

DC-CAM

# PUBLIC VILLAGE FORUM



**UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF ITS “WITNESSING JUSTICE PROJECT (WJP),” THE DOCUMENTATION CENTER OF CAMBODIA (DC-CAM) ANNOUNCES RESUMPTION OF ITS LONG-TERM MISSION TO KEEP THE GENERAL PUBLIC ENGAGED WITH, AND INFORMED ABOUT, THE LEGAL ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS ONGOING AT THE EXTRAORDINARY CHAMBERS IN THE COURTS OF CAMBODIA (ECCC).**

This outreach is important because until the creation of the ECCC basic fair trial standards have been largely absent in Cambodia. As such, DC-Cam believes it is essential to provide as many Cambodians as possible with the opportunity to observe the current justice-seeking process at the Court. These people are the victims of the crimes being adjudicated at the ECCC and without their engagement, true justice is impossible. Thus, the overall success of the ECCC demands level popular interest and participation among as many Cambodians as possible. Given the limited literacy and media access among Cambodians today, efforts to facilitate their participation require carefully tailored efforts to meaningfully engage with the ECCC process.

The WJP will assist Cambodians—especially rural dwellers, women and minority groups—in order to engage with the ECCC’s work by facilitating their attendance at a Court hearing, while also providing pre-hearing legal training and discussion of issues currently in play at the ECCC. In addition, program participants will attend two historical sites with DC-Cam’s assistance—S-21 Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum and Choeung Ek Killing Field—to help connect their own personal experiences to the larger legal and historical narrative of the Khmer Rouge experience in Cambodia.

DC-Cam’s Public Village Forums are therefore an important mechanism which can help provide legal literacy training to ordinary Cambodians in support of the work of both WJP and the ECCC. The selected invitees who have visited ECCC and historical sites already will chair the public village forums in their respective home communities. Participants in these rural areas will be invited to listen to a discussion on justice and related issues, pose questions, exchange views, give suggestions, and be asked to convey the insights they gain to their neighbors to maximize the impact of each forum. By evoking participatory spirit, ordinary Cambodians and especially marginalized groups will be empowered to join in civic activism and civil society more generally. As Cambodia has moved toward a national reconciliation, the Public Village Forum is poised to continue to serve as one mechanism that helps to build a shared future of a better Cambodia.

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Supported by Office of Global Programs, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), U.S. Department of State. (2013-2014)