

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

DOCUMENTATION CENTER OF CAMBODIA

GENOCIDE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION IN CAMBODIA

GENOCIDE EDUCATION IS GENOCIDE PREVENTION

Report of

Classroom Forum on

“The Importance of Studying the History of Democratic Kampuchea  
(1975-1979)”

At Borey 100 Khnang High School

8 May, 2018

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Photo: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/bz53RPA9bQeYWTrc9>

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## Contents

Summary .....	3
Objective .....	3
High School Background .....	3
Participants.....	4
Methodology.....	4
Contents .....	5
Results from Pre- and Post-Forum Survey.....	7
Reaction from Student .....	11
Conclusion.....	12
Appendix.....	13

## Summary

On 8 May 2018, Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) in collaboration with Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS) funded by United State Agency for International Development (USAID) conducted 32<sup>nd</sup> Classroom Forum at Hun Sen Borey 100 Khnang high school on “the importance of studying the history of Democratic



Kampuchea (1975-1979)”. The objectives of this forum were to increase students’ awareness on our darkest history, provided opportunities to ask question and encourage the dialogue on DK history. The forum started at 8 AM with 58 students (36 female) in social major. The agenda of classroom forum consist: 1) Open speech by Vice Principle; 2) Pre-forum survey; 3) Documentary film screening; 4) K-W-L Chart; 5) Presentation on DK history; 6) Question and Answer session; 7) Post-forum survey; and 8) the distribution of the history of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979) textbooks.

## Objective

Aim of Classroom forum was to illustrate to High School students about the importance of studying History of Democratic Kampuchea (KR regime) and as the way to promote building peace, healing, reconciliation, tolerance and genocide prevention.

The objectives included:

- Increase the awareness of students on DK history
- Give opportunities to students to ask questions and
- Encourage the discuss and critical thinking on this history

## High School Background

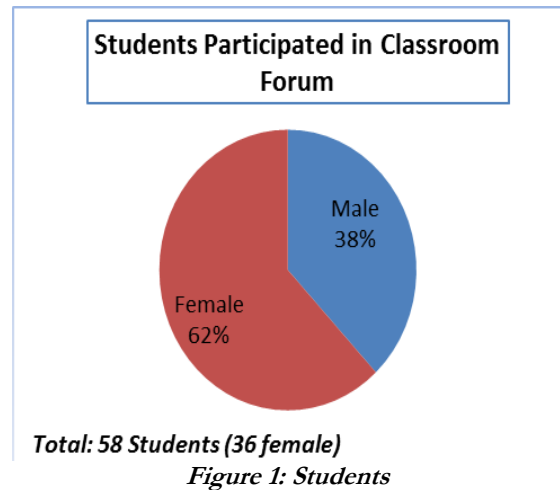
Hun Sen Borey 100 Khnang was a former Khmer Rouge pig raised ground. In 1982, with the supported from commune and district, it became Junior high school with only one building. In

2010, this school upgrade to high school by Ministry of Education Youth and Sport. Presently, Hun Sen Borey 100 Khnang has total 2166 students. 427 students are grade 12 and prepare to take the upcoming national exam. Grade 12 students divided into two – social and science. 205 students are in social subject.

## Participants

The forum was well attended with the support from host high school. There were 58 students, 62% female participated in the forum. All of them are grade 12 students who study in social science subject (Figure 1).

The forum was formal opened by Vice-Principle about school background and gave motivation speech for students.



Following by Mr. Pheng Pong-Rasy, Director of Genocide Research and Education Program of DC-Cam introduced the forum and presented the detail history of Democratic Kampuchea (KR).

## Methodology

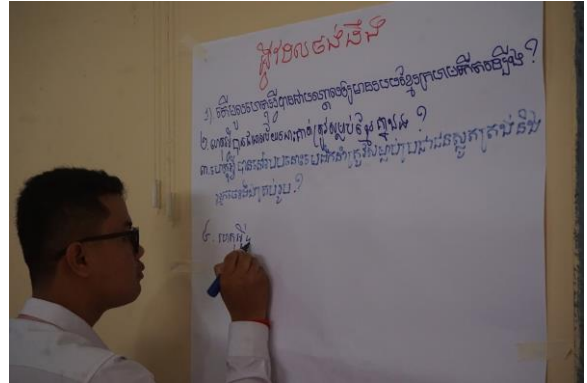
The forum consisted several activities to ensure it quality and transfer knowledge to students.

