

Genocide Education Project
The Teaching of "A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)"

Teacher Workshop-Working Group on Reclaiming Cambodian History

Preah Vihear Temple, December 25, 2010

Press Release

On December 25 2010, the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport will hold its second annual teacher workshop with the aim of establishing a working group on reclaiming Cambodian history through a truth and reconciliation process. Participants in the workshop will include 23 national teachers and 180 provincial teachers. The workshop's discussion will focus on four main issues:

- 1. The establishment of an official working group on reclaiming Cambodian history:** DC-Cam believes that a truth and reconciliation process that fits into the social and cultural context of Cambodia should be established to enhance genocide prevention and national reconciliation and to document the atrocities committed during the period of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) regime.
- 2. Professional development:** The workshop also aims to enhance the capacity of national and provincial teachers who will be able to act as master trainers in subsequent commune teacher trainings. In 2011 and the subsequent years, DC-Cam and the Ministry of Education will continue to provide trainings to the remaining history teachers and the teachers who teach Khmer studies and citizen morality.
- 3. Teaching effectiveness:** The workshop will discuss how teachers introduce A History of Democratic Kampuchea into the classroom. Some key questions will be addressed: Are teachers able to apply the knowledge, skills, and methodologies they gained from the teacher training workshops in their classrooms? How much content from the textbook A History of Democratic Kampuchea are teachers able to use in their classroom? Are teachers able to perform effectively in the context of their school environment? What are the challenges teachers face in applying new methodologies and using teaching materials DC-Cam provided during the course of their teaching?

4. **Documenting survivors' stories:** In their roles as commissioners, teachers will have additional responsibilities not just to educate students about Khmer Rouge history but to encourage them to document the stories of their parents, grandparents, relatives and neighbors to preserve the memory of the violent past as part of the truth and reconciliation process.

Seven papers would be discussed in the workshop:

Discussion Paper I: **Complementary Justice by Youk Chhang**

Discussion Paper II: **Forgiveness: Is It Possible to Forgive and Can Forgiveness be Taught? by Kokthay Eng**

Discussion Paper III: **Key perspective on Professional Development by Chris Dearing and Savina Sarik**

Discussion Paper IV: **Effective Teaching of History of Democratic Kampuchea by Phala Chea**

Discussion Paper V: **Theory and Practice of Oral History by Prof. Siv Thuon**

Discussion Paper VI: **History from Below: Recording Cham Muslims' Experiences under Democratic Kampuchea by Farina So**

Discussion Paper VII: **Quality Control Why? by Kamboly Dy**

During the course of DC-Cam's works with victims of the Khmer Rouge, we heard people describing a golden opportunity when trucks of western governments suddenly appeared a few days to pick refugees to resettle in their countries. Here is the fact that probably fit their stories and what happened next. In June 1979, Thai government announced that a large number of Cambodian refugees would be expelled from Thailand. 1200 refugees were selected soon after to resettle in the United States, France and Australia. However the remaining bulk of the refugees were sent back to Cambodia. They were sent to Preah Vihear province. Although the cliffs along the Preah Vihear province of Cambodia and Si Sa Ket province of Thailand are steep as they approaches the Cambodian side. Along a few accessible paths from Thailand the Khmer Rouge had already mined during their time in power to prevent people from escaping to Thailand. It was reported that up to 3000 people were killed during the trek back inside Cambodia and up to 7000 were unaccounted for. It was unknown why they were sent to Preah Vihear rather than some other spots where it should be safer to cross. Until December 1979 several more waves of people were sent to back to Cambodia in similar manner, including 850 were sent through a hilled crossing north of Aranyaprathet. There were reports of how Thai soldiers shot refugees from beside as they forced them to move forward through mine fields.

Preah Vihear is a province locating in the northwestern fringe of Cambodia. This province was named after the temple of Preah Vihear on Cambodian-Thai border. The temple was built the early 9th Century, dedicating to Hindu deities. Back then the Khmer empire stretched to at least the basin of the Chao Phraya River. Over the

millennium, the temple became syncretic site of worship for both Buddhist and Hindu followers. Preah Vihear Temple has been a site of conflict between Thailand and Cambodia for almost a hundred years. Maps drawn up the French administration in Indochina in early 1900s and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) court case in 1961 ruled that the temple is in Cambodian territory and that the country is the rightful owner with sovereign right over the temple. In the beginning access to the temple was difficult from the Cambodian side. The Thai side is on the plateau which dropped down a few hundred meters as it approaches Cambodian border. This forms natural boundary between the two countries. However, access to the temple has improved on the Cambodian side with construction of roads from Preah Vihear provincial town to the temple site and from the base of the plateau to the top of it.

After the ICJ court verdict was handed down, the Thai side made no appeal and consistent objection. The verdict also stated that the Cambodia could reclaim any removed artifacts. It was a success to Cambodia and much of the credits went to the eccentric and charismatic young Prince Norodom Sihanouk. However, several years since the ICJ verdict Cambodia fell into protracted and violent conflicts from 1970 to 1998. Preah Vihear temple became a hiding place and a stronghold for the Khmer Rouge. The temple was one of the last locations to be taken from the Khmer Rouge. Up until 2008, tourists were allowed to the temple by accessing through the Thai side. A sprawling border market was set up near the temple at the border between Thailand and Cambodia. Preah Vihear is a temple full of history. It contains pieces of Cambodia's lost civilization. It is considered by the Khmers as their symbols of success over the Thais who they view as exploitative. The conflict has not been resolved. As such Preah Vihear province is an appropriate site for DC-Cam's next teacher workshop on reclaiming Cambodian history.

The Conference is funded by The Asia Foundation (TAF) with the core supports from USAID and Sida (Sweden).

For more information, please contact:

Kok-Thay Eng: truthkokthay@dccam.org; Tel: 012 955-858

Samphors Huy: truthsamphors@dccam.org; Tel: 012-965-285