Teach For Cambodia

First cohort, 2018

94 alumni*

42 teachers** currently in classrooms for their initial 2-year commitment





“Upon working with Teach For Cambodia in Phnom Penh’s high-needs public schools, we witnessed remarkable transformations. Not only children across the schools become more engaged in their learning, but they also developed so much efficacy.”

— Director of Phnom Penh Department of Education

Teach For Cambodia
Rebuilding the nation through education



Teach For Cambodia's goal is to make a significant contribution to the rebuilding of a nation still suffering the effects of a genocide in the 1970s that killed more than 80% of the country's teachers and decimated the education system. 90% of the country's 10-year-olds are unable to read a simple sentence with comprehension.[1] While two-thirds of the Cambodian population is under 30, spending on education remains extremely low. 65% of teachers in the basic education system have only completed lower or upper secondary education, while only 35% have a bachelor's degree or higher,[2] and they receive little or no professional development.

Teach For Cambodia is working to rebuild the dignity of the teaching profession and to build trust within the education system. It has placed its bet on recruiting local leaders who have lived experience of the country's woundedness, and who can by their examples represent the possibility of fostering community transformation through education. Some fellows have experienced homelessness, domestic violence, or malnutrition growing up, and one is the first woman in her district to advance to higher education. This means Teach For Cambodia fellows are resilient, humble, and have empathy for the students and communities they serve.

Rooted in the belief that the system will only transform if the educators themselves heal from the trauma they've experienced and learn to listen to and trust each other, Teach For Cambodia places a focus on fostering these things during the two-year fellowship program. The program managers who support fellows use conscious leadership practices to help fellows reflect on their purpose and values, and work through their own trauma. This healing is further nurtured through an annual convening and an in-person retreat for all fellows. One of the most powerful activities is called the Circle of Trust, in which everyone shares



their most traumatic experience and fear with the group, thus processing these traumas and strengthening the support network they'll need to overcome them.

During the two-year teaching experience, fellows also participate in a two-year Master's programme with the Royal University of Phnom Penh, in which they have the opportunity to reflect on the systemic challenges they encounter in Cambodian education and how to solve them. As the school director at Hun Sen Chroy Changvar Secondary School says: "Fellows are highly educated and are well-trained and well-supported to deliver high quality education in our community. Parents continue to come to me and ask for enrolling their children in the TFC fellows' classrooms because parents see changes in their children's attitudes towards their future, family, and towards their learning. I also see that too. Fellows bring new pedagogical approaches and new learning to our communities."

Teach For Cambodia currently has 42 teaching participants and 94 alumni who have taught in the provinces of Kampong Chhnang, Kandal, and Phnom Penh. They are typically responsible for teaching 250 students, with one fellow responsible for as many as 1,300 students. The organization strategically placed some of the fellows in schools where the government was piloting what is now called the General Education Improvement Project (GEIP), which seeks to improve equity and student learning outcomes in target schools across general education by engaging parents in school governance, developing teachers and school leaders, and increasing accountability and autonomy for school leaders.

In a country with such weak educational infrastructure, Teach For Cambodia's alumni have been given significant leadership opportunities even very early in their careers. Some are teaching, leading in-service teacher professional development, and serving in policy coordination and teacher training roles in the National Institute of Education initiatives.

Only four years since its founding, Teach For Cambodia is already serving as an unparalleled pipeline for educational leadership. Going forward, the organization aims to invest in the ongoing leadership development and the building of community and trust among its alumni, who are so well-placed to transform the system and yet are under so much pressure at a young age.

Teach For Cambodia founder and CEO, Monirath Siv, shares his hope for the future: "I would love to see these local leaders stay grounded in the truth but also able to come together and sustain themselves for the long game of this work. I hope that, twenty years from now, Teach For Cambodia will have a lot of alumni who are system thinkers, who are able to leverage global knowledge and resources while staying grounded in local history and values, and who can lead collectively." •••

1 World Bank et al., "The State of Global Learning Poverty: 2022 Update", p. 67

2 Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, 2022