



## **DC-CAM DISTRIBUTES KHMER ROUGE HISTORY TEXTBOOKS TO STUDENTS**

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On October 9, 2009 the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) distributed textbooks about the Khmer Rouge to high school students in the Samrong District of the Takeo Province. The book, [A History of Democratic Kampuchea](#), was written by Khamboly Dy of DC-Cam in partnership with the Cambodian Ministry of Education. It is meant to serve as a supplementary text and teaching aid for high school teachers all across the country. The DC-Cam staff was met at the local high school by the director of the school as well as the chief of the Samrong District educational office.

After introductory remarks, Khamboly Dy addressed the large audience of high school students. He gave them a brief overview of the history of Democratic Kampuchea and explained the importance of studying and understanding what happened during that period. He described how the Khmer Rouge evacuated all the people from the cities and relocated them to the country side where they were put to work in the fields. The



**High school students in Samrong District listening to presentations about the history of the Khmer Rouge**

Cambodian people were forced to live in co-operatives as the Khmer Rouge eliminated all forms of personal property and all forms of monetary currency. He described how the Khmer Rouge specifically targeted the educated class. According to one estimate by the Cambodian Ministry of Education, about 85 percent of educated people were killed during that time. Khamboly Dy analogized Cambodian society after the fall of the Khmer Rouge to a broken glass; a shattered society which was very difficult to reconstruct.

Khamboly Dy further remarked that none of those students in the audience were alive during the period of Democratic Kampuchea, but many of their parents and grandparents suffered during that time. He argued that there was even a greater imperative for students

to learn about the history of the Khmer Rouge. The younger generation, he explained, could draw on this knowledge to build a more peaceful society.

Dara Vanthan from DC-Cam then spoke to the audience about the work that DC-Cam does and the objectives it strives to accomplish. He explained that DC-Cam aims to record and preserve the history of the Khmer Rouge regime for future generations. Furthermore, it strives to compile and organize information that can serve as potential evidence in a legal accounting for the crimes of the Khmer Rouge. The information that DC-Cam collects and analyzes includes an enormous collection of documents, films, and photographs from the Khmer Rouge period.

Dara Vanthan also gave the students a brief overview of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). The ECCC, he explained, was established by both the Cambodian government as well as the international community in order to prosecute those Khmer Rouge leaders who were most responsible for the crimes committed during the period of Democratic Kampuchea. He urged the students to follow the developments of the tribunal by watching the trial proceedings on television or reading about the tribunal in newspapers and the internet.

After the panel presentation several students energetically approached the podium and asked some very good questions. One student asked the panel how the tribunal would help victims given that the crimes had already been committed. Dara Vanthan explained that participating in the trial proceedings and having a chance to confront Duch helps many victims in the healing process. Furthermore, he stressed that those victims participating as civil parties were entitled to collective and symbolic reparations. Another student asked why Duch is not punished in the same way that Saddam Hussein was punished. Dara Vanthan stressed that the tribunal had not yet convicted Duch or determined his sentence. He elaborated by explaining that, unlike in Iraq, international and Cambodian criminal law prohibits the death penalty.



**Students excited to receive DC-Cam book about the history of Democratic Kampuchea**

After speaking with students individually at the conclusion of the presentations, it was evident that the event was a major success. Many of the students remarked that they had heard about the Khmer Rouge from their parents but they were excited to receive their new books and expressed a genuine interest in learning more about their history.

The event was attended by representatives from all of the thirteen high schools in the Samrong District. The representatives each received copies of the book to distribute to their students. Through many outreach efforts

such as this one, DC-Cam has distributed nearly half of the 300,000 books published this year. Based on the positive feedback DC-Cam has received, it plans to increase that number to 700,000 next year.