

# មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឧបកសាស្ត្រកម្ពុជា

Documentation Center of Cambodia's Genocide Education Project  
in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

The Teaching of "A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)"  
Teacher Workshop-Working Group on Reclaiming Cambodian History  
Preah Vihear Temple, December 24/25/26, 2010

# LAND OF RECONCILIATION

— Building A Peaceful Society Through Education

The workshop is funded by The Asia Foundation (TAF) with core support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida). The teacher training is funded by the Government of Belgium.

Report: Sarah Jones Dickens

Team: Kok-Thay Eng, Penh Samnang, Huy Samphoas, Mam Sophat

Photo: Keo Dacil, Mam Kalyanee, Nhean Socheat, Pheng Pong-Rasy, Lim Cheytoath



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



From December 24 to 26, 2010, over 200 Cambodian teachers from across the country met in Preah Vihear Province as part of the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) and the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport's third annual Teacher Workshop and Working Group entitled "Reclaiming Cambodian History." The Workshop's participants included teachers who received methodology and genocide education curriculum training in mid-and late 2009 as part of the Cambodian government's mandate to implement genocide education curriculum into all Cambodian public high schools and universities by 2013. The Cambodian Genocide Education Project (CGEP) utilizes Khamboly Dy's textbook *A History of Democratic Kampuchea 1975-1979* and its accompanying *Student Workbook* and *Teacher Guidebook* authored by Dr. Phala Chea and Christopher Dearing.

Preah Vihear Workshop Participants spent one day in the district town of Preah Vihear and listened to international and Cambodian scholars, National Teachers, and CGEP Coordinators discuss issues related to genocide education, national reconciliation, different concepts of forgiveness, and the importance of documenting history. On the second day of the conference, teachers traveled to see Preah Vihear Temple, an ancient Angkor temple built during the reign of the Angkorian era and has significant importance in present day Cambodian society.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Kok Thay Eng specifically spoke about the temple's significance during the Preah Vihear Workshop. See also "Press Release: Teacher Workshop Working Group on Reclaiming Cambodian History" Online. [http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Preah\\_Vihear\\_Workshop\\_Press\\_Release.pdf](http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Preah_Vihear_Workshop_Press_Release.pdf) and Sarah Jones Dickens

The Workshop sought to (1) build upon the professional capacity of national and provincial teachers who would train "commune-level" teachers in subsequent commune teacher trainings; (2) review the effectiveness of current teaching strategies; (3) offer suggestions for improvement; and (4) discuss the Project's logistical and strategic visions in the following years.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps more significantly, the Workshop set into motion the beginning stages of establishing an official working group that could later serve as a truth and reconciliation commission to compliment other transnational justice mechanisms. CGEP believes a national truth and reconciliation commission would go beyond the scope of current legal proceedings taking place before the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) and work towards national reconciliation. A recent survey conducted in 2009 by the Human Rights Center at University of California Berkeley found that 77% of survivors and 85% in younger generations wanted to learn more about the regime.<sup>3</sup> But as the study finds: "Although Cambodians, both of whom had lived under the regime and those who had not, were eager to find out the truth about what had happened during the regime, less than 50% of those surveyed were willing to be part of a public hearing and talk about their experiences."<sup>4</sup> As such, a TRC process could fill in these gaps and compliment the justice process by reaching millions of Cambodians who are hesitant to speak in public regarding the Khmer Rouge regime, but who want to know more about it—a search for truth that spans generations and cuts across national borders.

Youk Chhang, Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia



"Reclaiming Cambodian History: The Case of the Documentation Center of Cambodia," <http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Reclaiming%20Cambodia%20History--Sarah.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> See "Purpose: Teacher Workshop Working Group on Preah Vihear." 2010. Online [http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Preah\\_Vihear\\_Workshop\\_PURPOSE.pdf](http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Preah_Vihear_Workshop_PURPOSE.pdf)

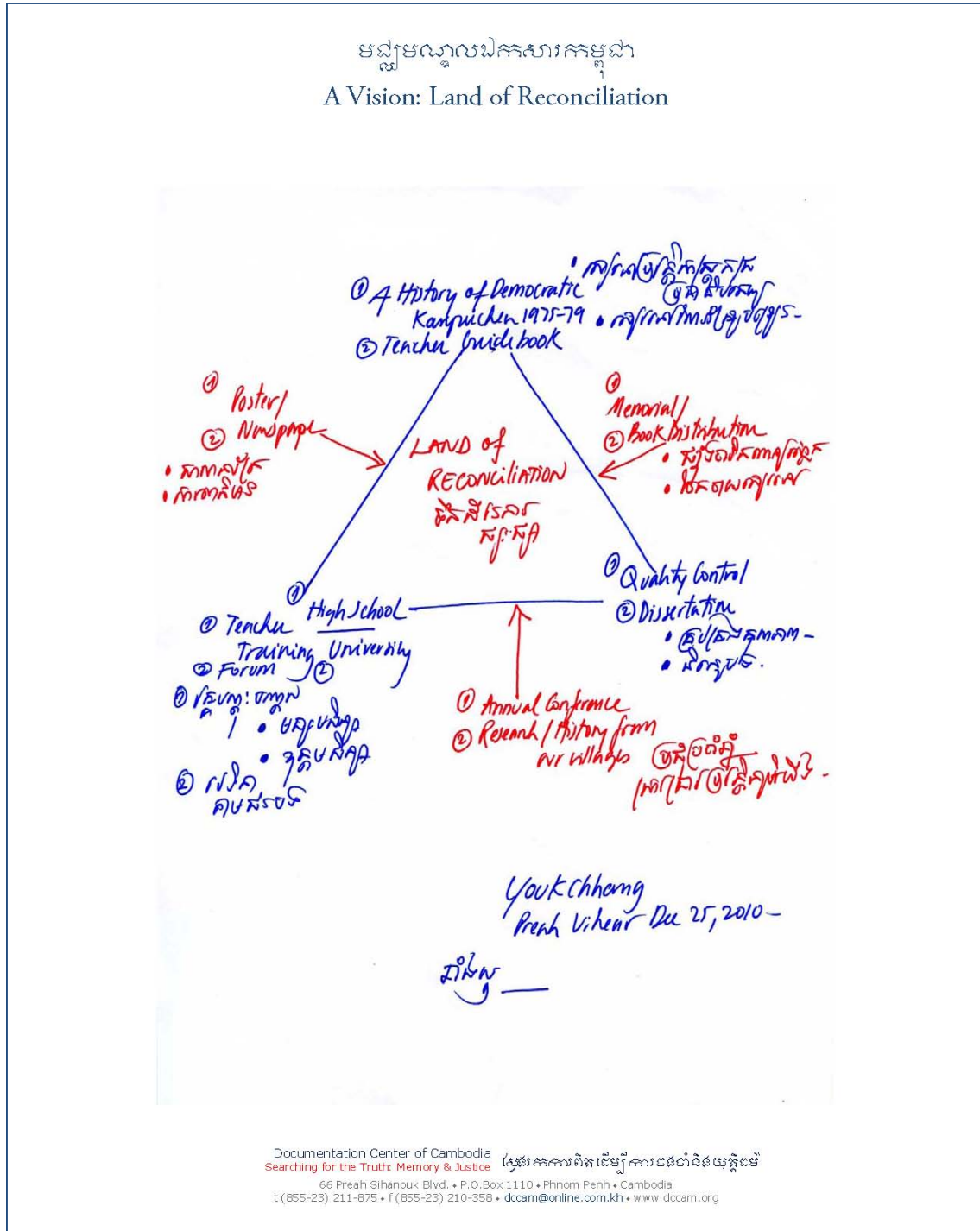
<sup>3</sup> Phuong Pham, Patrick Vinck, Mychelle Balthazard, Sokhom Hean, and Eric Stover, "So We Will Never Forget: A Population-Based Survey on Attitudes About Social Reconstruction and the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia" 2009. Human Rights Center. University of California, Berkeley.

available at <http://hrc.berkeley.edu/pdfs/So-We-Will-Never-Forget.pdf/> Quoted in Laura Goodwin and Maria del Pilar Castillo. "Complementary Justice: Designing a Mechanism for Memory and Reconciliation in Cambodia." ed. Youk Chhang and Jaya Ramji-Nogales. 2010. Online at

[http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Preah\\_Vihear\\_Workshop\\_DISCUSSION\\_PAPER\\_I.pdf](http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Preah_Vihear_Workshop_DISCUSSION_PAPER_I.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 5.

While TRCs in other post-conflict countries revolve primarily around Christian models of forgiveness,<sup>5</sup> Youk Chhang, Director of Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), unveiled at the Workshop a triangulated diagram entitled "A Vision: Land of Reconciliation"<sup>6</sup> that conceptualizes more Cambodian-specific notions for national reconciliation and healing. "The Land of Reconciliation" leverages the role of



<sup>5</sup> Goodwin, et. al.

<sup>6</sup> Youk Chhang, "Land of Reconciliation," December 25, 2010.

education and teachers because both are highly respected in Cambodian communities regardless of religious or ethnic differences. As such, Youk Chhang's vision places genocide education, teacher training, and quality controls at the triangle's central nodes. Annual conferences; research conducted in the villages; posters, newspapers, and book distributions; and genocide memorials buttress the triangle's pillars.

DC-Cam, the Ministry of Education and international scholars believe genocide education and other means to disseminate knowledge on Khmer Rouge atrocities can steer Cambodian society towards national reconciliation and individual healing.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the CGEP is already doing so. Teacher Training Sessions, Public Education Forums, Genocide Slogan Inaugurations, textbook distributions, and field trips have all born witness to survivors testifying to and sharing their memories of the Democratic Kampuchea (DK) period even when not prompted. The reoccurrences of these impromptu testimonial sessions in all three Teacher Training Workshops point to the power of the training sessions to serve as forums for individual and collective reconciliation. Furthermore, the CGEP and the teaching curriculum have allowed survivors to contextualize their own histories: As many teachers come to the training workshops with little if any knowledge of the DK period apart from their individual experiences, the curriculum provides survivors with historical knowledge to contextualize their own pasts within a larger history.<sup>8</sup> Attentive and curious, many teachers do not hesitate to ask guest speakers and training team members questions to clarify or expand on issues raised throughout the course of the workshops. Finally, the project has allowed teachers to testify in a safe place as they willingly volunteer their past experiences to the collective group.

These outcomes of the CGEP parallel with the goals of a truth and reconciliation commission, specifically in "acknowledging crimes, enabling victims to have a voice,

---

<sup>7</sup> Goodwin et. al, and Dickens. All Final Project Reports for Commune, Provincial, and National Teacher Reconciliation demonstrate the potential for CGEP to work towards individual and collective reconciliation. See "Final Project Report on Provincial Teacher Training" December 2009. Online [www.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/Report\\_on\\_Provincial\\_Training.htm](http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/Report_on_Provincial_Training.htm) and "Report on National Teacher Training July 2009." 2009. "Final Project Report on National Teacher Training." Online at [http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Report\\_on\\_National\\_Teacher\\_Training-June%202009\\_to\\_July\\_7\\_2009-EN.pdf](http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Report_on_National_Teacher_Training-June%202009_to_July_7_2009-EN.pdf) and "Genocide Education Project: The Teaching of "A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)" Final Report to Belgium. 2010. Online at [http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/DC-Cam\\_Genocide\\_Education\\_Report\\_to%20Belgium--2010.pdf](http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/DC-Cam_Genocide_Education_Report_to%20Belgium--2010.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> A Battambang teacher's comment from November 2009 underscores this crucial aspect of the training. She was around twenty years old during the Khmer Rouge regime, but did not, until this day, know the severity of people's experiences in different regions other than hers. After reading the textbook and going through the training process, the woman realized that much of her experiences of starvation and family members' executions were everyday occurrences during the regime. From her conversation with me, she describes that the training was crucial to contextualize her own history and to let her know that she was not alone with her suffering. She is quoted as saying, "There is one part in the book that talks about the torture, and it talks about starvation and this is what I experienced. The arrest of my father, my sister, to be killed is also mentioned in the book. That is part of my experience. The starvation that is what happened to my two children. I can relate to it." See [www.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/Report\\_on\\_Provincial\\_Training.htm](http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/Report_on_Provincial_Training.htm) and "Report on National Teacher Training July 2009." 2009

and providing a historical account of the various factors that lead to mass atrocities."<sup>9</sup> As such, the CGEP faces a unique crossroads to continue and expand these reconciliation efforts, but in more formal means once the Khmer Rouge tribunal is finished.



Another facet of the Land of Reconciliation is to utilize teachers in the proposed truth and reconciliation commission. Not only is this innovative but it is also culturally appropriate as teachers are highly respected in

Cambodian society.<sup>10</sup> At the Workshop, both Her Excellency Tun Sa Im and Youk Chhang articulated the significant roles Cambodian teachers can play in collecting, preserving, and writing their own histories. In fact, teachers have already proven they are quite successful in doing so: Prior to the Working Group, all participants were required to submit 10 to 20 page essays on any topic related to the villages in which they teach.<sup>11</sup> Over 200 essays were collected. These written documents bear witness to atrocities, survival, and resilience during and after the Khmer Rouge. Not all stories were limited to the Khmer Rouge period: Some teachers wrote about the history of their villages, the means through which villagers re-built their communities after the Khmer Rouge, and the way of life prior to the fall of Phnom Penh in 1975. The quantity and quality of stories submitted attest to teachers' effectiveness and eagerness to research, interview, and document history in their villages, allowing survivors to "re-claim" their own histories from the "village up."

The 2000 pages Participants contributed to the "History from Our Villages" project also evidence teachers' roles as active agents in steering reconciliation in Cambodian society. As teachers go out into the field to speak with survivors from their communities, they act as listeners and bear witness to the pain of others. This is precisely one of the most important aspects in any post-conflict society: To bear witness to, and thus legitimate, past traumas because they let the survivor know they

---

<sup>9</sup> Goodwin et al, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>11</sup> This was part of the project "History from Our Villages." Online.  
[http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/History\\_from\\_Our\\_Villages.pdf](http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/History_from_Our_Villages.pdf)

are not alone in their sufferings.<sup>12</sup> Farina So, a DC-Cam lecturer and expert in Cham Muslim's experiences during the Khmer Rouge, echoes these ideas in her paper about her extensive experiences interviewing Cham Muslims when she states: "I have noticed that these interviewees need 'empathic' listeners to bear witness to their acts of remembering and ...to recognize their own sufferings. Hence the role of listener is very important to make the narrator feel that they are not alone to bear their suffering, but at least they have someone to bear witness to their sufferings and, in effect, ease their pain."<sup>13</sup> Teachers further reinforce this testimonial process by writing down the histories they hear because writing holds a particularly special "truth" function in Cambodian society.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, teachers understand the importance of the Genocide Education project—and their roles—in Cambodia's reconciliation process. Many were thrilled, if not relieved, that this curriculum had finally reached Cambodia's schools. As Mom Meth, a National Trainer, was quoted as saying in *Searching for the Truth* in 2009: "I have turned my anger and suffering from losing my husband and younger sister into strength and perseverance to accomplish my career and raise all of my five children until they are educated. I teach the younger generation to understand Khmer Rouge history, to not be vengeful, and to strive for solidarity among each other."<sup>15</sup> Provincial Trainees also have had similar opinions and have commented, "We must emphasize that this [project] is for national reconciliation, for tolerance."<sup>16</sup> These sentiments were echoed in the Preah Vihear Workshop as teachers continued to demonstrate their understanding of the CGEP as a means towards reconciliation, understanding the significance they have as teachers—and as community leaders—in enacting this process.



<sup>12</sup> See Dickens. Also Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman's brilliant work *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*.1992. (New York: Routledge) builds off their experiences working with Yale Holocaust Video Archive. They specifically detail the important role witnesses play in affirming trauma. Also see Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*. 1997. (New York: Basic Books).

<sup>13</sup> Farina So. "History from Below: Recording Cham Muslims' Experiences under Democratic Kampuchea." 2010. Online at [http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Preah\\_Vihear\\_workshop\\_DISCUSSION\\_PAPER\\_VI.pdf](http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Preah_Vihear_workshop_DISCUSSION_PAPER_VI.pdf). In my extensive experiences working with Khmer Rouge survivors, former Khmer Rouge dancers, and artists, I have, like Farina So, noticed the need for survivors to bear witness to someone.

<sup>14</sup> Writing in Cambodian society holds particular reverence and is evidenced in palm leaf inscriptions, or in Khmer *Sleuk Rith*. According to DC-Cam website's *Sleuk Rith* are dried leaves that Cambodian religious leaders and scholars have used for centuries to document history, disseminate knowledge, and preserve culture during periods of harsh rule." [http://www.dccam.org/Sleuk\\_Rith\\_Institute/index.htm](http://www.dccam.org/Sleuk_Rith_Institute/index.htm)

<sup>15</sup> See Final National Teacher Report and Final Provincial Teacher Report.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.



