During each morning session, Mr. Khamboly Dy and Dr. David Chandler presented two chapters from the textbook *A History of Democratic Kampuchea*. Using PowerPoint slides, Mr. Dy extrapolated text from his book to discuss and teach DK history. Participants readily asked questions on DK facts, which took up more time than generally allotted.

Some questions from participants included:

1. What are the reasons for putting code numbers for regions? Why were there code numbers in some cases and not in others?
2. Where did the leaders get their ideologies from? Did they model their policies after other countries and leaders?
3. What were the political goals of the Khmer Rouge?
4. What type of currency was used during the Khmer Rouge?
5. Was Pol Pot really Buddhist?

B. Small Group Sessions

For a few hours per day, National Trainers broke out into small group sessions of around 10 participants per group. International facilitators led the sessions. Breaking out into small groups presented the opportunity for National Trainers to interact with the guidebook and textbook and make themselves more familiar or experiment with the materials. During the more intimate sessions, each National Trainer modeled one lesson from the Teacher Guidebook in 30 to 45 minute sample lessons while other participants acted as “students.” Then, after the lesson, each “Teacher” received feedback from the participants and sometimes from the international facilitator. During this time, facilitators encouraged participants to use discussion-based questions along with fact-based questions and presented various methodological tactics to participants.

Some sample lessons included:

1. Morn Met began her lesson by saying hello and taking attendance. She then went over what students had studied last time, asking one student for a brief review of the previous lesson. After the student summarized the previous lesson, she then reiterated and added information to the student's summary. Then she went over objectives for the day. She put the students in groups of three, and assigned each group a paragraph to read on different divisions during Democratic Kampuchea. She told each group to take notes on important facts in their paragraph, having students write their notes on large white sheets of paper. Then, each group had to present their notes to the class. Finally, she posed an open-ended question by asking the students to answer the question, "Compare differences between each geographical zone and explain why you think zones differed in size." Students were asked to present their hypotheses to the class. She concluded the lesson by summarizing what the students learned that day and assigned reading for homework.
2. Thourn Siv began his lesson by saying hello and taking attendance. He then went over what students had studied last time, asking one student for a brief review of the previous lesson. He then showed a photo of April 17, 1975 and asked the students to explain what they thought this photo was about. He asked the class "Why do you think people hid in the house?" He then divided the class into two groups and assigned two people as the group leader and secretary. He told the class that they were going to have a guest speaker come in to speak to the students and each group needed to write a report on what he has learned. Then, a "guest speaker" came to describe his life as a base person during the regime. After the guest speaker gave his presentation to the class, he asked each group to report on what the guest speaker said.

Small-group facilitators were also asked to model lessons for their groups. Below is a model lesson from one facilitator, Sarah Jones Dickens.

1. Sarah modeled a lesson based on the interviewing lesson from Chapter 7. She started the class by taking attendance and asking a student to explain the prior day's lesson. Then she told the students what they would be covering today: understanding the historical importance for interviewing and some possible negative consequences that could arise as a result of interviews. She told students that they would have to interview a person affected by the Khmer Rouge by next week, but they would go over interview techniques and methodology for the whole week to prepare them for their interview. She made two columns on the blackboard and asked students if they could help name good things that can come from an interview and bad things that could come from an interview. To reinforce or add to a student's answer, she summarized what the student said while writing on the blackboard. Then, the facilitator asked the students to get in pairs and come up with 5 potential questions they should ask Khmer Rouge survivors and 2 questions they should avoid. Each group presented their questions to the classroom while the facilitator wrote down on the board their responses. The facilitator summarized what the students covered today and assigned them for homework to explain in a four to five sentence paragraph the importance of interviewing. Once her actual lesson was over, she explained her rationale for conducting the lesson this way: She wanted to emphasize a lesson where there was no "right" or "wrong" answer, thus encouraging student participation to think on their own.

Below is another model lesson from small group facilitator Chris Dearing:

2. Chris decided to model a vocabulary lesson based on Chapter 3's vocabulary. He explained to the participants that he will both "model" and "explain" what he is doing during the lesson. When modeling, the participants had to pretend at times to be students. When the facilitator gave the cue that he is "stepping out of the modeling mode," he then provided an explanation of the reasons behind certain aspects of his lesson. The participants also had an opportunity to pose questions on any confusing points, aspects, or details of the lesson during the "stepping out" phase.

