

# Quality Control on the Teaching of "A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)" in Pailin and Banteay Meanchey Provinces

Khamboly Dy

---

**T**HE DOCUMENTATION CENTER OF CAMBODIA (DC-Cam) and the Cambodian Ministry of Education<sup>1</sup> held a quality control evaluation in Pailin and Banteay Meanchey provinces on 20-27 February 2011. An evaluation team (Team) consisting of two DC-Cam staff members (Mr. Khamboly Dy and Mr. Sovann Morm) and two officials from the Ministry of Education (Ms. Neang Beng and Ms. Piseth Neary Seng) undertook the evaluation exercise. The Team observed seven classes and held twenty-two interviews with teachers, students, School Directors, officials of the Provincial Offices of Education and former Khmer Rouge cadres. At the end of each classroom observation and evaluation, the Team provided feedback and recommendations for improvement to the observed teachers and School Directors who in turn agreed to exert more efforts at ensuring a proper and wider teaching of Khmer Rouge history in their respective schools.

## Evaluation Activities

The Team undertook a number of activities in Pailin and Banteay Meanchey provinces during the period of evaluation. Table 1 shows a summary of the evaluation activities done.

**Table 1. Summary of evaluation activities**

Quality control project objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching of <i>A History of Democratic Kampuchea</i> (Democratic Kampuchea history textbook).</li><li>• Evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching materials: (1) <i>A History of Democratic Kampuchea</i> as history textbook, (2) <i>Teacher's Guidebook</i> and (3) <i>Student Workbook</i>.</li><li>• Evaluate the integration of Khmer Rouge history into the daily regular teaching in schools.</li></ul>
------------------------------------	---

(Continued) **Table 1. Summary of evaluation activities**

Means of evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-hour class observation</li> <li>• Interview</li> <li>• Survey</li> </ul>
Tools for evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom observation checklist</li> <li>• Questionnaire for teachers</li> <li>• Questionnaire for students</li> <li>• Interview questions</li> </ul>
Types of school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools in urban, rural and remote areas</li> </ul>
Number of classes observed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seven (Bor Yakha Lower Secondary School, Hun Sen Sala Kroa Secondary School, Phnom Yat Lower Secondary School, Chhnour Meanchey Secondary School, Hun Sen Mongkul Borei Secondary School, Samdech Ov Secondary School, and Poi Pet Lower Secondary School)</li> </ul>
Average number of students per class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between forty and forty-five</li> </ul>
Approximate number of students with textbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No student in Pailin has received the textbook, while about forty percent of students in Banteay Meanchey received the textbook</li> </ul>
Approximate number of teachers with <i>Teacher's Guidebook</i> and <i>Student Workbook</i>	Only the teachers who participated in the DC-Cam training have guidebook and student workbook on hand
Approximate number of students with student workbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No student has received the student workbook</li> </ul>

### Pre-evaluation Activities

Before undertaking the evaluation activities, the Team discussed the project with officials of the Provincial Offices of Education to seek their collaboration and approval. The Team presented documents and evaluation tools to the education officials and had them signed by the officials as proof of approval, a necessary measure that would ensure sincere cooperation from School Directors. These meetings also allowed the Team to learn about the educational situation in each province, the location of the schools the Team was going to observe, and information on the respective school officials and teachers.

In Pailin, the Team met with Mr. It Chea, Deputy Head of Pailin Office of Education. Mr. Chea said that most people in Pailin were former Khmer Rouge cadres with low education and were appointed to government positions including Provincial Governor, Deputy Governors, and Heads and Deputy Heads of all provincial offices by the Royal Government of

Cambodia for the sake of political stability and peace. But they have limited capacity to oversee the general operation of the education system in the province. Though the current Head of the Provincial Office of Education is a newcomer from Phnom Penh, the former Head and one current Deputy Head are former Khmer Rouge cadres.

According to Mr. Chea, some children of the Khmer Rouge cadres have received secondary school education and attended the teacher training school in Battambang province since 2007. The children of former Khmer Rouge cadres constituted twenty percent of the teachers, mostly in primary schools and lower secondary schools. But few former Khmer Rouge cadres and their children have become teachers in upper secondary schools. Most teachers of all levels in Pailin are from Battambang, Kampot, Banteay Meanchey and Takeo provinces. The total number of students in Pailin currently reaches over nineteen thousand. The table below shows the ten-year growth (2001 TO 2011) of the number of teachers in Pailin.

