

25 June 2010

Early Morning Session:

Morning began with a group meeting of the 100 provincial teachers. Mr. Dara talked about the upcoming verdict for Duch in July. He then showed a film of S-21 that was made by the Vietnamese. For almost all of the teachers, it was the first time they had seen it.

Mr. Dara then spoke about S-21: why it existed, who ran it, who was taken there, etc. He also spoke about Duch's history and how he came to run S-21. Mr. Dara spoke about the children in the film – how most of the children were killed at S-21. The ones in the film who survived are now civil parties in Duch's trial. Mr. Dara said that most of this information is also discussed in the textbook.

A film of the prison, Prey Ven, in Bar Seth province was shown as well. Followed by a film of a visit to Cambodia by Chinese officials. In the film everyone is smiling and working and laughing. It also includes images of Pol Pot and other leaders of DK.

Late Morning Session:

The group of 100 was split into two groups of 50. A national teacher taught each group chapters three and four from the textbook. Provincial teachers learned about the evacuation of Phnom Penh as well as the organization of the DK government from Pol Pot down to Noun Chea to Ieng Sary, Ta Mok, etc.

DC-Cam followed up the historical lesson by answering more specific questions. Examples include the following: one teacher asked about the presence of King Norodom in Cambodia. The teacher said that he was alive during the Khmer Rouge regime and he thought the king had to be abroad because otherwise such atrocities would not have happened. Another question was about the Khmer Rouge and their use of the Central Market – whether they had currency and how did they fund their operations.

Then the national teachers taught chapters three and four from the teacher's guidebook. Chapter three covers how the Khmer Rouge came to power. The lesson worked primarily with photographs. The teachers also did a few practice exercises.

One required them to write down ideas or people they associated with the date, 17 April 1975. The national teacher then went on to explain what happened when the Khmer Rouge took over.

A different national teacher taught about chapter four, which covers the organization of the Khmer Rouge. Using a photograph from the book, she asked the provincial teachers what they knew about the leaders and how many leaders of the Khmer Rouge they could name. She then drew a chart on the board that asked the teachers to name the members of the party, tell their position in the government, and give their background, including education. This practice lesson was another example of using the launch, explore and summarize technique, which also incorporates the KWL method. The morning session ended with DC-Cam playing a recording of the national song of DK.

Early Afternoon Session:

The teachers were broken into groups of ten. Four of the ten will present mini-lessons from the DK textbook to their peers. Each lesson is to last 30 minutes. Prior to the mini-lessons, the provincial teachers are told how they will be evaluated. In addition to a review by their peers, the national teacher and/or a member of DC-Cam will also observe. After the lesson, the teachers will fill out forms evaluating their peer's performance. The form will evaluate how clearly and accurately the teacher conveyed the material as well as whether he or she engaged the students.

Before starting the mini-lessons, the national teacher gave pointers to the provincial teachers. Specifically, he talked about classroom control, dissemination of accurate information, facilitation of student engagement and evaluation of the students' performance/knowledge. He also recommended that the teachers allow their students to ask questions, discuss them with their peers and ultimately develop their own ideas.

There were four mini-lessons covering chapters one and two in the textbook.

An example of a mini-lesson by a provincial teacher:

SovSitha, a provincial teacher, gave a lesson on Pol Pot, specifically how he rose to power and the general historical context in which the DK came into being. The materials used included the DK textbook and the DK exercise book. Students, in this case the provincial teachers, were asked questions about Pol Pot. They were then given time to read the material about Pol Pot. They were asked questions about the material they had read. The teacher made sure to include all of the students.

After the lesson, the national teacher asked the provincial teachers if they had any other questions about the teaching style. Then Mr. Dara of DC-Cam gave his own thoughts on the mini-lesson. Mr. Dara said that Mr. Sitha followed the methodology correctly. Mr. Dara compared his lesson to those of other teachers who have had difficulty using this methodology because instead of teaching the material, they teach the method as well. Mr. Dara wanted to remind everyone to explain the purpose of the lesson to their students but keep the methodology they are using (the questions, the KWL, etc.) to themselves. The national teacher seconded his reminder.

Three more provincial teachers gave mini-lessons as well.

Late Afternoon Session:

The entire group of 100 teachers came together to assess their performance as a group and to reiterate the importance of the methodology. In addition, Youk Chhang of DC-Cam spoke. He talked about the methodology as well as making sure to teach the history accurately. For instance, if a student's parents were Khmer Rouge and the student says that what the teacher has taught is wrong; what should the teacher do? Mr. Chhang recommended that the teachers rely on facts and use documents to support those facts. It is also important not to paint the Khmer Rouge as entirely bad because some students may have parents who were Khmer Rouge. To say all KR are bad people may cause emotional damage to a student. The goal of this teaching is not retribution, but reconciliation.

End of Day Assessment:

One national teacher noted that the provincial teachers' grasp of the material continues to improve. However, the mini-lessons showed that the teachers are still struggling with the methodology. He believes it will take time as well as individual work with the provincial teachers who will be in charge of the training to make sure they continue to improve their skills. He did note that the provincial teachers did have a great understanding of the content.