*Pre and Post-Survey* was conducted at the beginning and the end of the forum. These surveys were aimed to explore knowledge of students before attending the forum and knowledge that they got after the forum. The questionnaire contained questions about peace building, healing, reconciliation, genocide prevention, human rights and genocide knowledge as well as students' opinions on classroom forum.



Documentary Film Screening “Children of Cambodia” will show students in a real situation of Cambodian Children right after the KR regime. The documentary film aims to awaken the students’ empathy.

K-W-L Chart was aim to encourage students participation. K-W-L chart divided into three parts: K stand for what students have known; W stand for what students want to know; and L stand for what students have learnt. Due to the time limit, we decided to use only W chart to encourage students to write down and express what they want to know about KR history.



DK History Presentation was presented by Mr. Pheng Pong-Rasy, Director of Program of Genocide Research and Education in Cambodia of DC-Cam. The presentation based on DK textbook. Started by introduce KR leaders, 17 April 1975, forced transfer, forced labor, the four year plan, and the fall of the Democratic Kampuchea.

Question & Answer was focused on answering the questions that students wrote on the W chart (of K-W-L chart).

The History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979) Textbook Distribution: 60 DK textbooks (English Version) were given to each student. It is also encouraging students to practice their English language which is a significant contribution to their future study and career.

## **Contents**

At the forum start Mr. Mey Somany gave the opening speech with brief about school background. He encouraged students to focus on the forum because it could help in the grade 12 national exam. He mentioned as students you must know and understand our own history through learning and reading.



Mr. Rasy started to introduce team member to students. He said KR is the worse the history of genocide, then the other country such as Rwanda. He asked one question to students “how

many people die in KR regime?" There was one student raised his hand and answer "four millions people were dead in KR regime. Mr. Rasy explained to students carefully and gave the right answer (1.7 to 2.2 millions). Next, DC-Cam team began to distribute Pre-Survey sheet for each student to complete in 15 min. After the students completed the questionnaire, Mr. Rasy started to screen the documentary film "Children of Cambodia" for the students.

After the film screening was finished, Mr. Rasy told to write what they want to know about the KR history on the W chart (of K-W-L chart). Three W charts were full with the questions and curiosities of students. All of these questions illustrated that students already had abasic knowledge of KR history (Table 1).

**Table 1: Question from Students**

<i>Questions from Students</i>
What is the difference between the KR regime and the other regimes?
Why KR regime could control the country until 3 three years 8 months and 20 days?
What does Angkar mean in KR regime? Where it come from?
What are the factors that obstruct Cambodian from protest against KR?
Why did the KR regime fall?
What are the factors that make KR leaders did cruel things on Cambodian?
What are the torture scenarios in KR regime?
After the KR tribunal, why did those KR leaders say they know nothing about the atrocities?
What are the effects of the KR regime at Cambodian present?
Why did KR divide the country in to division?
Who are the KR leaders who live until today?
Why did KR use the word "Reeducate" to kill people?
Why KR regimes wear black?
Where did Angkar take agriculture product too?

The presentation of KR history began with Apr 17, 1975 when the brutal KR regime took their control in Phnom Penh. Mr. Rasy mentioned that when KR arrive Phnom Penh, all citizens welcome them. People believed that war had end and peace has come after the civil war and

bombing for so many years. However, after 2-3 hours of the arrival of KR troop, people were forced to leave the city and their home under three reasons: 1) to take food and supplies (told by Cadre), 2) America bombing (by Kheiv Samphon), 3) to break the spy organization (by Pol Pot). After the forced evacuation, two new social statues were established which were base people and new people. Separated family, torture, forced labor, interrogation, and internal massacre were happening after KR regime born. KR regime fall because of three reasons: 1) people weaken because of hard labor, insufficient food, family was broke up. 2) Internal purge. 3) War with Vietnam.



The Question and Answer session was focused on answering the questions that students wrote down on W chart. Mr. Rasy answers the questions one by one. Students were satisfied with the answer. However, there were some students disappointed since the duration of forum was too short for them. Finally, Mr. Rasy introduced Genocide Education Facebook page and [Khmerrougehistory.org](http://Khmerrougehistory.org) website to students and encourage them to check and ask questions.

### **Results from Pre- and Post-Forum Survey**

Pre- and post-survey questionnaires were checked carefully to ensure the reliability and identify the missing value. 60 valid questionnaires from the pre-forum survey were collected. However, in the post-forum survey, DC-Cam team was able to collect on 58 questionnaires due to two students leave during the forum because of they did not feel good. Program SPSS version 22 was used as a tool for data analysis by using Descriptive Statistic, Frequency. The results of pre- and post-surveys were described in the table (see the appendix).

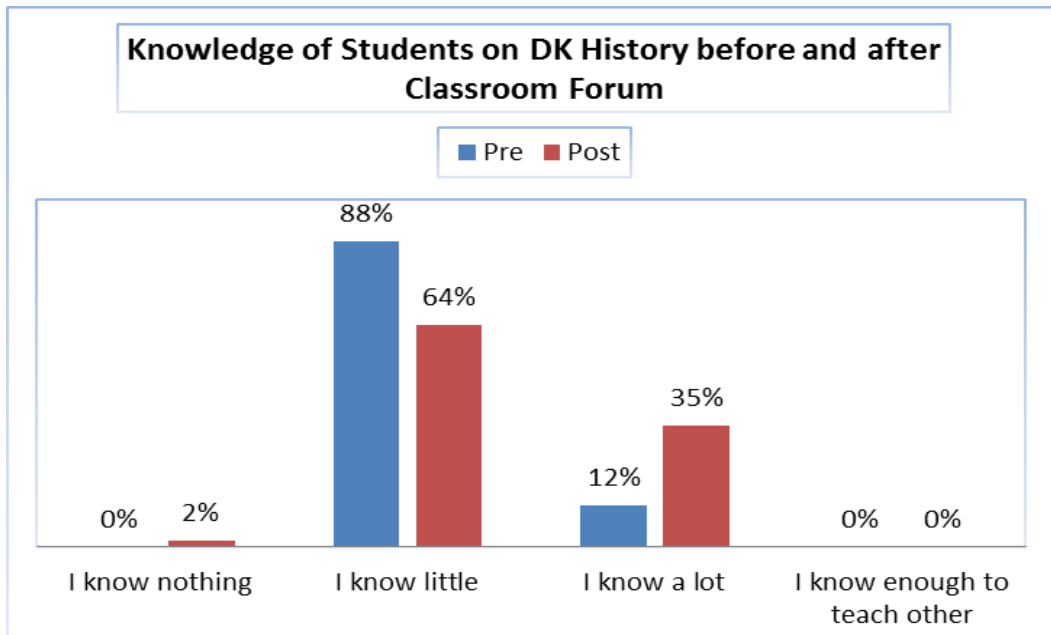


Figure 2: Knowledge of Students before and after Classroom forum

Based on Figure 2, it illustrated that students already have knowledge about DK history, even before participating in two hours classroom forum. About 88% of students have little knowledge about DK history while 12% other believed they know a lot about this history. After attending two hours classroom forum, students who know little about the DK history decrease by 24%, however, students who know a lot about DK history increase by 23%.