He began the lesson by writing on the top of the board: "economic systems" and drew a narrow box indicating a category of information. He asked participants, "What are all the economic systems in Chapter 2's vocabulary?" The participants gave their answers while the facilitator wrote all responses on the board, commenting on each to encourage the students' answers. He then asked the students, "are there any other economic systems not listed that you know about?" The participants responded, "Socialism and Capitalism." He then gave positive reinforcement by commending them for their answers. He commented briefly and asked participants if "peasants" were an economic system. They responded "No." He had the students tell him where in the category of economic systems peasants would be better placed.

He then divided the students into two groups and asked students in one group to write about life under capitalism and the other students to write about life under communism. He asked each student to pretend as if they were living under their assigned economic system and describe what their life would be like under the system. Next, he picked several students from each side (capitalism side and communism side) to read aloud their stories or descriptions of life in their economic system. The facilitator then posed the question: What is the difference between capitalism and communism?

The lesson concluded with the Facilitator asking participants, "What did we learn?" to evaluate the participants' understanding and to model how the participants should summarize lesson activities in their own classrooms.

C. International Scholars, National Scholars, and Guest Speakers

C.1. Dr. Ros Chantabot, *Vice President of the Royal Academy of Cambodia*, lectured on the history of political change from Sangkum Reastr Niyum to the Khmer Republic, placing the rivalry between royal families (Norodom and Sisovath) at the center of political chaos in the 1950s and 1960s. In his lecture on June 29, 2009, Dr. Ros mainly spoke about Prince Sihanouk's concern over the superpowers' and communist influences on Cambodia. Because some Cambodian figures were in contact with or were influenced by communism, Sihanouk put pressure on his officials who intended to join or support the communist powers as well as the superpowers, such as the United States.

In the 1950s, some of his officials had associated with the US and intended to stage a coup' d'état. This concerned Sihanouk and he tried his best to prevent his officials from joining with American agents. By the mid-1960s, some Cambodian school teachers and figures went missing. Although the motives of their disappearance were not exactly known, Sihanouk predicted that these lost people were leftist and in fact

communists. Pressure was put on school teachers. The government was concerned that teachers would teach about politics. When the communists rose to power quickly and more and more Cambodian leftists disappeared, Sihanouk began to put pressure on teachers. They were not allowed to discuss something in public with more than four or five people.

In 1967, the people in Northwest Cambodia were angered by the corruption policy of the government. The government soldiers grabbed people's land and when people protested, the government responded harshly by killing people, burning down their houses, and beheading the protests' leaders.

C.2. Dr. Alex Hinton, *associate professor and anthropologist at Rutgers University*, presented a lecture on "Truth, Representation, and the Politics of Memory after the Genocide" on July 1, 2009. He delineated between two types of education: formal education and informal education and explained that both types of education can occur at sites of memory. He then explored different periods of memory Cambodian society has faced since the Pol Pot time:

- a. Khmer Rouge period: Dr. Hinton argued that the Pol Pot period was a time when memory was itself a crime and the Khmer Rouge attempted to erase memory. People left sites of memory, places they once lived, streets once walked upon. He also stated that Pol Pot also tried to destroy memories of Buddhism, education, and commercial interaction by destructing the institutional framework itself. If people during this period thought about the past, they had memory sickness and would be killed. In short, the most effective way to erase memory was to erase the people themselves.
- b. PRK period: This period, Dr. Hinton argued, when politics of memory manifested in society as well as in the educational system. The PRK regime set out to establish a "narrative of the recent past that would buttress their legitimacy both domestically and abroad." Primary school textbooks included graphic images and violent stories of the Khmer Rouge period as propaganda for the PRK.
- c. UNTAC: The Khmer Rouge period was literally taken out of the curriculum. There was an explicit emphasis of forgetting although there were holidays that still commemorated the period.
- d. Current period: Dr. Hinton argued that Cambodia is in a period of transitional memory, citing the court and the current genocide education project as another reworking of the past.

