

# មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

## GENOCIDE EDUCATION IN CAMBODIA

### Quality Control on the Teaching of "A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)"

Phnom Penh, June 2-6, 2011

By Khamboly Dy

#### 1. INTRODUCTION



**The compound of Chhouk Va High School in the suburb of Phnom Penh**

On June 2-6, 2011, the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) and the Ministry of Education conducted an evaluation and observation on four classrooms in the capital city of Phnom Penh. The evaluation team consists of two DC-Cam's staff members Mr. Khamboly Dy and Mr. Sovann Morm and two

officials from the Ministry of Education Mr. Siv Thoun and

Mr. Va Vuthy. The team observed four actual classroom teachings and conducted twelve interviews with teachers, students, School Directors and the villagers. The purposes of the evaluation are to examine the effectiveness of the teaching of KR history in Cambodian classrooms as well as to look at various challenges teachers and students face in teaching this history. The team also wants to see the perspectives and attitudes of teachers and students as well as the education officials and the population at large toward teaching and learning KR history in the classroom. At the end of each classroom observation and evaluation, the team provided feedback and recommendations for improvement to the observed teachers and School Directors on the areas they should improve to ensure that the teaching of "A History of Democratic Kampuchea" reaches its goal in a broader term.

Phnom Penh has been Cambodian capital since 14<sup>th</sup> century. After the collapse of the Angkorean period, Cambodian King moved the capital from one place to another to avoid attacks from Thailand and finally settled the capital in what is now called Phnom Penh. Penh is the name of an old lady who initiated the construction of Buddhist temple and stupa on a small hill situated in the center of the capital. Phnom Penh is now the center of education, business, culture and state administration. Historic buildings such as the Royal Palace, National Museum, Parliament building, governmental building and foreign embassies are all in Phnom Penh. To date, its population reaches almost three million. Most residents are civil servants, merchants, and factory workers.

Phnom Penh has changed its face many times in the past half century. It was considered as “Pearl of Asia” and “an Island of Peace” during Sihanouk’s regime between 1955 and 1970. After the March 1970 coup to depose Prince Sihanouk from power, the rightist American-backed government led by Marshall Lon Nol took control of the administration following severe civil war. The coup also marked the end of the capital neutrality and its fall into the inflammation of Second Indochina War. From 1970 to early 1975, Phnom Penh witnessed political instability, economic downfall, corruption, armed struggles between the Khmer Rouge (KR) resistant forces and the Khmer Republic government. Millions of refugees who escaped the war poured into the capital. Together with social turmoil, the capital lost its status as the “Pearl of Asia.” Worse than that, Phnom Penh experienced the most traumatic event in Cambodian history when it fell into the hand of the communist KR in April 1975. Immediately after the arrival of the KR guerilla forces, the capital was emptied and became a “ghost city.” About two million people most of whom were refugees from the countryside were forcefully evacuated out of the capital to consume agricultural work in the countryside. There was no exception to the evacuation. The kids, the elderly, pregnant women and patients in the hospital had to leave. On each exit, the KR put checkpoints to screen for former Khmer Republic officials, soldiers and military officers for arrest and summary execution. Thousands of people died on the way as April is the hottest month in Cambodia. The sick, kids and old people were not able to endure such hardship.



**Young students playing on the ground during the break time**

The KR controlled over the capital city of Phnom Penh for only 3 years, 8 months and 20 days. In early January 1979, forces of the United Front for National Salvation of Kampuchea and Vietnamese forces took over the capital and almost the entire Cambodia ten days later. Though its name as “ghost city” was liberated, the city once again fell into the trap of Cold War, particularly the ideological competition between former

Soviet Union and China, who had committed a lot of resources and political supports to their respective beneficiaries. The status of Phnom Penh as the center of Cambodian education, culture, business and governmental administration was in question. The KR forces, though lost control over the capital, were able to seek its legitimacy with the support from China, US and Southeast Asian countries. The Vietnamese-supported Phnom Penh government was under international sanction because of its unfortunate siding with the Soviet socialist bloc.

After political settlement which marked the first national election in 1993, Phnom Penh up to the present regains its status. 30 years after the collapse of the KR, the history of the KR mass atrocities begins to have shape. In June 2009, the first-ever

national teacher training on the teaching of *A History of Democratic Kampuchea* was convened in Senate Library with 39 participants, all of whom are officials from the Ministry of Education and DC-Cam. Five months later, in November, 186 provincial teachers were trained on the same topic. Later in 2010, close to 2,000 history teachers nationwide were trained. Finally, wider teaching on KR history in the Cambodian classrooms emerges.

