

# Creating a Transformative Environment for Positive Change



## 5-year review of the Living Arts Fellow Program

Cambodian Living Arts  
March 2020



CAMBODIAN  
LIVING ARTS

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**MELLON**  
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# Why the Living Arts Fellows

Cambodia is a developing country, in a post-conflict context. The decisions and actions that people take now can have long-lasting influence. The emerging leaders today are shaping the future systems and structures which their successors will work in. They are doing that in a fast-changing, globally interconnected world.

That's why Cambodian Living Arts has made such a strong commitment to investing in people who are taking initiative, leading organizations, starting projects, and mobilizing others through the arts. We see their influence on the nature of Cambodia's cultural sector and by extension, what contribution the arts make to Cambodian society – today, and for the future.

Our program creates an opportunity for Fellows to clarify their vision and their values, to reflect critically on the work they do and to build a community of peers. The program supports the Fellows in finding ways of working and of leading that are rooted in their own life experiences and the specificity of Cambodia's national and regional context.

The Living Arts Fellows program reaches a small number of people but has an exponential impact. Like the Master Artists who survived the genocide and shared their skills to a new generation, the new leaders nurtured through this fellowship go out into the world and inspire others.

Working on this program consistently re-inspires us and motivates us to continually review and challenge ourselves as to how we do our work within CLA. We are grateful to all the Fellows, and to all the people who have contributed to the program and the community that has emerged from it.

We hope you enjoy reading this reflection on the program after five years, and how we see it continuing to evolve to meet the new challenges of this next decade.

*Frances RUDGARD and SO Phina*  
*Living Arts Fellows Program Facilitators*  
*Cambodian Living Arts*

# About Cambodian Living Arts

Cambodian Living Arts (CLA) was founded in 1998 by genocide-survivor and musician Arn CHORN-POND, based on a dream that his country could heal itself from war through music, love, and creativity. For the first decade of CLA's work, it was mainly concentrating on preservation of endangered performing arts forms and rituals. After efforts over a decade, the Cambodian traditional performing arts forms and artistic spirit have rebuilt and are currently developing rapidly.

In its second decade, CLA has been progressively increasing their focus on fostering leadership and entrepreneurship through scholarship and grant opportunities, and programs that include supporting both troupes and individuals. We are also working to develop arts and culture education in Cambodian public schools, and to increase performance opportunities for Cambodian artists. Looking forward, we promote creativity and innovation in the arts sector, and continue to build links with our neighbors in the Greater Mekong region and further afield in Asia.

# About the Living Arts Fellows program

The Living Arts Fellows is a unique program for people working in arts and culture in Cambodia. It is designed for people who have already been working in the arts for several years (whether as an artist, a teacher, an organizer, a researcher) and are taking an active role to create new initiatives, lead projects in their community, or even to run an organization. Each year we select a small cohort of just 4-6 Fellows, who go through an intensive experience together.

The program is structured through a series of four 'labs' – weekend working group sessions held in arts spaces around Cambodia and involving experienced Mentors from around Asia. During these labs, Fellows develop local, regional, and international networks, through interaction with leading scholars, practitioners, and artists from the cultural sector around Asia. Each lab has a different theme, relevant to cultural development in Cambodia today.

Themes have included *Arts Spaces & the Politics of Place*, *Value in the Arts, Culture & the Market*, *Cultural Leadership*.



The program also includes a regional research and networking trip to another country in the Mekong Region. In the final stages of the program, the Fellows will implement a small project as a group, with a budget supported by CLA. As a new component of the program for 2020, each Fellow will produce an individual reflection paper, that will be shared with a public audience during a presentation. Fellows will have individual coaching and mentoring during the program, and to help them with their final presentation.

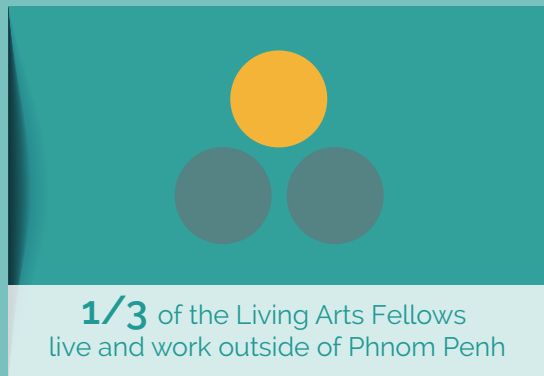
The program is designed to allow Fellows to reflect on their own current practices, using practical tools and examples to support this. The program will not tell Fellows what to do, but instead offers the Fellows different perspectives and experiences so that Fellows can choose concepts, examples, and practices that would work for them in their own contexts.

