

Interview of Dum Ien

A: Interviewer: Eng Daly

B: Interviewee: Dum Ien

Summary of the Interview

Dum Ien was born in the Year of the Snake (about 1953) in Ta Mao village, Prey Veng province. After reciting her family history, Dum Ien shares several harrowing stories of surviving starvation and forced labor during the Khmer Rouge before being reunited with her family after the Vietnamese invasion in 1979. She now lives on communal land in a small home that she constructed with the help of a Christian organization. Despite facing financial challenges, she does all that she can so that her grandchild can receive an education.

A: First, I would like to say hello to you and thank you for allowing me to come and interview you. I am from a university in the United States called BYU. My name is Eng Dalin, and I came to this interview so the next generation can know about your history.

B: Yes.

A: So, there are a few things I want to ask, so that future generations can know and understand your history. So what is this village called?

B: Boeng Snay village.

A: Yes, what commune, what district?

B: Sambo Meas district, Sambo Meas commune, and Kampong Cham province.

A: Yes, what is your full name?

B: My name is Ien.

A: Ien?

B: Dum Ien.

B: Dum Ien.

B: Yes.

A: How old are you today?

B: I am 68 years old!

A: 68, right?

B: Yes.

A: Yes, what about your nickname, do you have a nickname?

B: Huh?

A: Did you have a nickname before?

B: None.

A: No?

B: Yes.

A: No other name besides Ien?

B: No.

A: No, you don't have one?

B: Yes.

A: Yes, what about the lunar year, like Rat, Tiger, Rabbit, what year are you?

B: I am the Year of the Snake.

A: Year of the Snake?

B: Yes.

A: Yes, year of the snake, where is your place of birth?

B: My hometown is Prey Veng.

A: Oh, in Prey Veng?

B: Yes, I came here to find work.

A: Yes, in Prey Veng, in what district, what commune?

B: Ta Mao village.

A: Ta Mao village?

B: Reathor commune, Preah Sdach district.

A: Yes, Prey Veng province?

B: Yes.

A: And how many siblings do you have?

B: There are seven of my siblings, but we do not get together, some go here and some go there.

A: Yes!

B: Some have died already.

A: Oh, those seven siblings?

B: Yes.

A: Can you recall the names of your siblings starting with the oldest, what are their names?

B: The oldest's name is Uk.

A: What is the family name, Dum Uk?

B: Dum Uk and I am next, I am Dum Ien and after that my younger brother's name is Ien.

A: Ien!

B: And next is Chham.

A: Chham!

B: And another named Han.

A: And next?

B: And another, Non, and one more, but they died.

A: Yes, what is the name of the one who died?

B: Dam.

A: The name is Dam?

B: [...].

A: Yes, any other names?

B: Sin An and that's it.

A: Yes, that's all eight?

B: Yes.

A: There are eight of them, and what about your younger sister, how did she die?

B: She died.

A: How did she die?

B: The younger sister contracted HIV from her husband.

A: Oh, HIV?

B: Her husband works as a police officer.

A: Yes!

B: And one of them had high blood pressure, high blood pressure, then had a stroke.

A: Yes, what else?

B: And another one was a male soldier, he died, I don't know how, but he died, I don't know.

A: Yes, you do not know?

B: I do not know.

A: Yes, so three have died?

B: Yes.

A: Yes, what is your mother's name?

B: My mother's name is Sieb.

A: Sieb?

B: Yes.

A: What is the family name?

B: Mop Sieb.

B: Mop Sieb?

B: Yes.

A: And what was her occupation when she was alive?

B: She was a farmer, but now she is dead.

A: Really?

B: Yes.

A: And what about your father?

B: My father also died.

A: What was his name?

B: Dum, Khot Dum.

A: Khot Dum right?

B: Yes.

A: Oh you remember the name clearly, Khot Dum!

B: Yes.

A: And when he was alive, what was his occupation that helped him raise his children?

B: He farmed.

A: Did he only work in the fields?

B: Yes.

A: There was no fishing, or no other kind of work?

B: No there was never any other work, I never knew of any other work.

A: Don't you know what zodiac year your mother was born, ox, tiger, rabbit?

B: My mother was born the year of the snake.

A: The snake, like you?

B: Yes.

A: Yes, what about your father?

B: My father was the year of the horse.

A: The year of the horse?

B: Yes.

A: At what age did your mother die?

B: My mother died at 78 years old.