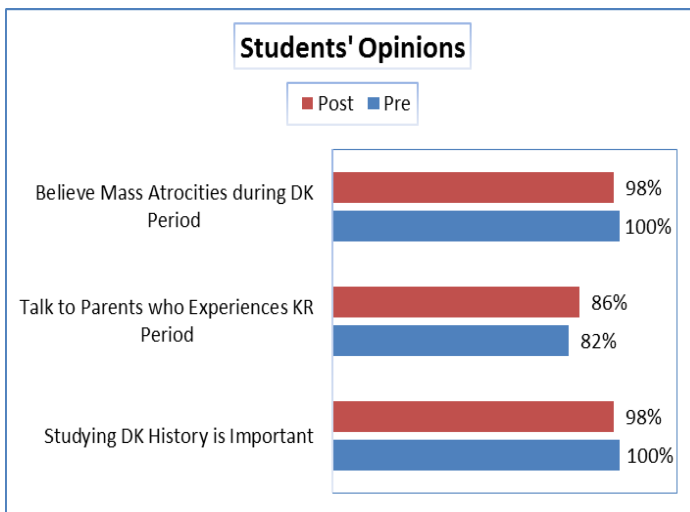


Figure 3: Students' Opinions

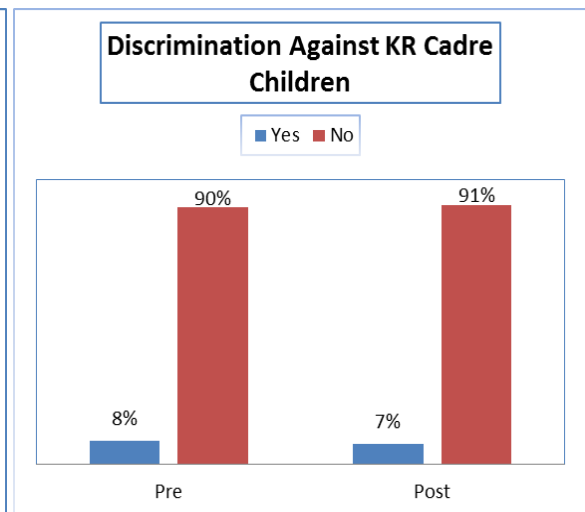
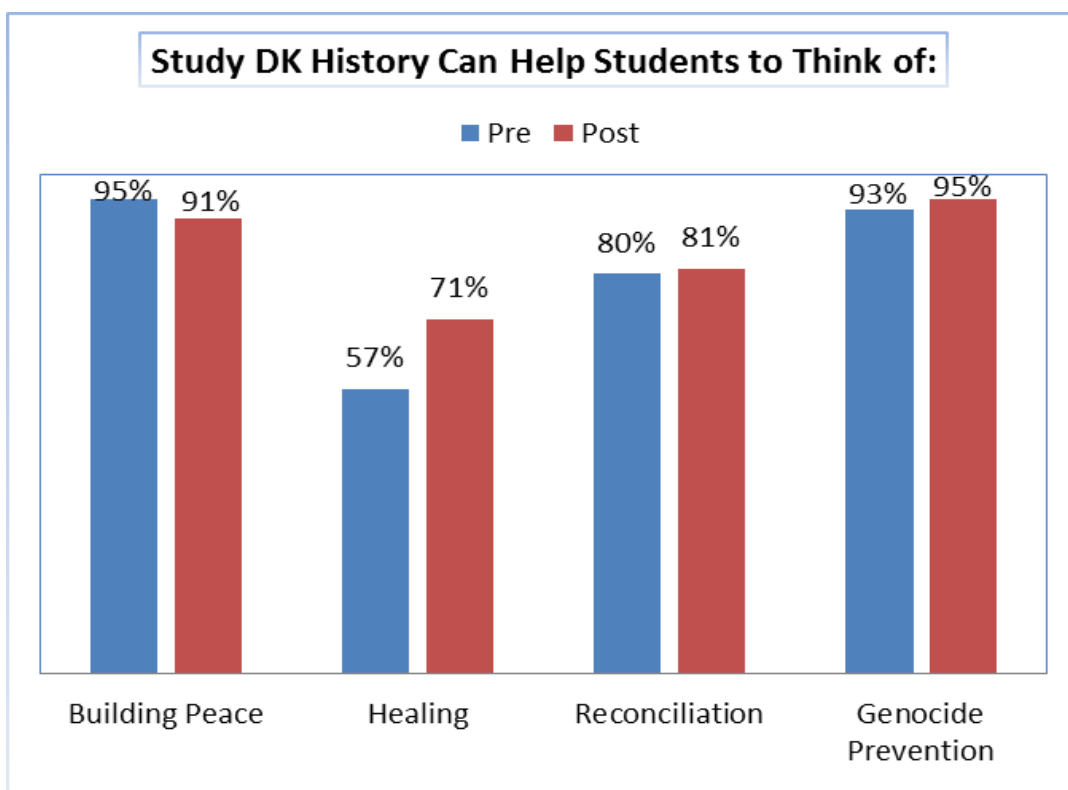


Figure 4: Discrimination

According to Figure 3, all students believed that mass atrocities have occurred in Cambodia during the DK period as well as believed that study DK history is important before attended the forum. However, after participating, the percentages decreased by 2%. In reality, the atrocities in KR maybe too hard for some students who only have small knowledge about it.



As for the important of studying DK history, some students may think it is just for the political purpose. These are signs that genocide education is needed in Cambodia curricular. But, it is not to make students believe, but understand about our history. Talking about the KR period in Cambodia is not unusual since most of the parents always compare the present situation with the KR regime. For example, to lecture their children not to waste or picking their food : “now you are having food to eat is so lucky. During the KR regime, I was at your age and did not have anything to eat besids watery porridge. So do not wasted the food”. Figure 4 shows that 91% of students disagree in discrimination against children of KR cadre while 7% agree with it.



*Figure 5: Students’ Opinion on Building Peace, Healing, Reconciliation, and Genocide Prevention*

According to Figure 5, after two hour classroom forum on DK history, it encourages studnets to think of healing, reconciliation, and genocide prevention. However, some students still uncertain about the peace building through study DK history. This is also needed the further explanation.

