

**Documentation Center of Cambodia Field Report  
Public Information Room (PIR) Road Trips  
First Quarter 2006**

**Background**

The purpose of these field trips is to distribute material related to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC, the Khmer Rouge Tribunal), show films on the regime, and hold discussions on sexual abuse that occurred during Democratic Kampuchea.

When visiting villages, the team members always gave a short talk before showing the films. The topics covered 1) an introduction to the Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2) the purpose of the PIR team's visit to the village, 3) a presentation on the background and developments of the ECCC, and 4) an introduction to the film(s) the villagers were about to see. After the films were screened, the team members asked if anyone had been sexually abused during Democratic Kampuchea, or if they knew anyone or had heard about anyone who had. People were also encouraged to make comments on the film(s), ask questions about the upcoming Khmer Rouge Tribunal, voice their opinion of the need to educate the younger generation on the history of Democratic Kampuchea, and other topics.

PIR staff also interviewed and filmed several villagers and took requests to find information on family members who disappeared during the regime.

**Summary of Activities**

The PIR team made three field trips this quarter, visiting Kampong Cham, Preah Vihear, and Steung Treng provinces. During these trips, about 1,670 people attended meetings held by DC-Cam, where they watched films and held discussions on the Khmer Rouge (KR) tribunal, sexual abuse during Democratic Kampuchea, and other topics. One person recalled a case of rape during the regime. The PIR team provided those attending with 430 sets of 4 documents, and 5 people asked the Center to trace their relatives who disappeared during Democratic Kampuchea.

## 1. Tbaung Khmum District, Kampong Cham Province February 10-13, 2006

People attending meetings/film screenings	Over 120
Information packages provided (UN-Government of Cambodia agreement, <i>Introduction to the Khmer Rouge Tribunal</i> , Khmer Rouge Law, DC-Cam magazine <i>Searching for the Truth</i> )	30
Requests for family tracing services	0

### Activities

The PIR team, led by Sokhym Em, went to Kampong Cham province in order to show films and distribute documents to villagers (see the table above). This was the team's first field trip and was conducted to determine the best practices for future trips.

At 1:00 p.m. on February 11, the team reached the house of Hey, a commune chief in Moung Rieng sub-district, Tbaung Khmom district. He stated that he was happy to help our team because he had read about our outreach work in DC-Cam's magazine, *Searching for the Truth*. Hey then telephoned the village chief and told him that we would be in the area on the following day.

Hey did not want to show the film in the central commune office because it is far from people's homes and did not provide any shade (the weather was very hot). He suggested that we show the film in his village or a pagoda about 1 km away. We elected to screen the film at the more centrally-located pagoda. The remainder of the afternoon was spent attempting to get our equipment to work; we later rented a DVD player on the local market.

When we reached Muong village the next morning, about 50 adults and 70 children were waiting for us. After the village chief introduced us to the villagers, we talked about DC-Cam and the reasons we were showing a film by Rithy Panh: *S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine*. We screened the film between 9:00 and 10:30 a.m. We also wanted to show DC-Cam's documentary *The Khmer Rouge Rice Fields: The Story of Rape Survivor Tang Kim*. However, we were not able to screen this film or hold discussions because people needed to return home to prepare lunch for their families. We then distributed 30 information packages to the people who watched the film.

At 1:30 p.m., we returned to the pagoda for a second screening. There had been some confusion about the time people were to assemble, so we asked the village chief to inform people about the meeting. After about 15 minutes, a few adults and several children arrived. We distributed four information packages to them and explained the film we were about to show (it deals with the sexual abuse of women during Democratic Kampuchea) and the documents we distributed. The audience did not ask any questions, despite our attempts to elicit them. No monks attended the screening (the pagoda has 13 monks, but no nuns) because it is against Buddhist practice.

### Conclusion

Although the villagers did not ask any questions, they did appear to be interested in the *Tang Kim* film.

### Lessons Learned

The trip was not completely successful because villagers told us that they did not want to be reminded of the past; it made them re-experience their pain. However, they did say that they would never forget the Khmer Rouge regime.

We realized that we should work directly with the village and group chiefs, asking them in advance to inform villagers about our program. We also decided to schedule adequate time for the films and discussion, and to introduce the film and distribute documents before showing the film.