# History of the program



## The Fellows

Between **2013** and **2018**, there have been **30** Living Arts Fellows & **10** Fellows through other CLA Fellowship Initiatives



Fellows have a diverse range of professional and artistic backgrounds:



# People:

## The Living Arts Fellows

### Pilot generation: Creative Leaders



Front row: CHREK Sopha, ONN Sokny, KHEN Vanthy, MOENG Meta, YOUNG Yorn  
Back row: Hannah STEVENS (facilitator) MAO Viet, CHHOEUNG Short Reuth, CHUON Sarin

### Pilot generation: Experience New York



CHEA Sopheap, KHUON Reaksmeay, CHEY Chankethya, SONG Seng, CHUM Chanveasna

### Living Arts Fellows 2015



ONN Sokny, SAN Phalla, HUN Pen, SO Phina, CHEA Sopheap

### Living Arts Fellows 2018



NANG Yanna, THORN Seyma, YIM Sotheary, SREY Bandaul, KIM AN Arun

### Living Arts Fellows 2016



KOR Borin, Helene VEAL, HUOT Dara, CHHAN Dina

### Living Arts Fellows 2017



MENH Chanvanda, SOUS Sinath, HEAK Pheary, OU Buntheng, AN Raksmeay

# People: Mentors



Ma Thida, Myanmar

Aung Soe Min, Myanmar



Hiromi MARUOKA, Japan

CHUNG Shefong, Taiwan

Yunyu WANG, Taiwan



Corazon s. ALVINA, Philippines

Anmol VELLANI, India

Naveen KISHORE, India

Tiao David SOMANITH, Laos

Keuay CHANTANGONE, Laos

Luckana KUNAVICHAYANONT, Thailand

Hoan LE, Vietnam

TRAN Luong, Vietnam

Jia-Ping LEE, Malaysia

YAP Mun Ching & AirAsia Foundation, Malaysia

Ruth BERESON, Singapore/ Australia

Marjorie CHU, Singapore



Sal MURGIYANTO, Indonesia



# 5-year evaluation

In 2019, CLA commissioned an independent review to evaluate the first 5 years of the Fellows Program program. We wanted to know:

What impact has the program had versus the impact we set out for it to have

What was working well in the program that should be continued, and what could be adapted for future years

How we could better animate the alumni network/ serve the Fellows after the program

Whether any changes to the goals and approaches of the program are advisable, taking into account regional and local context

After a competitive selection process, the review was conducted by consultants HEM Vanarath and KUON Lyna. Their approach was based on open-ended questions administered through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and One-on-One Interviews with key stakeholders such as CLA's management team, the program facilitators, managers, Mentors, different NGO partners of CLA, and the former Fellows of the program from different years.

The assessment was conducted by using a participatory approach starting from the early stages (design of the review) through the data collection process. Primary data was collected by one-on-one interviews and FGDs with the key stakeholders who were involved with the program. Desk review was the method used to harvest secondary data. The assessment selected 23 key stakeholders to be samples (43% were female). The samples were picked by the consultants independently. The review's input and feedback were obtained from these key stakeholders.





# Highlights of the Review

The review indicated that after the Fellows participated in the program, they all kept working in the artistic and cultural sector, establishing arts and culture with the committed purpose of creating a transformative environment for positive change.

*“After I attended the program, I have worked with purpose and passion in working beyond my duties. I can see lots of opportunities that I can deploy arts to create / inspire my peers to take actions for positive change.”*

Since the Fellows of this program are already in roles of management, leadership, and inventors in arts and culture, they have tremendous potential, authority, possibility, and opportunity to lead their peers to create meaningful arts and culture while connecting and enabling their audiences to experience arts that hold a transformative spirit.

*“Fellows expressed that the program not only developed their skills and perspectives but also fostered their creativity, imagination, vision, honesty, and humanity”*

Through this program, the Fellows had opportunities to delve deeper into their role as today's artistic and cultural leaders in Cambodia. They had a chance to have self-reflection and ask themselves the question: *“what kind of leadership role would they like to take/serve to advance their community, country, and the world towards positive development?”* Indeed, the Fellows expressed that the program not only developed their skills and perspectives but also fostered their creativity, imagination, vision, honesty, and humanity.