A: Yes!

B: And my father—he wasn't 70, then 80, I forgot for my father.

A: Is he dead?

B: He died a long time ago.

A: How did he die?

B: He got sick.

A: Was he really sick?

B: Yes, really sick.

A: And what about Prey Veng, do you have siblings in Prey Veng?

B: Still one there.

A: Yes, one there?

B: Yes.

A: In what village?

B: Ta Mao village.

A: Ta Mao village?

B: Yes.

A: Yes, what about your house in Prey Veng with your parents? What was your house like?

B: My house is nothing special, I had my younger siblings make a fence and barn for the cows.

A: Yes, what was the house made of, like the walls and the roof?

B: It was a thatched roof and walls all made of leaves.

A: So leaf walls, so what do you remember about your grandparents on your mother's side?

B: My maternal grandparents, my grandmother was named Grandma Hong and my grandfather was named Grandpa Mop.

A: On your mother's side?

B: Yes.

A: And what did your grandparents do for work?

B: He used to farm, but now he has been dead for a long time.

A: Yes, on your father's side?

B: What about my father?

A: Yes, paternal grandparents?

B: My grandfather's name was Grandpa Khon.

A: Grandpa Khon right?

B: Yes, and my grandma was Grandma Ou.

A: Yes, Grandpa Khon and Grandma Ou?

B: Yes.

A: And what about your family like your siblings, where are they now living in which provinces do you know?

B: Some went to Phnom Penh, some went to Siem Reap, some are in the hometown, one is in Siem Reap, and some in Phnom Penh, some are here, two birthchildren here.

A: Oh yes!

B: Three of us including me.

A: And what is your husband's name?

B: Oh, my husband's name is Chon, Huot Chon.

A: Huot Chon?

B: Yes.

A: Yes, how old is he?

B: He is 70 years old, now he would be 73, but he passed away already!

A: What happened to him, how did he die?

B: He developed a lump, he succumbed to it, it eventually became cancerous and he died.

A: And how many years had he been sick?

B: He has been sick for a long time, from small to large, when he can no longer speak, he went to the Russian Hospital for surgery, when it was small it wasn't a problem, but when it got bigger, he could not speak clearly, he would go for surgery once a month, until eventually he died.

A: Oh yes!

B: Just a bit!

A: After a while, he died, but when you married him, did you know he was sick?

B: I forget.

A: Forgot already?

B: Yes.

A: When you were young and got married, you only received a ritual offering when you were married?

B: Yes, we made an offering.

A: Oh so you did the offering?

B: Yes.

A: Yes! And what did your husband do when he was single?

B: He farmed.

B: Farming?

B: Yes, they all farm.

A: And what any other jobs, did he have any other jobs?

B: Not during that generation.

A: Yes!

B: My hometown would flood.

A: Yes!

B: Rotten, everything would always rot.

A: I want to know the history of you and your husband, how did you meet him, what did you do, where did you meet him?

B: You know, we went to pick some corn and that's how we met each other.

A: Where?

B: I went to pick the corn in Peam Chileang.

A: Oh, where was he from?

B: The same district.

A: Oh, he went to pick the corn?

B: Yes, hired to pick corn.

A: Oh, both of you were hired?

B: Yes.

A: Oh, so you went and saw each other and loved each other?

B: Yes.

A: And also had 8 children?

B: I had 10 children, all died except 7, 3 of them died.

A: And were you born before the time of Pol Pot?

B: Oh, during the Pol Pot era, I was just a girl.

A: Oh, did you get married before the Pol Pot era or after the Pol Pot era was over?

B: Pol Pot era, they ground flour during the Pol Pot era.

A: Oh, did you marry during the era of Pol Pot or before?

B: The Pol Pot era.

A: The Pol Pot era?

B: Correct, that era.

A: Oh, then did Pol Pot prepare it or did you prepare it?

B: That's it!

A: Oh Pol Pot arranged it?

B: They did 10 pairs at a time, or 20 pairs.

A: Oh, can you describe what difficulties you encountered during the Pol Pot era?

B: During the Pol Pot era, it was very difficult and I was very sick. I try to work hard day and night, they would give me a little bit of porridge only one scoop, I know I had a hard time. One scoop and you were never full, but that's all you got.

A: And how old were you in the Pol Pot era?

B: I was 25 years old.

A: Oh you were 25 by that time?

B: Yes.