He concluded his lecture by encouraging all participants that they are "making history just like the tribunals are making history." Dr. Hinton encouraged all National Trainers to think critically about the past and ask difficult questions. Concluding, Dr. Hinton says, "Even if we fully condemn atrocities and seek accountability, we must recognize that the world is not always divided in black and white and we must recognize that the world is full of humanity."

C.3. John Ciorciari, *professor at Michigan University*, lectured on the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), or better known as the Khmer Rouge Tribunal on July 2, 2009. During his lecture he explained the tasks the ECCC has set out to accomplish: conducting criminal trials and delivering justice to victims. He also explained that the court has a "truth telling function," or in other words it seeks to create an objective truth of the period by trying to figure out exactly what

happened. The court also holds responsibilities to the international community: it's the first of its kind to operate as a "hybrid" or mixed international tribunal. He also talked briefly about the creation of the tribunals and its legal and institutional features, such as victim participation and civil parties.

C.4. Dr. George Chigas, *professor at the University of Massachusetts and Adjunct Professor in Asian Studies at Cornell University*, spoke about trauma and its relation to Cambodian refugee poetry on July 3, 2009. He first gave a basic introduction of trauma and the affects of trauma on the psych. He explained that there is an inherent problem in language to describe traumatic experiences, which he argued was the reason that so many survivors chose silence over speaking. Yet, Dr. Chigas warned of the inherent dangers in keeping silent. He quoted Eli Wiesel, a famous Holocaust survivor, who said "if we are silent, those who have died, died twice. First, when they were killed by the perpetrators and second when they were forgotten." Dr. Chigas then introduced a set of poems written by Cambodian refugees in the United States. He wanted participants to ask themselves a few questions:

- What is the chance, the risk, the writer is taking to tell the story?
- How does the writer overcome the problem of language?
- What is the new identity the writer has when writing about his or her trauma?
- What is the purpose of the witness? Who is the witness speaking for?
- What does the writer and survivor need to hear?

Dr. Chigas explained that above all the survivor needed someone to say "I believe you, I believe what you told is true." He also explained that the poems signify a way for Cambodian survivors to take control of their trauma and integrate the traumatic experience into normal consciousness and memory.

C.5. Dr. Frank Chalk, *former Chair of the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Museum, Director of Montreal Institution for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, and history professor at Concordia University*, presented a lecture entitled "Genocide in a Global Context" on July 3, 2009. He first went over a basic, legal definition of genocide, explaining that genocide is defined as killing and other actions that have intentions to kill or harm an entire group of people on racial, religious, national, or ethnic reasons. Professor Chalk then gave a legal working definition of Article II of The UN Convention for the Punishment and Prevention of Genocide. He explained to the National Trainers that UN Convention did not include political and social groups in the legal definition of genocide, which he considered a major flaw. Professor Chalk pointed to the Khmer Rouge as a good example of the reasons one should not omit social and political groups in the legal definition of genocide. He also cited two groups of people during the Holocaust who were not protected by the Genocide Convention: the Nazi extermination of the mentally ill in 1939 ("racial hygiene") and of homosexuals. Professor Chalk also pointed out another flaw in the Genocide Convention by arguing that it is difficult to prove that the perpetrators' intend to destroy the whole group. Generally, once this can be proven, the whole or most of the group is dead.

Then, Professor Chalk encouraged the National Trainers to think about genocides in a global context and presented different ideas for a classroom lesson plan: The

teacher can assign different students various genocides and have them answer questions such as: Who was the perpetrator and victim group? What was the most important motive of the Perpetrator? How does the assigned genocide differ from the Khmer Rouge? How is it similar?

Participants then had a chance to ask Professor Chalk questions, some of which are:

1. Why should we not include Lenin or Stalin in the atrocity group?
2. Why is it always too late to intervene?
3. There have been genocides in other countries, but Cambodia is the only example where Cambodians killed other Cambodians. Do you think there is a different solution for reconciliation for Cambodia?