To date, Phnom Penh consists of 29 High Schools. 72 history teachers from these high schools received training on both the content of the history and methodologies to teach this history in April 2011. Located in the capital, both teachers and students have more access to teaching resources comparing to the schools in the provinces. For instance, nine high schools receive inauguration of anti-genocide memorials. In each inauguration, 300 copies of the DK history textbook, 300 copies DC-Cam’s magazine *Search for the Truth*, 300 copies of booklets on case 002 and anti-genocide poster are distributed to students and teachers. Some high schools have received up to over 2,000 copies of the DK history textbook. These include Russey Keo, Indra Devi, Preah Sisowat and Preah Yokunthor high schools.

However, according to the evaluation and observation work, some suburb schools receive only a few copies of the textbook. History teachers who got training begin integrating DK history into their regular teaching. As DK history is the new program and the Ministry of Education’s social study textbooks contain little text devoted to DK history, the integration of DK history into the classroom teaching in Phnom Penh is considerably limited. The Municipal Office of Education and school leadership requested that more teachers be trained and more copies of the DK history textbook be distributed to the schools.

The table below is a brief summary of the evaluation works in Phnom Penh province.

<p><b>Quality control project objectives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching of <i>A History of Democratic Kampuchea</i>.</li> <li>• Evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching materials: (1) DK history textbook, (2) Teacher’s Guidebook and (3) Student Workbook.</li> <li>• Evaluate the integration of DK history into the daily regular teaching in schools.</li> <li>• Examine students’ and teachers’ attitude toward learning and teaching DK history in the classroom.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Means of evaluation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one-hour observation</li> <li>• Interviews with students, teachers, school directors and parents.</li> <li>• Surveys with students and teachers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tools for evaluation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom observation checklist</li> <li>• Questionnaire for teacher</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questionnaire for student</li> <li>• Interview questions</li> </ul>
<b>Types of school</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban: Wat Koh High School</li> <li>• Rural: Chea Sim Chhouk Va, Toul Prasat Sen Sok, and Koh Dach High Schools</li> <li>• Most remote areas: NA</li> </ul>
<b>Number of classes observed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four</li> </ul>
<b>Average number of students per class</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between 45 and 50</li> </ul>
<b>Approximate number of students with textbook</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximately 3 percent</li> </ul>
<b>Approximate number of teachers with Teacher's Guidebook and student workbook</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only teacher who participated in the training have guidebook and student workbook on hand.</li> </ul>
<b>Approximate number of students with student workbook</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No single student has ever received student workbook.</li> </ul>

## 2. PRE-EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

### Meeting with education officials and School Directors



**Meeting with Director of Toul Prasat Sen Sok High School**

Mr. Chea Cheat, Head of the Municipal Office of Education has been very supportive to the Genocide Education Project. He has participated in several events such as the opening ceremony of the fourth commune teacher training in Phnom Penh and the inauguration of the anti-genocide memorials in several high schools in Phnom Penh. One day prior to the observation and evaluation work, the team needs permission letter from the Municipal Office of Education in order to observe the classrooms. It was a day-off for civil servant. In spite of this, Mr. Chea Cheat allowed to team to meet him in his office and produced permission letter for us. He said that if the team encounters any problem during their mission, they can call him directly.

The visits the school at least one or two hours in advance in order to observe the general conditions of the schools as well as to talk to the school directors. The team met the school directors ahead of classroom observations. In the meeting, the observation team presented permission letters and explained the purposed of conducting the work. We also had dialogues with the school directors about the

general challenges each school face. Three out of four school directors talked about the lack of teachers while all school directors mentioned the lack of teaching materials. Finally, we asked about the number of copies the schools have received and the integration of DK history.

Table below shows the names, number of teachers, students and classrooms of each school.

No.	High School	Teachers	Female	Students	Classroom
1	Chea Sim Chhouk Va	60	6	874	16
2	Wat Koh	226	112	2,605	65
3	Toul Prasat Sen Sok	67	13	1,208	10
4	Koh Dach	49	12	1,787	25

### 3. CLASSROOM AND GENERAL OBSERVATION

#### A. General observations

The capital city of Phnom Penh is considered to be the center of education with more available resources and textbooks. In spite of this fact, schools in the suburb areas still face shortage of social study textbooks. For instance, the team observed a classroom teaching at Chea Sim Chhouk Va high school. The classroom consists of 25 students, a surprisingly small number the team has ever met. Among these, only four students have history social study textbook on hand. The 25 students have to share the four copies of textbook together. Among more than ten subjects, one student is allowed to borrow only three kinds of textbook. Students have to come up with their own solutions for the other seven textbooks. Those who are from the rich families may buy the remaining textbooks while poor students have to shift and share the textbooks among friends who sit next to them. Teachers who teach grade 10, 11 and 12 do not have guidebook, and at the same time, teachers do not possess enough capacity to design effective lesson plans. This compromises the quality of education.