*“The content of Fellows Program made me understand the role of the arts in contributing to education, healing, politics, and social issues. And I hope that other Cambodians will start to realize the benefits of art just like me.”*

It especially enriched their belief in the transformative potential of arts and culture. Ultimately, the program helped them grow their self-confidence. The Fellows Program inspired the Fellows to appreciate arts and culture more deeply and made them feel proud of their Cambodian identity. It also helped advance the Fellows' passion to develop artistic and cultural programming that inspires younger generations to embrace culture as a force that creates and sustains positive change.



After the program, the Fellows stayed connected, helping and supporting each other's work. They continue to share their knowledge, information, personal connections, and help connect each other to resources. Indeed, some continue to co-lead joint projects after the program. The review found that the program was remarkably effective and impactful in helping artistic and cultural leaders as well as artists advance both their professional and personal skills.

*“The review found that the program was remarkably effective”*

*“I think the Fellows Program is an important program in advancing skills of artistic and cultural leaders in deploying arts creatively to express their perspectives, concerns, and needs of the community and society to leaders/policymakers.”*

*“After completing this program, I realized that I was a cultural leader. I was not aware of myself in that way before. After realizing my role, I feel more responsible.”*

*“The program has motivated me to do more. Now I dare call myself an artist. And the program has helped me realize my potential and make me feel confident in myself.”*

It did so by nurturing their leadership, sharpening their passion, values, vision, and creativity in establishing influential arts and cultures, inspiring their peers and the public to take action for positive change. The program supports and increases women's participation in the field. Moreover, the Fellows Program enabled the Fellows to expand their networks both locally and internationally.

The study concluded that the program's contents, topics, directions, facilitation, and general organization have enabled the program to achieve its stated goals. However, the goal of the Fellows Program is to remain dynamic and vital, and with that in mind, the evaluators identified the following areas for growth:

- Integrate former and current fellows' input in the design and recruitment stages of the program each year
- Review topics and content for the Labs annually, in order to ensure that the program remains responsive to the contemporary context of Cambodia, and the current challenges and needs of artistic and cultural leaders/practitioners
- Work to scale up the program's impacts to the widest societal level through on-going support for former Fellows' initiatives, especially collaborative projects which work to create societal transformation

# Evaluation: Program Methodology

## A Carefully Curated Group of Fellows

The program selects a small group of Fellows, just 4-6 people to allow for maximum discussion and engagement between the group. The Fellows come from different professional, social and economic backgrounds, and have varied levels of familiarity with different artistic disciplines and cultural theories.



The evaluation found that:

- 🌍 The small number of Fellows was effective and supported the program to achieve its goals
- 🌍 Fellows wanted more people to have the opportunity to experience the program, so evaluators recommended seeking to reach the threshold of 6 Fellows each year
- 🌍 The diversity of the Fellows brought strength to the program overall
- 🌍 The diversity of the Fellows' backgrounds means that sometimes not all Fellows find relevance in a particular session, or some Fellows may struggle to engage with content that is connected more strongly to a particular discipline or sector
- 🌍 The inclusion of civil servants in the program is positive, and CLA should continue to be mindful of how it facilitates discussion between government and non-government stakeholders



- 🌍 CLA could go further with curating the Fellows to maximize the effectiveness of their grouping for example, by putting together a group of Fellows with a shared interest in a particular issue but coming from different fields, or by putting together a group of Fellows who work in the same field/ chain of production, but perform different roles
- 🌍 CLA could consider offering the program for emerging leaders in some years, and for more advanced/ experienced leaders in other years, and offer a tailored program for more experienced practitioners

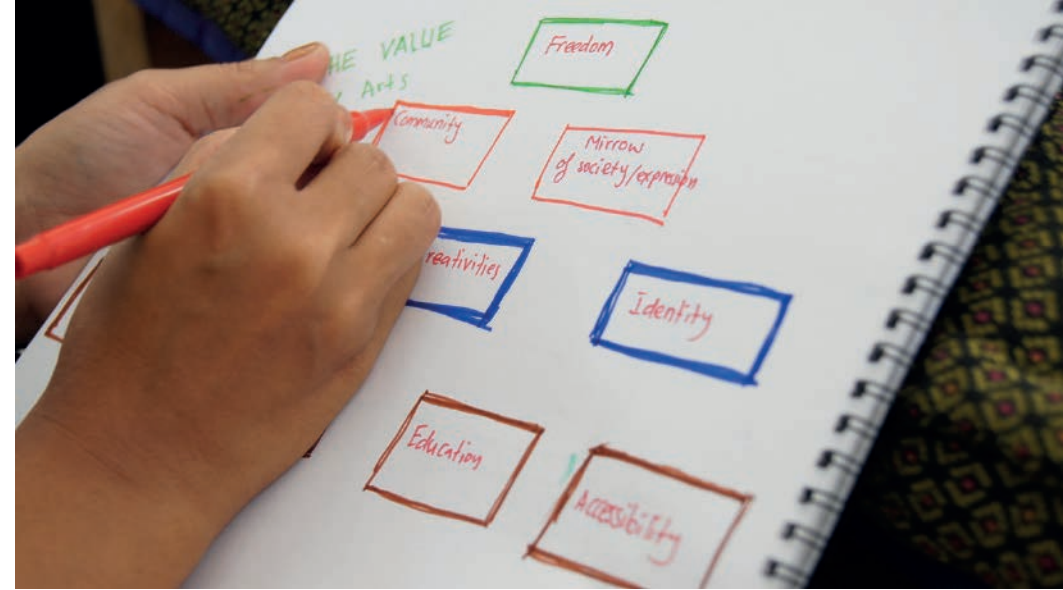
## The Living Arts “Labs”

The Labs form the backbone of the Fellows program. The purpose of the Labs is to create a space where the Fellows can think differently and explore new ideas. Each lab lasts three days, takes place in a different city in Cambodia, and includes a combination of presentations, discussions, creative activities and field visits. The labs are facilitated by CLA, who provide stimulus and activities for the Fellows to explore and articulate their ideas, and to practice key skills, such as presenting.

*“The facilitator asks questions, inspires and encourages silent participants to express themselves. They are good at summing up the contents of the sessions, making it brief and easy to understand. Not only that, they are very good at encouraging me to have confidence in myself and the work I am doing.”*

CLA invites 1 or 2 Mentors from elsewhere in Asia to each Lab, who participate throughout the whole three days. They always give a talk that introduces an aspect of their work or their experience, relevant to the Lab's theme. Then they take a fluid role between joining in discussion and activities with the Fellows, supporting facilitation and giving critical feedback and guidance to the Fellows.

*“The mentor Anmol [Vellani], pushed me to think deeply. Any questions he asked me, I really thought about it. I used to think I knew everything about those questions. But the truth was, I didn't really know.”*



The evaluation found that:

- 🌍 Fellows considered the Labs to be high quality and professionally managed
- 🌍 The topics addressed in the Labs were effective in achieving the program goals
- 🌍 The creative activities used in the Labs, help the Fellows to explore the theme through their local context and examples
- 🌍 Fellows sometimes find more theoretical inputs and discussions challenging, CLA should continue to emphasize to Fellows that it is ok not to understand everything immediately
- 🌍 Fellows expressed common needs/ interest in knowledge and skills development in relation to financial sustainability, fundraising and marketing

- 🌍 The participants highly appreciated the skills of the facilitators, especially in relation to asking the Fellows reflective questions and encouraging the Fellows to express themselves and be confident in their abilities and ideas
- 🌍 The field visits during the lab help the Fellows understand the current state of culture and arts in Cambodia and expand their networks
- 🌍 CLA should introduce a 15-30 minute one-to-one session for each Fellow with the visiting Mentor as part of every lab's structure
- 🌍 Fellows would like to see some Cambodian Mentors included in the program, in addition to the Cambodian artists and cultural leaders they meet through the field visits and networking aspects of the Labs



## A Living Arts Lab in the Fellows' own words

Place to throw ideas out... Discuss and challenge

Explore – journey of discovery

Free space

We work closely together, we are close

A place to learn... from each other

No right or wrong! No black and white!

(We find things... and ) Put things together to create a new thing – a place to experiment! – to get a new result

We get a new result by learning from each other and mixing ideas

The result can be a tool we can use; action we can take; change we can make for the country

Enlightenment

## Regional Perspectives

The program integrates regional perspectives throughout, by inviting Mentors to share experience and case studies from Asia, and by taking the Fellows for an exchange visit. This approach has two underlying aims: to equip the Fellows with practical knowledge and networks that they can apply and use in their own work, and secondly to explore complex histories in the region, with a view to Fellows reflecting on what this means to contemporary society and as cultural leaders how they might contribute to developing thinking about Cambodia in relation to its neighbors.



