

27 June 2010

Early Morning Session:

The objective for the morning session was to teach the provincial teachers chapters seven and eight from the textbook and then the teacher's guidebook. The group of 100 was divided into two groups of 50.

Prior to the lesson, one of the national teachers spoke to each group about his personal experience under the Khmer Rouge. The idea is that in addition to learning from the book, the teachers are also learning from the survivors. This is to help them understand not only what happened but to put a human face with the material; it will also help them to be more aware and sensitive when teaching the history in their classrooms. Provincial teachers were also given the opportunity to ask the national teacher questions about his experience.

Chapters seven covers daily life under the Khmer Rouge. The national teacher went over the organization of collectives and the conception of communal property. He also taught about the difficult conditions: forced marriages, hard labor, child labor, lack of education, forced fighting in war, etc.

Socheat, of DC-Cam, also spoke about the Khmer Rouge's suspicion that members of its own parties were working for the CIA or the KGB. Socheat explained how this suspicion led to internal purges of party members; many were imprisoned and killed.

Chapter eight covers the security system of the Khmer Rouge. In particular, the chapter shows how the system was organized and who all was imprisoned (traitors, intellectuals, foreigners, members of Lon Nol's regime, minority groups).

Late Morning Session:

The national teacher covered chapters seven and eight from the teacher's guidebook. For chapter seven, the provincial teachers were asked to read aloud from the diary of a person living under the Khmer Rouge. In their own classes, the teachers will ask their students to write their own diary entry, imagining what life would be like if they were teenagers and living under the Khmer Rouge.

In addition, the national teacher interviewed a provincial teacher as part of the lesson. One of the assignments asks students to interview someone about living under the Khmer Rouge. The national teacher showed the provincial teachers what

kinds of questions their students should ask, how to record the interview and then to write a report.

Chapter eight covers the security system. The national teacher reiterated the methodology for teaching: the teacher should give some background, ask the students what they think or even know about the subject, then teach them the material. Again the goal is to encourage critical thinking.

For the security system lesson, the provincial teachers will also need to ask a victim or a perpetrator to come to the classroom to talk about his or her experience under the Khmer Rouge. National teacher, Mr. Siv Thuon spoke about his experience under the Khmer Rouge again in order to provide an example for the provincial teachers.

In the afternoon, the provincial teachers were broken into groups of ten and each teacher had to practice teaching a mini-lesson to the other teachers in their small group. The teachers then had an opportunity to get praise and constructive criticism from their peers to work on their teaching technique. In each session there was a National teacher who was supervising the provincial teacher's practice.

They did sample mini-lessons from Chapters 7-8. Chapter 7 is about the Daily life in DK and Chapter 8 is about The Security System throughout the country during the period of DK power.

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

One of the mini lessons they did was to focus students on active reading. Their objectives were to teach the students about the establishment of the communes, the differences that Angkar chose to establish between social classes and the different treatment of marriage during the DK regime.

The DK communes were established with the ideal that people must share all parts of their lives. People had no private property or private use of their labor. All ownership of property and labor was only for the benefit of Angkar and no longer for an individual.

The teacher's then discussed how people were divided into social classes. There were those who came from the city and were called the "new people" and those who originally came from the lower socio-economic classes who were called the "base people." The people who were originally from the countryside were most likely to be trusted by Angkar to supervise the "new people." Those who came from Phnom Penh were least favored and known by the pejorative name, the 17 April people, because they remained from the old society they had to work the hardest to prove

that they were loyal to Angkar and endured the greatest hardships placed on them by the new social order.

The provincial teacher's lesson then went on to question the "students" about unique institution of marriage as envisioned by the DK regime. The answers given by the "students" explained how mass wedding ceremonies took place where all of the participants were chosen by Angkar to be married and often didn't even know the persons to whom they pledged life-long fidelity. The marriages were not intended to be about love, the purpose was to form sexual relationships between adults that would produce children to continue the vision that the DK regime had for Cambodia.

The provincial teacher then wrapped up the mini-lesson by asking the group to compare what a day in the life of a new person verses the day in the life of a base person might have been like in one of the villages. This question elicited a lot of response from the group as they considered how a new person might have been abused, and how a base person might have suddenly felt empowered after years of toil and hardship.

Late Afternoon Session:

The groups broke out into two groups of fifty for the special afternoon lesson. The lessons were focused on Chapter 8 which is about the Security System during the DK regime.

A guest speaker was featured in the lesson, which is the suggested Lesson Number Two for Chapter 8. One of the Provincial teachers volunteered to be the guest speaker for the presentation. He was about eight or nine years old when the Khmer Rouge gained power in Cambodia. Early on in the regime he, his mother, and his five siblings where moved. The siblings were very young and he had to lead his younger brothers along with his mother to the commune where they were assigned. At the same time his father was taken away to one of the detention facilities and a couple of weeks later they received information that the father had been killed. Throughout the rest of the time that the DK regime was in power he and his family was moved a number of times because of the advancing Vietnamese army. He was assigned to many different jobs over those years including being a herder of the cows.

The class then followed the speaker's presentation of his experience by discussing why the Khmer Rouge leadership ran such an extensive prison system. Some of the groups' thoughts included that that the Khmer Rouge leadership was afraid that intellectuals might encourage the population to rebel against the oppressive measures employed by the DK regime.

End of Day Assessment:

The National teachers and the DC-Cam staff met after the Provincial teachers left for a very brief meeting.

They quickly reviewed the success of the day's lesson, in particular how effective the guest speaker was at engaging the audience into a greater understanding of the plight of persons during the DK regime.

The National teachers also want to work on making clear to the provincial teachers the importance of the material that is being presented. They hope that through clear objectives and explanation of the value of the lessons the provincial teachers will improve their behavior and attention during the teaching sessions.

The leaders then discussed how they wanted to run the session the following morning by beginning the day with a brief pictographic and video presentation to transition from the Security System in general into the specific issues surrounding the atrocities committed and Tuol Sleng.