The lack of teaching materials could possibly one of the major reasons why most teachers decide to use traditional method by asking one or two students to read sections in the book followed by comprehension questions. Both teachers and students are not able to afford sufficient copies of textbook. Chhouk Va high school has never obtained DK history textbook. The whole school has only one copy brought by a teacher who participated in the April 2011 commune teacher training.

Teacher Hak Sen Sophea of Chhouk Va high school said that most students in the school come from slum area called Sambok Chab (bird nest). They were evacuated from the center of the capital for development project and resettled in the suburb of the city. Most families are poor and cannot afford to provide sufficient support for their children to come to school. Students are often absent as they need to help their parents to earn money for the living. This factor leads to a high dropout rate.

The gap between high schools in the capital center and those in the suburb is large. Schools in the suburb such as Chhouk Va and Toul Prasat Sen Sok lack both classrooms and teachers, the number of which are not responding adequately to the large number of students. Toul Prasat Sen Sok high school does not even have director office. The school leadership has to convert two classrooms into their offices. Only last year did the school have electricity. In contrast, Wat Koh high school has surplus of teachers and extra classrooms. In addition, Wat Koh has a functioning library, computer rooms, laboratory, and sewing class. The school also has life skill center and agricultural fields in which students are taught the skills necessary for their living such as planting rice and building houses. Wat Koh is also famous of art and sport since the school has sport facilities such as basket ball, volleyball badminton and football. It has art class as well. In contrast, the suburb schools do not have these facilities to encourage students to get involved in art or sport. In spite of this exception, Wat Koh still faces a large dropout rate each year. Some students leave the schools and attend private schools while others migrate with their parents to suburb.



Mr. Siv Toun led survey with students.



Mr. Siv Thoun and Mr. Va Vuthy observed survey with students.

Further advantages the schools in the capital obtain are the accesses to the scholarships from non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Several poor students live under the support of the NGOs providing living expenses and month stipend. However, this advantage is limited to a few poor students only.

## B. Excerpts from classroom teaching

Below is an excerpt from a classroom teaching with the integration DK history.

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**Teacher Hak Sen Sophea, Chea Sim Chhouk Va High School, Grade 12 of History class**

**Chapter 2: Lesson 5: People's Republic of Kampuchea and the State of Cambodia (1979-1991)**

**Duration: 1 Hour**

**Objectives:**

- Describe the creation of United Front for National Salvation of Kampuchea.

- Analyze the fall of the Democratic Kampuchea regime.
- Participate in the campaign against the genocidal regime, not to allow it to return to Cambodian again.

**Teaching materials:** History textbook for grade 12, page 229, and *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)*

**Process and Procedure:**

Step 1: Teacher observes the classroom order and sanitation.

Step 2: Teacher asks students a question: What were the reasons of the fall of DK regime?



**Mr. Hak Sen Sophea is teachig in the classroom.**

Step 3: Teacher asks two or three students to take turn to read sections of the lesson. After that, teacher explains some difficult terms such as genocide, riot and United Front for National Salvation of Kampuchea. Then teacher asks the following questions: Who is Hu Nim? When did he work against Pol Pot? In March 1976 When did people in Battambang and Siem Reap stand up against Pol Pot? In March and April 1977, What areas did people stand up against Pol Pot? What results did those who stood up against Pol Pot receive? When did the KR start killing more and more people? What were the reactions from the people? Who is Heng Sarin? What did he appeal to the people? When did the United Front for National Salvation of Kampuchea establish? Who were the leaders? When did the United Front and Vietnamese forces start liberating the country? When was Phnom Penh liberated? After the liberation day of 7 January 1979, what were the conditions of Cambodian people?

Step 4: Teacher asks students to summary the lesson related to Democratic Kampuchea.

Step 5: Teacher advises students not to take Pol Pot as example and read books related to Khmer Rouge regime.

**4. OBSERVATIONS OF STUDENTS**

Although the integration is limited and the number of copies of DK history textbook is small, students knows some of the basic historical events happening during the KR regime, especially the stories of their parents and grandparents at that time. This

finding contrasts to the claims that Cambodian young generations know nothing or very little about DK. Students in Chhouk Va and Koh Dach high schools were able to answer several questions from the teachers. They know the reasons of the fall of the KR regime, the rebels against the KR leadership in 1976 and the purge of Hu Nim, KR Minister of Information. Moreover, they talked about the sporadic conflicts with Vietnam and the struggle of the United Front for National Salvation of Kampuchea with assistance from Vietnam against the KR. Then the students link their answers on KR history to the aftermath of 1979. Apart from the textbook, they learned this information from their parents. At the end of the classroom, teacher asked if they wanted the return of the KR regime. The students spontaneously answered “no.”



