

Outreach Activities

With the intention of contributing to the strengthening the judicial reform process in Cambodia, the Khmer Institute of Democracy carried out an outreach program on the Khmer Rouge Trials starting in April 2005 in 7 provinces of Cambodia: Kampong Cham, Kampong Thom, Seam Reap, Battambang, Prey Veng, Svay Rieng and Kratie, with funding from OSI Development Foundation.

The ultimate aims of of the project are: eliminating Cambodia's culture of impunity, ensuring respect for the rule of law, and facilitating people's participation in the tribunal process.

The first phase of the outreach plan was conducted from August to November 2005 on the history of the Khmer Rouge, the structure of the Extraordinary Chamber (EC), the Agreement between the UN and the RGC on the establishment of the EC. In 93 communes, 20 districts in 7 provinces, 12,208 villagers of which 6,429 were women, were registered.

During the outreach activities, the participants expressed the following expectations of the Khmer Rouge Trials:

- it would prevent the return of the genocide
- it would be fair
- after the Khmer Rouge Trials finished, there will be justice in Cambodian society and judicial system would be improved.
- it should also try the lower cadres because they were the direct actors.

The participants were happy to hear about the Khmer Rouge Trials as they wish to have it set up as soon as possible. But, they expressed little hope that the tribunal will set up at all as they have heard about it for many years already. They also requested that the countries which support the Khmer Rouge be tried as well as the Khmer Rouge leaders.

They requested that the Institute to expand the dissemination of the Khmer Rouge Trials information to every village and commune and the trials are conducted in public and broadcasted on TV.

Some questions raised by the participants include:

Will the tribunal last only three years? Do the culprits have the right to complain after the verdict? Which country will compensate the destruction that Cambodia encountered? Will the accused persons have a lawyer? Why during the trial will the judges not give the death penalty? How many people will be tried? Who is the founder of the Khmer Rouge? Will Ieng Sary be tried as he was granted amnesty by the King father? Why did Pol Pot ban the practice of religion? Can those who are living abroad be tried? Will lower KR cadres be tried? During the DK regime, why were Cambodian citizens forced into hard labor and starvation? During that time what was the rice used for if it was not allowed for people to eat? What was the revolution of Pol Pot for? Will the dead KR leaders be tried? Will Cambodian people receive compensation after the KR leaders are convicted? Why do the KR Trials involve international judges? Who will be the most responsible KR leaders? What was the purpose of the KR movement? When was the Khmer Rouge formed?

The second round of outreach was conducted from February to April 2006 on Fair Trial principles and Witness and Victim protection. 9,585 participants of which 5,357 were women, attended the program.

Some questions raised by the participants include:

Mr. A saw Mr. B leaving a certain place, but when he arrived at the scene, Mr. A saw a dead man, can he be a witness as he did not see the killing? When will the trial of the Khmer Rouge leaders happen? Who can be in the audience and how many people can attend? Where will the trial take place? Will the safety of the witness be fully guaranteed? Who are the criminals given that most of the Cambodian people are victims? Can a convicted person appeal? Would he be incarcerated in Cambodia or abroad? What is the benefit of this trial for the Cambodian people? Who are the real leaders of the Khmer Rouge? If a rape was committed without a witness, can the perpetrator be convicted? Will the Khmer Rouge leaders be extradited if they are living abroad? How can we be a witness at the Khmer Rouge Trial? Are the witnesses in the normal courts protected if those of at Khmer Rouge Trial have been protected? Who would be the victim if a homeowner killed a thief to protect his life? Will the leaders of the Khmer Rouge tell the truth? What are the measures that **will be taken** to protect the witnesses? Why did Cambodians kill Cambodians? Will the victims and witnesses be repaid for the cost for appearing at the trials? Why will the Khmer Rouge leaders be tried if there is a national reconciliation policy?

The audience requested that the court convict those who committed the genocide and destroyed the nation, without distinguishing their rank, and requested that the trial takes place as soon as possible for fear that the Khmer Rouge leaders will die or escape.

The Institute will continue outreach activities on the court process and coordinate with the public relations department of the ECCC. It will also produce videos to show to the rural villagers.