The evaluation found that:

- 🌍 The regional approach of the program is valuable and should be continued
- 🌍 Much of the program is conducted in English, as the common language between Fellows, Mentors and other contributors. This can limit Fellows' understanding of complex concepts, and also limits Fellows' abilities to fully express their ideas and contributions. The evaluators recommended to increase the proportion of dialogue that is in Khmer, and translate to the Mentors rather than for the Fellows
- 🌍 CLA should explore whether aspects of other Fellowship initiatives, e.g. the residency component of the Artist Fellowship (see page 19), could be conducted in the region
- 🌍 The visit to another Mekong country helps to broaden the Fellows vision and grow their networks



## Group Project

At the end of the program, CLA gives the Fellows budget to implement a group project. The aim of this project is to enable the Fellows to put the principles they have been discussing during the program into practice, and to use the process of project design and planning as an opportunity for critical reflection. The Fellows start planning the project from the end of the second Lab. Projects implemented by Fellows include a session at a high school promoting careers in the arts and a festival on Arts & Environment.



The evaluation found that:

- 🌍 The project is an effective aspect of the program
- 🌍 It helps Fellows to develop their professional networks
- 🌍 The Fellows enjoy this aspect of the program and had no suggestions on how it could be enhanced
- 🌍 Some groups of Fellows have continued to collaborate after the program, and have repeated their projects in subsequent years, independently of the program