A: Oh! And a 25-year-old—?

B: They hurt us. They made us transport dirt, dig the canals, they made us suffer, they wouldn't look at us. They would hurt us by only giving us a little bit to eat.

A: Yes!

B: Very difficult.

A: Yes, then what were you digging?

B: I dug the canal.

A: In which province?

B: In the district of Preah Sdach.

A: Preah Sdach district?

B: Yes.

A: Preah Sdach district, Prey Veng province?

B: Yes.

A: Oh! And what about the parents and grandparents at that time, where were they?

B: My parents are at home and I was sent to the mobile unit.

A: And how old were your parents?

B: Well, my mother was 50 or older, but my father was much older than her but I'm not sure how old he was, but my mother was over 50.

A: Oh really?

B: It was very difficult, difficult for me ever since childhood to old age.

A: In what ways was it difficult for you as a child?

B: As a child it was from the Pot generation. They would hurt every one equally, and not give any rice to eat.

A: Oh really?

B: They hurt me so bad I just wanted to die.

A: How many meters of land did they make you dig?

B: We dug the earth, dug a lot of canals, one part at a time. We were tired, we would stop to rest, but they would tell us not to stop. I was very miserable during the Pol Pot era, my father was sick, I asked to go visit him, but they wouldn't let me. It is not like the current generation, where business is easy. Pol Pot grew potatoes, but didn't let us eat them. They would dig them up and bring it to the food house. It's been difficult for me since then until now. Now, I go to see my children and orphan grandchild, and have raised my grandkid until it is about this big. Now, it's sick, it hasn't gone to sort garbage. I haven't gone, because I can't walk- my leg hurts.

A: Have you had leg pain for a while?

B: I have been sick for a long time, two or three months already.

A: And what about when the Pol Pot era, was there not enough to eat?

B: It wasn't enough, we only got one scoop, we were not satisfied, we couldn't eat enough.

A: What were you sick with at that time?

B: That time, I was feverish and had chills, they didn't let us eat enough, we would have to pretend. And if corn was harvested, they always placed one kong for two people and would transplant that kong for three people for just that one kong.

A: One kong, is like one field?

B: It is 30 square meters, 30 meters square.

A: And they'd make you start ever since the morning?

B: We did it while it was still dark, the people in this corner and that corner had not yet gotten up. Oh, the Pol Pot era was so difficult. It was so hard to eat, and you always felt sick in the stomach.

A: That sounds so difficult. Were people usually very skinny in that time period?

B: Oh, we only knew how to just survive and endure. If we were scared, they beat us up. If we tried harder, if anyone resisted they beat them up in that time.

A: And for your siblings, did any of them die during that time?

B: Yes, one of my younger brothers died.

A: Oh, really?

B: Yes, in the Pol Pot era.

A: Why did he die?

B: He became a soldier in the army.

A: I see.

B: Yes, they took him to become a soldier and went missing in those days.

A: So he went to become a soldier and he died?

B: I don't really know.

A: You don't know anything more?

B: He went missing.

A: You have no news about him?

B: I don't know any news.

A: I see.

B: Just have one brother.

A: So the rest were sisters?

B: I had two brothers. The other one lives west from here.

A: And what does that one do these days?

B: He's a garbage collector west from here.

A: A garbage collector?

B: Yes.

A: Oh! Does he drive a car and take trash, or does he lift it himself?

B: He carries the trash himself.

A: He picks up the trash?

B: Yes.

A: So he picks up the trash. How much profit does he make in a month, and how much do you receive?

B: In a month, \$50.

A: So \$50?

B: Yes, that's what happens.

A: I see. Also, did your mother and father die in the Pol Pot era as well or what?

B: For my father, the Pol Pot era passed and then he died.

A: And your mother?

B: My mother died after the Pol Pot era too.

A: Oh. They were old then. What did the Pol Pot people do with them during that time?

B: They had them make cow ropes.

A: Make cow ropes?

B: Yes, that's right. And I watched the kids.

A: Oh, you were old by then?

B: Yes.

A: Also, when the Pol Pot era ended, where did you go?

B: When it ended, the Vietnamese came in. I went to Takeo province.

A: Oh!

B: I ran to Takeo province, I went to ask for their house there, to sleep there, do whatever there, harvest their rice for something to eat. The Vietnamese came to tell the Khmer people to run back to their country to raise chickens, cows, or whatever to eat. I did not kill, came back to see my mother. My mother was on that big river. I came back often, came to the house often.