## BACKGROUND TO THE WORKSHOP

The Preah Vihear Workshop is part of DC-Cam and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport's ongoing Cambodian Genocide Education Project, a nationwide endeavor that seeks to implement genocide education curriculum into all public Cambodian high schools and universities by 2013.<sup>17</sup> Preah Vihear Workshop Participants received pedagogical and history training in July and November 2009 in five to seven-day sessions and received Ministry of Education certification to teach DK History and train other teachers in commune-level training sessions held throughout the country in 2010. To date, more than 1000 teachers have received training and certification to teach DK history in Cambodian schools.<sup>18</sup> Since the inception of the Genocide Education Project (GEP) in September 2004, the following activities have been completed:

**The publication and distribution of the textbook *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)*.** The textbook was first published in 2007. Since then, over 300,000 copies have been distributed to over 1,700 secondary schools across Cambodia. The book has been endorsed by the Ministry of Education as core teaching materials and references for Khmer Rouge history curriculum in Cambodian classrooms at the secondary level.

**Translation of the textbook in five languages:** Besides English and Khmer editions of *A History of Democratic Kampuchea*, the textbook has also been translated into French, Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai and Japanese.



**The development and publication of teaching materials (the *Teacher's Guidebook* and *Student Workbook*) for the textbook.** 3,000 Khmer copies of a *Teacher's Guidebook* and 1000 English editions were published for the provincial teacher training in late 2009. Owing to a lack of funds, the *Student Workbook* has only been photocopied.

**National teacher training** 24 national teachers and 15 DC-Cam staff members were trained at a workshop conducted June 29-July 7, 2009. Participants were trained by both national and international scholars who are experts in history, curriculum

<sup>17</sup> For all CGEP's project activities to date see [http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/Genocide\\_Education.htm](http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/Genocide_Education.htm).

<sup>18</sup> See MoU between DC-Cam and Ministry of Education.

development, genocide education and law. Participants were trained on the content of the history textbook and the use of the teacher guidebook and student workbook.

**Provincial teacher training.** From November 23-December 4, 2009, 186 provincial teachers were trained by both national and international scholars on the use of the textbook, teacher's guidebook, and student workbook. The training workshop was conducted in six different regions: Kandal, Takeo, Prey Veng, Kampong Cham, and Battambang provinces, as well as at Phnom Penh Regional Teacher Training Schools.

**Commune Teacher Trainings.** In April-June 2010, there were three series of teacher training workshops with three to four sessions each. The trainings followed similar formats as the Provincial and National Teacher Training Workshops with some Provincial and National Teachers acting as Workshop Trainers along with DC-Cam staff. Over 1000 teachers from all Cambodian provinces received pedagogy and history training.



**Anti-Genocide Slogans/Memorial.** In June, DC-Cam received approval from the Ministry of Education to hang anti-genocide slogans across all 1,700 high schools in Cambodia. These memorials can take the form of a banner, plaque, wall painting, or another creative form and contain two slogans that both memorialize the tragedy of Democratic Kampuchea and promote post-genocide reconciliation.

The slogans read: (1) "Talking about experiences during the Khmer Rouge regime is to promote reconciliation and to educate children about forgiveness and tolerance;" and (2) "Learning about the history of Democratic Kampuchea is to prevent genocide." The estimated cost of one banner is approximately \$40. Each memorial costs \$400.

These slogans will help to memorialize this past while promoting interest in the upcoming and historically monumental trials of senior Khmer Rouge leaders. Together, the survivor generations and younger generations will learn about Democratic Kampuchea, generate interest in historic tribunals, and legitimize survivors' experiences and trauma.

**Review training for national teachers.** On August 1, 2010, Dr. Phala Chea, the teacher guidebook's co-author, provided additional training on the methodologies in the guidebook to fifteen selected national teachers including both DC-Cam's staff and officials from the Ministry of Education. The purpose of the training was to enhance the capacity of national teachers who are the master trainers in the commune teacher trainings. The training was conducted through presentations on 25 different topics and methods to help national teachers be better equipped to use, and train other teachers on, each method accurately and effectively.

**Public Education Forums between Teachers, Students and Parents.** In 2010, the CGEP launched a new project to provide informal education to various Cambodian communities in remote areas that have little access to *A History of Democratic Kampuchea* textbook and other publications related to the KR history. In 2010, five forums were held in Kampong Speu, Prey Veng, Kampong Chhnang, and Kratie which ranged from 50 to 250 participants per forum. The provincial teachers not only helped to organize the forums, but also led teaching sessions.

The forums provided opportunities to villagers who are both victims and perpetrators to converse and collaborate with teachers in educating children about what happened during the Khmer Rouge. As a result of the forums, villagers gained a broader understanding of the Khmer Rouge while young people learned from both the history textbook and the stories of their community. More importantly, different generations have the opportunity to share their experiences with each other. These inter-generational dialogues not only encourage children to learn Khmer Rouge history but also contribute to fostering more conversations at home, a reversal of children's denial and disbelief of their parents' traumas.

**National Examination Questions on Khmer Rouge History.** In response to the addition of the new Khmer Rouge curriculum, the national high school examination included five questions on Khmer Rouge history for the second year in a row. These additions emphasized the gravity of the project on a national scale.

**Teacher-Training Expanded to Include University Professors and Police Academy.** In December 2010, the Cambodian government tasked DC-Cam with training both university-level professors and high school teachers on Khmer history. This new mandate will affect 70 universities in Cambodia and



two hundred thousand students. The decision stems from the Cambodian government's mandate of October 2009 that required all first year university students to study the history of Democratic Kampuchea. Local and international trainers will train university professors using the same materials DC-Cam created for the high school teacher trainings. Additional university-level materials will be provided by international experts, including Professor David Chandler, a premier scholar in Cambodian History at Monash University, and persons with experience teaching about the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide.

At the same time, the Ministry of Interior included genocide education in its police academy studies. The Ministry of Defense, whose forces comprise a large number of former Khmer Rouge soldiers, is currently considering adding this curriculum as well.



**Quality Control.** To ensure that the teaching of *A History of Democratic Kampuchea* meets the goals of bringing about national reconciliation, building peace and contributing to global genocide prevention, a comprehensive quality control evaluation program will begin in 2011.

In the context of the CGEP, Quality Control programs will evaluate, assess, monitor, improve and guarantee the quality of the teaching of *A History of Democratic Kampuchea* in Cambodian secondary schools on a national scale. Quality control is conducted by both external review and self-assessment. DC-Cam and the Ministry of Education will oversee this aspect of the project throughout the project's implementation.

## ACTIVITIES OF THE CONFERENCE

### Land of Reconciliation

Youk Chhang unveiled his vision of the "Land of Reconciliation" during the Workshop, which as described above, utilizes teachers, education, and the dissemination of knowledge to complement current transnational justice mechanisms and create a "Land of Reconciliation." The reasons behind this model are as follows: 1. Current Khmer Rouge tribunals are only trying senior Khmer Rouge leaders while many lower level Khmer Rouge cadres live side-by-side victims in the Cambodian village. Thus, the ECCC may not promote reconciliation "on the ground" as lower level cadres are not held responsible; 2. The ECCC employs a "top-down"



approach to render its verdicts and create its history, which leaves very little room for victims to contribute to and "re-claim" their pasts; and 3. Throughout the past eighteen months, teachers have continuously demonstrated their abilities to educate students and the larger community, organize forums, and foster individual and collective reconciliation.

His vision, which he distributed to all Participants, illustrates a grassroots approach: As the arrows push up and challenge the triangle's perimeter, the triangle's central nodes seep into the spatial plane to affect, or create, the Land of Reconciliation. Yet, it is the "bulleted" forces "on the ground" that drive the arrows, acting as metonymic devices for the survivors and younger generations who will take charge and re-claim their own histories.

### "History from Our Villages"

As part of the "Land of Reconciliation," teachers in their roles as commissioners will be asked to provide three publishable stories per year, which will be published annually as monographs and distributed throughout the country. In the aggregate, these stories may provide answers to why and how genocide occurs, contribute to humanizing perpetrators, demonstrate the resilience of the Cambodian community to survive and rebuild their lives, and express the state of their lives today. Furthermore, the monographs will be used in classrooms nationwide to supplement teaching materials currently in place, a response to teachers' prior complaints on the

textbook's more "objective" based history.<sup>19</sup> According to CGEP's proposed "Land of Reconciliation, DC-Cam will be able to publish 540 survivors' stories each year. Additionally, all teachers will have the responsibility to encourage their students to document their family members' and neighbors' Khmer Rouge experiences.