### **Challenges and Suggestions**

We experienced difficulty with the equipment needed to screen the films (while people in the cities use VCD players, DVDs are the norm in the countryside). We were thus forced to rent a DVD machine (\$100 for two screenings). Moreover, we felt that the PIR Project should purchase a range of equipment for screening films, including a mini-electric machine, video equipment, a screen, DVD player, and LCD to preclude the time and expense needed to obtain equipment outside Phnom Penh.

We also felt it would be better to hold the screening and discussions in the evening, when more villagers are available and the weather is cooler. Holding the meetings convenient to the majority of a village's homes and providing snacks and water will ensure better attendance.

## **2. Tbeng Meanchey District Preah Vihear Province, March 10-14, 2006**

People attending meetings/film screenings	550
Information packages provided (UN-Government of Cambodia agreement, <i>Introduction to the Khmer Rouge Tribunal</i> , Khmer Rouge Law, DC-Cam magazine <i>Searching for the Truth</i> )	150
Requests for family tracing services	2

### **Activities**

The PIR Team (Sokourn Kong, Socheat Nhean, Sophal Ly and Sokhym Em) left Phnom Penh at 10 a.m. on March 10, and arrived in the town of Preah Vihear at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The purpose of the trip was to show a film and distribute four documents (the agreement between the Cambodian government and UN, the Khmer Rouge (KR) law, an introduction to the Khmer Rouge tribunal, and copies of DC-Cam's magazine *Searching for the Truth*).

On March 11, we met Duong Un, the chief of Phearakich village, Pahal sub-district, and told him about the purpose of our visit. He stated that he had seen copies of *Searching for the Truth* in the commune office, was interested in the magazine, and was happy to cooperate with us. Duong Un also suggested that we show the film after he told the villagers about it, and that the film should be shown at night, after people returned from work.

We next traveled about 10 km to the home of the commune chief. After informing him about the purpose of our trip, he replied that there were ten villages in his commune. Because they were far apart, he suggested that we show the film in two or three places, and assured us that he would guarantee our security. We also told him about DC-Cam's plans to bring villagers to visit the ECCC, Tuol Sleng, and Choeung Ek. We then invited him and the village chiefs in his

commune to participate in the ECCC program. He accepted our invitation with pleasure.

On March 12, our team rented a video player and screen from a man in Pahal village. At 5:00 p.m. we arrived in Phearakich village in Pahal sub-district. An hour later, the villagers began arriving. Using a microphone, the village chief called for people to come, and explained the purpose of our visit to them. Then Sokhym spoke, introducing DC-Cam and its work on the KR tribunal. Next, Sophal summarized the film the villagers were about to see (*The Khmer Rouge Rice Fields: The Story of Rape Survivor Tang Kim*). In the meantime, Sokeoun and Socheat distributed documents.

At 6:30 p.m., we showed the film to about 250 people; this was followed by a discussion. We asked if anyone present had been raped during Democratic Kampuchea or would be willing to serve as a witness, but no one came forward. Then Socheat introduced the next film they were about to see: Rithy Panh's *S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine*. We finished screening this 1 hour, 45 minute film by 9 p.m.

In the discussion afterwards, one viewer stated that both films were real; similar events had happened throughout their region. At a rubber farm in Preah Vihear province, one viewer recalled that a Khmer Rouge cadre had raped a young woman in a mobile unit. She became pregnant and the couple was forced to marry. Others told stories about how the Khmer Rouge hated new people, who they accused of being enemies of the revolution, and that they arrested young men from Phnom Penh who did not know how to farm. They noted that thousands of new people were killed or died from starvation or disease in Preah Vihear province during Democratic Kampuchea.

At 8 a.m. on March 13, our team met the commune chief at the Chhean Muk sub-district office. We explained our purpose to him and he stated that he was happy to cooperate. He also said that there were no security problems in his commune, but suggested that we use an LCD to show the film because it was better visually. In addition, he said we should show the film at the home of Sorn Khim, the village chief, as many people lived nearby.