C.6. Laura Summers, *professor at Hull University*, lectured on the history of Pailin on July 6, 2009. She decided to present on this topic because she believed one is able to observe how divisions within the National Army of Democratic Kampuchea began to recognize and deal with the problems of inadequate government and war economy. Using a series of photos of Wat Phnom Yat, Sinahouk's house, and the city center, to only name a few images shown, Professor Summers mapped out the ways in which Pailin transformed itself to "become more politically aware and economically organized during the four years before the mutiny."

National Guest Speakers

Norng Chanphal, *a child survivor of Tuol Sleng Prison*, gave a heartfelt talk to all participants during the morning session on July 1, 2009. He explained that he was part of the "train station" group who was brought to Tuol Sleng. He arrived with his mother and his three brothers and sisters. When he arrived, photographs were taken of them. His mother was brought to the second floor of Tuol Sleng while the children were brought to the ground floor. He explained that this was the last time he saw his mother, and then he began crying. After the Vietnamese entered Cambodia, he was brought to Phnom Penh hospital. One Vietnamese and one Cambodian soldier thought he was a "child of Pol Pot." He moved from place to place with the Vietnamese army and he was sent to an orphanage. He never saw his mother and father again.

Him Huy, *a former prison guard at S-21*, spoke about his experiences leading up to and during the Khmer Rouge. He was selected to join the army in 1973. When he arrived at District 18, he was asked to attend political training and indoctrination. He spoke about being homesick while there, but the Khmer Rouge would not let him visit home. US bombs were dropped near the training center two times per day, and the cadre told him if they dropped the bombs again, he would be killed. He was then transferred to Takeo, but got sick and went to the hospital. He escaped to go home for three days. He told the audience members he served in the army until 1976. In late 1976, he was sent to be a marine. In 1977, many chiefs were arrested and cadres in Division 7. He was later promoted as a chief of 100 member unit and was responsible to receive prisoners and take them to Choeung Ek. He said that many S-21 staff members were arrested and his name was actually included on the list.

Questions from participants included:

1. You said that you worked in the arrest unit. I want to know if people refused to be arrested, did you beat them?
2. What was your home village and age?
3. What is the meaning of District 18?
4. Could you tell us about the code names of the districts?
5. You were a young man at S-21 and must have had friends. You didn't come from a family of killers. When you saw children being killed, what do you think? How did you live with the site of children being murdered?

Answer: "I've never been happy about my role at S-21. One day in April 1977, I asked Son Sen at S-21 to transfer me to the frontline and out of S-21. That day, Son Sen asked me 'do you dare to fight the Vietnamese?' They were scared that if the Vietnamese captured me, the secrecy of S-21 would be compromised. I was concerned that if I were arrested, my whole family would be arrested. Regarding the children, I was never able to do anything about it. The climate in 1977 was not as intense—cadres could talk to people in different units, but in 1978 the climate of distrust was deepened. Everyone looked after themselves only. At that point, almost everyone was arrested and people acted just like scarecrows and not able to do anything. I would have died more than likely if the Vietnamese did not come in. In the 703 Division where I used to work, most of the cadres from that division were killed."

6. What were your impressions so far of the Duch trial? What do you think about what he's said so far?

Answer: "I'm very happy that Duch is on trial. During that time Duch and Hor didn't go along. Duch preferred cadres from the Western zone. I myself planned a prison break and at that time, I thought Hor would have supported the idea. But the prison break didn't happen because Hor wouldn't go through with it. I learned about this place in Kirirom, and I knew there was a Lon Nol base there we could escape to. I am not a bad person. After the Liberation of 1979, I saw this Lon Nol cadre, but I did not kill him. I could have killed him. I am not a bad person."

Youk Chhang, *director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia*, informed participants about the different activities of the Documentation Center of Cambodia: genocide education, research, building a permanent center, and the tribunal. He also handed out DC-Cam's Strategic Plan for the following years and a *Searching for the Truth Magazine*.

Farina So, *team leader of the Cham Muslim project and MA candidate at Ohio State University*, described her role in the Cham Muslim project, which started in September 2005. She explained to the participants the projects' goals, which are to collect information and have the Cham community talk about what happened during the Khmer Rouge. She also spoke about outreach projects directed towards the Cham community, such as DC-Cam's invitations for Cham leaders to come to Phnom Penh as well as the Center's field trips to meet with different Cham communities.