In order to test the efficacy of this proposed idea, all participants were required to submit 10- to 20-page essays on anything related to the villages in which they teach prior to the Workshop. As noted above, over 200 essays were collected. Not only do these essays demonstrate the teachers' ability to research, interview, and document the

past, but the sheer volume of the number of stories collected also illustrate the teachers' eagerness about this part of the project.<sup>20</sup> During the Preah Vihear Workshop, National Teacher Siv Thoun energetically spoke about ways teachers can tackle challenges in their field research while H.E. Tun Sa Im discussed the monumental role teachers can play in contributing to the archive and ensuring stories are heard and not lost. These enthusiastic sentiments were further echoed in responses collected from Participants, who recognized their own significance in this "grounds up" approach to documenting and preserving history for current and future generations.

One of the objectives of this project is to document stories that were not known and to provide a space for survivors to testify and "be heard." "Unknown" stories have already emerged, like the story submitted by Long Vannak, a teacher from Pailin—a former Khmer Rouge stronghold. Her essay documents the experiences of Ms. Chheun Snar, a Khmer Rouge survivor from Pailin. When Chheun Snar was a little girl, she longed to be a tailor, and when the Khmer Rouge began recruiting tailors, she joined the revolution despite her parents' hesitations. The Khmer Rouge would never fulfill her wish. She was transferred along with 10 other women to Battambang where she and the other girls were relegated to working in the rice fields. When the other girls asked to go back home, the Khmer Rouge killed them. Chheun Snar was fortunate to sneak away and survived.

---

<sup>19</sup> Specifically, some teachers throughout the 2009 training complained that the textbook and the photographs included in the textbook did not adequately convey the suffering they experienced.

<sup>20</sup> See appendix.

Likewise other essays submitted bear witness to the life before the Khmer Rouge, such as an essay by Sok Somony, a provincial teacher from Hun Sen Kampong Kantuot High School. In her essay "Da-lien Festival," she describes a special ceremony she attended in which Cambodians celebrate once the harvest is completed. According to Sok Somony, villagers believe that the Da-lien Festival connects people with the earth, allowing Cambodians to pay homage to the spirits who preserve and take care of the land. In a celebration under moonlight, villagers gather together to dance and wish for prosperous harvests in the upcoming year. Other stories document other histories of the Khmer Rouge, their villages, and their present-day society.



### **FIELD TRIP TO PREAH VIHEAR**

On the second day of the Workshop, Participants traveled to Preah Vihear Temple located about two hours away from Preah Vihear provincial town in the northwestern corner of Cambodia bordering Thailand. Preah Vihear is a significant site in current Cambodian present-day national consciousness, Khmer Rouge history, and, thus, is significant to Workshops theme of "Reclaiming Cambodian History." A historical overview of the site is outlined below.

Khmer King Yasovarman built Preah Vihear Temple in the 9<sup>th</sup> century on top of an 1800-foot hill in the Dang-rek mountains. The temple stretches over two kilometers

in length and is built around a shrine dedicated to a Hindu god Shiva. It is the only Khmer temple built on a north-south axis and the temple's inscriptions are believed to be one of the most beautiful and intricate of the Angkor temples. The temple was at one time central to and centered in the Khmer kingdom. But after the demise of the Angkor empire, the Siamese army (present-day Thailand) took and sacked the temple complex and it remained in Thai hands for over 400 years. But in the early 1960s, after receiving independence from France, the Cambodians sought to reclaim their temple from Thailand and used maps drawn by French colonials that placed the temple in Cambodian territory. Following a bitter legal dispute at The Hague, Preah Vihear was awarded to Cambodia. Prior to and during the Khmer Rouge regime, Preah Vihear was a Khmer Rouge stronghold.



In 1979, following the Khmer Rouge genocide, thousands of Cambodian refugees poured into Thailand. Four months later, Thailand wanted no more responsibility for these "degenerate" and "barbaric" people and told the United States, France, and Australia to come and "take their pick." After a "litter" of 1200 was chosen, the remaining refugees were loaded once again in a bus and taken to Preah Vihear. In one such instance, Thai troops, in a sickening recourse, corralled an approximate 42,000 refugees in buses, which took them up to Preah Vihear. After surviving nearly four years of hell, it is confirmed that 3000 were killed during the trek and up to 7000 are still unaccounted for. Several more waves of people were sent to back to Cambodia until December 1979, including 850 who were sent through a hilly crossing north of Aranyaprathet, where it was reported that Thai soldiers forced refugees to move forward through minefields, and if they resisted, the soldiers shot



them.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, other reports document Thai soldiers pushing refugees off of the 1800-foot cliff.



From the 1980s until the present-day, Thailand has sought to take back the temple, claimed it as its own, and refused to recognize Cambodian ownership despite international rulings that stated the opposite. But after over a century of bitter legal disputes, appalling cruelties, and border wars, UNESCO recognized Cambodia as the sole bearer to the world heritage site in 2008. Cambodians ran into the streets. Vendors sold Preah Vihear memorabilia. National pride was high. Despite the 2008 ruling, Thailand continued to station its troops on top of the site and perched Thai flags on the mount. As a result, a border war broke out between Thailand and Cambodia at Preah Vihear. Ten

days before the Preah Vihear Workshop's commencement, Thailand finally withdrew its troops from the temple site. As teachers climbed up to Preah Vihear, they saw the Cambodian national flag flying high on the staff, a visual signifier that connected to the workshop's larger themes of reclaiming its past.

## **THE WORKSHOP: GUEST LECTURES AND DIGNITARIES SPEECHES**

Guest lectures and speeches at the Workshop began the first steps to create a working group for a truth and reconciliation commission in the proposed "Land of Reconciliation." For instance, Farina So, a DC-Cam lecturer, spoke on the importance and challenges of collecting oral history, while H.E. Tun Sa Im emphasized the crucial roles of teachers in Cambodian society. Professor Chum Kiri emphasized the

<sup>21</sup> Joel Brinkley. "Thai Play Unwilling Hosts to Refugees." *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Dec. 4, 1979.

differences between a legal and moral understanding of genocide. While the ECCC will fulfill the former, a truth and reconciliation commission can help facilitate the latter, filling in gaps a legal approach must leave out. Kok Thay Eng, a DC-Cam Lecturer and Deputy Director, echoed these sentiments in his presentation on forgiveness, discussing Buddhist-centric ways that forgiveness and reconciliation can be furthered. Below are summaries of presentations given at the Workshop.

**Khun Inserey, The Asia Foundation (TAF)**

Khun Inserey, a representative from the Asia Foundation, gave a welcoming speech to the participants and emphasized the importance of the teacher training to further reconciliation efforts. Specifically he told the Participants how fortunate he was to fund this training. As a teacher for over thirty years, he was excited to see this education enter the schools and reiterated the teachers' significance in Cambodian society today.



**Samphou Soth, Deputy Governor of Preah Vihear Province**

Samphou Soth, Deputy Governor of Preah Vihear, stressed the importance of the genocide education project and of increasing teachers' capacities, specifically through learning new methodologies and stimulating critical thinking skills among students and teachers. During his speech, Samphou Soth also spoke about his own experiences during the Khmer Rouge, again another example that affirms that the

CGEP provides a forum for survivors to testify and witness to past traumas.<sup>22</sup> He told the audience that his family was on the list to be arrested and killed because his family owned a house, but were spared. He reiterated the importance of the GEP in order to preserve history, counteract the denial by the younger generations of their parents' history, and ensure the stories and histories are not erased. He ended his speech by highlighting the workshop's location, stating that he was "proud to be born Khmer and to own Preah Vihear Temple."

### **Her Excellency Chumteav Tun Sa-Im, Under Secretary of State of Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport**

H.E. Excellency Chumteav Tun Sa-Im followed with an enlivening speech to stress the role of teachers in healing, reconciliation, and education. She spoke about her appreciation in having an annual meeting to bring everyone back together and also believed that the teachers' writings of their own histories were crucial in moving the project forward, stating that it was "truly a valuable history." Like the Deputy Governor, H.E. Tun Sa-Im also utilized the workshop's location to raise educational challenges faced in Preah Vihear with its prevalence of Kuoy, a minority group that occupies 70% of the provinces. She stressed the need for the Ministry of Education to find ways to balance minority groups and Khmers in schools. Likewise, she also raised the issues of school children's attendance in Preah Vihear as many schools are far away from the villages, and as a result, many students do not attend school. She encouraged the province to reach the minimum goal of student attendance by 2015.

H.E. Tun Sa-Im urged teachers to collect survivors' stories as they are a living archive and can contribute a larger Cambodian history and also stated that she too will write about and contribute her own experiences during the Khmer Rouge to the CGEP.