**The compound of Koh Dach High School with many slogans**

According to the interview with teachers and classroom observation, students seem to be so interested whenever teachers talk about DK history. Some teachers said that they sometimes could not finish their regular lessons because students have a lot of questions on DK. It is hard to take students' attention back to the regular lessons. One student

from Chhouk Va high school said that when she read about

DK, she felt fearful and pity on her parents. One of her uncles is a former KR cadre. She heard her parents say that her uncle used to harm people during the KR. However, she never dares to ask him about his work during that time. He is now an layman in the nearby pagoda. She said that she did believe in what happened during the KR because everyone talks about this. They are living witnesses. She talked to her friends about war and the killings during the KR. They said that they are lucky to be born in this regime. They wanted to know “why the KR who was educated killed their own people.”

Though students have a lot of questions in mind, they believe in what their parents and relatives have told them. One student from Tuol Prasat Sen Sok High School said that, “the old people will never lie their suffering to their children. I believe 100 percent.”

## **5. INTEGRATION OF DK HISTORY COMMENTARY**

The integration of DK history into the social study teaching is considerably limited. According to the interviews with teachers, the integration is done through oral narrations and a few fact-finding questions either at the beginning or in the middle to the teaching where teachers see the relevance for integration. The integration rarely goes beyond brief story telling. Students do not have any activities on DK history, nor do teachers use the DK history textbook during the integration. The



interviews with students show that teachers rarely teach DK history in the class. However, for the most relevant lessons such as the lesson on the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) regime, teachers are able to discuss more about KR period since the two regimes are inter-related, and the integration is done throughout the entire session.

Only teachers who have participated in the DC-Cam's teacher trainings make efforts to integrate DK history into their regular teaching. The other teachers who have not been trained seem to feel that they do not have any obligation to teach or integrate DK history. In spite of this fact, one for a while the untrained teachers also talk about DK when any of their lessons related to KR issues. However, the untrained teachers



**Mr. Siv Thoun and Mr. Va Vuthy are giving feedbacks to the teacher.**

cannot be blamed as they do not yet receive training, nor do they have resources and teacher's guidebook for guidance to teach this sensitive history. More teacher trainings are needed to reach out to history teachers who have not had chance to attend the training and teachers in the field of Khmer Studies, Citizen Morality, Earth Studies and Home Economics.

In some cases, teachers integrate DK history through moral advice. For instance, if students do not pay attention to the study, teachers would say that, "If you were in KR regime, you would be taken for reeducation, forced labor or even execution." This advice sometimes leads to more discussions on KR regime during the teaching sessions.

Among the four schools observed, Koh Dach high school<sup>1</sup> which is considered to be the most remote school in Phnom Penh turned out to be the most effective in integrating DK history. The teacher explained students clearly and used new method he gained from the training to generate students' understanding. In the middle of the session, the teacher divided students into group discussions. He introduced two

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<sup>1</sup> To go to Koh Dach, one has to travel on national road No. 6. Travelling for about 10 kilometers, there is a sign on the right hand side saying "ferry to Koh Dach." It takes about fifteen to twenty minutes to cross the Mekong River to Koh Dach. The school situates beautifully in the middle of the island which is about seven kilometers long and three kilometers width. The school is much more organized and environmentally pleasant than expected. Inside the school compound, there are a lot of trees and flowers. A number of slogans are attached to the trees for educational purposes. The classrooms are decorated with educational slogans, flowers, pictures and posters. The physical outlook of the school is as beautiful as those in the center of the city. In spite of this, the school still lacks educational infrastructure and qualified teachers. Donors and supporters usually donate only school buildings and teaching facilities such as tables and chairs. Koh Dach consists of one commune and five villages: La-vea, Roneas, Koh Dach, Chong Koh, and Kbal Koh. There are seven pagodas, five primary schools, one lower secondary school and one high school. Lower secondary school and high school are in the same compound. Koh Dach is famous of its silk cloth.

critical questions: What are the effects of DK regime on Cambodia? Do you love peace? Why or why not? He allowed enough time for students to discuss and analyze. However, he failed to use DK history textbook during the integration. The school has the most effective integration of DK history though the integration in general is small.

The main reason for the limited integration of DK history concentrates on the vast number of lessons of the Ministry's social study textbooks. Teachers complained that they hardly finished the program set by the Ministry; therefore, they are not able to allocate much time for the integration of DK history. Teachers recommended that to have wider integration, the Ministry of Education may issue an instruction to integrate DK history, but the Ministry needs also to reduce the amount of foreign histories, which form the majority in history textbooks from grade 9 to 12.