At 5:30 that evening, we arrived at Mahaphal village in Chhean Muk sub-district, about 10 km from Preah Vihear town. About 300 people had assembled to watch the film. We invited the sub-district chief to attend and he spoke to the villagers about the tribunal and family tracing. Again, we passed out documents, and Sokhym introduced DC-Cam and the film. At 7:00 when the film was finished, we opened up discussions. No one said anything, so we began packing up to leave. At that point, two people asked about their relatives who disappeared during the KR regime. We noted the names of their relatives so announcements could be published in DC-Cam's magazine.

## Conclusion

We did not show the Rithy Panh film in Mahaphal village because the people of Phearakich village found it to be long and difficult to understand. In all, about 550 people watched the films. We also distributed 150 sets of documents to them.

## Impacts

**Films.** The people in both sub-districts seemed happy to watch the films and requested to see more films on the KR and 1970-75 bombing. They said that young people did not believe what happened during the KR regime, and that many people were killed or starved to death. They want young people to learn about the regime, but find it difficult to explain it to them. Thus, they suggested that we show films with KR leaders in them and people working during the regime.

**Family Tracing.** Two women in Mahaphal village asked us to trace relatives who disappeared during the regime.

Kheng (about 40 years old) asked us to find information on her parents; she was separated from them in 1975 when the Khmer Rouge took over. She said she does not remember her family name, but that her father's name was Khem. The family lived in Kampong Thom province. When she was young she heard a neighbor call her father Seb Sareoun; he was a lieutenant in the Lon Nol army. She remembered that her mother's name was Patt, but could not remember her face. One day, her mother's older sister took her mother away. When her father learned of his, he tried to follow her, but her mother was gone. After that, she lived alone with her father. On April 17, 1975, as people were being evacuated to Prasat district, she became separated from her father. She was forced into a children's mobile unit. Kheng said the KR teacher hated her and had her arrested three times, but a security guard sent her home. In 1979, a Vietnamese soldier brought her to Preah Vihear to live with her godmother. Today, she is married and has four children.

Khin Yorn's father was Prak Sim and her mother Prak Yen. She inquired about her uncle Prak Sim aka prak Yut, a Khmer Rouge soldier who disappeared at Dang Rek Mountain sometime after 1979. Khin Yorn asked that DC-Cam publish her uncle's name in *Searching for the Truth* and broadcast it on the radio. We promised her we would do our best.

## Lesson Learned

Showing the films at night allows more villagers to attend and gives them time for discussion afterward. However, this made us worry about security, especially when we saw a few soldiers standing around during the screenings.

## Challenges and Suggestions

**Film.** People found it difficult to watch the films on video because the screen is only 21" wide, especially with 200 or more people crowding around to watch. Thus, we suggest buying an LCD, which has a larger screen, for showing the films to people in the countryside.

Most of the viewers were reluctant to discuss the films or what happened to them during the regime.

Villagers were not interested in two of the documents: the agreement between the Cambodian

government and UN, and the KR law. However, they were interested in the magazine and introduction to the Khmer Rouge tribunal.

### 3. Stung Treng Province March 24-27, 2006

People attending meetings/film screenings	900
Information packages provided (UN-Government of Cambodia agreement, <i>Introduction to the Khmer Rouge Tribunal</i> , Khmer Rouge Law, DC-Cam magazine <i>Searching for the Truth</i> )	250
Requests for family tracing services	3

#### Activities

The PIR team (Sophary Noy, Darapidor Rath, Aun Long, Bunthy Chey, Ratanak Leng and Sokhym Em) traveled to the provincial town of Stung Treng on March 24. The next day, we met Suoy Khamvien, the chief of Koh Sampeay sub-district, Siem Bok district, and told him about the purpose of our visit. He was familiar with DC-Cam from the copies of *Searching for the Truth* that he saw in sub-district office. He added that we could not show film that day because the villagers were collecting money to build temple a temple, and at night, would sell flowers for dancing. Suoy Khamvien promised he would inform people that the film would be shown the next night.

We decided to show the film in Reachea Norkor village, Stung Treng sub-district. We met with the sub-district chief, Cea Vann, who said we would need permission from the governor of Stung Treng province and promised to help us. That afternoon, Chea Vann was successful in obtaining a letter of permission.

At 5:30 p.m., the villagers began arriving. Soy Heng, the village chief and lay priest at the local pagoda, explained the purpose of our visit to them. Then Sokhym introduced DC-Cam and its work on KR tribunal, and summarized the film the villagers were about to see (*The Khmer Rouge Rice Fields: The Story of Rape Survivor Tang Kim*). In the meantime Sophary and Pidor distributed documents, while Ratanak and Bunthy filmed and took photographs.