Year	Total number of teachers	Female teachers
2001	133	32
2002	162	40
2003	185	64
2004	223	89
2005	299	107
2006	352	129
2007	396	147
2008	441	159
2009	497	163
2010	552	184
2011	596	210

The extended interview of teachers and school officials who were former Khmer Rouge cadres or children of the former Khmer Rouge cadres facilitated the gathering of insights on how the project can be more effectively implemented at the school level. Mr. Choub Sambat, a Deputy Head of Pailin Office of Education, initially refused to talk until he learned about DC-Cam and the textbook. He was a former middle-ranking Khmer Rouge cadre in Phnom Penh in late 1970s.

## Evaluation Results

Overall, the respondents (teachers, students, education officials and residents in the provinces visited) agree that teaching and studying Khmer Rouge history in a formal classroom setting is important in preventing the reoccurrence of such atrocities in the future. Although about eighty percent of residents in Pailin province are former Khmer Rouge cadres and the province itself was a Khmer Rouge stronghold until 1996, most interviewed teachers, students, and residents see the teaching of Khmer Rouge history in schools in a positive light. Mr. Mei Makk, former personal adviser to Pol Pot and currently Deputy Governor of Pailin, suggested that, “we should study [Khmer Rouge history in order] not to allow it to [happen] again, [and] second to see the real extent of the crimes. I agree to have it forever.” Based on the Team’s observation, the children of former Khmer Rouge cadres in Pailin, constituting more than half of the student population, maintain good relations with the other students and show positive attitude toward learning the Khmer Rouge history.

## Evaluation of specific issues

The Team compiled a number of issues that affect the school system in general, and the teaching of Khmer Rouge history in particular. School officials and teachers in the schools visited by the Team discussed these issues.

Some of these issues are discussed below in summarized form.

### I. General Observations

#### *a. Khmer Rouge legacy and the effect of war on general education*

Emerging from war only from 1996, people in Pailin are still struggling with illiteracy. Most interviewed teachers complain about the frequent absence of their students for a number of reasons. First, most parents who are former Khmer Rouge cadres do not value education. They ask their children to help in the farm. Being a farming region, most people in Pailin plant potatoes, beans and fruits to sell to Thailand. Even some well-off families do not encourage their children to study. After finishing grade 12, children are encouraged to engage in farming because it generates income. Second, many students drop out of school or take one-year leave from school to

work in Thailand. The family's economic difficulties force students to work in Thailand. They mostly do housework, plant rice, and work in factories. Third, due to the border conflict between Cambodia and Thailand that led to exchange of gunfire, some parents do not allow their children to come to school. People have been traumatized by wars, conflicts and killings many times in the past. This trauma still affects them mentally. They do not want to lose their family members again.

### *Knowledge that students want*

Most of the time, teachers teach only those that are found in the textbooks. Teachers rarely use outside materials to enhance their teaching. However, when teachers use *K-W-L* (What I Know, What I Want to Know, and What I Learned) method, students raise many questions that the textbooks do not cover. In order to answer the questions in the *W* column, teachers need broader knowledge and have to make use of outside materials. The content in the social study textbooks should be the foundation that teachers can refer to for guidance, but not a doctrine that teachers cannot deviate from. Students' knowledge should not be confined to the content of the social study textbooks.

### *Dealing with children of former Khmer Rouge cadres*

In one school, teachers have difficulty educating the children of the former Khmer Rouge cadres. Some of these students are physically bigger than the teachers. Probably due to their low education and low social morality, they speak and behave arrogantly to the teachers. However, the teachers see the problem as a challenge to overcome. They do not blame these students considering their experience of living in the forest in the 1980s, fighting in the war almost everyday, and running from place to place to deliver weapons to the Khmer Rouge armed forces ("mobile living"). At that time, the students lived with inadequate food and diseases without proper medical treatment. Lacking proper education, they developed attitudes and social practices that differ from the usual attitude and practice of others in the community.

### *Appropriate method to fit the classroom situation*

Tables and chairs that cannot be moved make group activities for students difficult. This is the situation facing the teachers in Chhnour Meanchey

Secondary School. The teachers resort instead to making students work in pairs, which does not require moving tables and chairs. This method is seen as effective, keeps order among students, and allows the classroom process to proceed smoothly.