A: Oh! And what did you do to meet each other?

B: She ran, took me to sleep at the hospital here. After that, we split from each other. After this, she met with her father at the big river, you know. He hadn't died yet; she was staying with her father. Her father asked, where are you going, don't go anywhere! And he gave me the chance to return and stay at my grandfather's house, at the big river where I met my mother. I took my mother back to our hometown.

A: And, at that time, did your siblings meet up with each other?

B: All my siblings met up.

A: How many of your siblings were there at that time?

B: My brothers and sisters, let's see—sister Uk, sister Ien, myself, sister An, sister Phan, sister Non, and brother Chham—seven people—eight people including myself—eight people including Chon.

A: Chon?

B: Yes.

A: And what about the time after the Pol Pot era? What kind of things did you have with you, did you bring anything?

B: No, I had nothing. I walked to go harvest what was left of the rice from the fields. I harvested it to make sticky rice cakes to eat on the way to Ba Phnom. I only knew how to sell this and that, it was difficult. My mother and father were both dead, so we got together to look for work, but not so we would be stuck in that place. In that generation, we only had 1000 riel left!

A: And what about the time when you were getting married to your husband, what would they wear in that time?

B: At that time, people wore kben.

A: What era?

B: In those days, people wore kben for weddings.

A: In the Pol Pot period?

B: Yes.

A: And, at the time you were married, how many couples were married together?

B: Twenty couples.

A: Twenty couples?

B: That's right!

A: And they told you who you were to marry?

B: That's right!

A: And you couldn't argue against it, huh?

B: No arguing about it.

A: And, when it came time to get married, what was there? What kind of food did you have? Could you describe the wedding events?

B: Well, they had chicken, fish, the normal stuff, there wasn't any delicious meat though. They'd call their friends through the organization to come, they would talk about us getting married. There wasn't much to eat, some fish and that's about it.

A: And, during that era, what colors did they wear?

B: Black, or whatever.

A: Black?

B: Yes, the Pol Pot Regime, they wore black clothes.

A: And what about their hair?

B: They cut their hair, they didn't keep it long as we do. They cut it short, they wouldn't allow long hair during those times.

A: And, what if they were to keep their hair long?

B: You couldn't keep it long, they would cut all of the women's hair.

A: And what about men's hairstyles?

B: Men had normal hair, but women, if our hair was this long, they would cut it up to our necks and it would be left that length. The president of the women would come and cut it.

A: Oh, I see, and after the era of Pol Pot, how many children did you have?

B: I had seven children.

A: Seven kids, but during the Pol Pot era, did you get pregnant and have any kids?

B: My oldest son.

A: Your oldest son?

B: Yes.

A: In that time period?

B: Yes.

A: And how many years has it been since he was born?

B: My child is 50 years old, the oldest one.

A: 50 already?

B: 50!

A: But what about in the Pol Pot period?

B: During the era of Pol Pot, my oldest was born.

A: Being born then was difficult in those days, huh? Could you describe giving birth to your child during that time?

B: Oh, it was hard, very hard! I couldn't eat like I wanted; I couldn't eat anything. They made us eat!

A: Was there a doctor to help you give birth?

B: There weren't any doctors.

A: Then how did you give birth?

B: A midwife, a Khmer midwife.

A: But, at that time, when you were about to give birth, did they prepare a midwife for you or what?

B: Oh, the midwife was arranged and prepared by them. There were no doctors, there was nothing, there were no obstetricians during that time, only in this generation now do we have doctors that replace midwives and now, if you're sick, you can go to the doctors.

A: And were there midwives at the mobile unit?

B: Yeah!

A: Was there just one midwife or many?

B: The unit was made up of only women that would come to your house. My village had a midwife, she was older than me, she'd even be there at night if you were sick.

A: Was she experienced, or did she learn somewhere before how to help others give birth?

B: She learned from my mother-in-law, who was originally a midwife who taught her how to be a midwife.

A: Oh yeah?

B: Yes, they went to my mother-in-law.

A: Your mother-in-law?

B: Yes.

A: She knows how to assist in giving birth?

B: Yes. She could do all those things; it made her feel happy.

A: And, your mother-in-law, what was her name?

B: My mother-in-law's name is—oh—I've forgotten.

A: Oh—?

B: The father's name was Huon.

A: The father's name is Huon and what was his occupation?

