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Pursat Teacher Training: Daily Report

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Morning Session

Presentation on History

Rasy began the morning session. Today is the time for the conclusion of the training week. Participants can use this time for questions. Rasy then introduced Youk to speak to the teachers.

Youk addressed the teachers and then invited and answered questions from participants.

- Some senior Khmer Rouge didn't do anything wrong, like Son Sen. Why did some commit crimes while others didn't?
 - As the question is answered in detail and through a diagram drawn on the board, there are also comparisons made between the Lon Nol regime and the Khmer Rouge regime.

Youk then asked a question of the commune teachers.

- What is the purpose of the training session?
 - A commune teacher responds that the purpose of the training is to complete learning what happened under the Khmer Rouge, especially what affected victims and the involvement of officials of Khmer Rouge. It's also to learn how to live in peace together.
- At this point, a participant asks "what is genocide"?
 - To answer, information is relayed by Youk to the teachers about genocide as well as other international crimes such as crimes against humanity. Comparisons are made with World War I and World War II. International law, such as the Genocide Convention from 1948, is also included in the discussion as is the phrase "Never Again."
 - We set up genocide education training because it is our duty to teach new generations about genocide and to prevent it in the future. After a conflict, it's important for that country to learn and know about their history. Education is essential. If society doesn't know about the history, the history may be repeated again.
 - The present victims think that nothing can repay or repair what happened to them under the Khmer Rouge. The ECCC was set up and is the best way to bring justice to the victims. The court is important to help complete them, because they can feel relief about what happened under the Khmer Rouge through prosecution of the senior Khmer Rouge leaders. Education also serves this function.
- Youk continues with questions for the teachers. He asks, if you have to teach the children of Khmer Rouge officials, how can you do this? Who are victims?
 - A participant responds that victims are people who are hurt by another. Youk expands on this with an explanation and illustration on the whiteboard. He also asks the teachers why Chum Mey, a survivor of S-21, was able to survive.

- Commune teachers responded by stating he survived because of his painting skills. Youk expands on this and makes a connection to the film watched earlier in the training week about Bou Meng, Chum Mey, and Him Huy in S-21.
- The discussion moves to victims and perpetrators; who commits wrong and who does right? It's hard to give a specific answer and can be dangerous to make such a sharp distinction. The participants are supposed to think about this. No Khmer Rouge officials only did wrong; some of them also did right. A killer is not necessarily just someone who didn't know anything, it could be a lawyer or a doctor who understand what they are doing. But, when they commit wrong they believe that their activities are correct and supported by other people (or it's ordered by other people).
 - Youk also spoke about the importance of genocide education in the prevention of future conflict or mass atrocities.
- Our training has three main purposes: reconciliation, education, research.
 - A participant says he understands the training, especially focused on the reconciliation and what happened under the Khmer Rouge.
 - Why doesn't the new generation believe what the Khmer Rouge regime did? Participants answer:
 - Parents don't tell them
 - Lack of documents
 - Don't study it at school
 - Parents don't tell them the truth

Group Environment

While their colleagues asked questions to be answered by Youk, the other commune teachers listened intently to the information. Most were taking notes in their notebooks throughout the question and answer time. When difficult ideas are explained, such as the victim/perpetrator divide or the knowledge and thinking patterns of a murderer, the commune teachers appear to be contemplating and thinking through these concepts.

Presentation on Methodology

Rasy then started to lead the meeting again. He asked the participants to think of any questions they still have about the teaching methodology which has been taught during the training week. At first, no participants had questions to ask. Then, some participants opened up to request information.

- When we teach students, can DC-Cam provide more material like documents?
 - Rasy said DC-Cam will provide what they can to support the teaching.
- During the Khmer Rouge regime, there was cooperation between them and other countries. Should we also try those countries for their role in the Khmer Rouge atrocities?
 - Youk gave an explanation about other countries who were involved with the Khmer Rouge. He said that they may have supported the Khmer Rouge, but because the Khmer Rouge controlled the country, it was those officials who actually committed the crimes. Other countries only supported them materially but did not engage in direct criminal activity. The criminal liability is person to person, not country to country.

- Regarding China, why did they both help the Khmer Rouge and assist King Sihanouk?
 - To answer, Youk gives a historical explanation of the relationship between China and the Khmer Rouge regime. He also spoke about the Khmer Rouge advantages.
- How many kinds of victims are there, and what is the difference between these victims?
 - After Youk gave some general information about victims, the participant asked for a more specific answer based on his own experience. For example, different areas of the country may have experienced the Khmer Rouge regime differently and so the victims may thus have differences. Youk expanded on these ideas. Also, survivors who were children at the time are no longer children. Now, they are adults, possibly married with their own children. This affects the way they understand the Khmer Rouge and their experience under the regime.
- Has the Royal Government of Cambodia broadcast information about the Khmer Rouge regime to other countries, so that people outside Cambodia can understand what happened?
- A participant made a comment that maybe there are direct victims and indirect victims of the Khmer Rouge. He also would like DC-Cam to arrange for history teachers to be able to visit historical places within Cambodia, so they can have firsthand experience.
 - Youk explained that Cambodia has 3600 history teachers throughout the country. So, this is a large number and would take an enormous budget to arrange. At this time, nothing can be promised for this, but some things can be set up, such as sending documents from research or sending an expert to teach a particular part of the curriculum.

Group Environment

The commune teachers seemed a bit more reluctant to ask questions about the methodology. However, based on confusion as recent as yesterday's training session, there are still some lingering uncertainties. After a while, teachers began to stand up to ask questions about both the teaching methodology and also some historical/factual issues.

Break

Presentation on Methodology (continued)

Rasy explained again that the teachers should read all the methodology in the Teacher Guidebook. He had the teachers open their guidebook to the last section to review the various techniques that have been learned during the training. Rasy goes into some details about how to implement these methodologies in the classroom once the teachers are back at their home schools. Rasy wrote his contact information on the board so that any teacher can contact him with questions about the curriculum and methodology later.

Professor Manara then took the microphone to talk with the teachers. After chatting with them for a bit, he explained some of his own background and teaching experience. He also spoke about history and the importance of studying it. While he was talking, Rasy passed out copies of Searching for Truth magazine to all the teacher participants. Professor Manara encouraged all of the participants to research everything related to their lessons, especially the history. He gave several examples of this. They should read a lot of information before teaching so that they are fully prepared. Research can be done about their local community as well as in other places, but teachers need to study themselves and use all available resources.

They can cooperate with others in their community on establishing more knowledge of the history. Teachers are major players and can provide some knowledge and instruct the students on history; this will affect not only the understanding of the past but can also impact the present and future. Through the DC-Cam training, the teachers can collect their knowledge and experience together to improve methods of teaching students. Everyone brings something they can share and add to the group. Similarly, each person in the community can provide something for the country. Each person should ask themselves what they can provide the nation, rather than what the nation can provide to them. History teachers can let the rest of the population know they play a major role.

Rasy came to the front to address the group of teachers again. Methodology is discussed briefly, including that the teachers can combine their own methodology and the techniques in the Teacher Guidebook. He says a few words to conclude the training. One of the provincial teachers also makes a brief statement at the end of the session and provides his contact details to the participants as well.

Each teacher is called up by Rasy and Sovann to receive their transportation stipend and per diem.

Group Environment

All teachers follow along in their Teacher Guidebook as Rasy gives the lecture on methodology. The teachers seem to be paying attention and also taking some additional notes as the session progresses. Each teacher records Rasy's contact information in their notebook.