### *Teachers' capacity*

Schools in the remote areas do not have enough qualified teachers to provide quality education. For instance, Hun Sen Sala Kroa Secondary School does not have enough teachers who graduated from the university. To cope with this problem, the school has to ask primary school teachers to teach secondary school students. Mr. Kim Leng, the School Director, said that when he arrived in 2000, the secondary school was located in the primary school compound, and this strongly affected the quality of education. In 2003, he formed a secondary school committee and requested the Ministry of Education to provide a plot of land to build the secondary school compound. A grant from the Asian Development Bank supported the construction of this secondary school. But the school still faces the lack of qualified teachers. In some cases, history teachers teach geography, which is not their expertise.

### *Lack of training and teaching materials*

Mr. Kim Leng said that curriculums for grades 11 and 12 were changed in 2011. However, teachers do not receive training on the new curriculums. Teachers totally depend on the *Teacher's Guidebook*. They ask each other on the points that they are not clear about.

### *Teachers' limited knowledge on Khmer Rouge history*

Some teachers are happy to have team teaching in the classroom because this helps them answer political questions from the students. As observed, teachers possess limited knowledge on Khmer Rouge history and are not able to satisfactorily answer questions from students. Moreover, teachers dare not answer some political questions for fear of being blamed by higher education officials. Whatever the circumstance, students' interest in studying Khmer Rouge history in schools depends mostly on teachers' explanations. If teachers were not able to give clear answers, students would not have further questions, and thereby cannot generate more interests.

### *Young versus old teachers*

Credibility in explaining the Khmer Rouge history to the students differs between young and old teachers. The young teachers explain the history within the framework of the textbook while the old teachers explain it from their personal experiences as the Khmer Rouge regime's survivors. The old teachers' stories are very powerful in getting the interest, and satisfactorily answering the questions, of the students.

### *The teachers' living condition affects teaching*

Most newly-recruited teachers have no proper place to live in. Many of them stay inside the classrooms, sleeping on the floor. Those who are a bit better-off rent small houses and share rooms with several colleagues. The teachers' poor living condition lowers the students' respect for them. Some teachers say that they are embarrassed being seen sleeping on the floor by their students. These teachers complain that poor living condition and low salary are the biggest problems for teachers. Teachers receive an average salary of sixty to one hundred US dollars per month. This hard living condition discourages teachers from working for quality education. Some teachers honestly admit that they would like the examination period to arrive soon so they could sell materials that prepare the students for the examinations. The Ministry of Education has banned this activity.

Some teachers focus more on private business activities that take away time for reading materials or doing research to enhance their knowledge and expertise. Some teachers in Pailin also engage in farming. At the same time, the schools do not have enough materials and core books to help the teachers. Some government textbooks are sent to schools (in the middle of the school year) without the corresponding teacher guidebooks. Teachers have to use the old teaching materials they have on hand. As a result, students learn less.

On the other hand, the influence of modern technology and materialism on many students decreases their incentive to study. Some students play with their cellphones and MP3s during study hours. In addition, students skip classes to date fellow students in celebration of foreign holidays such as Valentine's Day and Christmas Day.

### *Cooperation between teachers and the villagers*

Due to their problems, the teachers in Hun Sen Sala Kroa Secondary School seek support from the people in the nearby communities whose chil-

dren study in the school. The villagers provide rice and other food to the teachers. Each student brings a can of rice each week for his or her teachers. This support encourages teachers to stay in the school longer and have more time to prepare lessons.

## **II. Observations of Students**

Children of the former Khmer Rouge cadres express positive attitude toward studying Khmer Rouge history. They dislike the regime and do not want to see the same atrocities happening in their country again. Moreover, they want to know the extent of suffering that Cambodian people endured at that time. They believe that the regime was cruel and brought a lot of hardship to the people. However, they also believe that their parents who are former Khmer Rouge cadres are good people, and they do not want see any friction among Cambodians. These students do not see their parents as former Khmer Rouge cadres, but simply as Cambodians. Some children of the former Khmer Rouge cadres claim that they want to see more dissemination of Khmer Rouge history to the public.

