

KRT visits top 100,000 mark
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More than 100,000 people had visited the Khmer Rouge tribunal in Phnom Penh's Chaom Chau district since the first trial began in February, 2009, court officials said yesterday.

A total of 111,543 people had visited the ECCC between February 16, 2009, and December 31, 2011, a statement from the court said.

"This is massive participation from the Cambodian people," tribunal press officer Neth Pheaktra said. "It is unprecedented, especially if you compare the numbers to other international courts like the [International Criminal Court]."

A large number of the visitors to the court came through the tribunal's Study Tour Program, which is part of the successful Outreach program at the court, officials said.

As part of the program, the court provides free transport for villagers in the provinces to come to Phnom Penh, see the court and meet with court officials to learn about its work.

"Villagers also get an opportunity to see S-21 and Choeung Ek and understand the history of the Khmer Rouge regime and the procedures at the court to bring justice to victims," Neth Pheaktra said.

"They also receive a booklet and other printed information about the court and the defendants that they can then take back . . . and share their learning with other older and younger villagers."

Prime Minister Hun Sen drafted the foreword to the booklet, in which he applauds the work of the court and the importance of bringing senior Khmer Rouge leaders to justice.

The 500-seat public gallery was often not big enough to cater for all those who wished to participate in the proceedings, Neth Pheaktra said, and the court has had to arrange a "holding bay" where visitors can watch a live screening outside the courtroom.

Youk Chhang, whose Documentation Centre of Cambodia frequently arranges for both victims and former cadres in the regime to attend the court, said public participation kept the court afloat.

“Without a full public participation, the Court is meaningless,” Youk Chhang told the Post. “It has been stormy over at the ECCC, but it has not collapsed, and that is because people participated.”