

GENOCIDE EDUCATION IS GENOCIDE PREVENTION  
EDUCATION ON KHMER ROUGE HISTORY IN CAMBODIA (1975-1979)

REPORT

Classroom Forum on “The Importance of Studying Khmer Rouge History (1975-1979)”  
At Boeng Prei High School

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Edited by: Elaine McKinnon

February 24, 2017

I. INTRODUCTION

On February 24, 2017, the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) and with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), conducted its eighteenth classroom forum on “The Importance of Studying the History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)” at Boeng Prei High School, about 24 kilometers from the capital of Phnom Penh.

The purpose of the forum was to educate young high school students about the history of Democratic Kampuchea (also known as the Khmer Rouge), as well as to provide a forum for thought, discussion, and critical debate in order to consider how the country’s present-day problems and future reflect upon its past.

The forum incorporated three activities, including a presentation on Khmer Rouge history and the importance of studying this history by Mr. Pheng Pong-Rasy; a presentation on interview techniques by Mr. Long Dany; and a presentation and tour of “The Forced Transfer: the Second Evacuation of People during the Khmer Rouge Regime” exhibition by Ms. Sirik Savina. The classroom forum was conducted from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. with about 47 students (30 female) from Grades 10 to 12.

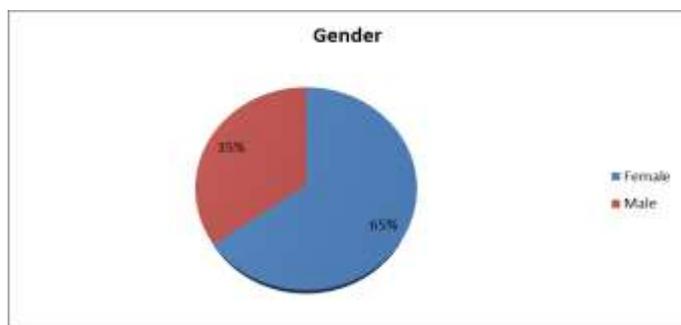
II. THE SCHOOL

Boeng Prei High School was previously located in Ponhea Leu District, Kandal Province. However, as the city grew and expanded, this district was incorporated into the capital. A new road has been constructed for access to this district, replacing the old dirt road.

According to the school principal, Boeng Prei High School was constructed in 2005 as Boeng Prei Secondary School. In 2012, Boeng Prei Secondary School was converted into a high school, providing both secondary (Grade 7 to 9) and high school (Grade 10 to 12) education. It has two school buildings and one administrative building, including a small library. During this academic year of 2016-2017, there are about 656 students and 47 teachers (17 female). There are three classes of Grade 7, three classes of Grade 8, two classes of Grade 9, two classes of Grade 10, two classes of Grade 11, and one class of Grade 12.

### III. CLASSROOM FORUM FRAMEWORK

The Classroom Forum began at 1 p.m. with 49 participating students (32 are female).