Students in Hun Sen Mongkul Borei Secondary School in Banteay Meanchey province show great interest in studying Khmer Rouge history. A teacher, Mr. Bun Yoeung, teaches Chapter 3 of the textbook entitled “The Khmer Rouge Come to Power.” He gives a bunch of questions to students who spontaneously give their answers in return. Students are interested in this chapter. Many students take turns to answer the questions. Some of them are able to summarize the whole chapter. Overall, students in his class understand considerably the historical and social contexts of the coming to power of the Khmer Rouge. At the end of the class, teachers ask the students to ask questions. Their questions include: what were the relationships between the Khmer Rouge and China (referring to photos that show Chinese advisers)? How could the Khmer Rouge win over the Khmer Republic? Vietnam helped the Khmer Rouge, why did the two countries fight each other later? Why did the Khmer Rouge kill intellectuals? Who created the Khmer Rouge and for what purposes?

## **II. Integration of Democratic Kampuchea History Commentary**

All teachers and School Directors agree that Khmer Rouge history should be included in the Ministry of Education’s social study textbook so that teach-



ers are able to teach Khmer Rouge history in their classes on a regular basis. Otherwise, teachers will extract part of *A History of Democratic Kampuchea* textbook and integrate it into their teaching according to their will and available time. Teachers claim that too much integration will affect the program of the Ministry of Education that requires them to finish the entire social study textbook within the academic year. Most teachers say that they hardly finish the Ministry of Education’s social study textbook on time, so they are not able to integrate Khmer Rouge history much. They can only talk about Khmer Rouge regime for about two to three minutes at the end of the session, and this yields little impact on student’s understandings on what happened during the Khmer Rouge period and why it happened.

The inclusion of part of Democratic Kampuchea history textbook into the Ministry of Education’s social study textbook only serves to limit the scope of teaching of this part of Khmer history. Khmer Rouge history can be integrated not only in History subject but also in other subjects such as Khmer Studies, Citizen Morality, Geography and other related social study subjects. The better option is to recommend to the Ministry of Education the issuance of a formal instruction to teachers who teach these subjects to integrate Khmer Rouge history in their teaching. To be specific, the instruction can address or suggest the points and places where teachers can integrate Khmer Rouge history in the different subjects.

In addition, some teachers suggest that DC-Cam and the Ministry of Education provide several documentary films to all relevant teachers. Teachers claim that film is a powerful means to educate students about one particular subject. The films can help teachers explain the content of the Democratic Kampuchea history textbook more effectively.

From the classroom observations and interviews with teachers in Pailin and Banteay Meanchey province, the Team suggests two ways of integrating Khmer Rouge history more effectively into the school lessons:

1. Homework: Homework gives students the chance to read the Khmer Rouge history textbook at home or in the library. Teachers can collect the answers to homework questions and discuss them with the students in the class. This can be done during the first five to ten minutes at the start of the class.
2. Devoting one lesson objective to Khmer Rouge history: Usually, each lesson contains at least three objectives. Regardless of the lesson being taught, teachers can make teaching of Khmer Rouge

history as one of these objectives. They can use the comparative method, for example, to compare and contrast between Myanmar's economy and that of Democratic Kampuchea.

However, while the teachers are able to follow these suggestions, they still encounter some challenges. Currently, the Ministry of Education introduces new social study textbooks with additional content and lessons while the number of allotted hours remains the same. Teachers may face difficulty in giving time to integrating Khmer Rouge history into their regular teaching. According to some interviews, teachers of all subjects have never been able to finish their respective syllabuses on time.

A teacher from Hun Sen Mongkun Borei Secondary School suggests that more teaching of Khmer Rouge history in schools can occur if teachers taught one whole chapter from *A History of Democratic Kampuchea* textbook or integrate Khmer Rouge history within three regular lessons from the Ministry of Education's social study textbook. Doing so, teachers may be able to finish the eleven chapters from *A History of Democratic Kampuchea* textbook within one academic year.

In order that students grasp the basic knowledge on Khmer Rouge history by the time they graduate from secondary school, teachers should begin to integrate the history from grade 9 up to grade 12. The integration should not be confined only to History subject.

### **III. Textbook, Guidebook and Workbook Availability and Use**

Roughly estimated, only about twenty percent of students in Pailin and Banteay Meanchey provinces receive copies of Khmer Rouge history textbook. Teachers claim that more copies of the textbook have to be distributed to all schools across the country in order to have wider learning of the Khmer Rouge history in the country. Teachers and School Directors alike suggest keeping copies of the textbook in school libraries for longer use of current and future batches of students. They suggest distributing copies of the textbook in proportion to the number of students in each school. For example, if a school has one thousand students, it should have at least five hundred to seven hundred copies of the textbook. If a school has three thousand students, the school should obtain at least two thousand five hundred copies of the textbook.

Moreover, in lending the textbook, the schools should give priority to students in grades 9, 10, 11 and 12. The schools have to collect the copies back at the end of each academic year.

The copies of the *Teacher’s Guidebook* and the unpublished *Student Workbook* have been distributed only to teachers who have received training on Khmer Rouge history. The rest of the teachers do not have these teaching materials and rarely integrate Khmer Rouge history into their teaching. For the subsequent trips, the Team should bring copies of the guidebook and workbook for the school libraries so that teachers who have not had the chance to attend the training on Khmer Rouge history are able to take advantage of these teaching materials. Moreover, the teachers who did not have the training can seek advice from the trained teachers on the points they do not understand. This will encourage the teachers who did not have the training to integrate Khmer Rouge history into their regular teaching.

#### **IV. Community Observations**

##### **a. Perspectives of former Khmer Rouge cadres**

The Team observed two different perspectives regarding discussion of Khmer Rouge history among the former Khmer Rouge cadres. Those who are in the government position do not want to recall their Khmer Rouge background, which they may find shameful. In contrast, the ordinary former Khmer Rouge cadres sincerely tell their story with little attempt to hide information.

Mr. Choub Sambat (Deputy Head of the Pailin Provincial Office of Education) and Mr. Ly San (Director of Hun Sen Tep Nimet Secondary School) initially refused to be interviewed by the Team. Mr. Sambat did not want to talk about his story initially, though he relented later on and narrated some of his experiences. Mr. Ly San wanted to hide his whole story. Instead of answering questions, he commented that “[R]ecalling the history will create revenge and hatred.” To him, most former Khmer Rouge cadres do not want to talk about their past experiences because they are about loss of face and humiliation. They want to be completely separated from the past. Mr. San added that he loved the integration policy of the government that preserved all the positions and works for former Khmer Rouge cadres in Pailin. Mr. San said that he had never told his story during the Khmer Rouge

period to his children. He told his children to focus on their study and not to pay much attention to the Khmer Rouge issues.

In contrast, the ordinary former Khmer Rouge cadres welcomed the Team very well. Mr. Soam Chhay and Mrs. Tam Chantho, a couple living in Bor Yakha commune, Pailin District, Pailin Province, agreed to an interview. They described their life during the Khmer Rouge period, when they were workers in the factories in Phnom Penh. In 1979, they escaped to Pailin with the Khmer Rouge leaders and worked as soldiers. Mr. Chhay was injured many times during the encounters between the Khmer Rouge guerrilla forces and the government forces of the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) in the 1980s. They claimed that they did not commit any crime during the Khmer Rouge period and they did not wish to become Khmer Rouge cadres. However, they had to adapt themselves to the situation and political leadership in order to survive in the Khmer Rouge society. The couple agreed that teaching and learning Khmer Rouge history in the classrooms were important in preventing such crimes in the future.

#### **b. Knowing Khmer Rouge history as a way to discipline children**

People usually use the Khmer Rouge experience to discipline and educate their young children on the prevailing social practices. Parents usually tell children, "You are lucky to be born in this regime. In my time, life was so hard." In some cases, parents use the hardship during the Khmer Rouge regime to encourage their children to study.

#### **c. Seeing the former Khmer Rouge cadres in proper perspective**

The Team interviewed Mr. Mei Makk, former personal adviser to Pol Pot and now Deputy Governor of Pailin Province, to understand the attitudes of former middle-ranking Khmer Rouge cadres toward teaching Khmer Rouge history in the classroom.

Mr. Makk sees the former Khmer Rouge cadres as people who committed atrocities during the Khmer Rouge regime, but he sees them also as victims. Having been victimized for many years, they are fed up with discussing Khmer Rouge and would like to focus on their livelihood instead. He explains that being illiterate, the Khmer Rouge corrupted their thinking and beliefs. The Khmer Rouge cheated them and yet they still followed them. They were used like cows and animals. The senior Khmer Rouge officers would say:

If people were educated, they would run away from the political line and the leaders. So we should not let them obtain high education. We don't have to establish schools. It is easier to use the illiterate.