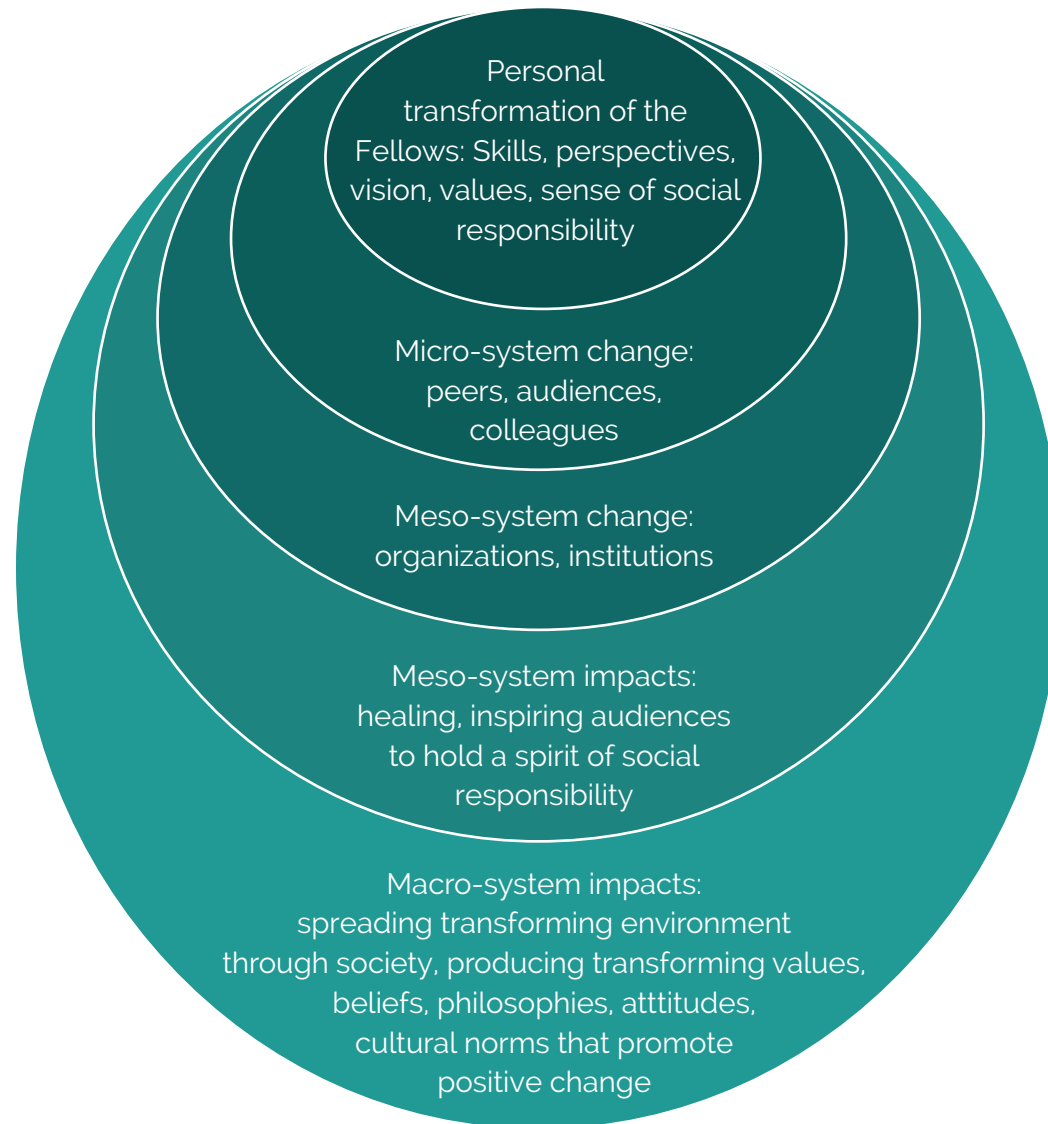


“I found that teamwork/ group project was very useful, we got the chance to learn from one another and also to get to know each other who come from different institutions, both from the government offices and private sectors. We have created a good network for our work.”

“I like the group project very much because it allows us to learn about the ideas, skills and creativity of each Fellow. [By doing the project we] know a lot about each other, and this teamwork has helped us to develop professional friendships and to go beyond the roles we play in our official positions.”

# Impacts: A Ripple Effect

The review found different levels of impact of the program, ranging from personal transformation and skills building, up to macro-system level impacts that affect society at large. The breakdown of these results and the feedback of former Fellows illustrate the broad array of outcomes of the Living Arts Fellows Program.





## Impacts: Personal

The Fellows noted that the program fostered their leadership and broadened their perspectives and vision. Their professional skills were upgraded, especially:

- Critical thinking
- Imagination
- Presentation skills
- Program design

The evaluation highlighted that Fellows felt a sense of increased creativity in developing art and culture that engages audiences in a critical way, and with a view towards inspiring change. In addition, the Fellows developed an increased sense of value for Cambodian culture, and pride in their identity. It also nurtured their love and care for their community and society as a whole, as well as their feelings of citizenship and accountability to those around them. Some of the Fellows acknowledged that Fellows Program bolstered their self-confidence.



*“The lessons learned from the program made me understand the value and difference between conservation and artistic development. In the past, my colleagues and I considered conservation concerns a priority, but I now see that in order to promote a rich and vibrant arts and culture to keep up to date with the current state of the working society, developing creative arts is very important. So this program has helped open my mind to new ideas of artistic development and creativity.”*

## Impacts: Community

Following the program, many of the participants began establishing arts and cultural projects with the purpose of creating transformative environments that foster positive change, aiding in the creation of sustainable development projects across Cambodia.

*“This program has encouraged my spirit to take responsibility for social issues and to take part in solving social problems. In the past, I didn't think much about how our work could contribute to dealing with social issues, but after participating in this program, I saw a lot of opportunities where I could use the arts to help society.”*

## Impacts: Education

The impact of the Fellows Program, through its support of artistic and cultural leaders, is amplified once those leaders return to their communities. Through their initiatives, educating and raising awareness of social issues, the program is fostering change across Cambodia.

Aou Chansereyath, a student from Kampong Cheu Teal High School who attended the Arts and Environment Festival, initiated by the 2017 Living Arts Fellows as their group project, and then continued after the program, said *“Joining the event made me realize that although plastic bags are really convenient, the next generation will suffer because we use them today. Indeed, we ourselves as users of plastic will suffer, for example when people burn used plastics it can cause illness.”*



## Impacts: Healing

During the program, the Fellows had the opportunity to meet with different senior artistic and cultural leaders from other Mekong countries who shared their experiences of using the arts for personal expression and healing after trauma and war. Since participating in the program, the Fellows have used these skills to deploy the arts for healing and expression in their own work environments.

*“ I used arts in healing those vulnerable children, the arts help them to be happy and to forget their anxiety, and the children use the arts to express their feelings. ”*

## Impacts: Policy

The program was not only effective in fostering leadership and broadening the philosophy and vision of the Fellows; it also advanced their skills on how to creatively and tactfully work within the arts to have their voices heard in influencing national policy.

*“ We know that many leaders or policymakers may not want to see us and may not want to hear our problems when we ask them for a meeting to discuss about our problems. However, if we invite them to see a performance or arts show, many of them definitely like to come. That is an opportunity where we can capture their attention and in doing so, inform them about our community concerns or social issues through those performances or art show. ”*



The Fellows Program also works towards global goals in fostering sustainable development. The program works towards the following UN-outlined sustainable development goals:



### Sustainable Development Goals<sup>2</sup>

The program works towards a number of the points on the Cambodian Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts' Strategic Plan, including:

#### Strategic Action Plan of Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts<sup>1</sup>

Strengthen and expand cultural potentials to be a catalyst in national economic development



Promote preservation and development of cultural heritage for national economic development



Strengthen and enlarge education, promotion, and creativity and establish cultural markets



Promote principles-based education and trainings (Education for culture and culture for education)



Promote awareness-raising on the importance of culture, tradition, and diversity of cultures



**Goal 12:** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, includes educating consumers on sustainable consumption and lifestyles.