Comparing the CGEP to blood that flows through the veins, she emphasized the value of the project's reciprocal

exchange: As officials, dignitaries, and institutions organize and relay information, teachers from the village have a central role in the projects' effectiveness as it will take a nation's collective effort to preserve history and reconcile.

---

<sup>22</sup> See Commune Level Project Report, 5. Specifically it states, "In many ways, the project has already provided a forum for Cambodians to speak about trauma suffered during DK rule and for others to listen, a witnessing process that legitimates and authenticates survivors' experiences." Also see Sarah Jones Dickens, "Reclaiming Cambodian History,"

During her speech, she also encouraged teachers to have an open-mind and be “humble to learning more.” She stated that learning is a life-long process as teachers too “must learn...until we die.” She urged teachers to share information with each other to focus on working towards effective teaching methodologies in order to grow professionally and collectively.

H.E Tun Sa-Im also discussed the differences between writing history objectively and subjectively—an implicit response to prior teachers’ complaints on the textbook *A History of Democratic Kampuchea* as some teachers complained in prior training sessions that the curriculum did not have enough ‘emotion.’ She stated that history-writers must ‘shy away from inserting emotions into history’ as doing so would create a sensationalist history. Rather, teachers and history writers must write objectively to ensure teaching accurate history and promote reconciliation between perpetrators and victims as a sensationalist history may incite revenge, encourage animosity, and further alienation. She provided an anecdote of a Khmer Rouge female cadre, Im Chaem, whom she met in Anlong Veng and who listened to her speak about the Khmer Rouge. After the meeting, the Khmer Rouge cadre told her that she felt relieved to have been included as the speakers acknowledged that she was “Khmer.”

However, H.E. Tun Sa-Im also re-emphasized the importance of a subjective history, stating that this type of history also has its own “truths.” She stated that, in a way, the “History from Our Villages” compliments the textbook’s objective history, filling in the other “truths” not included in the textbook.

Finally, H.E. Tun Sa-Im discussed the importance of the genocide memorials in promoting reconciliation and discouraging revenge as students will be exposed to the genocide memorial slogans on the prevention and understanding of genocide every day and will hopefully learn from them.

### **Siv Thuon, National Teacher**

Siv Thuon, a National Teacher from the Ministry of Education, then gave a short presentation regarding his own experiences, which he had contributed to “History from Our Villages.” He also discussed the challenges some teachers may face when conducting this research and compiling their stories. For instance, Siv Thoun said that some teachers who are not from the village in which they teach may find it difficult to do these interviews because they



do not know the villagers. At the same time, teachers who live in, for example, Rattanak Kiri and Mondul Kiri may face some difficulties as they have to work with minority groups. In order to face these challenges, Siv Thuon suggested partnering with another teacher to conduct research and co-author the article as he personally found co-authorship to be a successful strategy. Furthermore, he also believed it was critical to cultivate interest in writing history rather than following more Cambodian methods of oral history as he believed it was crucial to document and preserve this history for future generations in written form.

**Christopher Dearing, Co-Author of *The Teacher's Guidebook* and Savina Sirik, "Key Perspectives on Professional Development"<sup>23</sup>**



After a short coffee and snack break, Christopher Dearing, co-author of *The Teacher's Guidebook* and Savina Sirik presented their paper on "Key Perspectives on Professional Development." In their presentation, they cited survey results and field observations of past trainings and overall challenges, which found (1) National and Commune Trainers appeared limited in their capacity to convey teaching methodologies and needed to build their capacity; and (2) National and Commune Teachers

---

<sup>23</sup> See Christopher Dearing and Savina Sirik, "Key Perspectives on Professional Development." 2010. Online [http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Preah\\_Vihear\\_Workshop\\_DISCUSSION\\_PAPER\\_III.pdf](http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Preah_Vihear_Workshop_DISCUSSION_PAPER_III.pdf)

conflicted in their interpretations of teaching methodologies and needed to reach more consistent interpretations.

They then gave an overview of professional development, stating that *professionalism* was not a label based on one's resources or one's knowledge of the "latest trends." Rather, professionalism encompasses an "assimilation of new ideas and techniques" and the acceptance on the part of the individual to build one's repertoire of teaching techniques. Citing from the *Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance*, Chris Dearing and Savina Sirik stated that everyone needed "deliberate practice in order to achieve their objectives" and encouraged participants to share insights to the collective body.

After reviewing the definition of a Professional Learning Community and citing relevant examples, Chris Dearing and Savina Sirik broke the audience down into small groups so teachers could meet with each other and discuss areas of improvement and the purpose of goal setting. After discussions were completed in their small groups, Chris Dearing and Savina Sirik presented training survey results, highlighting strengths and weaknesses of past training sessions.

Some responses from small groups are articulated below:

1. Teachers must do more research to teach effectively, especially those teachers who were born after the Khmer Rouge
2. Teachers need to ask villagers to help with teaching
3. Teachers should utilize examples, photographs, and archival documents from DC-Cam
4. In order to build respect, teachers should try to answer the questions first rather than saying they simply do not know, then refer students to DC-Cam
5. Teachers should share common techniques.

**Kok Thay Eng, DC-Cam Deputy and Research Director "Is it Possible to Forgive and Can Forgiveness Be Taught?"<sup>24</sup>**



<sup>24</sup> See Kok Thay Eng. "Is it Possible to Forgive and Can Forgiveness Be Taught." 2010. Online at [http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Preah\\_Vihear\\_Workshop\\_DISCUSSION\\_PAPER\\_II.pdf](http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Preah_Vihear_Workshop_DISCUSSION_PAPER_II.pdf)



Kok Thay Eng, DC-Cam’s Deputy and Research Director, then presented his paper titled “Is it Possible to Forgive and Can Forgiveness Be Taught?” During his presentation, Kok Thay traced the concept of forgiveness in Cambodian and other post-conflict societies and argued that means of forgiveness vary depending on one’s culture. Specifically, his presentation focused on the impact of the genocide in Cambodian society and explored ways Cambodians have grappled with its legacies. For Kok-Thay Eng, forgiveness means being able to “move on and to leave the tragedy behind,” which he argues comes after legal actions have taken place. His presentation ended with a brief discussion on Buddhist practices. While he stated that there is no concept of forgiveness in Buddhism’s holy book, people are advised that

“vindictiveness” ends “by not being vindictive.”

**Professor Chum Kiri, Royal Academy of Cambodia and Siv Thuon, National Teacher “The Meaning of Genocide”**

Dr. Chum Kiri, a professor at the Royal Academy of Cambodia, and Siv Thuon, a National Teacher, traced a non-legal concept of genocide and ethnicity in a Cambodian context, focusing on the etiology of the two words. The word *genocide* in Khmer directly translates into “to kill one’s race, religion, or nationality.” According to Professor Chum Kiri, the literal interpretation of this word can differ from a legal interpretation, but he stresses that teachers should know the different interpretations of the word, especially given the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia’s role in contributing to justice and the collective memory. Then, Siv Thoun discussed the etiology of the words *ethnicity* and *minority*, which he argued were often dependent upon one’s positionality. He also argued that these concepts have their roots in colonialism who “found” minority groups. For example, Siv Thoun stated that many Cambodians see Cham Muslims as an ethnic minority in Cambodia, but for Cham Muslims they believe they are not an ethnic minority but are Khmer.

**Dr. Phala Chea, Co-Author *The Teacher's Guidebook* and Khamboly Dy, DC-Cam Lecturer and Author of *A History of Democratic Kampuchea 1975-1979*, "Effective Teaching of the History of Democratic Kampuchea"<sup>25</sup>**

Rather than lecturing, Dr. Phala Chea and Khamboly Dy facilitated a discussion with National and Commune Teachers on effective teaching methodologies of Democratic Kampuchea history. During their presentation, they asked conference participants what they found were successful and challenging teaching methodologies. Teachers asked Dr. Phala Chea and Khamboly Dy to clarify some teaching methods in the Guidebook they still did not understand, such as the Jigsaw activity, brainstorming exercises, Venn Diagrams, K-W-L charts, Foreign Relations Brochure, and the Survival Box. In response to these questions, Dr. Phala Chea and Khamboly Dy modeled lessons and also asked teachers to come up to the front of the room to demonstrate the lessons to other teachers.

