

29 June 2010

Early Morning Session

Mr. Dara started the morning session by giving the provincial teachers notice that the DC-Cam staff and National teachers would be looking for Provincial teachers that were motivated and doing a good job with the material. They wanted to select teachers that were showing such strength in teaching and initiative in learning the material to become teacher trainers for their communes. This strategy of encouraging quality participation is intended both to find the best candidates to continue the instruction throughout the communes, but also to motivate some of the teachers who have been less engaged to make a greater effort to participate and possibly earn greater opportunities for recognition of their skills.

The objective for the morning session was introducing the training participants to the final Chapter about the fall of the DK regime. Mr. Dara started the morning by showing a video about children during and following the fall of the DK regime. The video is intended to get the participants thinking about what challenges were faced by persons immediately after the regime fell, as well as those faced by the entire Cambodian population today.

The provincial teachers couldn't help but be strongly affected by the scenes they saw in the video. Their exclamations of sympathy and dismay were audible as they saw the struggles that the very young children were facing. The video did a very effective job of showing the plight of so many children as they battled to survive following the end of the DK regime. The poignant scenes of the children finally eating were especially heartbreaking for the audience. It was so clear that the children were starving and were willing to consume food that many of the provisional teachers in attendance would never consider eating today. The other scenes that garnered particularly strong reactions from the audience were those of children who were so severely malnourished that all of their bones were showing through their skin.

This video exercise proved to be an extremely engaging one for the majority of the provincial teachers because the stark reality of the video and photographs really drove home why both they and their students should care and learn about what happened during this particular period in history.

Following the video presentation, Mr. Dara opened up the floor to allow all of the provincial teachers to ask questions or share their thoughts about the video they had just seen. The room was filled with a silence that seemed to continue to reflect the shock of what the teacher's had just seen. Mr. Dara then suggested that some teachers in other provinces felt as if they couldn't teach about reconciliation after the video reminded them of the horrible things that resulted from the decisions of the leaders of the DK regime. He then asked the teachers from this training session if they felt the same way, or if they could still find a way to help themselves and their students reconcile with their history and to find forgiveness.

Mr. Dara then suggested that teachers must be very thoughtful when using the curriculum and follow it closely. He is concerned that with the atrocities in Cambodia being a sensitive topic it would be easy to incite students to feel violence and hatred because of what happened. Instead the curriculum focuses on the lessons on development, forgiveness, and moving society forward in a way that prevents such atrocities from occurring in the future.

Mid-Morning Session

Following the video, the large group split into two smaller rooms of fifty provincial teachers, the DC-Cam staff taught the morning sessions today and they intended to cover Chapter Eleven and the Conclusion of the textbook. Chapter Eleven is about The Fall of Democratic Kampuchea. That chapter focuses on both the internal and external the reasons for the collapse of the DK regime. They finished the morning by addressing the conclusion section. The conclusion section gave a very clear summary of the main points made throughout the textbook and proved to be a fitting outline for the training that the DC-Cam Staff and National teachers has been working on for the past week.

To begin the section on the fall of the DK regime, Mr. Socheat, showed a slide show that helped the students connect with both the perception of the fall of the regime from the perspective of the local population as well as the perspective of the international population. He focused upon the problems of starvation that faced the population as displaced persons tried to return to their home villages. One way of showing the international reaction to the humanitarian crisis was to show a *Time* magazine cover story featuring a scene depicting a fleeing mother and child.

Mr. Socheat also spoke about the time when the DK regime was weakening, and the leadership decided that they must remove all persons that they felt were not fully supporting the DK regime. The leadership then took everyone that was Vietnamese or lived in an area that had traditional ties to Vietnam and attempted to eradicate them in a misguided attempt to protect the leadership in Cambodia. The DK regime

did not stop at eliminating the working classes that they believed had either a genealogical or ideological tie to Vietnam. They also decided that the leaders of the regions where those people lived were sympathizers with the Vietnamese, and therefore eliminated the regional leadership as well as the local populations.

They followed the discussion of eliminating the Vietnamese during the end of the DK regime by playing an audio recording of Pol Pot shortly before his death where Pol Pot, from his hiding place near the Thai border, is still telling Hen Sen that the Vietnamese continue to be enemies of Cambodia. Pol Pot still believed that if Hen Sen worked with Vietnam that the Vietnamese would again turn on Cambodia and try to control the government.

Finally, Mr. Socheat wrapped up the session by describing the situation under which Pol Pot died and how he was cremated with little ceremony. The provincial teachers seemed surprised that after such a significant impact that he made on the history of the country, that his death was concluded with such little fanfare.

Following the presentation, Mr. Socheat opened the room up for questions. He got many questions about what is the purpose of the paranoia of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge. Mr. Socheat answered by saying that the reason they had so little trust is because they were scared of losing power, and that everyone in the organization was afraid because a person above or below them could denounce them and that could very easily be the end of their own lives.

Late-Morning Session

Mr. Socheat began the late morning session with the conclusion section of the textbook. He selected different individuals to read one paragraph at a time to the class. This helped get more people involved in the lesson. The majority of the class was also following along with the lesson. Although some of the person in the back were having a difficult time staying on task; Mr. Socheat dealt with this well by calling on some of those individuals to read or answer questions which brought their attention back to the lesson.