D. Visual and Aural Activities and Field Trips

Films, excerpts from plays, and songs were also incorporated into the training

workshop, which were followed by seminar-format discussions.

Film Screening of *Tuol Sleng, Baset and Prey Veng prisons in 1979*, and *KR Liberated Zone, Kampong Cham 1973*.

Three films were shown on the morning of July 1, 2009 to the participants. The silent, rare films provided interesting visual testimony of the time after the Vietnamese entered Cambodia. Professor Laura Summers facilitated a short discussion of the films. She told the participants that whenever there were films shown, viewers should ask themselves three questions:

1. Who produced the films?
2. Who was the intended audience?
3. What messages were trying to be communicated?

Professor Summers then gave a brief description or summary of each film, answering the questions she posed. She explained that some of the films shown were meant only for records and not intended for public viewing while other films were intended for a Vietnamese TV Station.

Professor Summers then argued that the films do not teach any history on the conflict between Vietnam and Cambodia. She also stated that film evidence does not help us with critical thinking and knowledge of history, but we must be careful to interpret correctly the visual evidence shown.

Song Performances and Film Screening: *Oh Phnom Penh* sung during *Cambodian Children and Phnom Penh in 1979* and *Breaking the Silence*

Participants started off July 2, 2009 by watching a short film *Cambodian Children and Phnom Penh in 1979* during the morning. The poignant film showed emaciated Cambodian children in the slums, eating bugs and digging through trash to find food. Their tattered clothes and dirty bodies offered a stark reminder of life after the Khmer Rouge. During the film, a woman sang *Oh Phnom Penh*.

After the film, participants then heard the song from *Breaking the Silence*. Youk Chhang led the discussion by asking participants to explain the songs and asked them which one they liked as the National Reconciliation Song. Below are some participants' comments:

"The first song is more about anger, but the second song keeps repeating the word river, moving from the blood of the river to a river of reconciliation and responsibility. It is as if we move from sadness to responsibility. It's more empowering. *Oh Phnom Penh*, however, is only moving from sadness to revenge."

"I think both songs are meaningful but the second song is more meaningful. The first song seems to focus only on Phnom Penh and doesn't speak about other places people went after the Khmer Rouge. The second song, however, talks about reconciliation and turning killing into reconciliation."

"Both songs are important because it reminds us of what happened. The first song reminded me of what happened, it is very emotional, and I can't hold back my tears. The second song, however, well after listening, I feel relief."

"I think the first song is about survival, our 2nd life. However the 2nd song encourages us to reconcile with the crimes and to heal."

"I do not think we can evaluate the meaning of each song. We can't compare the songs to each other. We must think about the time that they were composed. The first song is about then and the 2nd song is about now. The first song was written during the war, so it's hard to avoid words of revenge"

Field trip to Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek

National Trainers went on a field trip to Tuol Sleng, and Choeung Ek on July 3, 2009. After the field trips there was a discussion on ways in which field trips could be used in classrooms and their importance. Some comments are found below:

"When I saw Tuol Sleng, it made me believe that it happened. When we teach students in the classroom, we should use field trips to make them believe."

"If students visit these sites, they may make them feel terrible and upset and remember or imagine what happened."

"When we have field trips, we encourage education because the child soldiers were not educated. When you are educated you don't let people control you, so taking children on field trips and seeing uneducated children like those in the photographs encourage them to come to school and learn."

Breaking the Silence

Excerpts from the play *Breaking the Silence* were performed for the National Trainers. One of the scenes shown depicted a victim and perpetrator speaking to one another.

One participant commented on the play:

"Watching the play made me recall what happened during the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge made me clear the jungle. One day, the knife broke, and the Khmer Rouge punished me. I was injured and had to go to the hospital. I met with the medical staff and they made me eat porridge although I didn't want to eat. The lower level Khmer Rouge staff helped me."

When asked about using plays to teach the history, many National Trainers hesitated to the use plays in the classroom. Some commented:

"We need to have a methodology to perform."

"The play should be used in art class, not history"

Professor Chalk encouraged that teachers must change as the world changes and begin to accept and use innovative technology. Teachers must "accept the language" of their students.