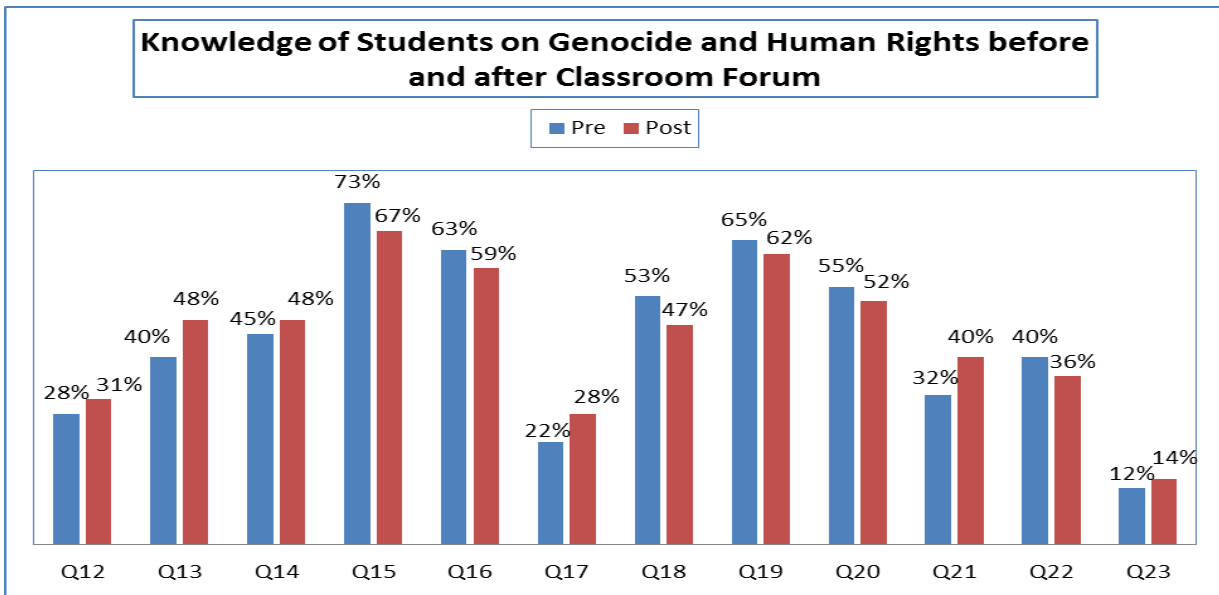


Figure 6: Knowledge of Students on Genocide and Human Rights

Figure 6 illustrates the percentage of students who answer the questions correctly. Those twelve questions are focused on the genocide definition and human rights knowledge. Those questions might be hard for high school level. However, we want students to think about those questions based on KR history they have learnt. The average percentages of students who are able to answer these questions are 44% (see appendix in genocide and human rights knowledge section).

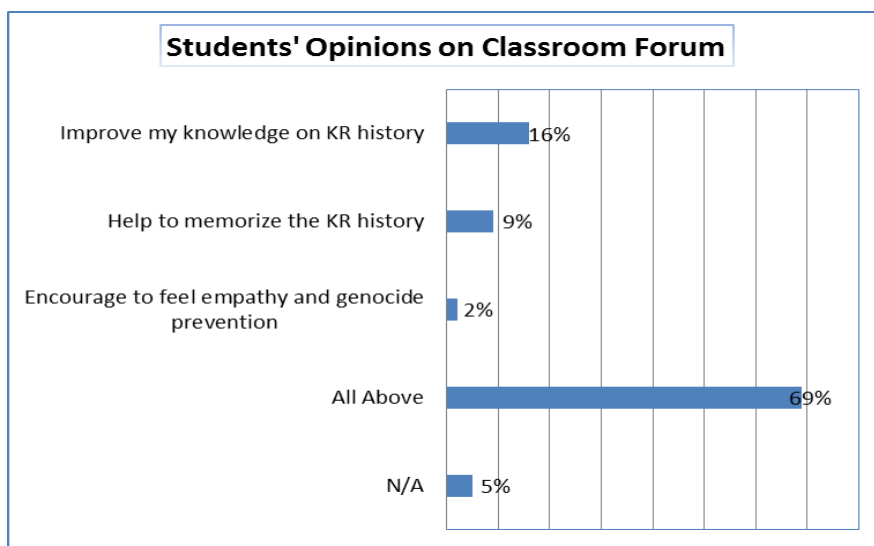


Figure 7: Students' Opinion on Classroom Forum

Based on Figure7, students show positive opinion of classroom forum. 16% of students think that this classroom forum helps to improve their knowledge, 9% of students believe that it

help to memorize the KR history, 2% of them think that it encourage feeling empathy and genocide prevention while 69% selected the three points that mentioned above.

### **Reaction from Student**

Kim Sambath is 17 years old student at Hun Sen Borei 100 Khnong said “several years before, I did not interested, did not want to know, nor thinking about KR regime. I though it just a political issue because I am born in modern time has all basic needs, have place for leisure. That’s why I should be happy with everything I have in the



present”. Sambath continued “but now, I think I should study and learn more about KR regime because it is not only story about my parents grandparents but a whole country”. Sambath also mentioned “my mother used to tell me and my siblings about her life during KR regime with tear. That’s why I do not want to know it anymore because it made my mother sad. But now, I have a textbook that contained a lot of information and photos as well as the video that I have watched with the detail presentation from teacher, thus, I can discuss about KR period with my parents and compare what I have learnt with what have heard”. Finally, I wish there are more event like this with us students would be great.



My name is Reuon Maren. I am 20 years old. I wanted to know to understand about DK history also known as KR. I wanted to know why this regime occurred. Why people were forced to leave Phnom Penh? Why there was not school for kid like present? But no one could answer and discuss with me. The teacher only

taught based on the school schedule and it is not specific. My parents were child during KR period. They could not remember specific about events and life under the KR regime. I always

search for KR documents through social network like Google, Facebook, and YouTube etc. However, all of them are not enough for my curiosities because the more I read, the more I am curious about it. As I mentioned above, I need someone to discuss. And today, I am very happy when I was called to participate in the KR history session. I also prepared questions to ask beforehand. But I am disappointed because the presentation duration of teacher from DC-Cam was too short for me. Finally, I wish there will be more event like this in my school in the future because I am not the only one that want to know about this history. There are more junior students that talk to their parents about KR regime.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the results from the survey, there is a significant increase in students' knowledge of DK history. There are some questions that decrease in percentage like question number two and four which decline by 2%. However, there are not changing the fact that 98% of students believe that mass atrocities under the KR regime and the important of study DK history. The discrimination on children of KR cadre still happens, but they are in small level. As we can see in Figure 4, 8% of students discriminate against children of KR cadre but it decreased by 1% after attending two hours classroom forum. Genocide education is needed for students.

Documentary film was essential for students to understand the past atrocities. Some students mentioned they have more stories to discuss with their parents after watching the film and have the textbook in their hand. The K-W-L chart is very effective for encouraging students to involve in forum activities and ask what they want to know. Many questions were written by students on W Chart (of K-W-L). Based on the students' questions (table 1), we can conclude that they are interested KR history, curious, and enthusiastic to learn.

Finally, a classroom forum in Hun Sen Borei 100 Khnong was effectively conducted with great outcomes. Both students and teachers were supported and well cooperated until the end. For students, two hour session may not enough, but DC-Cam team has provided different sources of information for them such as website, Facebook page, and textbooks. We cannot move forward without understanding the past, that's why understanding genocide is the key to build the better future, toward goal of national reconciliation and genocide prevention.

## Appendix

<b>N</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
		<b>Pre</b>		<b>Post</b>	
	<i>Male</i>	24 (40%)		22(38%)	
	<i>Female</i>	36 (60%)		36(62%)	
<b><i>History of Democratic Kampuchea Knowledge</i></b>					
<b>1</b>	<i>Would you describe your know ledge of DK period?</i>				
	I know nothing	0	0	1	2
	I know a little	53	88	37	64
	I know a lot	7	12	20	35
	I know enough to teach other	0	0	0	0
<b>2</b>	<i>Do you believe that mass atrocities occurred during DK period?</i>				
	Yes	60	100	57	98
	No	0	0	1	2
	N/A	0	0	0	0
<b>3</b>	<i>Have you ever talk about DK period with your parents or people who experience that period?</i>				
	Yes	49	82	50	86
	No	11	18	8	14
	N/A	0	0	0	0
<b>4</b>	<i>Do you think the studying of DK history is important?</i>				
	Yes	60	100	57	98
	No	0	0	1	2
	N/A	0	0	0	0
<b>5</b>	<i>If one of your friends is s son/daughter of perpetrator, would you discriminate against his/her?</i>				
	Yes	5	8	4	7
	No	54	90	53	91
	N/A	1	2	1	2
<b>6</b>	<i>Which school level that DK history should be taught in?</i>				
	Primary school	3	5	2	4
	Junior school	33	55	35	63
	High school	19	32	18	31
	University	4	7	3	5
	N/A	1	2	0	0
<b>7</b>	<i>Does the study of DK history encourage you to think of peace building in Cambodia?</i>				
	Yes	57	95	53	91
	No	3	5	5	9
	N/A	0	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	<i>Does the study of DK history encourage you to think of healing?</i>				
	Yes	34	57	41	71

	No	24	40	17	29
	N/A	2	3	0	0
<b>9</b>	<i>Does the study of DK history encourage you to think of reconciliation?</i>				
	Yes	48	80	47	81
	No	8	13	11	19
	N/A	4	7	0	0
<b>10</b>	<i>Does the study of DK history encourage you to think of genocide prevention?</i>				
	Yes	56	93	55	95
	No	4	7	3	5
	N/A	0	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	<i>How do you feel about the studying of DK history?</i>				
	Want to know and understand about this history	54	90	48	83
	Do not want to know	0	0	0	0
	Feel empathy to victims	5	8	10	17
	Boring	1	2	0	0
	N/A	0	0	0	0
<b><u>Human Rights Knowledge</u></b>					
<b>12</b>	<i>Which response below is the best definition of genocide as stated in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide?</i>				
	Killing members of a political group with the intent to destroy the entire group because of their political agenda	20	33	22	38
	Arresting leaders of a religious group with the intent to undermine the practice of religion	9	15	8	14
	<b><u>Deliberately starving an ethnic group with the intent to destroy the people</u></b>	<b><u>17</u></b>	<b><u>28</u></b>	<b><u>18</u></b>	<b><u>31</u></b>
	Killing enemy soldiers who are shooting at your soldiers during war	9	15	7	12
	N/A	5	8	3	5
<b>13</b>	<i>Which response below reflects circumstances that support violence and possibly future genocide in community?</i>				
	Students engaged in peaceful protest against a school policy	14	23	11	19
	<b><u>Local leaders requirement to force members of a religious group to live separate from the rest of the community</u></b>	<b><u>24</u></b>	<b><u>40</u></b>	<b><u>28</u></b>	<b><u>48</u></b>
	Police arresting persons who trespass on government property	2	3	3	5
	Immigrants from another country seeking to settle in a community	18	30	15	26
	N/A	2	3	1	2
<b>14</b>	<i>Which response below reflects circumstances that support violence and possibly future</i>				

	<i>genocide in a country?</i>				
	<b><u>Religious leaders who describe members of another religion as “sub-human” and “worthy of death.”</u></b>	<b><u>27</u></b>	<b><u>45</u></b>	<b><u>28</u></b>	<b><u>48</u></b>
	Religious leaders who encourage their members to pray for members of another religion.	11	18	13	22
	Political leaders who encourage everyone to vote.	17	28	12	21
	Individuals who petition their government leaders to adopt a policy.	2	3	5	9
	N/A	3	5	0	0
<b>15</b>	<i>Which response below is the best description of the impact of genocide on <u>individuals</u>?</i>				
	Individuals suffer as a result of lower wages and job growth.	2	3	6	10
	<b><u>Individuals mourn the loss of family and friends who were tortured and/or killed.</u></b>	<b><u>44</u></b>	<b><u>73</u></b>	<b><u>39</u></b>	<b><u>67</u></b>
	Individuals are not impacted by genocide. Genocide only affects groups of people.	2	3	3	5
	Only children are impacted by genocide by the loss of parents.	10	17	10	17
	N/A	2	3	0	0
<b>16</b>	<i>Which response below is the best description of the impact of genocide on <u>families and communities</u>?</i>				
	Individuals suffer during genocide but generally families and communities are unharmed.	0	0	4	7
	Only poor families ever suffer during genocide. Rich families never suffer during genocide.	3	5	7	12
	<b><u>Genocide can impact families and communities in many ways for generations.</u></b>	<b><u>38</u></b>	<b><u>63</u></b>	<b><u>34</u></b>	<b><u>59</u></b>
	Genocide impacts communities but families can always escape by fleeing to another country.	17	28	12	21
	N/A	2	3	1	21
<b>17</b>	<i>Which response below is the best description of the impact of genocide on <u>countries</u>?</i>				
	Countries are not impacted by genocide.	2	3	1	2
	Countries can be impacted by genocide but the world is too big to be impacted.	14	23	15	26
	Countries suffer from genocide only when it is occurring. They can rebuild quickly	31	52	25	43
	<b><u>Countries can be impacted by genocide for generations.</u></b>	<b><u>13</u></b>	<b><u>22</u></b>	<b><u>16</u></b>	<b><u>28</u></b>
	N/A	0	0	1	2
<b>18</b>	<i>Which response below is the best description of an important strategy that <u>individuals</u> can do to prevent and avoid circumstances that are supportive to violence and possibly future genocide?</i>				
	Individuals can ignore violence when it occurs because there is nothing they can do	6	10	6	10