But under the leadership of H.E. Y Chhean (now Governor of Pailin Province) and others, they decided to defect from the Khmer Rouge. The government of Samdech Hun Sen introduced a “win-win” policy, which they tested and found to be true. They came out and survived. The government did not do anything to harm them.

Their defection was also due to the oppression of Pol Pot and Son Sen. They witnessed how the people were constantly oppressed and deprived of things they needed. Pol Pot and other senior leaders acquired many cars, land, and other means of livelihood while they did not even have a bicycle or motor. All their properties were put under a collective use system.

Mr. Makk mentions that he was a school teacher and also a leader in the 1980s when the Khmer Rouge regime was fighting the Royal Government of Cambodia. He was made responsible for analyzing the military situation within Cambodia and beyond and reported his analysis to Pol Pot. He says that if the Khmer Rouge regime would come back to power, he would be the Chief of the General Staff and assistant to Son Sen. He remembers Pol Pot saying that as long as Vietnam did not withdraw from Cambodia he would blow up the Royal Government of Cambodia like a paper. But the Royal Government of Cambodia became stronger, China stopped supporting the Khmer Rouge regime and Vietnam withdrew from the country. He reported this to Pol Pot. But Pol Pot believed that Vietnam would never withdraw from Cambodia. Pol Pot said that “Vietnam was addicted to Cambodian food.”

On the study of the history of the Khmer Rouge regime as part of the national school curriculum, Mr. Makk says:

It is good, indeed. If we don't study, how can we know? If we don't know [the past], the situation may go that way again, and our country will lose a lot. We have to develop our country through ... globalization.... Secondly, when we study, we can see the extent of the crimes [committed by the Khmer Rouge regime], and it can heal people's mental wound. Otherwise, people will continue to be angry for several generations. Moreover, we don't want that kind of regime to come back....The tribunal<sup>2</sup> shows that leaders cannot do anything as they wish. With the

hybrid tribunal, all leaders have fear. But some people still commit corruption. However, they are also worried....

On the use of the *A History of Democratic Kampuchea* textbook, Mr. Makk says that having the book in smaller size

... would be great. You can print it into several parts and introduce them to schools. Students study part by part. Don't be ambitious. If you are too ambitious, it may be hard for students to accept. It can be studied part by part. For example, one semester, how many parts do we plan to finish? It is important to study. I don't know what to say to express more than that. But I agree to have it forever. Moreover, you and other young generations have work to do...

## **V. Impacts, Challenges and Lesson Learned**

### **a. Sensitivity of the Khmer Rouge issue**

Pailin was integrated into the Royal Government of Cambodia in 1996 when Ieng Sary, former Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Democratic Kampuchea, defected to the government and brought with him thousands of members of the Khmer Rouge armed forces and people. Roughly, about eighty percent of the provincial residents are former Khmer Rouge cadres. Most of the students are children of these former cadres.

In this case, the interviewer has to use proper and appropriate words in interviewing the former cadres and their children in order to avoid hurting their feelings. It is reported that when some non-governmental organization (NGO) workers interviewed the students about people's life in general and their parents' criminal acts during the Khmer Rouge period, some students felt bad. They felt bad learning that their parents killed people and committed a lot of crimes during the Khmer Rouge regime. One student was traumatized by the stories learned and began to develop a mental problem. The student was brought to the hospital for treatment.

Some new teachers say that they never use the word "Khmer Rouge" when they communicate with the villagers. Teachers usually refer to the Khmer Rouge period as the "three-year period."

The Deputy Head of Pailin Office of Education, Mr. It Chea, also suggests a careful choice of words in interviewing students to avoid the same

problem. He tells the case of some former Khmer Rouge cadres who were furious with the interviewers and shouted: “What’s the damn point of talking more about this? I am Khmer Rouge. What do you want to do to me? Go ahead and do it.”

From the interview of Mr. Chea, the Team learns that the Pailin Provincial Office of Education has to seek advice from the Provincial Governor before deciding whether or not to allow the Team to observe and do evaluation in the province. This is a sensitive point that the Team has to pay much attention to when doing evaluation in other former Khmer Rouge strongholds. It also shows that the sensitivity to the Khmer Rouge issues is still strong in former Khmer Rouge areas.