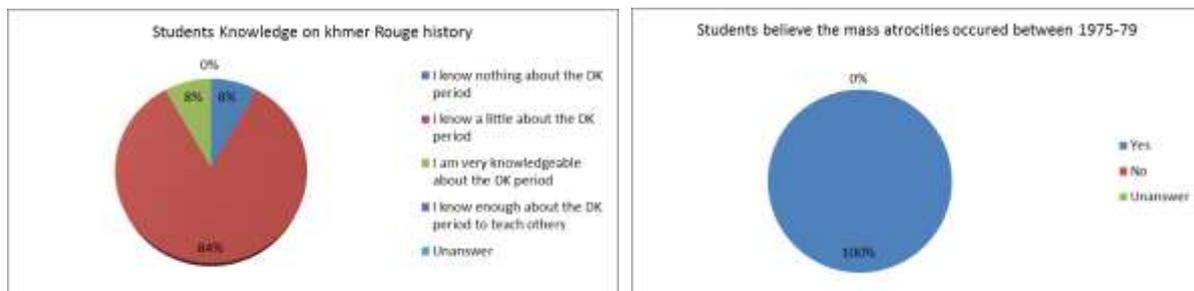


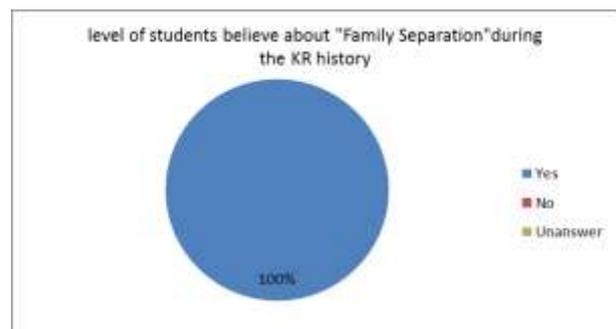
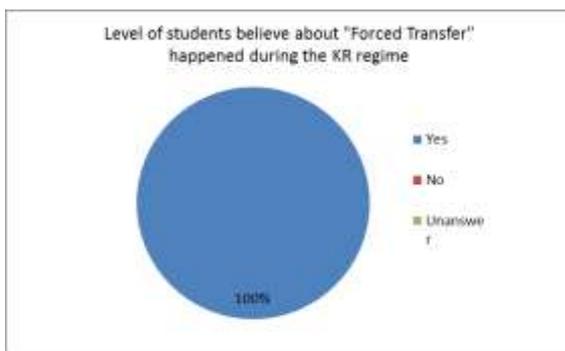
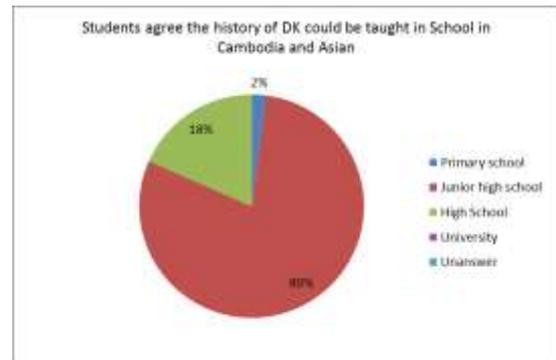
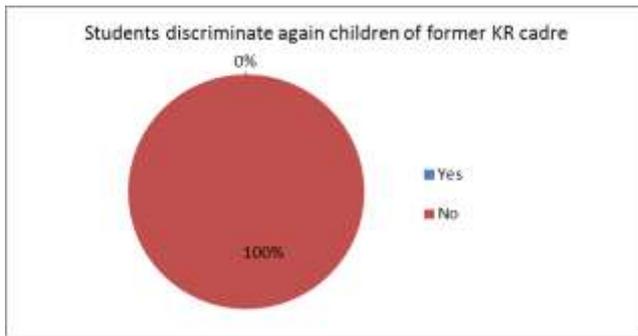
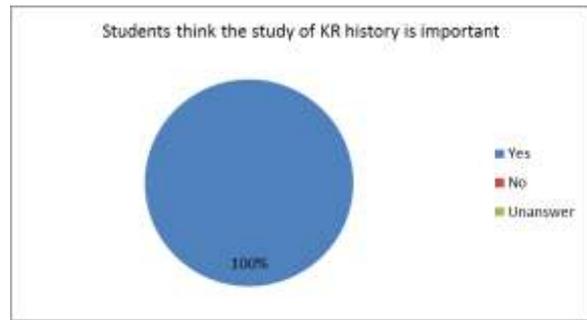
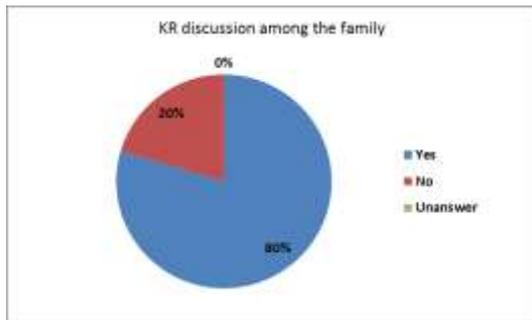
#### 1. Pre-forum survey

Mr. Pheng Pong-Rasy, Team Leader of DC-Cam’s Genocide Education Project, introduced each team member to the students prior to his presentation on Khmer Rouge history. Afterward, the team distributed a pre-survey sheet for each student to complete.