B: He farmed, didn't do anything else.

A: And for Huon, what did he do, what did he farm?

B: Farmed until he died.

A: And just that, did he have midwife responsibilities?

B: He died and, in those days, his siblings were midwives.

A: Did he die a long time ago?

B: He's been dead for a long time!

A: Oh, did he die in the Pol Pot era?

B: Afterwards!

A: Oh, after?

B: After, he came to Phnom Penh and had kids in Phnom Penh until he eventually died here in Phnom Penh.

A: And at that time, in your life raising children, how many children did you have?

B: Seven kids.

A: Seven kids and, in your life raising them, what were some difficulties for you?

B: Oh, it was very difficult.

A: When your kids were young, what job did you work a job to support them?

B: It was very difficult for me; I don't know what to say. During the rice planting seasons, I would plant seeds for others. It was so difficult for me that I don't want to recount it.

A: It's okay, it's all alright. We've come to interview you about the true life and how difficult it is for our people.

B: Yes.

A: During our time, we didn't have anything.

B: Yes.

A: You had a lot of children so, in that time with those events, could you recount your difficulties so that you can save these memories, this interview, for the next generation of your family so they can know and understand?

B: Yes.

A: Yes! When you don't give us the truth—we want your grandchildren to know and remember for a long time, when you're not with them anymore, you know?

B: Yes.

A: Okay, so, you need to tell them about what was difficult when you were raising their mother or father as to preserve this for your grandchildren to know and listen to your voice.

B: Yes.

A: Yes! Ok, can you tell us about raising your kids?

B: My parents raised their kids by working for others and taking those earnings to raise their children, hardly making ends meet, I don't want to say. They were hardly able to make both ends meet, sometimes we went without anything, I don't want to say. I worked for others, planting rice seedlings for others, so that I could raise my children, it was difficult even up until now that I'm old, it's still difficult.

A: So, when you went to transplant rice seedlings, what did your husband do?

B: He would sometimes have something to do or not have something to do.

A: Did he go work in the fields or anything?

B: No, he was at home.

A: He was at home?

B: Yes.

A: And, did he not have a job to help raise the kids?

B: He didn't raise them, they're my kids. He wasn't busy, I would go look for something to raise my kids, there wasn't a time he made a living for the kids to eat. Our siblings or family never came to give us anything either.

A: Oh, your brothers and sisters?

B: Yes.

A: What would they bring to you?

B: They brought fish paste, brought rice, sometimes I didn't sleep so that my children could eat. It was very difficult.

A: And, did you ever go fish or anything for your children?

B: I didn't ever go fishing, I had my children get fish and get shrimp and whatnot, take it to sell, and then exchange it for rice or something to eat.

A: And, when you talk of food, what did you make? Did you ever pick any vegetables or anything from somewhere for your kids?

B: I'd pick vegetables from the marsh and whatnot, and bring it to my children to eat with a water hyacinth.

A: And your kids, at that time, how old were they? Very young?

B: My children, one of them was 10 years old.

A: 10 years, huh?

B: Yes.

A: And your children, did anyone go to school?

B: My child.

A: Did anyone go study anything?

B: Two of them learned to write, they became monks in order to learn and one got a degree. Right now, one has a wife in Siem Reap, he also was a monk. Two of my kids became monks.

A: Two of them became monks?

B: Yes.

A: And, when you were raising your children during that difficult time, were you raising them all by yourself?

B: Yes.

A: And what about your husband, does he not care?

B: Him and his wife don't care.

A: Oh! During that time, did he have another wife?

B: Yes.

A: Oh! And, during that time, how many more kids did he have with his other wife?

B: 7 kids.

A: Oh, really. And so, did he leave you behind to go live with his second wife?

B: He was with his last wife and he took part of what we had with him. I didn't, I worked for other people and spent my earning on my kids so they could eat, whatever kind of field, I would work in it for whoever didn't have any cows or oxen to work. It was very difficult, there were fields but there were no cows or oxen to work on them.

A: When you were working in the fields, were they very large or just an average size?

B: Ah, at that time, their fields measured 17 meters, one person for 17 meters but I measured for just one person. When measuring, my mother called me to stop from measuring. I didn't but my oldest child got 17 meters.

A: Oh, and they were for rice and other crops?

B: Yes.

A: And when there are no cows or anything, how did you possibly farm it?

B: I found relatives to plow in the morning, I only knew how to transplant the rice seedlings.

