



**RESPONDING TO THE  
CAMBODIAN GENOCIDE IN  
A GLOBAL CONTEXT:**

# **STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2021\***

Forty years after the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime, Cambodia still grapples with painful legacies of genocide and mass atrocity. Many of the wounds inflicted during the Pol Pot era have yet to heal. As the 2018 national elections approach, bitter political disputes remain about the nature of the government that displaced the Khmer Rouge. Social and political cleavages run deep, a need for justice remains, and national reconciliation is far from complete. The trials at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) are crucial steps, but the convictions of three former DK officials do not address all of the injustice related to Khmer Rouge rule and its aftermath.

Between 2019 and 2021, the **Documentation Center of Cambodia** (DC-Cam) will continue to pursue our long-standing mission of promoting memory, justice, and reconciliation. We will compile further evidence of genocide and crimes against humanity, educate Cambodians about the history of the Khmer Rouge regime, and address the needs of Cambodian victims and their descendants—the keys to the country's future. This summary Strategic Plan outlines our next steps to help overcome the shadows of Khmer Rouge terror and build a brighter future in Cambodia.

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# 1. A PHYSICAL LEGACY

## Building a Permanent Genocide Research Center

DC-Cam has established a permanent **Sleuk Rith Institute (SRI)** to expand our work and ensure a long-term commitment to human rights and genocide prevention in Cambodia. A design for the SRI is now in place, prepared by **Zaha Hadid Architects**. It is an inspiring design that will accommodate a museum, library, research center, and school. Surrounding the SRI will be ample green space for reflection. The Cambodian government generously provided us a large piece of land in Phnom Penh for the SRI complex— fittingly beside Beong Trabek High School, the site of a former Khmer Rouge re-education center.

The SRI's name reflects our core objectives and Cambodian heritage. *Sleuk rith* are dried leaves that Cambodian religious leaders and scholars have used for centuries to document history, disseminate knowledge, and even preserve culture during periods of harsh rule. They represent the beauty of knowledge and the power of human perseverance during times of peril.


The SRI will embody those values. It will be a physical memorial, encouraging visitors to honor and remember all those who died or suffered under Khmer Rouge rule. It will be an educational hub, enabling current and future generations to learn about Cambodia's harrowing past and empowering them to prevent similar abuses in the future. Finally, it will be a major locus for research. We aim to be the leading institution focused on genocide studies in Asia and to build on our strong connectivity to leading scholars and institutions throughout the world.

We are now conducting a capital campaign and plan to begin construction of the physical facility soon.

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MEMORY & JUSTICE

Photo: Raffy Lerma  
Philippines



“...A SOCIETY CANNOT KNOW ITSELF  
IF IT DOES NOT HAVE AN ACCURATE  
MEMORY OF ITS OWN HISTORY.”

— YOUK CHHANG

## 2. A LEGACY OF MEMORY

Preserving memory means remembering and understanding the past to honor those who perished or suffered under Khmer Rouge rule and prevent similar abuses in the future. In the coming years, we will focus on helping to establish a **National Historical Commission on Genocide Prevention in Cambodia**. This commission will be a vital guardian of historical memory and provide a necessary complement to the ECCC in providing a sense of justice for survivors of the Khmer Rouge period. At the same time, we will continue to pursue projects to enhance public understanding of Khmer Rouge history.

### Genocide Education

Education is crucial for Cambodians to preserve their history, remember the two million people who perished under Khmer Rouge rule, and understand the causes and consequences of the genocide. For more than a decade, we have worked with the Cambodian Ministry of Education and local and international experts to implement a genocide studies curriculum based on our acclaimed textbook, *The History of Democratic Kampuchea*. Our work training officials, teachers, and students has helped fill a gaping hole in public knowledge after decades of relative official silence on the Khmer Rouge era in Cambodian schools and universities.

In the years ahead, we will extend that work by promoting more inclusive approaches to history. Our Village History Project will help develop and publish histories from marginalized communities in Cambodia. We will train local teachers in marginalized communities on how to collect and write oral histories. We will also engage them through on-the-job training and mentoring as they develop and collect the histories of remote villages. We will then publish those histories for further use in schools and informal education programs, including those in marginalized communities, in an effort to democratize history in Cambodia.