VI. STRENGTHS

1. Small group Sessions: If there were resentment or animosity in the large group meetings, it disappeared once participants gathered in smaller groups. National Trainers who were trying to "show off" their knowledge in the large group seemed to not be as outspoken in the smaller groups. The more intimate environment

allowed National Trainers to voice or raise concerns without stirring up the whole group. Small group sessions also provided a great opportunity for teachers to model lessons and give feedback on each person's lesson plans. After hearing critiques and strengths from all participants and facilitators, participants obtained a better understanding of expectations. It was also a useful activity for observers to evaluate comprehension of the teaching methodology and the Guidebook.

2. Songs, Films, and Performances: These activities provided a forum to allow participants to discuss various issues on Democratic Kampuchea. By using the arts, facilitators created a more welcoming environment for participants. Starting the morning sessions with some type of film or song was also a great way to grasp participants' attention and provided an engaging activity with which to begin the day.

3. Guest Speakers: Like the art-based activities, the guest speaker presentations were useful methods to stimulate discussion and increased participant contextual understanding. They also enjoyed the lengthy post-speaker discussion period and enjoyed learning from and sometimes challenging the international and national guest speakers.

4. Modeling Lessons: During each small group session, every National Trainer had to present a mock lesson to the other trainers in their small groups. This activity provided a wonderful forum for National Trainers to engage with the guidebook and textbook and "make it their own." Some National Trainers deviated away from the guidebook, adding other creative approaches to cover the lessons' objectives. Other National Trainers followed the guidebook exactly. Regardless of their approaches, modeling lessons was an excellent context for participants to make the material "come alive."

5. Handling Concerns Raised by National Trainers and Organizational Logistics: Mr. Dy and the other Cambodian facilitators did a wonderful job of appeasing the National Trainers' concerns. Because the National Trainers were much older than the DC-Cam staff, there was some friction between the two groups owing to the issue of respect and age (In Cambodia, it is part of the culture that adults know more than children. In other words, the older you are, the more you know, and thus the more respect you receive. DC-Cam staff members addressed the National Trainers with respectful Khmer language, calling them "*Lauk Kru Neak Kru*" and speaking with soft language. By doing this, the younger DC-Cam staff members affording the teachers with high regards although they were training them. The two co-authors, Phala Chea and Chris Dearing also did a wonderful job to manipulate the schedule to stay on time. Other DC-Cam staff members often corrected each others translations, thus showing an air of teamwork and camaraderie among DC-Cam staff.

6. Modeling the Training Session in Similar Ways to Model the Classroom: The ways in which the training sessions were conducted were the ways in which a classroom should be organized. The National Training seminar incorporated guest speakers, songs and films, fact-based lessons, and critical thinking questions.

VII. CHALLENGES

The following list of challenges summarizes a meeting held at the Documentation Center of Cambodia following the National Teacher Training. DC-Cam staff, some international scholars, and facilitators participated in the meeting.

1. No Clear Objectives: It appeared that we did not provide participants with clear objectives and rationales of the training workshop. Participants seemed unsure of their roles in and the reasons for their attending the workshop. They also seemed unclear about their duties in the second training.

Recommendation: For the next workshop, it was suggested that we include a short, carefully crafted paragraph that states the aims and objectives of the program and seminar. We should also have the aims and objectives posted at the front of the room as a visual reminder for the participants. It was also recommended that we have conducted an icebreaker activity that asks participants to list objectives and rationales for the training project and teaching of DK. Doing so would smooth over any misunderstandings, allow for expectations to be established, and give participants a “voice” in the Seminar’s organization and outcomes.

2. No Consistent Model Lessons: It was noted that the National Trainers were not given consistent model lessons. While the small groups were effective for the participants to engage with the guidebook and material, participants felt that they were not presented with standard and consistent model lessons. Small group facilitators often deviated greatly in their own small groups, using and employing different methodology. Some small group facilitators commented after each lesson while others only gave comments after each day of modeling. Some facilitators took on more detailed lesson plans and covered theoretical concepts while others did not do so. Finally, there seemed to be some inconsistency among the actual methodology of modeling lessons: some facilitators decided to step out of “model” mode and point to the actual theory at work while others modeled the lesson as if it were a regular classroom.

Recommendation: Facilitators and some National Trainers could conduct model lessons in large and small groups. Facilitators should also meet the day before to make sure their lesson plans are specific and that they follow similar guidelines so that the information presented in small groups is consistent across all groups.

3. Tensions between Teaching and Learning History There appeared to be tensions between learning *the history* of Democratic Kampuchea and learning *ways to teach* the history of Democratic Kampuchea. Methodology, in other words, “took a backseat” to history lessons and facts. For instance, history lessons always ran into the time set for methodology and pedagogy. Participants also used this time to go into long speeches over the microphone.

Recommendation: The facilitators next time should try to keep the discussions and questions more focused and centered on learning about the history in the book,

rather than on more nuanced details. It should be reiterated to the trainees that they are not becoming historians on Democratic Kampuchea, but rather teachers who will be able to relay and teach DK history to high school students. Of course, trainees should have time to ask and answer questions during the history presentations, but questions must be limited. If trainees have questions that do not pertain to the history in the textbook or time has run out, trainees should feel free to meet the historians or scholars “after class” or during lunch and snack breaks, which would be the procedure in any classroom.

4. Western way of teaching verses Cambodian way of Teaching: There were fundamental differences in Western, student-centered approaches to teaching and Cambodian, teacher-centered approaches to teaching. Because the teacher-centered model of education makes the teacher into the “end-all, be-all” of knowledge for the students, historical facts become the determinant of success. This approach seems to be preferred in Cambodia because it helps the teacher maintain control over large groups of students and it prevents the teacher’s authority (or competence) from ever coming into question. In the student-centered model, “learning processes” as opposed to “inputs and outputs” of knowledge become the desired outcome rather than simply the transfer of knowledge from teacher to student. The student is encouraged to discuss his or her thoughts on ideas, lessons, and information provided by the teacher. In some cases, this could bring the student’s opinion in direct conflict with the teacher’s position on an issue. If the teacher is not familiar with how to navigate these situations, he or she could feel personally attacked or have his or her role as “teacher” directly questioned. Without directly being stated by any participants, we sense this was a fundamental fear underlying any use of open-ended questions and student-centered discussions.

Recommendation: At the heart of this problem lie the very same issues of any Western project coming in and implementing their own set of standards or goals on Non-Western society. It becomes a challenge of “our way” verses “their way.” Arguably, there are some similarities between two ways of teaching and facilitators must utilize the similarities rather than focusing on differences in order for the project to sustain itself.

We should reiterate to the trainees that the Cambodian taxonomy includes discussion questions in steps four through six while it includes the need for fact-based discussion questions in steps one through three. Future seminar trainings should highlight the use of the Cambodian taxonomy in the Guidebook. Also, we could have teachers read aloud in the group some text from articles based on theory. This is a Cambodian way of learning. Then, we could ask them to probe deeper into the meaning, which is more Western. After the activity, we could explain to them the methodology of our asking fact-based and discussion-based questions on the reading and the importance for incorporating the two in the classroom.

5. No Explicit Coverage of Larger Questions on Genocide: It seemed that what was missing from the training was we did not cover complex, sociological questions on the history of genocide and mass atrocities. What are the affects of genocide on our current society? What are circumstances that give rise to genocide? Why do leaders

select young children and teenagers? Why do people need to identify with groups? Why do people kill?

Recommendation: We should include these types of questions into all model lessons and discussions and reiterate to the trainees that these are the larger and perhaps more crucial questions to ask students. While dates and facts are important, teachers should reinforce these issues into all classrooms.

It was also suggested that we wait to cover more thematic comments in the second or later rounds of training in the following years, focusing the next two phases of training on the history of Democratic Kampuchea. Once basic history is covered and teachers understand and can teach more basic knowledge, we can then move on to more philosophical and theoretical training.

