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KRT roadshow makes the rounds

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Uong Maly travelled for the first time in August to Tuol Sleng, the former Khmer Rouge torture centre turned genocide museum, and the Choeung Ek killing fields - some of the starkest reminders of the apocalypse that engulfed Cambodia 30 years ago.

"When I got back, I came home with questions that I wanted to ask in order to release my feelings," she said. "I wanted to ask if other countries were also killing their own people."

The 63-year-old Kampong Cham native came a small step closer to getting those answers last week when she attended the latest forum organised by the Center for Social Development (CSD) aimed at getting Cambodians to talk about their country's past and giving them insight into efforts to bring former regime leaders to justice.

For some, the forum took on added poignancy following last month's indictment by Khmer Rouge tribunal judges of Kaing Guek Eav, the Tuol Sleng prison chief better known as Duch who will be the first defendant sent to trial.

"I do not have revenge left, I want justice," said Net Tong, a farmer from Prey Sralao village in Kampong Cham who lost 10 family members under the 1975-79 regime.

"We want to put away the past and feel peaceful. If the [detained] people get jailed, we will feel very happy," he added.

Both Net Tong, 60, and his friend, 62-year-old Nong Srim, said they came to the forum, which was attended by tribunal officials, with little knowledge of how Cambodia plans to prosecute regime leaders through the UN-backed tribunal.

"Before we didn't know the exact process of the tribunal, but now we feel better informed," Nong Srim said.

Net Tong added: "I want people to understand the process. After this forum I will spread the information about the prosecution in my village."

Get involved Sok Leang, a senior assistant at CSD who facilitated last week's forum, said it was important for the tribunal to be explained to Cambodians, many of whom lacked even the most basic knowledge of how the court worked.

"We want to inform people about the tribunal, and we want them to understand that they have rights," Sok Leang said. "Their suffering can be eased through this court, and they have the right to get involved in the legal process."

More than 150 people participated in Friday's forum, and organisers said they hoped these people would take their experiences back to their villages.

"We want to remind people about the past so that they can act as catalysts ... to get others engaged in the dialogue, to inspire and encourage them to talk," Sok Leang said.

"We always encourage [the participants] in every public forum to disseminate the information we give them," Sok Leang said.

"If you know someone who would like to file a complaint, get them informed and get back to us."

For Oung Maly, simply being able to attend the forum was "victory" for her.

"We hope that we get justice for the Cambodian people. Before we just heard [of the process], never saw it, but now we can participate.