The pre-forum survey explores to what extent the students have learned or heard about the Khmer Rouge regime, whether or not they believe or understand what had happened during the Khmer Rouge regime, and how often the students discuss the Khmer Rouge regime with their family members and friends.

Data from Pre-Forum:





## 2. K-W-L Chart

The team placed two flipcharts side-by-side on the whiteboard. At the top of the left flipchart was written, “What have you learned/heard about the Khmer Rouge regime?” On the right chart was written, “What else do you want to know about the Khmer Rouge regime?”

This exercise was to encourage students to share their knowledge with their classmates and to inquire about topics of further interest regarding the Khmer Rouge regime.

After a moment of silence, a male student bravely stood, walked to the whiteboard, and wrote on the left flipchart, “The Khmer Rouge regime took power on April 17, 1975, and ended on January 7, 1979.” A female student then came forward and wrote, “[During the Khmer Rouge regime,] people were forced to marry and educated people were targeted by the Khmer Rouge.”

Another male student wrote on the right flipchart that he wanted to know why the Khmer Rouge forced people to get married, while another female student wanted to know what factors contributed to the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime, who the Khmer Rouge leaders were, and why the Khmer Rouge regime took place, to name a few.

### 3. Presentation on Khmer Rouge history

Mr. Rasy began his presentation with an explanation of the term “the Khmer Rouge.” After that, he elaborated on Khmer Rouge policies to abolish schools, free markets, currency and foreign culture; events following the arrival of the Khmer Rouge in Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975; the social classification of “base people” and “new people;” family separation; enemy of the Khmer Rouge revolution; Khmer Rouge security centers; forced labor during the Khmer Rouge regime; and factors that contributed to the fall of the regime in 1979.

All of the students absorbed Mr. Rasy’s presentation in silence. No one slept or talked to their tablemates. Their eyes were fixed on the text and photos from the PowerPoint slides projected on the whiteboard.

### 4. Short documentary film screening

To provide a better understanding of Khmer Rouge history to the students, the team also screened a short documentary film, “Tuol Sleng Prison in 1979,” which was produced by Vietnamese journalists who originally encountered Tuol Sleng Prison when Cambodian government troops and Vietnamese troops arrived at Phnom Penh in early 1979.

### 5. Presentation on interview techniques

Mr. Long Dany is the Team Leader of DC-Cam’s Promoting Accountability Project. Before his presentation on interview techniques, Mr. Rasy reminded the students that learning Khmer Rouge history is very important in order to remember Cambodia’s past, to join hands to prevent mass atrocity from happening again, and to reconcile and forgive. Thus, all the participating students were encouraged to discuss Khmer Rouge history with their family members and to listen to their experiences, especially those of their parents or grandparents.

To begin his presentation, Mr. Dany asked the students if they had ever talked to or asked their parents or grandparents about life during the Khmer Rouge regime. Among all the

students, only two of them courageously raised their hands in acknowledgment. One student told his classmates that he used to ask his parents about how they suffered at hard labor during the Khmer Rouge regime.

Mr. Dany pointed out to the students that interviewing former Khmer Rouge cadres is more challenging than interviewing Khmer Rouge victims, since questionnaires need to be more carefully constructed in order to avoid self-incrimination.

Then, Mr. Dany stated the objectives for his presentation to the students. He remarked that, hopefully, his presentation would familiarize the students with interview techniques and skills so that they would be able to draft interview questions and summarize what they had asked.

Additionally, Mr. Dany suggested to the students that because the purpose of the interview was for historical record, the students should divide the questionnaire into three different periods, such as prior to 1975, 1975-1979, and after 1979.