### **b. Transferring knowledge on Khmer Rouge history and teaching methodology**

DC-Cam has held five teacher training workshops including one national teacher training, one provincial teacher training, and three commune teacher training. School Directors, Deputy Directors or administrative staff of the Provincial Offices of Education constitute about thirty percent of the participants. They return to schools to do administrative work, and not teach. These participants have little impact on the integration of Khmer Rouge history into the classroom teaching. The Team advises these school officials to share documents, knowledge and experiences gained from the training with the teachers who are currently teaching in the classrooms.

### **c. Impact on teachers’ performance**

Most School Directors say that they are happy that the Team comes to observe classroom teaching, which alert the teachers. With the presence of the Team, teachers are better prepared. Moreover, the Team gives advice on how to improve teaching that adds to teachers’ knowledge.

### **d. Pride of teachers**

Senior teachers, who obtained Baccalaureate Degree (secondary school degree) from the 1960s onward, are proud of themselves. They rebuilt the education system after the fall of the Khmer Rouge in 1979, when the education system was at its zero point. They gathered educated people who survived the Khmer Rouge regime and formed community schools in various parts of the country before the formal reestablishment of school system

by the new government. Therefore, the Team does not only show respect to them but also acknowledge their efforts and achievements.

#### **e. Effect of secondary book on students' knowledge**

Cambodians who have migrated to other countries published several books about the Khmer Rouge. The books about survivors' stories are good for the general knowledge of students. However, some books contain political biases and propagandas that corrupt the students' critical thinking. One student read such a book and came to believe that there must be someone behind Pol Pot and other Khmer Rouge senior leaders, and that person was the one who ordered the killing of millions of people.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In general, the observed teachers in Pailin occasionally integrate Khmer Rouge history into their teaching. The character of Pailin province as the former Khmer Rouge stronghold with the majority of residents being former Khmer Rouge cadres produces certain reluctance on teachers to talk about Khmer Rouge history. Moreover, teachers are discouraged by the poor living condition and students' poor attention toward education. Most often, students take a very long leave either to work in Thailand or to help their parents in farming. In Banteay Meanchey, teachers integrate more the Khmer Rouge history into their teaching. However, most often the integration efforts are in the form of brief descriptions at the end of the sessions.

To have an effective integration of Khmer Rouge history, there has to be an official instruction from the Ministry of Education, and the instruction has to clearly identify the sections and places where teachers can make the integration. The instruction should also give several alternatives so that teachers have options to choose from according to their available time and situation. For example, teachers who are not able to finish on time the social study textbooks of the Ministry of Education can give homework on Khmer Rouge history to students and discuss the answers at the beginning of the next session in the class.

Most observed teachers are able to use the teaching methods they gained from the training. The popular methods are K-W-L chart and group discussion. Teachers use big papers and write the objectives and questions and stick them on the board so that they save time for student-led activities.



However, all schools lack copies of the *History of Democratic Kampuchea* textbook, *Teacher’s Guidebook* and *Student Workbook*. Each school needs at least five hundred copies of the textbook for the library. Big schools may need at least one thousand copies. Both School Directors and teachers suggest that copies of the textbook be kept as property of the schools rather than let students own them. The schools can lend the books to students and collect them back to be used by the next batch of students.

Teachers, students and some members of the general populace including former Khmer Rouge cadres and their children believe that teaching Khmer Rouge history in school is important, while considering some objection from former Khmer Rouge cadres who are currently working in various offices of the province. The young generation of Cambodians needs to know and understand what happened during the Khmer Rouge period so that they can help bring about wider national reconciliation, peace and the prevention of future genocide. As the former personal adviser to Pol Pot Mr. Mei Makk say,

I agree to have [the teaching of Khmer Rouge history in school] forever.

## Endnotes

1 The formal name of the Ministry of Education is Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.

2 This is formally called the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia for the Prosecution of Crimes Committed during the Period of Democratic Kampuchea (Extraordinary Chambers or ECCC).

