



## PRESS RELEASE

### **With the support of UNESCO's International Fund for Cultural Diversity, Leaders of Cambodia's Cultural & Creative Industries Unite to Form New Strategic Association**

PHNOM PENH, 24 May 2021 – With the support of UNESCO's International Fund for Cultural Diversity, Cambodian Living Arts (CLA) is incubating a new membership-based association with other leading art institutions to advocate for the cultural & creative industries (CCI) of Cambodia.

When the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic hit Cambodia's CCI hard in early 2020, the heads of the leading art institutions united to support struggling artists.

Directors and executives from Cambodian Living Arts, Phare Performing Social Enterprise, Epic Arts, and Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center -- among others -- organized to share recommendations with the Ministry of Culture & Fine Arts about how to bring much-needed relief to the arts and culture sectors. From these meetings the Association was born.

Chief Executive of Phare Performing Social Enterprise and interim chair of the Association, HUOT Dara said: "Our temples, dances, rituals, festivals, architecture, and visual expressions are all cultural assets that help us Cambodians identify who we are. However, the cultural and creative industries are not yet appreciated as a major financial contributor to Cambodia's economy because our sector is considered fringe to other industries like tourism."

Starting his career in the tourism sector, Mr Huot experienced first-hand the usefulness of a dedicated association that can monitor, measure, support and advocate for a sector. There was immediate willingness from the others to work together to make this happen.

On behalf of the group, Cambodian Living Arts applied to UNESCO's International Fund for Cultural Diversity, and was one of six projects -- out of more than 1,000 applications from all around the world -- selected for funding.

Now, since May 10<sup>th</sup> 2021, Cambodian Living Arts, with the co-leadership of founding committee members:

- Huot Dara, Chief Executive, Phare Performing Social Enterprise (interim Chair)
- Onn Sokny, Country Director, Epic Arts
- Osman Khawaja, Executive Director, Phare Ponleu Selpak Association
- Chea Sopheap, Director, Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center
- So Phina, Knowledge, Network & Policy Program Manager, Cambodian Living Arts
- Laura Mam, CEO, Baramey Productions



is working to initiate the Association. Once the Association is registered in autumn 2021, it will become independent of CLA and operate as a membership-based association, directed by a steering committee and with an AGM (Annual General Meeting) for reporting to and decision making from its members.

Membership is open to individuals, organisations, independent or formal – and the Founding Committee welcomes interest from anyone wanting to get involved at this early stage. Interested parties should please contact: [cci@cambodianlivingarts.org](mailto:cci@cambodianlivingarts.org)

Founder and interim chair, HUOT Dara said: “I am happy and honored to be spearheading this effort, working with my peers from different cultural and creative organizations, stakeholders and policy makers to nurture the creative and cultural industry in Cambodia. I look forward to the formation and functioning of this membership-based association that will include everyone who would like to get involved by joining as members or even volunteers in the steering committee.”

During the two years of project funding, the Association will work on some specific activities – including a research project to map the informal part of the cultural and creative industries. This is very important as many artists and artisans are currently not fully included within the economy and do not have access to information and resources that they are entitled to, for example NSSF or contractual rights. The research will be used to make recommendations to relevant Ministries about how conditions could be improved to provide more support to people working in creative and artistic jobs, and in doing so further develop and improve the awareness and the market for their work. The Association will also take on new projects, guided by its members' concerns, and respond to data that the Association will collect and analyse related to the cultural and creative industries.

Also within the two years, Cambodian Living Arts will be running two editions of its Living Arts Fellows program, which builds leadership capacity in the arts. The 2022 edition will have a special focus on cultural policy and to work with those taking a leading role in running the Association.

Phloeun Prim, Executive Director CLA, “Cambodian Living Arts is honored to be able to serve the arts community by incubating the start-up of this Association. We believe that arts is at the heart of a vital society, and it is clear that the work of artists and those working in cultural and creative industries – from performance, to handicrafts, film and original music make a rich contribution to Cambodia’s economy and national and international reputation. An Association that can represent the interests of this important sector has the potential to take this work to a new level. We are especially pleased to see the strong link between this Association and the work we have been doing over the past decade to nurture leadership and build networks between individuals and organisations in the arts.”

## Notes to Editors

- Cultural & Creative Industries are sectors of organized activity that have as their main objective the production or reproduction, the promotion, distribution or commercialization of goods, services and activities of content derived from cultural, artistic or heritage origins for example handicrafts, film, performing arts and design
- UNESCO International Fund for Cultural Diversity is a mechanism of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (the 2005 Convention)
- The International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD) aims to foster the emergence of a dynamic cultural sector and to promote sustainable development and poverty reduction in developing countries, including development and implementation of cultural policies of cultural industries and capacity-building for cultural entrepreneurs and the creation of new cultural industry business models.
- #SupportCreativity
- Cambodian Living Arts was founded by Arn CHORN-POND in 1998.
- Cambodian Living Arts is an independent not-for-profit organization, based in Phnom Penh.
- Cambodian Living Arts' mission is to be a catalyst in a vibrant arts sector, inspiring new generations. Cambodian Living Arts believes that arts are at the heart of a vital society, and envisions the arts and cultural expression as essential to a thriving future for Cambodia.