During this session, one teacher from Battambang raised concerns on the difficulties he and other teachers faced when using these strategies owing to the large number of students in Cambodian classrooms—echoing anxieties raised at the 2009 Training Sessions. Morn Meth, a National Teacher, came to the front of the room to explain that that these techniques can still be used despite larger classrooms. Specifically, she proposed that these techniques did not have to be used every class period and could be used when teachers have the time. She also encouraged teachers not to feel as if they needed to use multiple teaching strategies each class; instead, teachers should focus on using one technique. Dr. Phala Chea supported Morn Meth's suggestions and also encouraged teachers to only use some of these strategies—such as the Brochure or Survival Box—when students were somewhat knowledgeable on the subject as ways teachers can evaluate students' understanding of the material.



**Khamboly Dy, DC-Cam Lecturer and Author of *A History of Democratic Kampuchea 1975-1979*, "2011 Program for Quality Control of Teaching the History of Democratic Kampuchea"<sup>26</sup>**

Khamboly Dy then spoke about the Comprehensive Quality Control Evaluation Program, which DC-Cam and the Ministry of Education will conduct throughout 2011. Quality Control will assess the effectiveness

<sup>25</sup> Dr. Phala Chea. "Effective Teaching of the History of Democratic Kampuchea." 2010. [http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Preah\\_Vihear\\_Workshop\\_DISCUSSION\\_PAPER\\_IV.pdf](http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Preah_Vihear_Workshop_DISCUSSION_PAPER_IV.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Khamboly Dy. "Quality Control: Why?" 2010. [http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Preah\\_Vihear\\_workshop\\_DISCUSSION\\_PAPER\\_VII.pdf](http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Preah_Vihear_workshop_DISCUSSION_PAPER_VII.pdf)



of teacher trainings and the teaching of *A History of Democratic Kampuchea* in classrooms. There are two main reasons for Quality Control. As Khamboly Dy explained, teachers who have completed the training still “remain concerned not only about the complex social and ethical issues [of teaching this history]...but also about their capacities to teach...in an effective manner.” Similarly, the leadership of the Ministry of Education, DC-Cam, and national and international experts and educators who have been involved in teacher trainings also share these concerns. As such, Quality Control can help address these concerns, improve teaching capacities and build teachers’ confidence and accountability in teaching this history. Evaluation projects will also ensure that the CGEP will meet the project’s pedagogical goals and fostering national reconciliation. Khamboly Dy then went over more logistical aspects of the Quality Control Evaluation Program: He explained the tools for evaluation and various aspects of assessment.

### **Vanhan PeouDara, DC-Cam’s Deputy Director, “2011 Program for Teacher Training”**

Vanhan PeouDara, DC-Cam’s Deputy Director, gave an overview of strategic plans for the 2011 Teacher Training Program. He told teachers about the recent Memorandum of Understanding signed between DC-Cam and the Ministry of



Education, which is detailed earlier in this report. He also explained logistical matters related to the genocide education memorials, and the additional distribution of 200,000 *History of Democratic Kampuchea* textbooks and training of 540 history, morality, and literature teachers in 2011. He also called out names of those who were selected for subsequent trainings in Phnom Penh and Kandal, Kampong Cham, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Speu, and Battambang provinces for 2011.

### **Farina So, DC-Cam Lecturer and Team Leader, “Cham Oral History Project”<sup>27</sup>**

Farina So, DC-Cam Lecturer and Team Leader, focused on the

<sup>27</sup> Farina So. "History from Below: Recording Cham Muslims' Experience Under the Khmer Rouge." [http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/Teacher\\_Workshop-Working\\_Group.htm](http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/Teacher_Workshop-Working_Group.htm)

processes of conducting oral history of the Cham Muslim community in Cambodia. During her presentation, So discussed her research methodologies in the field to gather testimonies from Cham Muslims and Cham religious leaders. She also discussed the project's outreach efforts to Cham Muslim youth and the ways younger generations can play a significant role in documenting Khmer Rouge history as they are directly implicated in the multigenerational legacies of genocide. For instance, Farina So discussed the essay competition she organized in 2005 among Cham Muslim teenagers to interview one or both of their parents regarding their Khmer Rouge experiences. According to her, the writing competition "revealed the importance of the oral history approach in two major ways: education and relationship building."



Her work parallels larger aspects of the proposed truth commission "Land of Reconciliation." Specifically, her work with Cham Muslims is pertinent to the proposed "History from our Villages" project as both projects seek to preserve and document the past. Specifically, Farina So emphasized the critical roles of testimony and the act of witnessing in working towards larger reconciliation efforts. According to her presentation, some historians and scholars question survivors' testimonies for testimonies to provide an "accurate" or "true" history, but Farina So emphasized the importance of telling and listening to stories of survivors despite the "historical" limitations. As she stated: "By encouraging [survivors] to talk and by listening carefully to their stories as well as letting them know the power of their stories, we may help them break the silence and their memories may escape distortion and

oblivion. Therefore, effort needs to continue to educate younger generations for memory, educational and genocide prevention purposes, and building a stronger democracy in Cambodia.”

## **STRENGTHS**

### **Trial “Runs” of Aspects for Proposed National Reconciliation and Truth Commission**



One of the greatest strengths of this Workshop was that it gave CGEP Organizers opportunities to tryout its proposed plans for a truth and reconciliation commission. The Workshop created a space to “tryout” and hold trial runs of ideas before making policy recommendations and implementation of its ideas on a national scale. For instance, the “Land of Reconciliation” envisions Provincial teachers from all Cambodian districts drawing upon their own and student research and submitting three 10 to 20 page publishable stories each year. As part of the proposed “Land of Reconciliation,” 540 essays would be collected each year, published annually as monographs, and distributed throughout the country to supplement current Cambodian genocide education curriculum materials.

Thus, as noted previously, CGEP required all Preah Vihear Workshop participants to conduct research and submit 10 to 20 page essays on anything related to the villages in which they teach. Doing so allowed Organizers to both assess the feasibility of its plan as well as become more aware of challenges and weaknesses faced in regards to its proposals. Likewise, the CGEP also asked teachers their opinions on national reconciliation and their perceived roles in the process, which allowed CGEP

Organizers to know if their ideas were supported “on the ground.” CGEP’s working through its proposed vision with the group was an effective strategy and should be employed in future Workshops.

## **QUESTIONNAIRE ON TRUTH COMMISSION**

Once the workshop's activities were over, Participants were asked to give responses on their understandings of the purpose and meaning of a “truth and reconciliation commission” and how one could operate in Cambodia. The questionnaire asked participants to define a truth commission, and a majority of the responses said that truth commissions are a mechanism for a type of transitional justice with the authority to investigate and address past human rights violence. Some described that the role of truth commission after the ECCC trials end will be to reconcile, compile and preserve the KR related documents, disseminate information, and educate the next generation while other responses stated that a truth commission will play a vital role in helping victims reconcile their sufferings.

They were also asked if they thought a truth commission after the ECCC is finished was necessary and to discuss the role or participation of perpetrators in a truth commission. Most responses stated that a truth commission after the ECCC was important and necessary because it would further promote reconciliation efforts, help Cambodians continue to research and compile truths, and compliment the objectives of current legal proceedings. Teachers also responded that the role of perpetrators in the process of the truth commission is necessary. As one teacher stated, "There is no reconciliation without including perpetrators in the process." Teachers' responses also described that one of their roles in a proposed truth commission would be to work with perpetrators in responsible ways. Specifically, teachers responded that they should "encourage perpetrators to speak" "without making judgment," by "ensuring their safety" and not "discriminating against them." The questionnaire also provided space for teachers to offer suggestions for a possible truth commission in Cambodia. Some teachers recommended using art to



supplement reconciliation processes and placing a comment or suggestion box in the provincial centers for villagers to share stories or voice concerns.



### **Presenters' emphasis on the importance of teachers in Cambodian society**

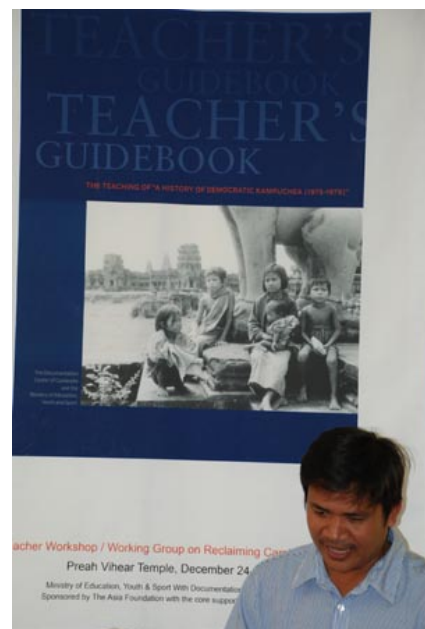
There were many presentations that were highly-motivating, uplifting, and appreciative toward the work of teachers in Cambodian society which proved to inspire the participants—increasing their self-worth and continuing a sustained interest in the Project. For example, H.E Tun Sa Im and Youk Chhang gave particularly inspiring motivational speeches that emphasized the significant roles teachers play in national reconciliation. These sentiments were echoed by Khun Inserey and by others who articulated the value they had for these efforts. Likewise, Youk Chhang emphasized the ways the teachers' efforts in genocide education expand out into the international arena and affect global discourse. Emphasizing teachers' paradigmatic contributions to a wider world undoubtedly reassured the teachers of the importance of their continued involvement in the project. Similarly, H.E. Tun Sa Im's speech reinforced the teachers' sense of self-worth and "status" in Cambodian society. Specifically, she discussed the reciprocity between teachers' efforts with those of the CGEP Organizers and government officials. Her association holds a particular weight in Cambodian society and arguably served as an effective motivational tactic because the comparison raises the status of teachers to that equal with governmental officials and dignitaries.