**Goal 15:** Life on land includes promoting forest conservation, protection and encouraging tree planting



**Goal 16:** Promote just and peaceful society includes promoting inclusive society, enforce justice and responsible institutions



<sup>1</sup>Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, "Activity and work plan 2014," 2014, <http://www.mcfa.gov.kh/files/2014/01/37/Action%20Plan%20last.pdf> (Accessed 26 November 2019)

<sup>2</sup>United Nations, "Sustainable Development Goals: 17 Goals to Transform Our World," n.d. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/biodiversity/> (Accessed 27 November, 2019)

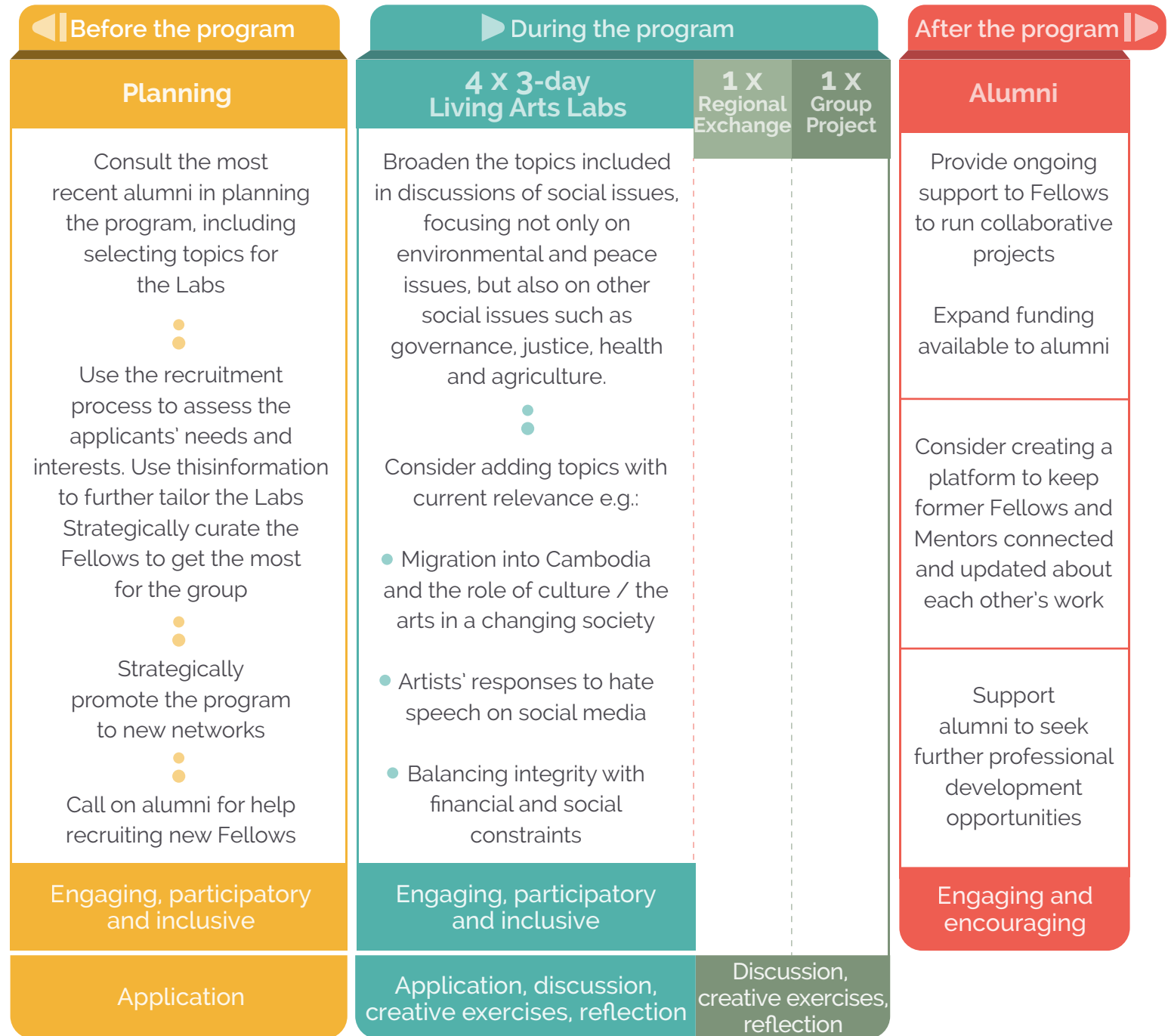
# Looking to the future

Based on the review, the consultants gave the following recommendations for future Living Arts Fellows programs. These recommendations are organized into adaptations to be made in the stages before, during, and after the program takes place.

## Conclusion

The exercise of reviewing the Living Arts Fellows program has been enriching and has provided us with both critical reflection and practical actions to take forward into the next iterations of the program.

Above all, the review has highlighted the extraordinary membership of the program's alumni and the opportunity that their network, their skills and their belief in the transformative force of arts presents to the sector, to Cambodia and to a wider international network of cultural practitioners.



# Other fellowship Initiatives from CLA

In addition to the Living Arts Fellows program, CLA supports other regular and ad hoc Fellowship opportunities for creative and cultural leadership development. These include:

## Young Cultural Innovators

The Salzburg Global Forum for Young Cultural Innovators empowers rising talents in the creative sector to drive social, economic and urban change. Launched in 2014, it is building a global network of 500 competitively-selected changemakers in "hub" communities who design collaborative projects, build skills, gain Mentors, and connect to upcoming innovators in their cities and countries. We partner with Salzburg Global Seminar to support participation from Cambodia and the Mekong Region in the YCI Program.



Young Cultural Innovators 2014: HUOT Dara (Cambodia), ONN Sokny (Cambodia)  
2015: SO Phina (Cambodia), MOENG Meta (Cambodia) 2016: YENG Chheangly (Cambodia), Arlette QYNH-ANH TRAN (Vietnam), Anouza PHOTISANE (Laos), Lomorpich RITHY (Cambodia). 2017: SOUS Sinath (Cambodia), minh DUC HOANG (Vietnam), Lattanaxi SENKITCHANULUCK (Laos)