	Individuals can prevent violence by attacking their enemies before they are attacked	6	10	6	10
	Individuals can prevent violence by staying quiet and not criticizing violence	15	25	18	31
	<b><u>Individuals can prevent violence by speaking against such violence</u></b>	<b><u>32</u></b>	<b><u>53</u></b>	<b><u>27</u></b>	<b><u>47</u></b>
	N/A	1	2	1	2
<b>19</b>	<i>Which response below is the best description of <u>another</u> important strategy that <u>individuals</u> can do to prevent and avoid circumstances that are supportive to violence and possibly future genocide?</i>				
	Individuals can encourage violence against their enemies	2	3	6	10
	Individuals can encourage victims to be silent because speaking out against violence will only encourage more violence	16	27	8	14
	<b><u>Individuals can denounce violence and encourage peaceful solutions to conflicts</u></b>	<b><u>39</u></b>	<b><u>65</u></b>	<b><u>36</u></b>	<b><u>62</u></b>
	Individuals can encourage perpetrators to commit their violence without public attention, which only aggravates the situation	2	3	5	9
	N/A	1	2	3	5
<b>20</b>	<i>Which response below is the best description of an important strategy that <u>communities</u> can implement to prevent and avoid circumstances that are supportive to violence and possibly future genocide?</i>				
	<b><u>Communities can protect the individual rights of all community members, regardless of religion, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, political opinion or other characteristics</u></b>	<b><u>33</u></b>	<b><u>55</u></b>	<b><u>30</u></b>	<b><u>52</u></b>
	Communities can protect the individual rights of the majority group at the expense of minorities in order to preserve peace, order and stability	15	25	15	26
	Communities do not need to protect individual rights; rather, they must always seek to maintain peace, order and stability	9	15	7	12
	Communities do not need to protect individual rights because this is always a state responsibility	1	2	4	7
	N/A	2	3	2	3
<b>21</b>	<i>Which response below is the best description of <u>another</u> important strategy that <u>communities</u> can implement to prevent and avoid circumstances that are supportive to violence and possibly future genocide?</i>				
	Communities can prevent violence by identifying minorities and requiring them to live separate from the rest of the community.	2	3	6	10
	<b><u>Communities can prevent violence by teaching youth to appreciate human diversity through education about different cultures, religions, and communities.</u></b>	<b><u>19</u></b>	<b><u>32</u></b>	<b><u>23</u></b>	<b><u>40</u></b>



	Communities can prevent violence by teaching youth to appreciate their own culture and identify ways to protect it from outside influence.	32	53	20	35
	Communities can prevent violence by teaching youth how to protect themselves and their communities through self-defense training	6	10	7	12
	N/A	1	2	2	3
<b>22</b>	<i>Which response below reflects an important strategy that <u>countries</u> can implement to prevent and avoid circumstances that are supportive to violence and possibly future genocide?</i>				
	Countries can prevent violence by censoring information and news.	3	5	7	12
	Countries can prevent violence by attacking enemies before they are attacked	6	10	6	10
	Countries can never prevent violence but they can assist in peaceful resolution.	26	43	25	43
	<b><u>Countries can prevent violence through education and diplomacy</u></b>	<b>24</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>36</b>
	N/A	1	2	2	3
<b>23</b>	<i>Which response below reflects <u>another</u> important strategy that <u>countries</u> can implement to prevent and avoid circumstances that are supportive to violence and possibly future genocide?</i>				
	<b><u>Countries can identify and publicly denounce circumstances that support genocide.</u></b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>
	Countries should never denounce other countries because it will weaken future diplomacy.	6	10	10	17
	Countries should only denounce enemies that support violence or genocide. Countries should never denounce allies involved in genocide because they are allies.	20	33	20	35
	Countries should only help people who deserve to be helped. Some genocide is necessary to preserve peace and order.	24	40	17	29
	N/A	3	5	3	5
<b><u>Opinion on the Forum</u></b>					
<b>24</b>	What do you think about this classroom forum?				
	Good and help develop my knowledge			54	93
	Not good, did not help anything at all			0	0
	N/A			4	7
<b>25</b>	What this classroom forum can help you?				
	Improve my knowledge on KR history			9	16
	Help to memorize the KR history			5	9
	Encourage to feel empathy and genocide prevention			1	2
	All above			40	69
	N/A			3	5