A: And what about now, are you siblings well off?

B: My younger siblings were well off, I was the only one struggling. I was sick and couldn't walk, so I couldn't find anything because I was sick.

A: When did you come to Kampong Cham?

B: I came a long time ago. I've been here for 20 years already.

A: Oh! You've been here for 20 years?

B: Yes.

A: And, before when you came here what was this land like?

B: It was communal land. It was all trash, but I asked them to live here. It was a landfill.

A: Oh, really?

B: Yes. I asked the community to stay here.

A: Oh you had to ask, so right now do you have to keep requesting to stay?

B: Yes, they let us stay here, so long as we don't stay on their [...], they said so.

A: Yes! Who did you come here through?

B: Through—

A: Do you still know the land?

B: My brother-in-law was a policeman stationed here, and his child came here to work in separating trash. So, I came with [him/her].

A: Oh!

B: I told [him/her] not to plant rice because my hometown was flooded, it was close to Vietnam. I told [him/her] to go work with the trash in Kampong Cham instead. So, I came with them.

A: So, came to work with trash?

B: Yes.

A: So when you came here in the beginning, was it hard? Like, how did you find the wood to build your house?

B: There wasn't any.

A: How was it when you first came here?

B: At first, it was very difficult to build an old hut, but now, Jesus' organization always helped. And we have a few things to do at home, I look at the old wood and use it to do things. That house, the teacher and my grandchild learned and made it for me.

A: Yes! And the grandchild and the teacher pitied you!

B: Yes.

A: So, the teacher felt bad for you and came and helped build your house?

B: Yes.

A: Yes, so how much money would you make each day while you were working with garbage?

B: In one day, if I sold all of the paper and whatnot, I made 15000 riel.

A: Did you work every day?

B: Yes, I worked every day, but now my grandchild is sick. So, I couldn't work at all.

A: You don't work at all?

B: I couldn't. My grandchild has a fever.

A: Really?

B: It's been two or three days already!

A: Two or three days, for the parents of the child, where are they?

B: They are divorced, they went here and there. But its mother is still at home.

A: And that's why it came to live with you?

B: Since it was a baby.

A: Since it was young, it was there when it was young?

B: I raised it since it was small.

A: Are the other grandchildren with you?

B: No, just this one.

A: And what is the grandchild's name?

B: It is named Sina.

A: Right, Sina?

B: Yes.

A: And did the grandchild help you, help you sort trash?

B: It sorted trash, they go to sort to earn money to go to school.

A: And it went to school, what did it do to go to school?

B: It went to school, and from school to pick up trash. It would study in the morning, and go to sort trash in the evening. If my grandchild studies in the morning, it can only sort once a day.

A: And do you have a bicycle?

B: It broke, the whole bike is broken!

A: Oh, and if you sort from morning until evening, how much money do you make?

B: For one day, according to my grandchild—

A: Oh!

B: 5000 riel, for one foot.

A: Only 5000 riel for one foot?

B: Yes. When you get a lot, you can sell it for 15000 riel, and sometimes even 15000, 16000, or 17000 riel.

A: Does your grandchild give the money to you or keep it for itself?

B: My grandchild brings the money, and I save it for education. I give them only 2000 riel to learn and buy food. If I was not sick, it would not be difficult for me.

A: Oh really?

B: Sometimes—

A: Do you not ride a bicycle?

B: I cannot ride, because now I can't ride, I can't walk. Now, I take that motorbike, take the motorbike to the hospital.

A: Oh really? For the people in this area, are you all relatives?

B: We're all relatives.

A: All of them?

B: Yes.

A: All of them, brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces?

B: Nephews, siblings, nieces.

A: All the houses in this are owned by your relatives?

B: That's right!

A: Oh!

B: They're all nieces/nephews, not just one house, but two houses next to each other!

A: Not just the two houses, right?

B: Yes.

A: Yes! And what about when you were a child, did you learn anything, do you know the alphabet?

B: I just want to laugh! I learned to read just a little, but I can't read the hard words, it is difficult. But my father lacked money and drank a lot. I was angry, so I stopped learning and went to plow the fields and whatnot, I had to farm the land and took care of the fields for by relatives, transplanted rice. I was the one who did the plowing, my father was the one who drank.

A: Was he drunk every day?

B: Yes.

A: He drinks alcohol?

B: He drinks alcohol.