Following his presentation, Mr. Dany asked a volunteer student to participate in a role-play by having Mr. Vannak, a member of the DC-Cam staff, act as a former Khmer Rouge cadre, with a student acting as the interviewer. Saksith, a Grade-12 student, raised his hand to volunteer as the interviewer. Saksith kicked off his interview by greeting Mr. Vannak and introducing himself. While Saksith and Mr. Vannak were talking to one another, Mr. Dany requested the other students to pay attention and take notes of their conversation, for he would be selecting some students to provide a recap of the interview.

#### 6. A History of Democratic Kampuchea textbook distribution

Forty-seven (47) copies of “A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)” by Dy Khamboly were distributed to all student participants as supplementary reading material. The students were happy to receive the book.

#### 7. The Forced Transfer Exhibition

Ms. Sirik Savina, the Team Leader of DC-Cam’s Outreach and Collaboration Project, provided a guided tour to student participants through the Forced Transfer Exhibition inside the school’s compound. Twelve exhibition panels are displayed at Boeng Prei High School highlighting the life stories of Khmer Rouge survivors and former Khmer Rouge cadres,

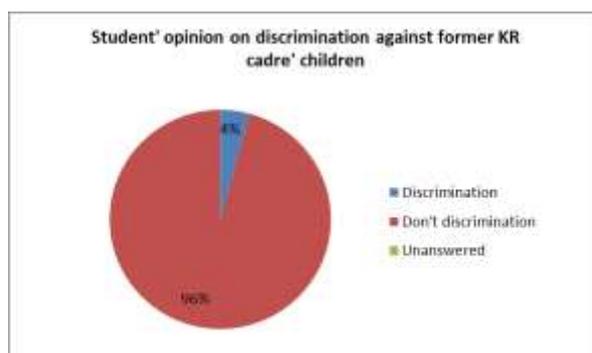
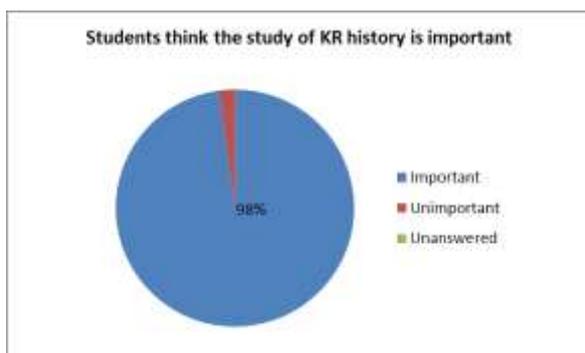
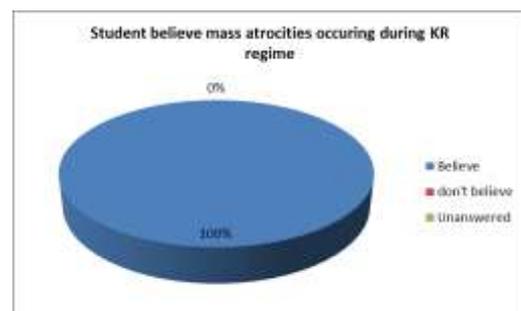
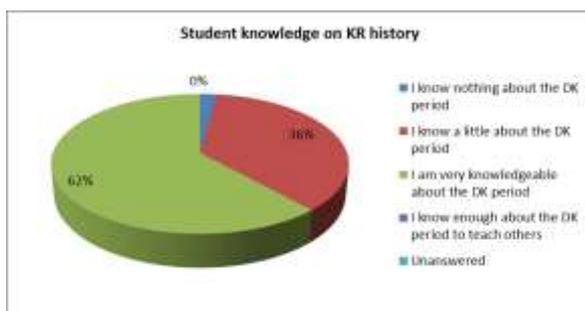
selected Khmer Rouge prisons and burial sites, and portraits of senior Khmer Rouge leaders who were charged with crimes at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (Khmer Rouge Tribunal).