## Artist Fellowship USA

CLA partners with Vermont Studio Center and Fresh Sound Foundation to run a bi-annual artist Fellowship to the USA. The Fellowship is open to visual artists and writers, and includes a one-month residency at Vermont Studio Center, followed by a 10-day networking and research visit to New York City where the Fellows meet with a range of artists and cultural workers, as well as visiting arts spaces, connecting with Cambodian communities in NYC and sharing their work to New York audiences.



2015: CHOV Theanly, YIM Maline, ENG Rithchandaneeth



2018: HANG Sokharo, TAN Vatey, TOR Vutha

# Mekong Cultural Hub



Cambodian Living Arts' sister organization, [Mekong Cultural Hub](#) serves emerging leaders from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam, focusing on people working at the intersection of arts and society, and looking to find collaborative solutions to shared regional needs and opportunities. One of MCH's core programs is the [SEAD Fellowship](#).



SEAD is a program co-created by Mekong Cultural Hub and British Council which creates space for cultural practitioners to reflect on how their work in arts and culture can contribute to sustainable development within South East Asia through their individual and collective leadership. Each year we select 10 Fellows from 10 countries: Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Taiwan and the United Kingdom.

The program has 4 main gatherings spread over a one-year period where Fellows get together. Each gathering takes place in a different South-East Asian country and has a unique purpose: exchange, create, share then reflect.



# Acknowledgements

Thank you to all of the Fellows and the Mentors who have participated in the program over the years, and especially those who gave their time for this evaluation exercise, and in doing so have helped to improve the program going forward. Thank you also to Nareth and Lyna for their excellent work on the evaluation and the constructive inputs they have given as to how the program can be further developed and strengthened.

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Mekong Exchange hosts: Aung Kyaw Tun, Khin Khin Yee, Arlette QYNH-ANH TRAN, Linh PHUONG, AJ PHOTHISANE, Tara GUJADHUR, Marie-Pierre LISSOIR, Wayla AMATATHAMMACHAD, Keeta ISRAN and Prach PIMARNMAN

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Program supporters:



*“My advice to future  
Fellows is to treasure  
this program like a  
diamond”*

[www.cambodianlivingarts.org](http://www.cambodianlivingarts.org)

 Cambodian Living Arts (CLA)

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