## Selection of Training Site

Holding the annual workshop in different locales throughout the country is a particularly useful strategy to bolster national pride, increase teacher's self-appreciation and extend the Project's thematic concepts into a tangible site. Despite the different locales, teachers are still readily and able to attend the conference owing to CGEP Organizers' methods of ensuring transportation and providing a small travel stipend for all participants.



As noted above, the Preah Vihear Temple holds a special status in Cambodia's present day national consciousness and was a particularly effective site to hold the Workshop as it was highly relevant with the Workshop's themes of "Reclaiming History." Likewise, the site holds particular relevance in regards to the vision of a "Land of Reconciliation." As teachers traveled on Cambodia's newly paved roads up to the site, they—as a group and as individuals—received spiritual blessings from monks, lit incense to honor those perished, and sat in solitude and among company to contemplate Cambodia's long and, at times, very traumatic history in Preah Vihear. Taking photographs in front of signs that bore the message "I am Proud to Be Born Khmer" and eating together on top of the mountainside, the teachers represented the way in which the traumatic site could become one of serenity, amity, and pride.



At the same time, holding the workshop in different locations throughout the country also provides a forum to discuss current educational challenges in the location where the Workshop is held. For instance H.E. Tun Sa Im utilized the workshop's location in Preah Vihear to raise educational challenges faced in Preah Vihear, especially in regards to Preah Vihear's prevalence of Kuoy, a minority group that occupies 70% of Preah Vihear. Specifically, she described the difficulties teachers face when attempting to strike a balance with Cambodian and other minority school children. Such discussions not only provided a forum to learn more about the problems faced in Preah Vihear, but were also pertinent to the challenges many



teachers face in other school districts. Similarly, Samphou Soth, the Deputy Governor of Preah Vihear, discussed the economic and educational troubles in Preah Vihear, which provided participants with a stronger knowledge base about current difficulties in other parts of Cambodia.

**Conference Allowed Teachers to Voice Concerns, Raise Questions about Teaching Methodology, and Receive Professional Development Training**

The Workshop allowed teachers to voice concerns and clarify points provided in the *Teacher Guidebook* and textbook. Since teachers have not met as a collective group since April 2010, and the Workshop allowed Participants to raise questions they faced as Trainers of other teachers. As such, Preah Vihear Workshop Participants asked questions and modeled strategies on K-W-L charts, the Jigsaw Puzzle Activity, and the

Foreign Policy Brochure among other teaching activities. The time devoted to these questions and issues was beneficial and an important element for the teachers who will, in 2011, participate as trainers in subsequent commune-level trainings.

### **The Positive Attitude of the Participants**

Participants continuously demonstrate positive attitudes during the Workshop and when completing pre-Workshop requirements. During the Workshop, teachers were very eager to contribute to the discourse and participated willingly in various activities. Despite the conference room's suboptimal conditions (detailed below), teachers, for the most part, paid attention to speakers and participated with positive attitudes. As evidenced in the over 200 stories collected prior to the Workshop, the participants also understood and readily contributed to the Project. Such positivity plays a significant role in the Workshop's success and in turn makes teachers' prime candidates for spearheading national reconciliation efforts.

### **The Annual Meeting Increases Teachers' Camaraderie, Sustains and Bolsters Interest in the Project, and Creates Space to receive genocide education updates**

Annual Meetings increase teachers' camaraderie and helps sustain the interest of the teachers in the Project. As many teachers and CGEP Organizers have not seen each other since the last Training annual workshop in April 2010, Participants were genuinely excited to see each other and reunite. Likewise, the annual meeting also provided a space for Speakers to reaffirm the Project's importance and teachers' significance in the project. Such speeches from H.E. Tun Sa Im, Youk Chhang, and Khun Inerey were particularly uplifting and allowed teachers' to realize the "bigger" picture of their participation in the project. At the same time, the Workshop creates a space for teachers to further their learning. For instance, Professor Chum Kiri's discussion provided a fruitful analysis of the etiology of genocide while Farina So presented historical facts on the Cham Muslim experience during the Khmer Rouge of which some teachers were unaware.





Annual workshops have also proven to be an effective forum to present logistical updates, review the current year's strengths and challenges, and relay information on the upcoming year's plan of actions. For instance, Christopher Dearing and Savina Sirik presented survey results from prior training workshops that assessed teachers' strengths and their areas where they need improvement. At the same time, Dara Vanthan and Khamboly Dy went over the dates and locations for the next training sessions, the following year's objectives, and the details of the Quality Control Program. Disseminating information out to the collective group ensures that all Teachers receive consistent information and also reinforces the gravity of such aspects of the projects.

## **CHALLENGES**

### **Challenge: Conference Facilities Need Improvement**



One of the biggest problems of the conference was the meeting space, which was held in a conference room of the Preah Vihear provincial office. There were several issues with the meeting site. First, the meeting space was too small and narrow for the 200 participants. As a result, at times speakers were not easily able model effective teaching strategies, interact with their audience, facilitate group work, and organize small group discussions. Concomitantly, many teachers were unpleasantly cramped, became annoyed when transiting into smaller groups as there was no room, and had difficulty concentrating. Those who sat in the back of the room faced even more challenges as they could not see the presentation slideshows. The room also had poor air circulation, which became even more problematic in the back of the conference space as the bathroom often produced a pungent odor. The smell coupled with the small

room made some of the participants physically ill. These challenges hinders the project's efficacy, participants' concentration, and teachers' overall respect for the Project.

### **Recommendation: Ensure Venue with Proper Space**

For subsequent trainings and conferences, finding a proper venue must be a primary concern for the team leaders and conference organizers. A future meeting space should have enough room for 250 individuals to sit comfortably, space for breakout sessions with small groups, and have proper and sanitary bathroom facilities. It is also recommended that if there is not enough room for teachers to break out into small groups, that conference organizers should consequently send groups to meet in places outside the conference room area. If appropriate space cannot be found in subsequent annual meetings, the conference should be held in Phnom Penh and, at the end of the Workshop, the entire group can travel together to the field trip destination together. However, it should be noted that holding the conference in Phnom Penh may not be as optimal as some participants may leave before the field trip,

### **Challenge: Time Management & Scheduling**

Another challenge the GEP faced was the limited amount of time available to meet the conference objectives. As the Workshop only lasted one day, the schedule was quite tight with many papers and the conference, as a whole, felt extremely rushed. For instance, during the afternoon session, papers were presented back-to-back with very little time for participants to engage with the material or think critically about what they heard.

While there were question and answer sessions after each presentation, only a few participants asked questions and all participants knew there was insufficient time for the presenters to provide a thorough answer and facilitate an ensuing discussion. In previous training sessions, conference organizers' would encourage participants to ask questions, which facilitated fruitful discussions as some participants were too shy to ask questions. Yet, organizers during this conference could not employ this technique owing to time constraints.

This problem became even more compounded when presenters did not manage their time effectively. Conference presenters often ran over their allotted time and some Ministry officials gave impromptu speeches, which led to further time constraints. Similarly, introductory speeches lasted quite a long time and some proved to be redundant. As a result, teachers were not given ample time to discuss the current challenges they face, ask questions after presentations, and share with each other their own experiences with genocide education.

**Recommendation: Budget Time More Wisely.** Conference presenters must budget their time more wisely, ensuring that they run through their presentations a few times beforehand to ensure they are within the appropriate time frame. If a translator is needed for English-speaking participants, it is recommended that they either practice (and time) their presentations with the translators or have the translators give their presentations for them. In order to help with time management, conference organizers must also regulate presenters' time more strictly. One recommended method is to hold up signs with five minute and one minute warnings in the back of the room so presenters will know when time is running short.