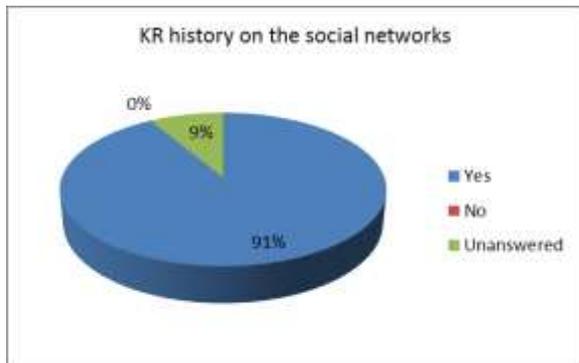
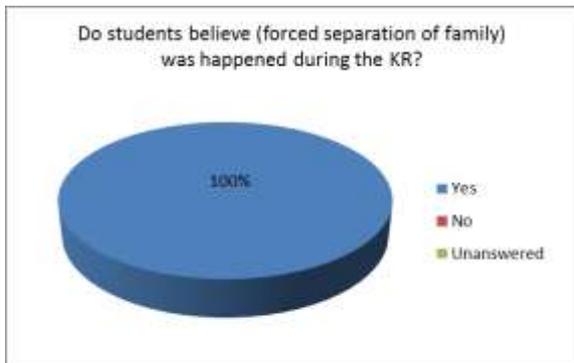
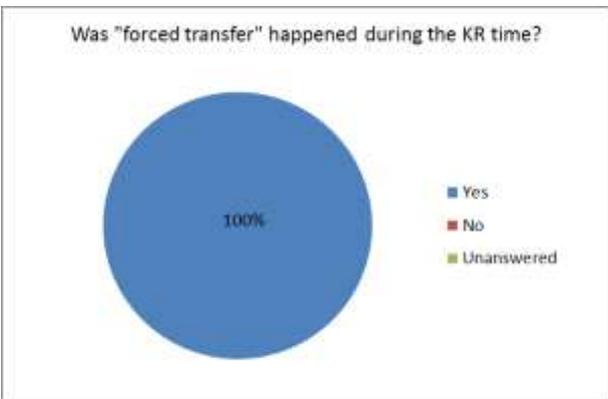
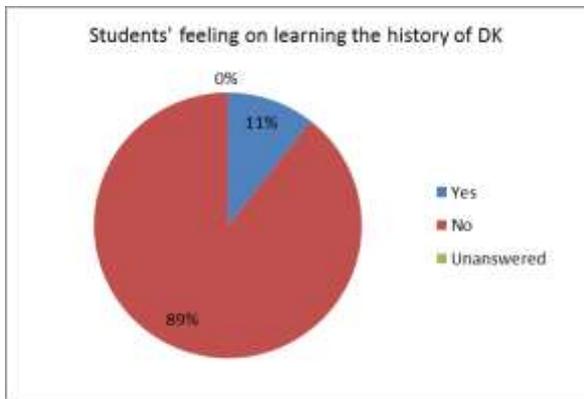
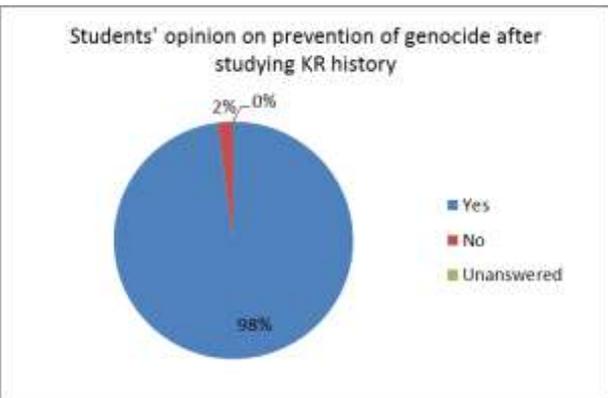
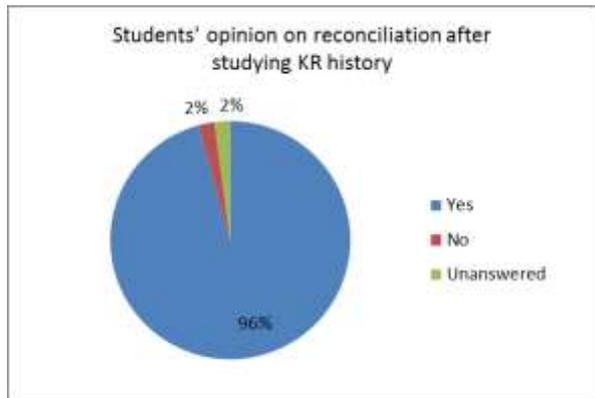
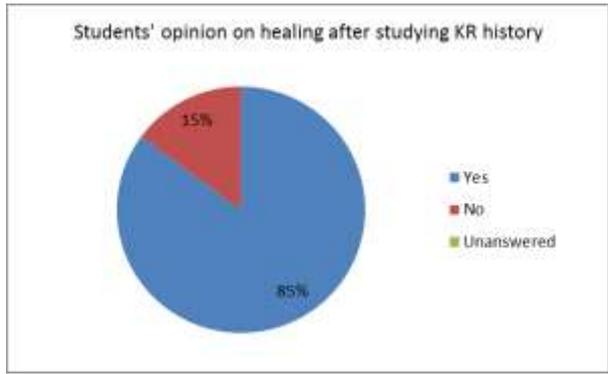
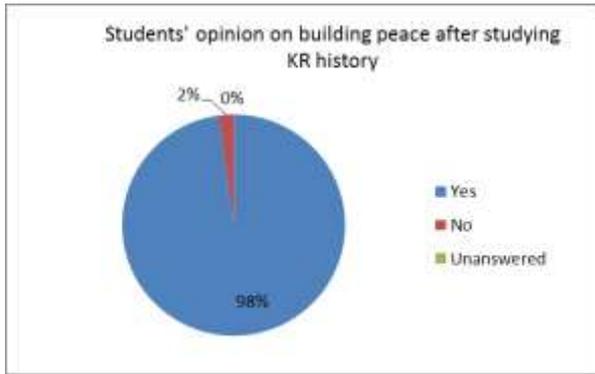
The exhibition on “The Forced Transfer: the Second Evacuation of People during the Khmer Rouge Regime” was one of the judicial reparation projects endorsed by the Khmer Rouge Tribunal in Case 002/01 against Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan. This exhibition reflects on the forced evacuation of Cambodian people during the Khmer Rouge regime. For many survivors, the forced evacuation was a turning point in their life that led to hard labor, overwork, torture, family separation, execution, starvation and disease. This exhibition also honors and remembers the Civil Parties before the Khmer Rouge Tribunal as well as other victims of the Khmer Rouge regime.

