

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

THE CAMBODIA TRIBUNAL MONITOR

Travelling Education at Bright Hope Institute, Kampong Chhnang Province



Cassava dried on Kampong Chhnang Airport

Kampong Chhnang province during the Khmer Rouge regime was placed in Western Zone and administered by Chou Chet. In 1976, the Khmer Rouge and China selected Rolea Pa-ier District of Kampong Chhnang province to build an airport, envisioned by China as its future regional military base. Many Chinese experts oversaw technical and machinery work, while tens of

thousands Cambodian people who were untrusted by the Khmer Rouge were forced to do heavy work causing numerous casualties. Unfortunately, this construction has never been finished due the presence of the Vietnamese forces and collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979. After almost three decades, Cambodian Prime Ministry Hun Sen announced that this airport would be reconstructed and expanded as a functioning airport by 2020.

On September 5, 2013, the Cambodia Tribunal Monitor (CTM) Project of the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) presented a screening of the documentary film "Tuol Sleng Prison in 1979" in Kampong Chhnang Province. After viewing the film, Dith Sophana, who is more than 70 years old, pulled out his artificial teeth and told the students who attended the workshop, "This is one of the unforgettable legacies of the Khmer Rouge regime." During the Khmer Rouge years, Sophana and his family were evacuated from Phnom Penh to Svay Rieng Province, where his father was executed, and where he was imprisoned for more than a year. Because he grabbed one grain of rice to eat, he was beaten so harshly that he lost many of his teeth.



Kong Seth shared his experiences to the students

Kong Seth, who is about the same age as Dith Sophana, experienced similar tragedy during those years. With tears in his eyes, he stood up and shared his experiences during the Khmer Rouge era with the students. Before he began speaking, he took several deep breaths and wiped tears from his eyes. With a trembling voice, he told the students that the Khmer Rouge had stolen his happiness. Most of his family members vanished during that brutal regime. He was orphaned and had to struggle to survive. Since the establishment of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, officially known as the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), he now feels that justice is

being served. He encouraged the students to pay close attention to the presentation by the DC-Cam team in order to absorb the knowledge for their future development.



Bright Hope Institute students read DC-Cam's studied materials

This marked a very good introduction for the workshop, which was intended to create a platform for disseminating information on the history of Democratic Kampuchea, ongoing developments at the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, and resources provided by the CTM website.

The workshop was conducted in the white-painted building of Bright Hope Institute and was attended by 100 students representing various majors, primarily Accounting, Management and Development. This is one of three institutes that provide higher education in Kampong Chhnang Province.

Chea Phalla, team leader of the CTM Project, discussed the film, which was produced by two Vietnamese photographers and donated to DC-Cam in 2009. The film featured the horror of the prison, including flesh, dead bodies, shackles, tools of torture, and photos of prisoners who died by having their stomachs slashed. Phalla then presented information about key events which occurred before and during Democratic Kampuchea—the brutal regime which claimed the lives of nearly two million Cambodians. She emphasized that even though most of the students attending Bright Hope institute are not majoring in law or history, it is still vital for them to learn and understand the country's contemporary history.

After a short break, Kim Sovannandy discussed the CTM website, which has been developed in cooperation with the Center of International Human Rights at Northwestern University. She presented the students with images of the website, which has an attractive design. Students and researchers can search the website for comprehensive trial footage at the ECCC, hearing reports, commentary by well-known scholars, video reaction from citizens, and news, just to name a few of the available resources. From this website, she directed students to a video clip portraying reactions of several military students to Nuon Chea's statement at the ECCC. Since more than half of the participants have never witnessed the trial of the senior Khmer Rouge leaders, they watched the video with interest and curiosity.

Finally, Lim Cheytoath made a presentation about ongoing developments at the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, focusing on four main areas—charges against the accused at the ECCC, separation of Case 002 into mini-trials, prediction of judgment in Cases 002/1, and current challenges at the ECCC.

After the presentation, numerous questions were asked of the speakers:

- 1) What were the benefits of the Khmer Rouge regime?
- 2) Who were the Khmer Rouge leaders besides Pol Pot?
- 3) What are the benefits of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal?
- 4) What is S-21?
- 5) Why did the ECCC separate Case 002 into mini-trials?
- 6) Who are the accused in Cases 003 and 004?
- 7) When was the ECCC created and for what purpose?
- 8) Why did the ECCC face financial problems? What is the solution?
- 9) If all the accused died, would justice be achieved?

At the end of the workshop, second-year student Chean Chhairy, who is majoring in Rural Development, stated that she almost cried when she saw her teacher describing his experiences in a trembling voice and in tears. She remembered when her parents told her about their experiences being evacuated to the countryside to do farming, when they were forced to work all day long and to live and eat cooperatively. She feels that this lecture and the accompanying documents which were distributed—namely the Trial Observation Booklets on Case 002, A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979), and Case 002: Who are the Senior Khmer Rouge Leaders?—will serve to deepen her understanding of the regime and the trial of the senior Khmer Rouge leaders.



CTM Team and Bright Hope Institute