**Recommendation: Two-Day Conference.** For subsequent annual meetings, the GEP should allot two days for a meeting rather than one as there was not enough time to meet thoroughly the entire workshop's objectives. Doing so would give all presenters more time to delve further into their concepts without feeling rushed and would also allow participants to engage with the material.

**Follow July 2009 National Training Programming.** It is also recommended that the proposed two-day annual conference follow the July 2009 National Training programming. In this proposed scheduling, the morning session would include more theoretical and formal aspects related to key dignitary introductions, Khmer Rouge history, genocide education, and reconciliation. Similarly, afternoon sessions would be more pragmatic in order to meet the workshop's objectives regarding professional capacity development. Such afternoon sessions would allot ample time for small group workshops to ensure teachers the opportunities to share effective strategies, strengths, and challenges of current training and teaching methodologies.

**Lessen the Number of Introduction Speakers.** If a two-day meeting is unfeasible, it is recommended that only one dignitary gives an introductory speech and only one or two "theoretical" or academic papers are presented. This structure would allow more time for teachers to interact with each other, provide accounts of their personal experiences with genocide education, and discuss more effective training and teaching strategies.

**Challenge: Not Enough Space in Schedule to Hear from Participants**

While the workshop explicitly stressed a more "grounds-up" approach, this was not met in practice. For the majority of the conference, participants listened to government officials, international presenters, DC-Cam staff and National Teachers lecture while providing very little time to for the presenters to receive comments and feedback from the participants. Furthermore, the only means through which national and provincial teachers could voice or raise their concerns outside of informal discussions, were via the questionnaires on a possible truth and reconciliation commission, the stories they contributed prior to the conference, the one hour

session on methodology led by Dr. Phala Chea, and insubstantial and insufficient question and answer sessions following the presentations.

**Recommendation: Create More Participatory Exercises.** In subsequent annual meetings, conference organizers may want to ask some National and Provincial Teacher to assist in leading presentations or to lead their own presentations. Doing so, would not only empower teachers and strengthen confidence, but also make teachers “active” rather than “passive” participants in the annual meeting. Such sessions would provide forums for teachers to hear from each other and provide key insights from teachers’ hands-on experiences. Future Workshops should also allot more time for group-work and small group discussions and organize some panels following a more seminar-based approach.



**Challenge: Culturally Appropriate Presentations**

Some of the presentations were highly dense and employed theoretical concepts that may not have been suited to a non-academic audience.

**Recommendation: Speakers’ Can Include More Culturally Relevant Examples.**

Presenters must be more aware of their audience and relate their discussions more to the experience of the teacher on the ground. While it is important to introduce new concepts to the group, speakers could do so through buttressing theory with more culturally relevant examples to both engage their audience and explain their concepts in existing modules of understanding. In Cambodian society, proverbs, folk tales, and legends are very powerful ways to relay one’s message. As such, subsequent presenters may want to draw upon various culturally appropriate examples in their talks. For example, the importance of group-work and “professional learning communities” are also evidenced in the Cambodian culture of rice

cultivation or in a Cambodian understanding of the village. Employing such examples will help speakers connect with their audiences and also further their understanding of the topic at hand.

**Challenge: Breaking out into Small Groups**

Breaking out into small groups is a highly effective strategy to facilitate discussion and share ideas. Yet, the process of dividing into groups during this training was chaotic and took up too much time. During the workshop, conference presenters placed a sheet of paper with different provincial names onto chairs, but many teachers thought it was trash. As a result of the disorganization and miscommunication, many teachers became annoyed, lost interest in the activity, and some teachers even refused to participate.

**Recommendation: Color Coded Name Tags.** Dividing up into small group can be implemented more smoothly, as evidenced in the Battambang Regional Training in November 2009. Prior to the teachers’ arrival, Battambang team organizers pre-assigned teachers into groups and created nametags with various colored lanyards that signified their group assignment. During the registration process, nametags were given to each participant, which not only facilitated flawless transitioning from a large group to a small group, but also allowed participants to know the other participants’ names and their hometowns. As the visual is an effective method in organizing groups, it is recommended that later Workshops employ this method for subsequent small group division.

**Challenge: Lack of Instructions Regarding Informed Consent from Interview Subjects**

Teachers have proven to be an effective in gathering interviews, but it is uncertain if they understand proper research methodology or are consistent with obtaining informed consent to use interviewees’ stories.





**Recommendation: Ensure Proper Research Methodology in Half-Day Training Session**

If the CGEP want to use the stories collected in the villages for publication purposes, it is highly recommended that the CGEP think about ways to ensure responsible human research methodology, specifically in receiving informed consent from interviewees. As the Khmer Rouge is a sensitive subject in Cambodia, interviewers must ensure that their interviewees know the purpose of the interview and the possibilities that their stories can be published. Likewise, interviewers must receive informed consent before and after their interviews.



While this is not a very common practice in Cambodia currently, the CGEP can use this opportunity to spearhead more responsible research methodologies with human subjects and begin to facilitate a "culture of conscience" in Cambodian society regarding the use (and abuse) of human subjects. As such, a half-day to full-day session in regards to proper and responsible research methodology is recommended during the next annual meeting with the Working Group to ensure responsible research techniques.

## **OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POTENTIAL TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION**

Goodwin et al write "Some of the most crucial ambitions of a truth commission can be acknowledging crimes, enabling victims to have a voice, and providing a historical account of the various factors that lead to mass atrocities." For the past six years, and especially in the past year, DC-Cam's and the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports' Cambodian Genocide Education Project has demonstrated its ability to assist in steering the course for a "Land of Reconciliation." Not only does the project affirm survivors' memories of past atrocities, but it also provides a place for them to bear witness to the experience of others, and safeguard their own experiences-fundamental aspects of any truth and reconciliation commission. Additionally, the act of educating younger generations assists in a feeling of legitimization of the traumas experienced by survivors.

Unlike the ECCC and other transnational justice mechanisms currently underway in Cambodian society, the Land of Reconciliation as a proposed truth commission does not employ a "top-down approach." Rather it is one that occurs from "with-in." One of its greatest benefits is that it begins in the village and utilizes teachers, individuals who are highly respected in the community and who have continuously demonstrated their abilities, eagerness, and effectiveness to steer Cambodian society through this land of reconciliation. More than 2000 pages of stories written by teachers and collected prior to the Preah Vihear Workshop attest to their capabilities and willingness to conduct research, submit stories, and in effect reclaim their history.



Cambodia is at a monumental crossroads to enact change, steer the course toward truth and reconciliation efforts, and above all heal together as a nation, as a village, and as individuals. To date, transnational and national institutions, non-governmental organizations, the press, scholars, and nation-states have already lauded the CGEP as one of the archetypal models for reconciliation and genocide education implementation in post-conflict societies. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's referred directly to the CGEP during a speech she gave on November 1, 2010 during her official tour of Southeast Asia. She stated "What is *most* important is that Cambodians themselves are educating the young generation about a painful chapter in this country's past and honoring the memory of those who died by working hard to bring accountability and justice while seeking to stabilize and reconcile as well" (emphasis added). But not only international actors and national institutions realize the CGEP's significance. Teachers on the ground also recognize the importance of the CGEP. Responses elicited from the questionnaire demonstrate Workshop Participants' understandings of the significance they have as teachers and as community leaders in reconciliation process.

"The Human Heart," an essay by Nguon Sophal, a teacher from Battambang, epitomizes the vision of the "Land of Reconciliation." Contributing to the "History from our Villages," her essay details her experiences during the Khmer Rouge and concomitantly demonstrates the potential for the Cambodian Genocide Education Project to foster national and individual reconciliation. Writing on the ground, she bears witness to herself, reclaims her history, and generates discourse to remind others—and herself—that perpetrators are not all "monsters" but are humans "with human hearts." For despite such immense loss, pain, and brutality, Nguon Sophal, who lost all of her family members and children to the Khmer Rouge, was able to find—unprompted and on her own—compassion and humanity for a Khmer Rouge cadre who was generous to her while she was in a Khmer Rouge hospital. Her observations are crucial in reconciliation efforts as lower level perpetrators often live side-by-side with victims in Cambodian villages. When stories such as these are disseminated in monograph form and read nationwide, they will, like the arrows in Youk Chhang's vision, slowly break down barriers and foster a **"land of reconciliation."**

Report by:  
Sarah Jones Dickens  
Doctoral Student  
Contemporary Global Art and Visual  
Studies and Contemporary  
Cambodian Art, Trauma, and Visual  
Studies, Duke University  
Department of Art, Art History &  
Visual Studies, 112 East Duke  
Building, Durham, NC 27708-0764  
U.S.A.

