

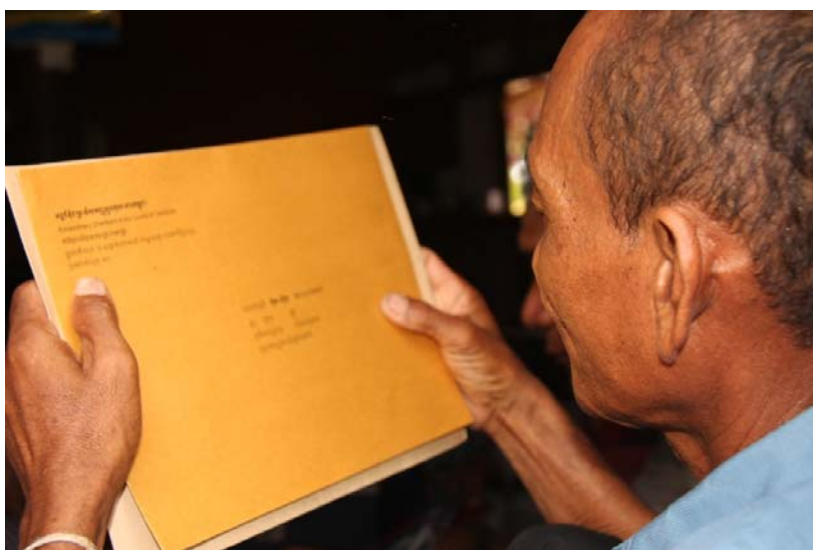
**KHMER ROUGE SURVIVORS STILL RESENT CHILDREN OF THE KHMER ROUGE**

**VICTIM PARTICIPATION PROJECT: DELIVERY OF COURT NOTIFICATION LETTERS TO SURVIVORS IN KAMPONG THOM AND SIEM REAP**

**MAY 2010**

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Between 25 and 31 March 2010, the Victim Participation Project (hereinafter 'VPA') at the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) went to Siem Reap province to deliver to complainants notification letters issued by Office of the Co-Prosecutors (OCP) of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). And from 21 – 31 May 2010, VPA made another field trip to Siem Reap to deliver OCP notification letters to the remaining complainants in Siem Reap and Kampong Thom. These complainants in both Kampong Thom and Siem Reap filed their complaints with the ECCC approximately two years ago via the DC-Cam's VPA.<sup>1</sup> Two years later, ECCC is responding to these survivors with notification letters informing these individuals of the measures taken as a result of their complaints. In addition to their complaints, these survivors also took part in making of the “Renakse Petitions,” intended by the post-Khmer Rouge government to reveal the extent of the Khmer Rouge crimes to the world and to request the UN to stop recognizing the Khmer Rouge as the legitimate representative of Cambodia. These petitions never left the country and are currently housed at DC-Cam.



In both provinces, VPA delivered OCP notification letters to 248 complainants residing in 6 districts. As with previous field trips, VPA collected survivor reactions as to their satisfaction with the ECCC proceedings and their views toward justice and the whole ECCC process. From these two provinces,

VPA had collected reactions from 59 complainants. A selective overview of the

<sup>1</sup> From 15 – 25 February 2010, VPA made a field trip to Kampong Thom and delivered notifications to all complainants, except for those residing in Staung and Prasat Balang districts. *Please see* Kampong Thom Report on [http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Tribunal\\_Response\\_Team/Victim\\_Participation/PDF/VPA\\_Field\\_Trip\\_to\\_KG\\_Thom.pdf](http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Tribunal_Response_Team/Victim_Participation/PDF/VPA_Field_Trip_to_KG_Thom.pdf).

survivor opinions is presented below. Interviews with survivors were recorded in both audio and visual format. DC-Cam believes these interviews and reactions will form an even more crucial part of history in many years to come. In addition, in a remote village of Kampong Thom province, VPA found an interesting case where the alleged perpetrator and victims are living in the same village. VPA and DC-Cam's Film Team is in the process of producing a documentary focusing on the issue of forgiveness and reconciliation, using this case as a starting point.

## FINDINGS

The following are findings from interviews conducted with 46 survivor complainants from Kampong Thom and Siem Reap, who were randomly selected for their reactions to the ECCC. These individuals were selected for this purpose because they had given specific answers as to their emotions towards the Khmer Rouge as an organization and to the younger generation of those associated with the Khmer Rouge. The term “survivor” used in this report refers to both victims and those taking part in the Khmer Rouge’s organization. As the Project found out, some of the complainants had also somewhat taken part in the Khmer Rouge organization. Despite being members of the Khmer Rouge, most of them had also endured indescribable sufferings and losses. This report was meant only to get an understanding of survivors' feelings towards the Khmer Rouge given the passage of 30-year span.



VPA staff gets survivor reactions from a complainant.