At 6:30 p.m., we showed the film to about 200 people; this was followed by discussions. We asked if anyone present had been raped during Democratic Kampuchea or would be willing to serve as a witness. We also told them about how nearly 2 million people died during Democratic Kampuchea, focusing on the younger people who attended. A few students stated that their parents had told them about this, but they did not believe them. We then told them more about the activities of the KR during Democratic Kampuchea. Before the next film was shown, Sophary explained the KR tribunal and asked if anyone had questions. One grade 12 student asked about the sources of funding for the tribunal and when the tribunal would occur. Sophary answered his questions and gave him more information about the trials.

At 7:30 p.m. we introduced Rithy Panh's films *Huot Bophana*, and began showing it. However, people could not understand the film, which is in French. We thus stopped showing it and apologized to them. We continued to discuss rape during Democratic Kampuchea and took requests for family tracing. Three people asked for information about their relatives. We promised to search for their names and publish the results in *Searching for the Truth*.

On March 26, we rented a video player and two screens. That evening, we arrived at the Koh Sampeay sub-district office, where about 700 people had assembled to watch the film. The sub-district chief spoke to the villagers about our program. Then Sokhym spoke about DC-Cam, the film, the tribunal and family tracing. We also passed out documents. At 8:30 when the film was finished, we opened up the meeting for discussion. When no one spoke, we introduced the film *Nine Levels of Hell*. Due to electrical problems, we were unable to show it.

## **Conclusion**

In all, about 900 people watch the film; we also distributed 250 sets of documents to them.

## **Impacts**

**Films.** Preap Savin, age 52, of Reachea Norkor village, Stung Treng sub-district, asked for a copy of the *Tang Kim* film to show to other villagers. He noted that his neighbors told him that this film has similar events to those his neighbor's relative had experienced during Democratic Kampuchea.

Nut Pann, age 45, said the film showed the real story about how the KR killed people. After 1979, he learned that the KR killed his parents in 1978 at a dam in Chi Sen district.

Soy Heng, village chief of Reachea Norkor, stated that the KR killed people and forced them to live apart from their families. In 1968, he was a monk in Koh Thom district, Kandal province. In 1973 the KR occupied his village and tried to force him three times to quit the pagoda. He finally resigned in 1975 when the KR took control over Cambodia. He added that from 1972-75, the KR forced monks to farm. After 1975 the KR accused him of being from the high classes. They nearly killed him, but he was able to escape.

**Family Tracing.** Three villagers in Reachea Norkor asked us to trace relatives who had disappeared during the regime.

Chuong Nhey, age 68, of Kaing Memay village, Prah Bat sub-district, asked about her younger brother who disappeared after 1979. His wife's name is Pann; they have 4 children and are living in Kaing Memay village. Chuong Nhey heard that her brother is living in the US.

Dim Sarith, age 53, lives in Reachea Norkor village. His father was Dim Saroeun (he died in 1971) and his mother is Neang Ban. Dim Sarith asked about his older brother Dim Sarim aka Ki. Dim Sarim was a KR soldier. When he was guarding on top of Lah Baing mountain, he accidentally shot himself. The KR accused him of shooting to signal Vietnamese troops and arrested him. He mother heard that he is now living in Battambang province.

Sala Chun, age 38, lives in Reachea Norkor village. He was born in Takeo village, Teveng sub-district. His father was Kev and his mother was Pril Lip. Sala Chun asked about his older brother who was one of Pol Pot's bodyguards after 1979.

## **Lesson Learned**

People did not like the documentary film on Tang Kim; they said she just told her own story and it did not have any action like a fictional film. They also did not seem to want to hold discussions or ask questions despite our efforts to engage them.

## **Challenges and Suggestions**

**Film.** People found it difficult to watch the film because the screen is only 21” wide. Although we rented two screens, 700 or more people had to crowd around to watch. Thus, we suggest buying an LCD, which has a larger screen, for showing the films. In addition, electric power surges damaged the cassette player, making it impossible to show the second film. People were not interested in discussing the film or what happened to them during the regime.

Prepared by  
Sokhym Em