## 6. IMPACTS



**The Pagoda on the Koh Dach Island**



**A Ferry to Koh Dach Island**

Though one or two copies of DK history textbook per school are not enough, it does have great impact on students' knowledge and teachers alike. Mr. Hak Sen Sophea from Chhouk Va high school put one copy in the library and the other in the teacher meeting hall. The two copies become so old and decayed as students and teachers take turn to read. The observation team gave 25 extra copies to the school and promised that DC-Cam will allocate more copies for all suburb schools in the capital. Mr. Sophea said that he sent two copies to an orphanage center in Kampong Speu province. The center wanted more copies for the orphan there. The team said that the center can submit formal request to DC-Cam, and we will offer extra copies for them.

At Wat Koh high school, a teacher who participated in the provincial teacher training is aware of the inauguration of the anti-genocide memorial in various high schools in Phnom Penh. He informed this to the school director who requested that DC-Cam hold a book distribution and put anti-genocide slogan in his school because so far the school has not yet received any formal textbook distribution, nor has the school received the number of copies of the DK history textbook according to its quota in which each school is to receive 130 copies. The team agreed in principle that

they will report this request to DC-Cam and, if agreed upon, will contact the school director in order to prepare this event. The director said he wanted to have the slogan inauguration in October, which is the start of the academic year.

One teacher of Wat Koh high school said that she is now teaching the teachers who are studying for additional credits to be promoted to upper secondary school level teachers. The study takes place every evening in her school. The knowledge on KR history and the methodology enhance her capacity to teach the teachers some of whom had gone through the KR period. She said without proper training, she will not be able to deal with the students who are at her age or older. However, she, in some cases, found it easy to teach them because they are KR survivors and remember a lot of stories. She even learns the KR history back from them sometimes.

## 7. CHALLENGES AND LESSON LEARNED



**Mekong River, One of the Longest Rivers in the World**

DC-Cam has distributed copies of the DK history textbook to all lower secondary schools and high schools in Phnom Penh as well as schools in the provinces. Unlike provincial schools which receive between 50 and 100 copies, the four schools in Phnom Penh the team observed have only one or two copies of the textbook. The schools got the textbook through the teachers who attended the training and brought extra copies for their

respective schools. In fact, about ten high schools in Phnom Penh received a large number of textbook; some high schools receive up to or even over 2,000 copies. The total number of high schools is 29. High schools in the suburb of the capital receive less attention and do not have enough copies for their students, thereby compromising the effectiveness of integrating and teaching DK history in the classroom. It is recommended that DC-Cam works collaboratively with the Municipal Office of Education to obtain the updated number of high schools and lower secondary schools in Phnom Penh and ensure that each school receives at least 100 copies for library references and uses.

The school leadership in Phnom Penh seems to be little aware of the teaching/integrating DK history in the classroom teaching. For instance, Wat Koh and Chhouk Va school directors only know about the teacher training but not much about the DK history textbook and its integration. They have no knowledge on the collaboration between DC-Cam and the Ministry of Education in introducing DK history into Cambodian classrooms. Only the high schools in which DC-Cam's related events such as textbook distribution and inauguration of anti-genocide memorial took place are aware of the genocide education project. There have to be

measures ensuring that the school leadership and all teachers, especially those in the fields of History, Khmer Studies, Citizen Morality, Earth Studies and Home Economics, are aware of the project of introducing DK history teaching into Cambodian classroom nationwide. A wider textbook distribution to the schools in the suburb of Phnom Penh and anti-genocide memorial play important roles in disseminating this awareness for a more effective collaboration from the school leadership and the teachers at large.

Students' knowledge on the textbook *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)* seems pretty small comparing to the students in the provinces. Among the interviewed students, many seem to have never seen the textbook whole a few others said they have seen somewhere but never read and have no idea of what the textbook is about. Teachers in the provinces are more active in both teaching DK history and promoting students' awareness on this topic. For example, some teachers in the provinces asked students to read the textbook in the library as KR issues appear in the national exams for two consecutive years.

## **8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Schools in the suburb of Phnom Penh make little geographical differences from the schools in the remote provinces in terms of qualified teachers and teaching materials. The gap between schools in capital center and those in the suburb of Phnom Penh is big. The schools in the suburb still encounter shortage of teachers and students' textbook. Moreover, teachers are still practicing traditional method in their classes. Most of the time, teachers ask only the questions that already have the answers in the textbook. Analytical questions are very rare. Group work and presentation are not common practices for many teachers. The interaction in the classes is pretty small. Only a few students work and respond to the teachers while most students have no interactions.