## Annex

### Lesson Plans Using A History of Democratic Kampuchea Textbook

#### I. Chapter 3: The Khmer Rouge Come to Power

Teacher: Mr. Bun Yoeung

School: Hun Sen Mongkul Borei Secondary School, Grade 12

Mongkul Borei District, Banteay Meanchey Province

Duration: One hour

Date: February 25, 2001

Objectives: enable the students to

1. Describe the coming to power of the Khmer Rouge
2. Explain the historical and social context of the establishment of the Democratic Kampuchea
3. Define some of the key words in the chapter 3.

Teaching materials: *A History of Democratic Kampuchea* textbook

Process and procedure:

Step 1: Teacher recalls the previous lesson by asking students some questions related to China. He links communism to the Khmer Rouge regime. Teacher asks several questions: What was the last lesson you studied? After expelling the Japanese troops out of the country and winning over Chiang Kai-Shek's forces, did Mao Zedong declare the country as under communism or democracy? What is the color of the communist Chinese flag?

Step 2: Two students read chapter 3 on pages 16-18.

Step 3: Teacher asks students some questions to learn historical facts: When did Phnom Penh fall into the hand of the Khmer Rouge? What uniform did the Khmer Rouge soldiers wear? What did the Khmer Rouge declare on radio after occupying Phnom Penh? What reactions did the people have? Where did foreigners and some Cambodians take refuge? What did the Khmer Rouge do to them at that time? Where was Marshal Lon Nol at that time? What did the Khmer Rouge do to the people living in the city? What did they do on patients in the hospital?

Step 4: Teacher asks students to summarize chapter 3.

Step 5: Teacher asks students to discuss the following question: What are the effects of the evacuation on the people? Teacher divides students into four discussion groups.

Step 6: Teacher gives homework to students to answer the following questions: How do the Khmer Rouge acts affect the emotion of the Cambodian people? Do you want Democratic Kampuchea regime to return? Why?

## **II. Geographical Discovery and the Expansion of Colonial Regions of the Europeans**

Teacher: Lon Sokly, Poi Pet Secondary School, Grade 9

School: Poi Pet City, Banteay Meanchey Province

Duration: 1 hour

Date: February 26, 2011

Objectives: enable the students to

1. Recall their prior knowledge through teaching the lesson on the geographical discovery and the expansion of colonial regions of the Europeans
2. Explain the importance of the reasons that led the Europeans to make the adventure and try to divide the world among them
3. Create the spirit of unity among them to protect their motherland and to preserve peace.

Teaching materials: History textbook and K-W-L chart

Process and procedure:

Step 1: Teacher recalls the last lesson and introduces the objectives of the class for the day.

Step 2: Teacher introduces the K-W-L method and explains the way to use this method. Students then fill in the K column on what they already know about Khmer Rouge history.

Step 3: Teacher asks if students want to know anything else related to the lesson. Then, teacher asks students to fill in the W column.

Step 4: Teacher asks students to read sections in the textbook to find the answers to the questions in the W column.

Step 5: Teacher asks students to write what they have learned from the reading and

fill in L column. Teacher asks more questions to summarize the students' learning: Do you love your country? Do you love peace?

Step 6: Teacher summarizes the lesson and asks students to copy the answers from the board into their notebooks.

### III. World War II (1939-1945) and the Establishment of the United Nations

Teacher: Song Somalet, Bor Yakha Lower Secondary School, Grade 9

School: Bor Yakha District, Pailin Province

Duration: One hour

Date: February 21, 2011

Objectives: enable the student to

1. Describe the causes of World War II and those who stirred up the war
2. Describe the spread of World War II.

Teaching and learning materials: *Teacher's Guidebook* and *Student Workbook*

Process and procedure:

Step 1: Teacher checks classroom's sanitation, students' attendance and discipline. Teacher recalls the previous lesson about World War II by asking questions: What lesson did you study last time? When did World War II start? When did it end? In World War II, did Germany win or lose the war? When was the United Nations established?

Step 3: Teacher asks students to examine the photo on page 153 of the Student Workbook. Then teacher asks students to read sections A and B on pages 153-154. After that, teacher explains the meaning of the book sections.

Step 4: Teacher asks comprehension questions to summarize the students' learning: What year did World War II start? What country stirred up this war? Who was the German leader who led Germany to war? What year did Britain come to war with Germany? When did Germany start to invade the Soviet Union?

Step 5: Teacher gives homework to students. Teacher asks students to read sections C, D and E of the textbook for next session.