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According to the interviews, VPA has found that, as far as anger is concerned, survivors generally remain angry at the Khmer Rouge organization. Among the 46 interviewees, 35 of them (76%) said they are still angry at the Khmer Rouge for what they had been through and their losses. Some of these 35 respondents mentioned specifically that their feeling of resentment is against the persons who had personally inflicted sufferings upon them back thirty years ago. Despite expressing their angry feelings, most said they are happy seeing these former leaders of the Khmer Rouge prosecuted by the ECCC. Nonetheless, 11 survivors (24%) said in their interviews that they no longer have resentment against the Khmer Rouge for various reasons. A few survivors said they have no one to be angry at as their perpetrators have already died or been killed. Others mentioned that Buddhist principles and the passage of time have helped them to feel relief and to forgive and forget.

As for resentment towards the children of Khmer Rouge, 15 respondents (32%) said that they do not want their children to associate with children of the people who used to serve the Khmer Rouge organization. They believe that the offspring of the Khmer Rouge have to some extent received negative influence from their parents and that this could also have negative impact upon their children. 31 respondents (68%) feel that it is alright for their children to hang around with children of former members of the Khmer Rouge. They reason that these young children had no knowledge of what their parents did under the Khmer Rouge and that they are young and innocent.

On a separate matter, similar to findings in VPA's previous report "Delivery of Court Notification Letters to Complainants in Kampong Thom Province, February 15-25, 2010,"<sup>2</sup> survivors generally informed the Project that, despite the two-year gap since they had filed their complaints, they are very pleased to receive the notification letters from the ECCC. Many of them felt that this meant an official acknowledgement of their sufferings by the ECCC. Most, if not all, of the survivors interviewed told VPA that they wholeheartedly supported the tribunal as they believe the ECCC shall serve as a reminder that such atrocity shall never take place again. "I am very supportive of the tribunal because it makes sure that future leaders will not do the same to their people," said Et Ny from Kampong Thom.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF SURVIVOR STORY

**Eoun Yeoun, 72, from Siem Reap:** The elderly 72 year-old Yeoun from Siem Reap worked in an Economy Support Unit for the Khmer Rouge during Democratic Kampuchea. He brought food from place to place for the villagers living in cooperatives. One time in 1977, he was sent to Kralanh district, where Phnom Trung Bat, one of the most brutal security centers of the Khmer Rouge. He saw people thrown into the burning rice husks to be killed. According to Yeoun, before this killing took place, a female cadre back in the village gathered the sick villagers and told them that they were going to be taken to the hospital. Unfortunately, these villagers were burnt alive. Their ashes were used as fertilizers for the rice fields. Yeoun recalled that sometimes he found the unburned parts of the bodies when working in the field. As for his views about the ECCC, he told VPA that he trusts the ECCC wholeheartedly in its tasks of bringing surviving leaders of the Khmer Rouge to justice. He wishes to see an end to this long-time impunity.

**Heng Saruon, 55, Siem Reap:** Mr. Heng told VPA that he never grows tired of telling his stories of living through the Khmer Rouge period. He participated in the creation of the 1982-83 *Renakse* petition campaign condemning the Khmer Rouge to the United Nations. Unfortunately, his petition, like the others, never left Cambodia and is currently stored at DC-Cam. He believed the lower-level Khmer Rouge cadres performed their duties way beyond orders. For instance, in September of 1976, in

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<sup>2</sup> The report is available at

[http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Tribunal\\_Response\\_Team/Victim\\_Participation/PDF/VPA\\_Field\\_Trip\\_to\\_KG\\_Thom.pdf](http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Tribunal_Response_Team/Victim_Participation/PDF/VPA_Field_Trip_to_KG_Thom.pdf).

Kauk Khpous village, Chrolang commune, Puok district, a lady from Otdar Meanchey was sexually abused and later killed by a few KR soldiers in rice field. They even took her clothes off after killing her. The poor lady, as Heng said, had been arrested and accused of being a traitor because her family was caught trying to escape to Thailand. Heng would like to know the truth as to why such atrocities took place on this gentle land. He regrets that Cambodia was reduced to the level he called "zero." He said it gives him closure to participate in the ECCC judicial process.

*Che Chay, from Siem Reap:* Under the Khmer Rouge, Che was separated from his father. Shortly after, he learned that his father, a palm juice extractor, had been taken to be killed by unknown Khmer Rouge soldiers. Thereafter Che, along with other villagers, was sent to work at Phnum Kraom. He spent almost three years doing his assigned tasks - breaking the mountainous rock into little pieces. Pum, a cruel military chief, took charge of the place. At night, all workers needed to sleep in a pagoda without having a blanket or even a mosquito net as cover. At the worksite, there was no medicine and those who became ill laid down and waited for their last breath to come. While working, I saw people fell down unconscious due to exhaustion and heavy work. Though it has been 30 years since the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime, anger, suffering, and a sense of finding justice encouraged Che to register his complaint with the ECCC. Che was intrigued knowing that his complaint forms part of the country's historical record and tribunal's case file. Che told VPA that he does not want his children to hang out with children of former Khmer Rouge cadres. Mr. Che has been happy with the progress the court has made so far and he believes that this special court could bring him and other people justice. When asked about the meaning of the word justice, he said that to him, justice means revealing the truth.

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