



First cohort, 2018

60 alumni*

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



“Teach For Cambodia alumni bring creativity and innovation and a special mindset—they see this work as purposeful and valuable for impacting lives in Cambodia.”

— Dr. Sok Soth, Dean and head of the General Education Improvement Project initiative at Royal University of Phnom Penh

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 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.

Teach For Cambodia currently has 36 teaching participants and 60 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.

Moreover, Royal University of Phnom Penh, the core implementation institution of the GEIP, employed alumni to oversee and drive the execution of this nationwide reform program. These alumni are responsible for the training and development of thousands of teachers and school leaders, as well as for coordinating the reform effort. Indeed, 19 out of their 60 staff members are Teach For Cambodia alumni. Dean and head of the initiative at Royal University of Phnom Penh, Dr. Sok Soth, shared his view about the added value that the alumni are bringing. "Alumni had two-year experiences in classrooms

and the community which help them really understand the challenges, needs, and mindsets of teachers and school leaders, and have also gone through our two-year program which helped them understand the education system and work well with our team," he said. "They bring creativity and innovation and explore different techniques and approaches for their work with teachers and school leaders, and they bring a special mindset—they see this work as purposeful and valuable for impacting lives in Cambodia."

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 of its alumni who are so well-placed to transform the system and yet 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