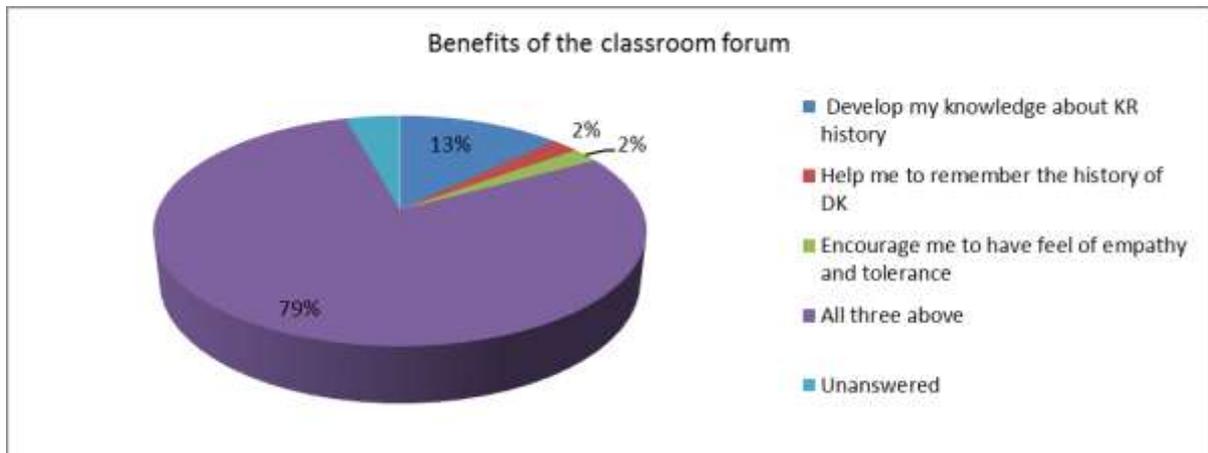
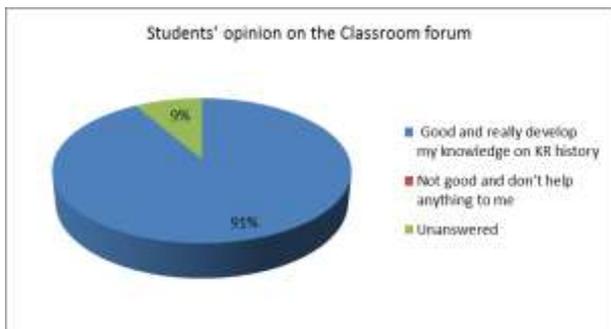
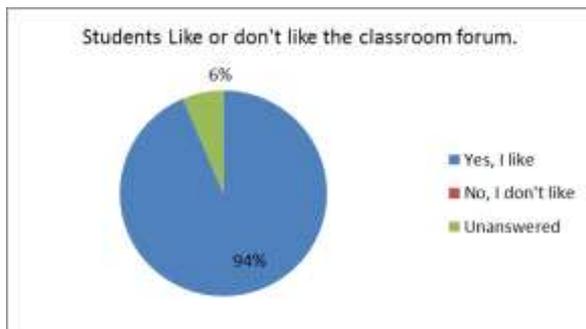
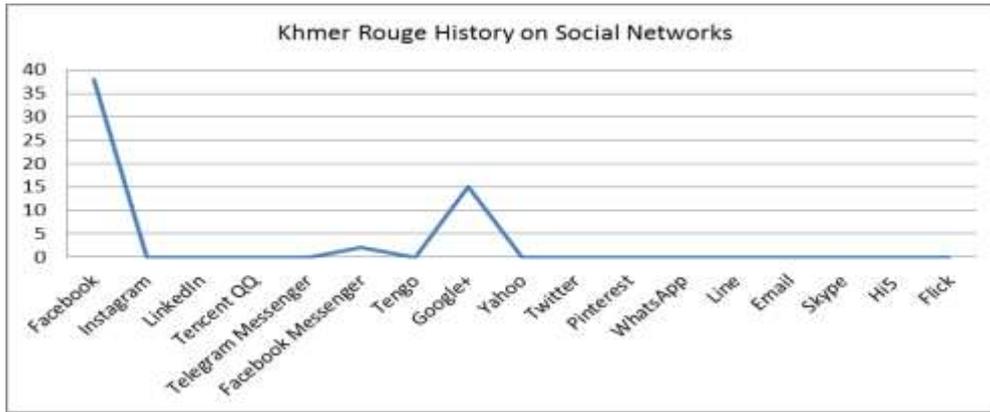
### 8. Post-forum survey

To conclude the forum, the DC-Cam team distributed a post-forum survey sheet for the students to complete in order to evaluate the students’ understanding of Khmer Rouge history following their participation. The survey was also designed to determine the students’ observations regarding the learning of Khmer Rouge history—whether or not the study of the Khmer Rouge history encourages reconciliation and forgiveness within Cambodian society.

#### Data from Post-forum survey







#### IV. CONCLUSION

The forum ended satisfactorily. The students seemed to enjoy the variety of presentations by DC-Cam staff. There were no major challenges during the forum, with the exception of the late arrival of some students. The team feels that this forum will encourage the students to further explore Khmer Rouge history, since this three-hour session was not sufficient to cover the entire history of the period.

**Team: Pheng Pong-Rasy, Long Dany, Sirik Savina, Sok Vannak and Men Pechet.  
Funded by USAID.**