Students' knowledge on DK history strongly depends on teachers' choice. At this stage of genocide education in Cambodia, it is important that teachers have incentives and desires to teach and to integrate DK history into their teaching as there has no formal instruction from the Ministry of Education to teach or to integrate yet. The Ministry of Education only agreed in principle that DK history has to be taught in Cambodian schools, but teachers need a more specific instruction distributed via the provincial offices of education down to the district offices of education and to the school management which is the usual bureaucratic practices in Cambodian education system. If teachers have passion and see the importance of genocide education clearly, teachers are more likely to spend more time to put homework and help students to learn more about DK history. To avoid overlapping with the existing program of the Ministry of Education, teachers can ask students to interview their parents about life during the KR and write a small story out of the interview. Teachers can spend about ten minutes or at the end of the class to review the homework altogether in the class.

Survivors have played integral role in educating their young children about this

traumatic history. In the next 20 or 30 years, educating Cambodian young generations on DK history have to depend totally on formal teaching in the classroom and informal teaching through public forums and scholarly research and publications. The role of survivors will fade away from time to time.

**Appendix: Interview with Mr. Hak Sen Sopheap, a teacher at Chea Sim Chhouk Va High School, interviewed by Khamboly Dy**

Boly: How are you?  
Sopheap: I am fine, thanks.  
Boly: What's your name?  
Sopheap: Hak Sen-Sopheap.  
Boly: How old are you?  
Sopheap: 36 years in official birth registration but I am actually 40 years.  
Boly: How many years have you taught?  
Sopheap: 13 years.  
Boly: What date is it?  
Sopheap: It's 2nd June  
Boly: What is district called?  
Sopheap: Kork Roka  
Boly: Commune?  
Sopheap: Dong Kao commune.  
Boly: Is it Sen Chey commune?  
Sopheap: It isn't changed yet.  
Boly: Teacher Hak Sen-Sopheap?  
Sopheap: Yes.  
Boly: When were you born?  
Sopheap: April 25, 1974.  
Boly: Which village were you born?  
Sopheap: Keo Udom village, Trapeng Korng district, Samrao Torng commune, Kampong Speu province. My date of birth is not true.  
Boly: Not true?  
Sopheap: When I went to school, my father didn't allow me to study. He was afraid of the Khmer Rouge whose cadres bullied him. As we know, Khmer Rouge was communist, and its Victory Day was communist too. So he didn't allow me to study, but I wanted to study, and I wrote my wrong biography in order to be able to study. But I was born in Phnom Penh. I was 17 April people, but I was born in 1972 because I just happened to know. He didn't tell me. I he told me, I went to school. So I applied for studying with wrong biography until now.  
Boly: Oh! You are Phnom Penh resident?  
Sopheap: Yes, I am 17 April people.  
Boly: Is your place of birth in Phnom Penh?  
Sopheap: Yes. After Pol Pot regime, my father didn't live in Phnom Penh and moved to live in another village. When I applied for scholarship, I didn't know where I was born, so I wrote on application form where I am living now.

Boly: Where is your parents' hometown?  
 Sopheap: My father was born in Srey Santhor commune, Kampong Cham, and my mother was born in that village. It is his wife's hometown. He didn't live in his hometown because he was afraid of someone knowing his biography. He was forced to become a chief of commune in 1979 but he denied because he wanted to live here. He didn't want to become a commune chief, so he moved to live with his mother because he was afraid of reoccurrence of the Khmer Rouge regime again.

Boly: It is still a concern in mind.  
 Sopheap: After the election in 1995, he was still afraid of the reoccurrence of that regime and he would never wear black.

Boly: He didn't want you to learn?  
 Sopheap: No. He thought that when his son has knowledge, His son will be killed. So my biography is not true from beginning to now. Even until I took secondary school exam, he didn't want me to change my correct biography. I changed my previous name in the village, and I also used another first name.

Boly: How do you know your correct biography?  
 Sopheap: After that, he told me what he wrote in his book but it disappeared during Khmer Rouge. So he just told what he remembered.

Boly: What was your father's job?  
 Sopheap: He stopped study at grade 11 during Lon Nol regime and he was a vender in Phnom Penh

Boly: Where did he go after Khmer Rouge controlled the country?  
 Sopheap: He went to Staung commune, Kampong Thom province, South Kampong Chen village.

Boly: It is near Duch' district too. He lived in Kampong Chin.  
 Sopheap: Yes. But he didn't know until he read Duch's biography.  
 Boly: I would like to ask you about present teaching as you said that most students are forced to move from illegal construction in Phnom Penh.  
 Sopheap: Yes.  
 Boly: So what challenges do you have when you teach them?  
 Sopheap: Firstly, they don't have documents and study materials. For discipline, I always educate them, explain about the importance of learning, and I told them about my willingness to teach them. They think it is my big willingness, so they try study hard. In term of the present salary, I am discouraging to teach because it is small income and we spend it all, so I have to do another work. I can stop working here to work outside, but I don't want to stop because I feel pity on the students. To be honest, if I decided to work in the province, I would have stopped teaching many years ago. Here, it is near my house, and I feel pity on the children. We are good resources for education. If we stop teaching them, they can be turning from bad to worse. For education problem, it is not a serious matter, but teaching materials are real problem. They are poor, so they don't have money to buy books and we can't copy

lessons for sale. It means that teacher has to explain lesson more and they remember what they learn. So it is my problem.

