

GENOCIDE EDUCATION IN CAMBODIA

The Teaching of “A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)”

The Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) and the Ministry of Education are proud to announce a new program that will expand the Genocide Education Project to pre-service teachers in six regional training schools. This expansion is not only a critical step forward in building a culture of reconciliation and peace, but one that also supports human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

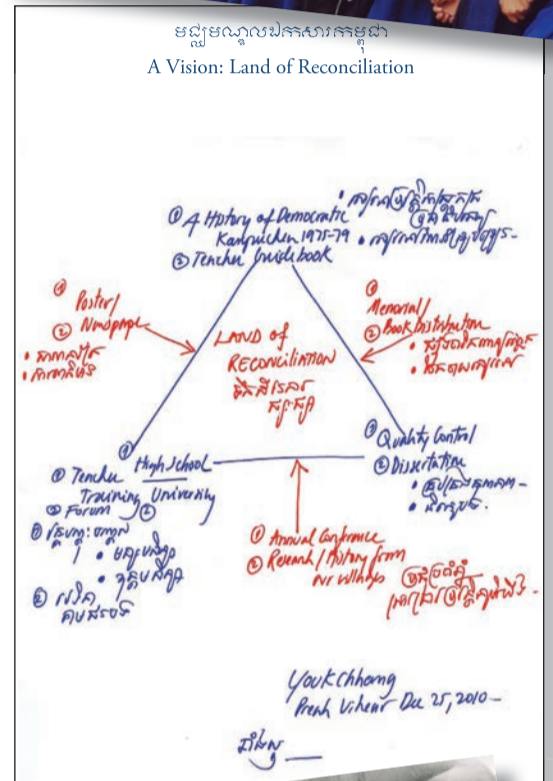
Over one decade after the fall of the Democratic Kampuchea (DK) regime in January 1979, efforts to teach Khmer Rouge (KR) history to Cambodians, especially the younger generation, were limited either to official political propaganda or to stories privately shared between parents and children. This changed in 1991 with the signing of the Paris Peace Agreement. The signature of this agreement marked the gradual transition to a new curriculum in which the history of Democratic Kampuchea was quietly removed. For the next ten years, Cambodians were encouraged to focus on peace and reconciliation at the expense of historical understanding and inquiry. To many, it was safer to bury the past than to confront it. Years passed and, with the creation of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, old fears of renewed war eroded. Twenty-eight years after the fall of Democratic Kampuchea (in 2007), DC-Cam published a textbook, *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)*, which the Ministry of Education has officially endorsed as a core reference for secondary-school teachers and students nationwide. A *Teacher's Guidebook* was also developed in 2009 to provide teachers with modern teaching methodologies. With the support of these books, in May 2011, the Ministry of Education revised its social study textbooks from grades 9 to 12 to incorporate portions of DC-Cam's textbook into History, Khmer Studies, and Citizen Morality classes.

Recognizing the remarkable and unprecedented progress of the genocide education program, DC-Cam and the Ministry of Education followed up with a series of teacher training workshops. Since 2009, over 3,000 teachers in History, Khmer Studies, and Citizen Morality have been trained throughout the country. In the interest of broadening the impact of the program, DC-Cam also developed curricula for other segments of civil society and government. University lecturers for the foundation year of university studies (year one), police and military officers, and pre-service teachers at the National Institute of Education (NIE) were provided instruction on the history of Democratic Kampuchea as well as profession-specific training related to genocide education. In addition to these outgrowths, DC-Cam and the Ministry of Education have embarked on a new program that will train pre-service teachers in all six regional training schools: Takeo, Phnom Penh, Kampong Cham, Kandal, Battambang and Prey Veng.

The teacher training workshop is a dynamic platform for institutionalizing a culture that values human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Historical empathy, critical thinking, critical reflexivity, and objectivity are key concepts and processes that are crucial to a thriving democracy and which are embedded within all genocide education curricula. The workshop is an important medium for cultivating these skills as well as providing lessons on how they can be taught by the participants. The guiding ethos of the workshops is to have teachers learn by doing. Teachers practice the lessons that include (but are not limited to) guided discussion, interactive group work, and scaffolded reading methods in order to not only broaden their understanding of DK history but also synthesize and practice their own use of student-centered learning methodologies. In this sense, teachers are challenged to be active learners and engaged participants in translating modern teaching methods to Cambodian classrooms.

At present, DC-Cam is the only institution that the Ministry of Education has granted permission to work with teachers nationwide on KR history. Moreover, our textbook and teacher's guidebook are the only resources endorsed by the Ministry of Education for nationwide use. We believe that to have a sustainable genocide education in Cambodia and to contribute to peace building, national reconciliation, and genocide prevention, additional trainings must be conducted to reach out to all relevant teachers in the three aforementioned subjects.

Photos from Top to Bottom: Students in Takeo province by Phat Peseth, A Vision: Land of Reconciliation; Teacher's Guidebook The Teaching of "A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979), A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)



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