6. Tensions from National Trainers: There seemed to be much tension between the National Trainers and DC-Cam staff, perhaps owing to the fact that DC-Cam staff members are much younger than the National Trainers. Tensions also seemed to arise from the fact that the National Trainers did not “feel ownership” to the project. In fact, some asked that their names be removed from the guidebook

Recommendation: In order to mitigate these problems, it was suggested that we bring in more senior level teachers to the next training. We could also state that the guidebook is only a guide, and teachers should feel free to deviate away from it. Furthermore, we could explain in the next meeting that their participation is valued in the project, and we need them for the projects’ success. Mr. Dy did a great job speaking diplomatically and politely to the trainees, and we should continue to employ this language. Finally, more leadership may be required from the group facilitators to bring discussions back on track rather than deviating from the purposes of the training.

7. National Teachers’ Focus on Administrative Tasks Rather than “Larger Picture”: Accountability and administrative tasks seemed to have a high priority in the classroom and participants were very critical of any teachers who failed to put the date on the blackboard or who did not abide by the 5-Step Process that they learned. Much criticism was given on what Westerners would consider minute details, but apparently is highly valued in Cambodian society.

Some participants gave lessons that were very regimented and focused on simple recitation of basic historical information. These lessons would typically involve the teacher asking questions that were either answered with “Yes” or “No” answers or very short statements. Such teachers would also sometimes ask rather complex or not easily answered questions but they would quickly make these questions rhetorical by answering them very quickly after asking them. Generally, the teacher imposed his or her view of “right” and “wrong” and did not feel comfortable allowing students to discuss their views of right or wrong. Overall, some of the participants understood the basic methodology behind each lesson (i.e. what is being taught [or rather learned], why it’s being taught, and how it is being taught), but they lacked sufficient practice in various teaching methodologies in order to effectively use the lessons.

Recommendation: More time in practicing the lessons is required in order for all participants to gain a sufficient skill in training teachers in the lessons. Small group facilitators should recognize the importance of these details in Cambodian teaching methods, but also try to move group discussion and feedback into larger thematic and overall feedback on the lessons.

There were also more nuanced suggestions made.

1. There should be little changes to the schedule for both international and national participants. Post-seminar meetings and dinners should also be included in the schedule so participants can plan their schedule accordingly.
2. An internet connection should be set up at the conference hall.
3. Include a packet to all trainees with a large map of DK, a glossary, a photo book, DVDs, and other supplies.
4. Photo captions should either be included or we should go over ways teachers can answer questions brought up by students regarding the photographs if teachers cannot offer a description.
5. Color-coded name cards could be given to all participants so that groups are already divided before the workshop begins.
6. All National Trainers should meet before the next workshop to go over logistics.
7. All Seminar readings should be organized according to presentation, with page numbers and by day. This would allow the participants to understand what readings go with what speakers and when they should be read.
8. Day 1 article discussions should be removed or the participants need to be given the articles before the Seminar. It was also suggested that they be removed or moved to a different day.
9. Participants should be allowed ample time for question and answer. Seminar organizers should plan for at least 15-30minutes per presentation of questions.
10. A Seminar Glossary of all translated terms should be circulated to all translators and participants to avoid confusion over difficult terms.
11. A pre-Seminar meeting of all facilitators should be scheduled to outline and define: Which lessons will be modeled? How will small group practicum be run? What methodologies will we teach or explain?

VIII. CONCLUSION

Three decades have passed since the world first learned of the "killing fields" of Cambodia: systematic torture, mass executions, and countless deaths by starvation by the Khmer Rouge. Yet, for three decades, education on this tragic period has not

yet been implemented in Cambodian classrooms in accurate and pedagogically appropriate ways. As one National Trainer poignantly quoted during the opening day of the training, "I've waited 30 years for education on this period."

Political perspectives have inevitably affected how educational systems interpret and define important historical events. Sometimes, the Khmer Rouge has been used as fodder for proactive propaganda campaigns in school curriculum. In other cases, the regime has simply been ignored in classrooms. Yet, it seems that the collaboration between DC-Cam and The Ministry of Education on Genocide education project is the first of its kind to offer a somewhat objective presentation on Democratic Kampuchea. The project, while not perfect, is a solid start towards arming Cambodians with the tools and resources to know about and learn from their own history. While there is no ease in the phrase "never again," enlightenment through education is indeed one of the most important steps to preventing actions that give rise to inhumanity. Younger generations must be taught to recognize and know when to stand up against cruelty.

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