A: And did he help raise his children at that time?

B: He stayed at home, but I, my brothers and sisters, were transplanting and harvesting. I would take dirt, maybe ten or twenty, and put it in my fields, and a cubit.

A: Yes! And what about your life, ever since you were born until now, how are your circumstances, what has changed?

B: Now I think it's better than before, before it used to be very difficult, now it is easier to eat, it is convenient for us to choose and sell, buy food, it is not like before when it was hard. They say that is more convenient to find food to eat, that if we are lazy, we don't get anything. For me, I have only my grandchild, and it is too sick to sort trash and doesn't let me go. When my grandchild is sick, it is hard for me.

A: Oh! And what about here, do they have electricity?

B: Electricity is very expensive, 10,000—for a month more than 10,000 riel, and for only three houses.

A: Only three houses?

B: Three houses, and more than ten thousand riel and a few thousands more. I cannot do it; I cannot use the fan. I just know how to sleep when the lights are on.

A: Yes! And you've asked from them?

B: I continue from others.

A: Yes! And when it comes to water, is there clean water or anything?

B: It is not clean, well water is not clean, well water, but we have money, we buy their clean water, they come with drinking water.

A: Oh, pure water?

B: Pure water.

A: And when it comes time to use water, what do you do with well water?

B: Yes, well water.

A: Did they dig the well for you, or did you ask them?

B: Hey, we buy them a jar for 4500 riel.

A: Uh, a jar is 4500?

B: Yes.

A: Yes, and how many days can you use one jar?

B: Three days.

A: Three days, yes, and you can wash clothes, and stay at home?

B: Yes.

A: At home, and every day your job is to sort trash?

B: Sort trash, I have my grandchild do it. If not from my grandchild, I can't do it. I can't walk.

A: And what about your children, do they have any money to send to you?

B: Oh, my children, they send money too. But they are raising their children, and some of my children are poor, some rich and find work to raise their children so they say they can't

send anything. [...]

A: Yes! And what about your last words, do you have anything to pass on to your children—if they hear your words, like your difficult history?

B: Yes.

A: Don't you have any words to convey to your grandchildren, to have them to strive to work hard, and to avoid anything?

B: I know how to tell my grandchildren to study hard, for them to know that if we are illiterate, it is very difficult, to look at me and know that it is difficult and how it is difficult. I always urge my grandchildren to learn every day, in the evening, I call him to look at the textbook and read it until they understand. To know how to hold a job, and so it isn't hard. Read for a long time, and I'll fall asleep and leave just my grandchild.

A: Uh, and is your grandchild striving to learn?

B: Striving, but for me, I don't. I am willing for my grandchild to skip sorting trash for a day, but it cannot skip learning, I don't let it skip.

A: Really?

B: I raise my grandchild, but I don't allow my grandchild to skip unless it is sick, I ask for a teacher's permission.

A: Ask for the teacher's permission?

B: Yes.

A: And what ideas do you have about when your grandchild grows up, what do you want it to do?

B: My idea is that I want my grandchildren to learn how to work as a car mechanic or a motorbike mechanic.

A: Yes! And you do not want your grandchild to be a teacher or a policeman?

B: Being a teacher, being a police officer, we have no money to give up, we don't have money to give them.

A: Oh really?

B: Yes.

A: Let your grandchildren have an occupation and whatnot?

B: Yes.

A: And what you have him avoid?

B: Huh?

A: Do you have any words to advise him to avoid drugs and whatnot?

B: Oh, about drugs, I disciplined my grandchild not to get involved with drugs. I really hate drugs, I say every day to go and sort garbage, sort and come back. I don't like it, I disciplined my grandchild, that if it smokes drugs, I won't let it in the house, or the police

will arrest my grandchild, that all.

A: Yes!

B: I hate drugs.

A: Yes! You want him to study hard, right Grandma?

B: Yes.

A: Yes! Finally, thank you very much, I hope that in the future, your grandchild will learn well, and when it learns, it will have a salary, it's life will be prosperous, I hope that one day it will you hear your words, and be aware of your difficulties, you know?

B: Yes.

A: And is that one of his lessons?

B: Yes.

A: Well, I hope it does what you told us, you know?

B: Yes.

A: Yes, thank you very much.

Interview originally translated by Braeden Kilburn, Jackson Enloe, Sokkim Khok, Mike King, and other volunteers. Retranslated by Thomas Barrett in April 2022.