### Victims' Historical Memory

Our Victim History Project focuses on the victims of Khmer Rouge terror. Using various archives, databases, histories and stories, we

are compiling information for a book memorializing those who lost their lives. This will be the first book to inscribe the names of the deceased and present their stories as an integrated history. We want the victims of the Khmer Rouge genocide to be remembered and heard as individual persons—not just numbers or categories of people. In addition to individual names and biographical information, we will include information on the Khmer Rouge history and the structure, rise and demise of the Khmer Rouge regime. The book will also discuss the problem of disappearances and their psychological impacts on survivors. By focusing on the stories of individuals throughout the country, the book will be a crucial supplement to the ECCC process and existing historical accounts of the Khmer Rouge period.

### Negotiating Memory

As the ECCC winds down, we also plan to continue our work of empowering survivors by helping them speak openly about issues related to the Khmer Rouge legacy. We plan to establish formal survivor associations to enable victims to engage on official and civil society projects related to justice, memorialization, and education about the Khmer Rouge period. This project will therefore aim to help foster informed, energetic civic engagement in public affairs—one of the keys to preventing governance abuses like those of the Pol Pot era.



# ស្វែងរកការពិត

SEARCHING FOR THE TRUTH

*Photo of Buddha:  
Keo Theasrun, Cambodia*

*Photo: Laetitia van dan Assum  
The Netherlands*

## 3. A LEGACY OF JUSTICE

The trials at the **Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC)** are not an end to the need for accountability in Cambodia. Our mission includes a commitment to build on the work of the ECCC by drawing lessons from its work, uncovering new information to promote accountability, and make our existing resources more widely available.

### Voices from the ECCC

One way we will build on the ECCC's work is by sharing the lessons and experiences of those who have worked at the Court. Through a project entitled "Voices from the ECCC," we will collect, preserve, and publish testimonies of former officials, stakeholders, and parties who participated in the ECCC, making testimonies available in video format online. These interviews will serve as important educational tools on the ECCC, enabling further scholarship and debate on the ECCC's success, lessons learned, and legacy.

### Unburying the Past

We have long collected information to identify and map the Khmer Rouge organization. The information we have collected through our "Accountability Project" already has played a key role in supporting the ECCC process. In the years ahead, we will expand our reach to focus on matters well beyond cases likely to appear at the ECCC. We will aim to shed light on crimes committed at low levels—offenses of great importance to survivors. We will continue to interview surviving Khmer Rouge officials who hold

the keys to understanding the Pol Pot regime's discreet, secretive and covert structure and operations. We will compile that information in databases and interview transcripts that will be lasting foundations for historical, and possibly legal, accountability.

### Making Our Documents Available Worldwide

A further way we will continue to promote memory and justice, at home and abroad, is to enhance and secure our archival collection. Between 2019 and 2021, we will work to develop a digital portal to more than 500,000 pages of records from our archive that are not currently available to the public online. This will allow scholars, journalists, officials, and ordinary interested citizens to conduct effective research on the Khmer Rouge period. We will also take steps to improve the data retrieval systems for our extensive historical, bibliographic and geographic databases.

We look forward to building the SRI and sustaining our push for memory and justice in Cambodia with the generous support of our friends in Cambodia and around the world.

# DC-CAM

The Documentation  
Center of Cambodia

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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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The Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) was founded and constituted in 1995 after the U.S. Congress passed the Cambodian Genocide Justice Act in April 1994, which was signed into law by President Clinton. The Royal Government of Cambodia also formally supported DC-Cam. DC-Cam has received numerous accolades and awards for its work in support of memory and justice for victims of the Cambodian genocide. In 2017 alone, DC-Cam was the honored recipients of the Judith Lee Stronach Human Rights Award from the Center for Justice and Accountability, and his Majesty King Norodom Sihamoni made Youk Chhang a Commander of the Royal Order of Cambodia in recognition of Chhang’s distinguished services to the Kingdom of Cambodia. In 2018, DC-Cam also was a winner of the Ramon Magsaysay Awards, which is regarded as 'Asia's Nobel' prize, for preserving historical memory for healing and justice.