Boly: Well, they are poor, so they don't have money to buy books?

Sopheap: Yes. Anyway, Phnom Penh's Municipal Office of Education provided 10 books. As you know, when I taught, they have a few books in the class. Some students have textbook because they have money to buy it.

Boly: Do you have other challenges besides lacking of documents?

Sopheap: It doesn't matter as I pay strong attention to teach them. I try to overcome the problem. If we decide to teach them, we should not have reasons to escape from the challenges.

Boly: Were six students absent in the class?

Sopheap: Yes. Because six students thought that they studied in the afternoon, so they confused the study time.

Boly: why did they change?

Sopheap: Generally, students always study alternately in Phnom Penh because school lacks of classroom, so they are not jealous toward each other. They shift one month in the morning and another month in the afternoon. Unlike in the provinces, students study one whole year in the morning and next year in the afternoon because schools in the province have more classrooms.

Boly: It is unfair?

Sopheap: Yes. We have problem with books and documents here. I keep the DK history textbook that I got from DC-Cam in the library. But now, it is torn, and I changed the new one because they like reading it very much.

Boly: Who read it?

Sopheap: Teachers. Firstly, I introduced the book to teachers to read, and I then told the students. I reserved two copies of the textbook in the library for students' research, and I kept one copy here for teachers too. After we integrated it into the teaching, some students want to know.

Boly: How do they want to know?

Sopheap: They want to know the details of the regime because the integration is little, so they want to know and they find book to read. When we didn't integrate, they didn't think about it. But when we integrated, we have no books for them to read because we have small copies of the textbook. Reading in the library, they have short time, so they borrow the textbook to read at home. I have six copies, and I sent two to orphanage center in Kampong Speu.

Boly: Why did you send the book there?

Sopheap: I visited there and I have known the center. I gave two copies to them, and they asked me "Do you have more copies? Oh! My ability is limited."

Boly: How do you integrate KR history?

Sopheap: I mostly integrate the points related to the lessons. Secondly, I integrate directly. For example: When students didn't respect discipline, I told them about the strict Khmer Rouge disciplines. They keep silent and I told that if you lived during the Khmer Rouge regime, you would be

sent to reeducation. So you should be quiet. If regime happens again, you can be flexible to survive. Sometimes, I have several teaching hours left. As I just came back from the training, I spent the entire one or two hours to teach chapters from the DK history textbook. As I later wanted to finish my lesson. I taught DK history according to the time available.

Boly: Many lessons?

Sopheap: Yes. I taught many lessons in grade 11 and 12 not grade 10 because I have little time.

Boly: Generally, are you able to finish the whole school curriculum within an academic year?

Sopheap: Finish.

Boly: And you have hours left to teach the whole content of textbook?

Sopheap: Yes. I have my plan. As you know, my teaching experiences have been 13 years. The reason of being able to finish and not depends on time management. For grade 12, this is the last lesson, and I have a few weeks left to KR history to teach them.

Boly: I asked some teachers and they said that it is difficult to finish the school curriculum within an academic year. What are the reasons?

Sopheap: First, they don't know how to prepare the schedule. They follow the school curriculum and there are a lot of national holidays. The curriculum does not count in the national holidays. Second, some lessons are long, and teachers have to spend extra time. Most teachers spend many hours to teach some particular lessons. The curriculum provides only three hours but they spend four hours. In another case, the class is off for many hours. The teachers don't determine which lesson they should spend less time and which ones to spend more time. But for me, the Ministry of Education assigns us to finish 50 percent by the first semester; however, students have finished many lessons earlier. For the first semester, I can teach up to 70 percent of the total curriculum. There are a lot of national holidays during the second semester. So I keep 20 to 30 percent of the curriculum for the second semester. If I don't do that, students won't be able to finish their study.

Boly: If you finish earlier, do you allow them to go home?

Sopheap: No, I teach what I should teach for extra curriculum course. And I don't have extra hours. I am able to finish the program every year. I have never been late. But other teachers don't think so. As I said, if they pay attention to teach, they can solve this problem. If they don't like the teaching job, they have all reasons to make excuses. As they said, there are a lot of holidays. If my teaching is late, I don't blame on the long national holidays. My salary is small.

Boly: So if you have good preparation on the curriculum, you can finish it?

Sopheap: Yes. It depends on us. We can prepare.

Boly: Does this depend on teachers?

Sopheap: Yes. It depends on teachers. If we strictly follow the school curriculum, we can't finish it. For example, if teachers have no class for an hour, their teaching is late for one hour already. Next month is the vacation



period. Therefore, some teachers have to be late. If they don't know to arrange the curriculum, they won't be able to finish the whole curriculum.

Boly: You said you have integrated a lot of DK history, right?

Sopheap: Yes. I have integrated a lot of lessons.

Boly: Have you noticed the challenges to your integration? What are the difficulties when you integrated the content of the textbook?

Sopheap: First, it is about timing. It is important. Now, students have higher knowledge. After I integrated DK history into my teaching, the students believe and like it. Prior to the integration, they didn't believe and think that "No one kills human beings like animal, especially killing their own nation national." When I tell them, they seem to be unbelievable. But I try to explain them. Even some teachers have difficulties in believing such acts too. "No one kills their own relatives." Therefore, I try to figure out the method to explain them, but I just don't have much time. Today, I am arranging time to finish the new curriculum. I don't know how long it is.

Boly: Do you have any comments to have a broader integration of DK history into your regular teaching?

Sopheap: First, teachers have to have desire to integrate KR history and manage the time. It is important. Thus, they are different. If you tell them to integrate and their desire doesn't want to integrate, there will be no integration. The main point is that they understand about KR history and they want students to know to prevent genocide, so they will integrate. It is my opinion. In addition, teachers should select one student to tell a story of his/her family to all friends in the class. If his/her friend narrates the story to them, they believe. They may not believe what the old people tell them. For example, I told them about the marriage under the Khmer Rouge. They said that, "No one gets marriage while the couple doesn't know each other." I asked them if anyone has parents whose marriage was arranged under the Khmer Rouge. A few students said "yes." "How did your parents say? My parents just said it is absolutely true." So, they believe.

Boly: So it is easy as they have self-study.

Sopheap: Yes.

Boly: What do you do besides the teaching job?

Sopheap: I was trained in medicine but I have given it up. Now I am running a business.

Boly: Were you trained in both teaching and medicine?

Sopheap: Yes.

Boly: Two scholarships?

Sopheap: Yes. As you know, I have had difficulty since the Pol Pot regime. I was three or four years old under Pot Pol and I could support my father who was sick. So when I had problem, I was able to solve it even if I was a kid. Therefore, if I cannot run a business now, I will be a useless person. Although the Khmer Rouge regime was so strict, I still could survive and support my father.

Boly: Our experiences can help ourselves.

Sopheap: Yes.

Boly: Let come back to the integration. Besides asking students to interview their parents, do you think you have other ways to do the integration?

Sopheap: After attending the training, I encouraged the integration of DK history textbook. Their parents told them about the living condition during the KR regime; however, they don't know about the structure of Khmer Rouge regime, so I mentioned this part. Now they know both the living condition and the structure of KR regime. It is my integration.

Boly: When you told them about the KR history, do you think the students are interested or not?

Sopheap: They are interested.

Boly: Doesn't anyone want to know?

Sopheap: When I teach KR history, I have a hard time to return back to my regular lesson. They asked a lot of questions and they wanted to know more and more. They like learning it. As I told you, sometimes I spent one or two hours just for questions and answers on KR history. They want to know and I can't refuse them. They don't get bored. I also integrate other social issues, not just KR history.

Boly: Does your class consist of the children of former KR cadres?

Sopheap: No.

Boly: Do know if there are former KR cadres among the teachers?

Sopheap: No.

Boly: If there is one, I just want to know the relation between them.

Sopheap: We rarely have former KR cadres living in Phnom Penh but there are some in the provinces.

Boly: I only have a few more questions to ask you. Especially, I want to know the challenges when you teach KR history and how you solve those challenges. At the end of the quality control, I will prepare a recommendation for the Ministry of Education, H.E Im Sothy, to have a wider integration of DK history.

Sopheap: Now the Ministry of Education reduced teaching hours of the History course. I only have some hours for my teaching. The score for this course is little too. I have difficulty in teaching the students. First, the score is little, so the students don't want to study this subject. They are aware that the subject has little score. But now, the Ministry of Education has increased the score. Therefore, the problem is solved as they turn to like studying it. This history subject is counted as 50 percent as the science courses. I am delighted with the change made by the Ministry of Education. I stopped teaching history course for grade 11 and 12 a few years ago. But this year, the Ministry of Education changed the program, so the challenges are reduced. We didn't have enough time for the integration as our time was short. But now, we have enough time and we can integrate more. So I support what the Ministry of Education has done. But if we demand for more integration of DK history, we can't do so. It's too much. It doesn't balance with the other subjects.

Boly: Thank you for your interview.

End

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