Then a National teacher took over and started teaching about the lessons to go along with Chapter 11. First the teacher focused the teachers on thinking about what the objectives are for Chapter 11. Then, he immediately moved on from the active reading part of the lesson, to the second lesson for Chapter 11 focusing on visual images of the day of liberation. The National teacher focused the Provincial teachers on the images that go with lesson two. Then asked the Provincial teachers to think of strategies for how to ask the students questions that will help them understand

the significance of the people rejoicing and trying to move back to their homes. The National teacher took some of the ideas, and then added some of his own suggestions, such as: Did the people in the photos consider themselves victims? Now we look back and think of people who survived the DK regime as victims, but the National teacher is encouraging a deeper level of thinking to consider how people thought of themselves at the time.

The National teacher also wants that Provincial teachers to help their students understand why the history of these atrocities are important to learn about today. Students need to think about why something like this would happen where people of their own race were doing such harmful acts to each other. Unless students today recognize the errors of the past, they will not be able to see opportunities in the future to deal with conflict in ways that result in positive resolution rather than horrific violence. Following the thinking that the students need to do, the provincial teachers are shown how to use the student workbooks to have the children then create their own answers to questions about why the DK period is an important one to study.

The last activity in the morning session was Lesson 4: A Comparative Mass Atrocity Study – Jigsaw Exercise. This activity was particularly interesting because it broke the large groups of fifty into smaller groups of ten where in each group they discussed one of five topics ranging from the atrocities in Cambodia to those in Rwanda. Once each group learned about their topic, they then broke out into groups of five. In each group of five there was at least one person from each small group that learned about one of the past commissions of an atrocity somewhere in the world. Each of the five people in the group then taught all the other members about the history of their region and tried to share the findings and conclusions of their group. Then in each group of five, the members compared the findings and conclusions from each of the topics. This style of learning proved to be extremely interactive for all students because even those who were more silent in their large groups were then encouraged to speak in their small groups of 5 to present the findings of their section.

Early Afternoon Session:

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 provincial teachers in their group. They particularly focused on part II of the Jigsaw lesson which further expanded upon the ideas of comparing and contrasting the historic episodes of genocide which were discussed thoroughly during Lesson Four's Jigsaw exercise.

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

The provincial teacher's went from their smaller groups into teaching what they learned to the large group. They took at least one of the "experts" about each of the historical time period and had them give a presentation to the entire class. Since each teacher had a different style of presentation, the performances and the way that the teachers communicated the information to the rest of the group had some variation.

Some of the teachers gave presentations that were based more on what they had written on the board and used that frequently as a reference. A couple of the other teachers had a more extemporaneous style of teaching that appeared to be more of a lecture that included more questions of the audience. A couple of the teachers really distinguished themselves by having very clear presentation styles. They spoke loudly and clearly, which is just the first step to a good presentation. They followed up their easy to understand speech by thoughtfully presenting the information in a way that was clear to the students and then asking insightful follow-up questions that captured the attention of the audience members.

They ended the afternoon session by completing peer evaluations, and discussing some of the teaching techniques that went particularly well in the afternoon.

Late Afternoon Session:

The National teacher began the closing session for the day by telling the students how much they have learned so far, and that how tomorrow will be their final day. He made clear how important the material in the course was, and how many skills the teachers have learned over the last week.

He went out to say how far they have come because last week when the teachers opened the book they knew nothing, but now they have learned so much about the history of the DK regime and about new techniques for teaching their students.

The book has two main points. First the purpose of learning the history, but second is to learn the new strategies of teaching. He used the examples of KWL and Jigsaw as some of those strategies that teachers can use in a variety of ways in their classes.

He understands that they won't learn everything about the Khmer Rouge or about teaching during these sessions. But they are started on a path to greater learning that teachers can do more to pursue on their own. He recommended doing more research about new teaching techniques and about the DK period of history so teachers can do an even better job of serving the education of their students.

He also asked the teachers if they can take the knowledge that they gained this week and share it with their students when they go back to their home schools.

This training is not just supposed cover everything, but that the teacher's asked so many questions that in reality they did find out nearly everything they could that was offered in the materials.

He hopes that both the material about the DK regime and the lessons about different ways of teaching that are coming from other countries will prove to be a benefit to the students and fruitful in the future to improving education in Cambodia.

One of the National teachers then got up to speak and said that he was proud of their improvement, but knew that all development cannot happen in just one week. He invited the students to contact him via phone or email after the session to ask more questions as they came up. He made a very valid point in saying that silence does not equal understanding and that the provincial teachers who were willing to answer and ask questions were doing the most development for their learning. He warned some of the teacher's who rarely participated that remaining silent because they might not understand and be too afraid to ask questions that might expose their ignorance on a subject would not actually help them improve or help their students.

To end the session, the provincial teachers all filled out evaluation forms considering the program for the entire training seminar.

End of Day Assessment:

For the end of the day, the DC-Cam staff in conjunction with the National teachers organized and implemented the distribution of pay to all of the training participants.