



knowledge without boundaries

EIFL-PLIP

Improving lives and livelihoods through innovative public library services

IMPACT CASE STUDY

Library brings Cambodia's hidden history to life Lveate Centrestone Public Library, Cambodia

The Khmer Rouge led by Pol Pot ruled Cambodia from 1975 to 1979, a period which is remembered for mass executions, unjust imprisonment, forced labour and starvation. In Cambodia, there is a reluctance to speak about the period. To break the silence, Lveate Centrestone Public Library teamed up with the Supplementary Teaching Education Programme (STEP) and created the Digital Archives Project (DAP). Using oral history methodology the project interviews villagers about their experiences under the Khmer Rouge. The stories are shared with rural communities through the library and through history classes in village schools. Support from EIFL-PLIP (US\$ 8,700) was used to purchase digital voice and film recording equipment, a projector and screen projector, a computer and hard drive, and to fund some activities.

Building the digital archives

Oral history – especially where violence and trauma are involved – requires sensitivity. The DAP team sought help from specialist organizations, like the Documentation Centre of Cambodia (DC-Cam). The team held community meetings to encourage villagers to come forward and be interviewed. Two interviewers travelled many miles to remote villages to interview survivors in their homes. In just nine months, they conducted 115 interviews. With the villagers' permission, most of the interviews were recorded on film.

Achievements and impact

- 115 villagers have told their stories, and all agreed to share their interviews with other villagers through the library and local schools.
- The interviews are available in voice and film, making them accessible to non-literate people.
- Villagers found the experience positive. Some said that speaking out was healing.
- Lveate Centrestone Public Library has become an audio-visual centre. Moved by the project, a donor funded construction of a film viewing room.
- The project has enriched history teaching. Every week, teachers bring their students to the library to watch an interview. Students are encouraged to think critically about the interviews and to discuss them.



Lveate librarian interviews a villager about his experiences under the brutal Khmer Rouge regime.



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What the villagers say

'I think it is helpful for us, the young generation, to know more about this regime and not forget about it, because many children don't even know about it, or simply don't believe that it did happen.' - Secondary school student, Lveate.

'I feel extremely relieved to be able to get some part of those painful memories off my chest. I also feel happy that I can leave this account of my life behind for the next generation.' - DAP interviewee.



Every week, teachers bring students to Lveate Centrestone Public Library to view films and listen to interviews. Teachers encourage students to think critically about the interviews and discuss them.

The future

The project has attracted new funding for the library, and valuable partnerships. STEP is working with local schools to ensure that the interviews are incorporated in history lessons. DC-Cam regularly provides the library with up to date information on the Khmer Rouge period. The Extraordinary Chambers in the Court of Cambodia (ECCC), which is responsible for prosecuting leaders of the Khmer Rouge, has donated printed and digital material, and has invited STEP to take part in their outreach programme.

EIFL-PLIP supported the DAP in May 2010. A year later, the library assessed the impact of the project.

Information presented here is based on the library's assessment.

For further information, contact STEP Director, Sokchea Monn, info@stepcambodia.org.

[EIFL](#) (Electronic Information for Libraries) is an international not-for-profit organisation dedicated to enabling access to knowledge through libraries in more than 60 developing and transition countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. EIFL's Public Library Innovation Programme (EIFL-PLIP) supports public libraries to use ICT to implement innovative community development services. Learn more - www.eifl.net/plip; further information - plip@eifl.net. EIFL's Public Library Innovation Programme is supported by a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation