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ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF PHNOM PENH

# A Journey of Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities in Cambodia: RUPP-AAS Collaboration



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Foreword by  
Prof. Chet Chealy  
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A Journey of Cultivating Social Sciences and  
Humanities in Cambodia: RUPP-AAS Collaboration

**Un Leang and Leng Sokchea**

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of the  
Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) and  
Association for Asian Studies (AAS)



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## Message from the Royal University of Phnom Penh



**Prof. Chet Chealy**  
Rector, Royal University of Phnom Penh

First and foremost, I would like to extend my warmest greetings to all who are part of this RUPP-AAS Collaboration in Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities in Cambodia. It is with immense pride that I witnessed the remarkable progress achieved by the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (FSSH) in advancing research excellence in Cambodia. This initiative represents not only a significant advancement for the Royal University of Phnom Penh but also a crucial foundation in Cambodia's journey towards building a robust academic and research infrastructure in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Through our collaboration with the Association for Asian Studies (AAS), we have created a project and platform that senior scholars can share, mentor, and empower young scholars to pursue academic research while addressing the critical issues within our communities. This project reflects our shared commitment to fostering an environment where scholarly excellence goes hand in hand with social responsibility—a place where knowledge grows not in isolation but through proactive engagement with our cultural and social contexts.

The RUPP-AAS Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities Project provides a vital platform for Cambodian researchers, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds, to receive the support and resources to reach new heights in their academic and professional careers. I am particularly proud of the collaborative spirit and efforts that have driven great success in this journey. The dedication of our working team and resource personnel, the determination of our participants, and the persistent support of our partners have created an ecosystem where innovation, mentorship, and academic growth thrive. I, therefore, would like to extend my applause and appreciation to our dedicated faculty, especially Dr. Un Leang, our partners at AAS, and, most importantly, the scholars who bring energy, ideas, and a vision for the advancement of higher education in Cambodia. Together, we are not only cultivating a generation of engaged young scholars but also fostering a more knowledgeable and resilient Cambodian society.

As the Rector of RUPP, I am inspired by the dedication and achievement of everyone involved in this initiative. I encourage our researchers to continue striving for academic excellence and to use their expertise to contribute meaningfully to the development of Cambodia's society and beyond. Together, we are shaping a future where social sciences and humanities remain integral to the growth and resilience of our nation. Thank you for your continued support and commitment to this vital endeavor. Let us continue to work together in building a strong, vibrant future for Social Sciences and Humanities in Cambodia.



## Message from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities: The Journey and Its Cultivator

The past three years have been a transformative journey for the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of the Royal University of Phnom Penh. Beginning with the 2022 Journey of Developing Capacity-Building Program, continuing through the 2023 Journey of Expanding Capacity-Building Program, and culminating in the 2024 Journey of further Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities Research in Cambodia, this initiative has been a testament to our unwavering commitment to fostering a robust and sustainable academic culture, especially for Social Sciences and Humanities in Cambodia. Through a series of thoughtfully designed workshops, we have created platforms and opportunities for doctoral students and early-career researchers to build foundational skills, refine their research frameworks, and bring their work to realization through higher quality PhD proposals and journal articles. From the inaugural sessions in 2022, which laid the groundwork for understanding research methodologies, to the 2024 workshops, this journey has significantly strengthened the capabilities of Cambodian researchers, especially those who are underprivileged and underrepresented.

This initiative has also been a collaborative success, supported by the expertise of resource persons, the dedication of participants, and the solid support of our host institution, the Royal University of Phnom Penh and our partners, including the Association for Asian Studies (AAS), and Sida. The progress we have made together has been marked by many achievements, such as the awarding of research grants, the successful completion of high-caliber research proposals, and the recognition of our participants on international stages. These milestones are not only a reflection of individual growth but also a step toward elevating Cambodia's academic standing regionally and globally. Looking to the future, we are excited to embark on the next phase: the 2025-2026 Journey of Deepening Research Capabilities in Social Sciences and Humanities in Cambodia. This vision aims to further enhance the depth and impact of research in Cambodia, focusing on advanced research skills, inter and cross-disciplinary approaches, and strengthening the integration of Cambodian scholarship into regional and global academic networks. With a stronger foundation now in place, this next chapter in the following years will seek to deepen our researchers' expertise and broaden their contributions to societal challenges.

As the Dean of FSSH, I am deeply proud of what we have achieved together and remain committed to this shared vision of pursuing academic excellence for Social Sciences and Humanities in Cambodia. I extend my sincere thanks to all the participants, resource persons, and partners who have been part of this journey. I would also like to extend my most profound gratitude to the Royal University of Phnom Penh, especially Prof. Chet Chealy, RUPP Rector, for the unwavering support in all aspects of this initiative, to the Association for Asian Studies for the technical support, and to Sida for the financial support for our initiatives. I express my special thanks to Dr. Uk Krisna, AAS Director of Special Initiatives, for every support extended to us throughout the journey. Together, the contributions from everyone have been instrumental in making this journey a reality and laying a strong foundation for the future of Cambodia's academic landscape. Thank you for everyone's continued dedication and support as we are moving forward.



**Prof. Un Leang**

Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences  
and Humanities (FSSH),  
Royal University of Phnom Penh

## Message from Association for Asian Studies: The Journey and Its Cultivator



**Dr. Uk Krisna**

Director of Special Initiatives  
Association for Asian Studies

“Cultivating the Humanities and Social Sciences and Supporting Underrepresented Scholars of Asia” is a project designed for those living in social, economic, and political margins but with potential untapped and a thirst of knowledge to be quenched. Focused on enabling knowledge production in low-income and conflict and post-conflict regions of Southeast and South Asia, the project is meant to enhance the capacity of local institutions and the capabilities of scholars and public intellectuals within and beyond their geographical reach. It is tailored to the needs and aspirations of individuals, who have not had the chance to fully develop their aptitudes. This transnational endeavour places them at the center of our collective efforts to invest in them.

After two and a half years, the results have been remarkable. As one of our implementing partners in Southeast Asia, the team at the Royal University of Phnom Penh has worked tirelessly to incubate a promising group of scholars, who will in turn become mentors to the next generation of researchers. This would have not been possible without the passion of our resource person, Dr Un Leang, and his competent and most friendly team involved in the planning, intellectual content, finances, and logistics of the Cambodian program. External support also contributed to building major milestones throughout this long, and at times, intellectually complex journey. Scholars from a shared network spanning Asia, Europe and the U.S. offered mentoring, lecturing and monitoring assistance. Colleagues from our Indian and Pakistani Hubs have also shared their knowledge, methodology and wonderful collegiality that makes this project fundamentally collaborative and interconnected.

As a result, some of the Cambodian students, early-career scholars and independent researchers we have worked with have seen their self-confidence increase, their argument take an analytical shape, and their research contributing to innovative and critical debates during local, regional and international exchange. Although this will take more time to create a lasting impact on Cambodia’s Higher Education sector, our collaborative work is intent on continuing to identify, train, and offer professional opportunities to those who want to be part of our shared story of change and transformation. For this, we shall always be indebted to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and their most dedicated staff at the Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok for entrusting us with the necessary tools to write this success story.

## Introduction to the Journey of RUPP-AAS Collaboration in Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities in Cambodia

The RUPP-AAS Collaboration in Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities in Cambodia represents academic collaboration in a transformative shift in Cambodia's approach to Social Sciences and Humanities. Originally envisioned as "Developing the Social Sciences and Humanities in Asia," the initiative recognized the need to cultivate a knowledge ecosystem that not only advances academic research but also responds to the unique social and cultural challenges facing post-conflict and marginalized communities. Evolving from a focus on merely developing individual scholars, the project now aims to foster a resilient, community-engaged academic landscape where Cambodian researchers are empowered to effect meaningful change within and beyond scholarly circles

At the heart of this journey lies the belief that scholarly excellence must align with local relevance and social responsibility. As project leader, Dr. Un Leang notes, the initiative strives to "build scholarship that meets international standards while remaining grounded in the reality and context of Cambodian society." Supporting scholars from underrepresented backgrounds, particularly those from conflict-affected regions, this initiative provides essential resources—including research grants, travel opportunities, and mentorship—building their capacity and resilience to contribute knowledge that is both impactful and socially attuned.

## Timeline of the Journey (2020-2022)

### Beginning of the Project

**23 March 2020**

**First Communication** with Dr. Krisna UK (AAS Director of Special Initiatives) Initial idea: "Developing the Social Sciences and Humanities in Asia"

**May 18, 2022**

#### **AAS and RUPP Signing Agreement**

- First, the focus is on
  1. Scholarship-building for conflict and post-conflict countries
  2. AAS-in-Asia conferences and transregional workshops
- Then move on to:
  1. Research grants
  2. Graduate students travel allowances
  3. Scholars in Residence fellowships for members of under-represented and vulnerable groups.

**April 18-19, 2022**

**Bangkok, Thailand**

**SIDA has confirmed that they are able to meet with AAS and the Hubs**

- Thailand (Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University)
- India (Faculty of Humanities, Savitribai Phule Pune University)
- Pakistan (School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Lahore University of Management Sciences)
- Cambodia (Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Royal University of Phnom Penh).

### 2022 Journey: Developing Capacity-Building Program

**8-12 August 2022**

**Battambang, Cambodia**

**Workshop I:** Capacity Development on Research in Cambodian Social Sciences and Humanities.

**8-9 October 2022**

**Siem Reap, Cambodia**

**Workshop II:** Capacity Development Workshop on Research Concept Note on Cambodia Social Change and Participation in Qualitative Analysis Program.

**8-10 December 2022**

**Chiang Mai University, Thailand**

**The CHSS Symposium:** Cultivating the Humanities and Social Sciences

"Addressing the Multiple Marginalities of South and Southeast Asia".



# Timeline of the Journey (2023-2024)

## 2023 Journey: Expanding Capacity-Building Program in Cambodia

**27 February - 3 March 2023**

Kampong Cham, Cambodia

Workshop I: Topic and Research Questions

**22-26 April 2023**

Kampt, Cambodia

Workshop II: Literature, Theory and You

**3-7 June 2023**

Battambang, Cambodia

Workshop III: Methods, Data, Ethics and Writing

**21-22 June 2023**

Seoul, Republic of Korea

AAS Symposium "Mainstreaming the Margins"

**24-27 June 2023**

Daegu, Republic of Korea

AAS-in-Asia Conference

**22-26 September 2023**

Siem Reap, Cambodia

Workshop IV: Conducting Literature Review for PhD Thesis in Social Sciences and Humanities



## 2024 Journey: Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities Research in Cambodia

**14-17 March 2024**

Washington, United States

AAS 2024 Annual Conference

**25-27 March 2024**

Chiang Mai, Thailand

AAS Finance Training

**26-28 April 2024**

Kampt, Cambodia

Workshop I: Introduction, Research Puzzle and Question

**16-20 May 2024**

Savitribai Pule Pune University, Pune, India

Collaboration and Learning Team Project Meeting on "Cultivating the Humanities and Social Sciences and Supporting Under-Represented Scholars of Asia"

**7-9 June 2024**

Sihanoukville, Cambodia

Workshop II: Research Framework: Qualitative and Quantitative

**6-8 July 2024**

Yogyakarta, Indonesia

AAS Symposium "Mobilities Beyond Boundaries: Upward Social and Spatial Trajectories in Asia"

**9-11 July 2024**

Yogyakarta, Indonesia

AAS-in-Asia Conference "Global Asias: Latent Histories, Manifest Impacts"

**9-11 August 2024**

Siem Reap, Cambodia

Workshop III: Research Methodology and Findings

**27-29 November 2024**

Kirirom National Park, Kampong Speu, Cambodia

Workshop IV: Writing Up Your PhD Thesis Proposal and Journal Article

# 2022 Journey: Developing Capacity-Building Program

The Capacity Development Workshop on Research in Cambodian Humanities and Social Sciences, held from 8-12 August 2022 at Maison Wat Kor, Battambang, was the first of two connected workshops, which marked the beginning of the Journey of RUPP-AAS Collaboration towards Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities in Cambodia. This workshop sought to address the need for revitalizing social sciences and humanities research in Cambodia, particularly given the limited opportunities and resources available to academics in these fields. Bringing together 19 participants from diverse academic and professional backgrounds, the workshop aimed to build foundational research capacity while fostering collaboration among Cambodian scholars.



## **Workshop I: Capacity Development on Research in Cambodian Social Sciences and Humanities**

8-12 August 2022

Battambang, Cambodia

A key feature of the workshop was its integrative structure, blending theoretical training with hands-on fieldwork. Participants were equipped with essential skills in qualitative research, including research question formulation, ethnographic fieldwork, and academic abstract writing. Guided by a team of esteemed resource persons, the workshop offered an enriching learning experience. The local expertise was provided by RUPP-FSSH's faculty members, including Dr. Un Leang, Dr. Peou Chivoïn, and Dr. Timothy Rackett. External resource persons who offered academic supports in the first workshop included internationally recognized scholars such as Dr. Un Kheang (Northern Illinois University), Dr. Nathan Green (National University of Singapore), Dr. Sophea Young (University College London), Dr. Hy V. Luong (University of Toronto), Dr. Jennifer Estes (National University of Singapore), and Dr. John Forrest (State University of New York). Their diverse expertise enriched the participants' understanding of social sciences methodologies, fieldwork techniques, and academic writing.

The workshop's practical aspect included fieldwork in Battambang and Pursat Provinces, which further allowed participants to engage with local communities and explore Cambodia's socio-economic changes. This combination of expert guidance and real-world application provided participants with significant insights into conducting meaningful research. As the first in a series of capacity-building initiatives, this workshop laid a strong foundation for the RUPP-AAS collaboration's mission to cultivate a robust research culture in Cambodian social sciences and humanities.











## Workshop II: Capacity Development Workshop on Research Concept Note on Cambodia Social Change and Participation in Qualitative Analysis Program

8-9 October 2022  
Siem Reap, Cambodia

The Capacity Development Workshop on Research Concept Note on Cambodian Social Change and Participation in Qualitative Analysis Program, held on 8-9 October 2022 at The Sanctuary Residence in Siem Reap, was the second workshop in the 2022 Journey in Developing Capacity-Building Program. This workshop, as part of the Journey of RUPP-AAS Collaboration in Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities in Cambodia, furthered participants' research skills by introducing them to grounded theory methodology and qualitative analysis tools. Participants engaged in refining research questions, applying sensitizing concepts, and mastering memo writing and coding techniques to enhance their conceptual frameworks for exploring Cambodian social issues.

The workshop featured interactive sessions led by prominent resource persons, including Dr. Peou Chivoin and Dr. Un Leang, who provided theoretical grounding in qualitative research methods and practical guidance. Participants were immersed in activities such as developing open-ended research questions, utilizing sensitizing concepts, engaging in memo writing, and applying coding techniques. A distinctive feature of this workshop was its emphasis on practice over lectures, allowing participants to revise and present their concept notes, with constructive feedback to refine their research strategies. This hands-on approach culminated in the selection of five outstanding concept notes for small grants to support further research.

A standout feature of this workshop was the awards of five Research Grants to five exceptional participants to further conduct the fieldwork for their research and had the opportunity to present their research at regional Symposium on Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities in Chiang Mai at the end of that year in 2022. This regional platform allowed Cambodian researchers to present their findings, engage in academic exchanges, and strengthen Cambodia's academic visibility in the regional research community, reflecting the growing capacity and ambition of Cambodian scholars. The workshop's impact was therefore extended beyond Cambodia and demonstrated a collective commitment to fostering innovative research in Cambodia and bridging local knowledge with regional and global academic standards.



# 2022 Journey: Attending First Regional Academic Conference

## The CHSS Symposium: Cultivating the Humanities and Social Sciences

Theme: Addressing the Multiple Marginalities of South and Southeast Asia  
8-10 December 2022

Chiang Mai University, Thailand





## Recipients of 2022 Research Grants



### **Ms. Ket Chanracksmey**

The Concern of Health Check-up of Health Care Professionals from National and Provincial Staff



### **Mr. Soeung Bunly**

The Resistance and Adaptation of Bunong Communities to the Lower Sesan II Hydro Dam Project in Steung Treng Province



### **Mr. Uy Sareth**

Making Sense of Violence: Narrative Understanding Meaning of Violence of Higher Education Students



### **Ms. Keo Priyanith**

The Rural-to-Urban Migrants Experience: A Study of Self-Perceptions and Identities



### **Ms. Chea Muykim**

Understanding How Knowledge in Cambodia is Being Produced: The Account of Higher Education Institutions



# 2023 Journey: Expanding Capacity-Building Program in Cambodia

## Workshop Series: “Writing Your Proposal for Doctoral Research in Social Sciences and Humanities”

The 2023 Journey was to expand Capacity-Building Program in Cambodia. As part of this journey, a series of four interconnected workshops was launched under the theme, “Writing Your Proposal for Doctoral Research in Social Sciences and Humanities,” which marked the second year of the RUPP-AAS Collaboration in Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities in Cambodia. These workshops were designed as a cohesive journey throughout 2023 to support doctoral students in developing comprehensive research proposals, enhancing their scholarly capability step-by-step.



### Workshop I: Topic and Research Questions

27 February - 3 March 2023

Kampong Cham, Cambodia

The first workshop in the series, “Topic and Research Questions,” was held from 27 February to 3 March 2023, in Kampong Cham, Cambodia. It aimed to equip doctoral students with the skills to formulate impactful research questions and design robust research proposals in social sciences and humanities. Seventeen doctoral candidates participated, benefiting from the guidance of nine experienced resource persons.



The resource team featured distinguished academics, including Dr. Un Leang, Dr. Jenna Grant (University of Washington), Dr. Vong Sotheara (Royal University of Phnom Penh), Dr. Keo Chanvuthy, Dr. Sok Serey (Royal University of Phnom Penh), and Dr. Sou Veasna (Royal University of Phnom Penh), who brought their extensive

expertise to guide participants through the process of developing well-defined research topics and questions. They also provided detailed instruction on the structures and components required for effective doctoral research proposals. The sessions addressed practical topics such as refining research hypotheses, writing abstracts, conducting discourse analysis, and searching for scholarly literature. Participants actively engaged in hands-on exercises, personalized mentorship, and group discussions, fostering critical thinking and collaboration while gaining practical understandings about research design. This collaborative learning environment, coupled with constructive feedback from mentors and peers, laid the foundation for the subsequent workshops that ensured participants’ preparation for the next stages of their research proposal development.











## **Workshop II: Literature, Theory and You**

22-26 April 2023

Kampot, Cambodia



The Workshop II on Literature, Theory, and You, held from 22-26 April 2023, at Les Manguiers in Kampot, Cambodia, was the second in the four-part series, “Writing Your Proposal for Doctoral Research in Social Sciences and Humanities.” Building on the foundational skills from the first workshop, this session focused on equipping doctoral students with the tools to conduct literature reviews, identify theoretical frameworks, and position their research within broader scholarly conversations.

Fifteen PhD students participated in this workshop, guided by a team of distinguished academics and researchers such as Dr. Un Leang, Dr. Jenna Grant, Dr. Ly Kimlong (Royal University of Phnom Penh), Dr. Eng Sothy (University of Hawaii), Dr. Im Soksamphoas (University of Michigan), and Dr. Keo Chanvuthy. The workshop covered a range of topics, such as integrating theory into research design, mapping scholarly conversations, identifying key articles and scholars, and drafting literature reviews. Through a combination of lectures, exercises, and group discussions, participants refined their ability to contextualize their research within existing literature and develop strong theoretical foundations.

This workshop also emphasized hands-on engagement through exercises like identifying key scholars, working with theory, and outlining literature reviews. Participants received personalized feedback from mentors and peers, which fostered a collaborative environment that helped strengthen their scholarly skills. As a vital step in the connected journey throughout 2023, this workshop ensured participants were well-prepared to advance their doctoral research proposals and contributed to the ongoing development of academic capacity in Cambodia’s social sciences and humanities.







### **Workshop III: Methods, Data, Ethics and Writing**

3-7 June 2023

Battambang, Cambodia

The Workshop III on Methods, Data, Ethics, and Writing, held from 3-7 June 2023, at the Sanctuary Villa in Battambang, Cambodia, was the third workshop of the four-part series, "Writing Your Proposal for Doctoral Research in Social Sciences and Humanities." As part of the 2023 Journey, this workshop focused on equipping doctoral students with the knowledge and skills to design robust methodologies, address ethical challenges, and enhance academic writing for their doctoral research proposals.

This session brought together 16 PhD students, supported by 13 expert resource persons, including Dr. Un Leang, Dr. Jenna Grant, Dr. Keo Chanvuthy, Dr. Chann Sophea (Michigan State University), Dr. Miriam Stark (University of Hawaii), and Prof. Chhem K. Rethy, among others. Participants investigated the essential topics of research methodology, data management, and ethical considerations, with an emphasis on practical exercises, peer reviews, and personalized mentorship. Key focuses include developing detailed methodologies, which align data collection with research objectives and address ethical responsibilities in fieldwork.

In the workshop, participants received tailored feedback from mentors and peers, which enabled them to integrate methodological rigor and ethical depth into their research designs. This workshop built on the progress made in earlier sessions to help prepare participants to move confidently toward the final stages of their doctoral proposal development while reinforcing the RUPP-AAS collaboration's commitment to advancing social sciences and humanities research in Cambodia.











## Workshop IV: Conducting Literature Review for PhD Thesis in Social Sciences and Humanities

22-26 September 2023

Siem Reap, Cambodia



The Workshop IV on Conducting Literature Review for PhD Thesis in Social Sciences and Humanities, held from 22-26 September 2023, at Sanna Villa Residence in Siem Reap, Cambodia, concluded the four-part series, "Writing Your Proposal for Doctoral Research in Social Sciences and Humanities." This workshop equipped participants with advanced skills to conduct systematic and comprehensive literature reviews, essential for crafting high-quality PhD theses.

The workshop, attended by 22 participants, was led by a distinguished team of speakers and resource persons, including Dr. Un Leang, Dr. Uk Krisna (Association for Asian Studies), Prof. Furrukh Khan (Lahore University of Management Sciences), Prof. Anagha Tambe (Savitribai Phule Pune University), Prof. John Marston (El Colegio de México), and Dr. Po Sovinda (Royal University of Phnom Penh). Participants were guided on techniques for searching, citing, and critiquing existing literature, identifying research gaps, and synthesizing studies to formulate credible research problems. Emphasis was also placed on connecting literature reviews with fieldwork data to ensure originality and relevance in their research.



In addition to the workshop's intensive training, the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities facilitated the participation of some selected PhD students in two prestigious academic events in South Korea. These included the AAS Symposium "Mainstreaming the Margins" held from 21-22 June 2023, in Seoul, and the AAS in Asia Conference held from 24-27 June 2023, in Daegu. These events provided participants with a platform to present their research, engage with international scholars, and integrate their learnings into regional and global academic discourse. These opportunities further underscored the RUPP-AAS collaboration's unwavering commitment to nurturing research excellence and promoting Cambodian scholars on international stages.







# 2023 Journey: Attending Second and Third Regional Academic Conferences



## AAS Symposium "Mainstreaming the Margins" 21-22 June 2023 Seoul, Republic of Korea





# AAS-in-Asia Conference

24-27 June 2023  
Daegu, Republic of Korea



# 2024 Journey: Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities Research in Cambodia



## Workshop Series: Mentorship on PhD Writing Journey and Journal Article Writing

The 2024 Journey of RUPP-AAS Collaboration in Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities Research in Cambodia builds upon the remarkable success of the 2023 Journey, which reaffirmed the indispensable value and long-term viability of continuing such capacity-building initiatives. The 2023 workshops significantly contributed to strengthening the research capabilities of Cambodian doctoral students and scholars, establishing a solid foundation for sustainable academic development. The success of this project further highlighted the necessity of ongoing efforts to support doctoral research and enhance the higher education landscape in Cambodia.

As a continuation of this momentum, the workshop series, “Mentorship on PhD Writing Journey and Journal Article Writing,” was launched in 2024 with the aim of equipping participants with essential skills for crafting strong PhD research proposals and writing publishable journal articles. The workshop series has four connected workshops, which were conducted from April to November 2024. This initiative focuses on fostering a strong and sustainable academic environment by guiding doctoral students and early-career researchers through the complexities of research design and academic writing.

### Orientation to the 2024 Workshop Series

20 April 2024

Royal University of Phnom Penh



In preparation for the “Mentorship on PhD Writing Journey and Journal Article Writing” Workshop Series, the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at the Royal University of Phnom Penh hosted an orientation session for participants, resource persons, and organizers, which took place on the morning of 20 April 2024, at the Institute for International Studies and Public Policy, Royal University of Phnom Penh.

This session aimed to familiarize attendees with the workshop series’ objectives, structure, and expected outcomes, ensuring everyone was well-informed about their roles and responsibilities throughout the program. The session was welcomed by Dr. Un Leang who emphasized the significance of the initiative for academic capacity building in Cambodia and followed by an overview of the workshop schedule and activities by Dr. Po Sovinda and a presentation on the logistical preparations for the four workshops by Mr. Ly Makara. The orientation facilitated meaningful connections among participants and resource persons, creating a strong foundation for collaborative engagement during the workshops. The session ended with a group photo and a chance for further networking over coffee at Nisset Coffee.





## Workshop I: Introduction, Research Puzzle and Question

26-28 April 2024  
Kampot, Cambodia



The Workshop I which introduced the Workshop Series, “PhD Writing Journey and Journal Article Writing,” held from 26-28 April 2024 at Kampot Sweet Boutique in Kampot Province, Cambodia, marked the beginning of the 2024 Journey: Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities Research in Cambodia. This first part of the four-part workshop series aimed to provide doctoral students and early-career researchers with critical skills in crafting PhD research proposals and developing publishable journal articles.



The workshop was attended by 10 PhD students and 10 early-career researchers, supported by an accomplished team of resource persons, including Prof. Chet Chealy, Dr. Un Kheang (Northern Illinois University and in August 2023 became Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation), Dr. Un Leang, Dr. Alisa Freedman (University of Oregon), Dr. Chheang Vannarith (Angkor Social Innovation Park), Dr. Ky Sereyvath (Institute of China Studies, Royal

Academy of Cambodia) and several others. Sessions covered essential topics such as structuring research proposals, formulating research questions, and outlining methodologies.

This workshop brought together a dynamic group of 32 people, including 10 PhD students and 10 early-career researchers, alongside several staff members, distinguished speakers, and resource persons. In addition to the sessions of interaction and mentorship between resource persons and workshop participants, the first edition of the workshop series featured a series of impactful addresses and presentations by esteemed academics and professionals, including:

- Special and Closing Remarks by Prof. Chet Chealy, Rector of the Royal University of Phnom Penh
- Welcome and Introductory Remarks by Dr. Un Leang, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, RUPP
- Presentation on “Writing a Journal Article: Perspectives from an Author” by Dr. Un Kheang, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia and Professor of Political Science

- Presentation on “Writing a Journal Article: Perspectives from an Editor” by Dr. Alisa Freedman, Professor of Japanese Literature, Cultural Studies, and Gender, University of Oregon
- Presentation on “Becoming an Engaged Scholar” by Dr. Chheang Vannarith, Chairman of Angkor Social Innovation Park
- Presentation on “PhD Research Proposal: A Perspective from an Examiner” by Dr. Ky Sereyvath, Director General, Institute of China Studies, Royal Academy of Cambodia
- Presentation on “PhD Research Proposal: Personal Experience” Presented collaboratively by Dr. Po Sovinda, Designated Director, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Institute for International Studies and Public Policy; Mr. Hok Kimhean, PhD Candidate, Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies, Lund University and Mr. Taylor Coplen, PhD Candidate, Department of the History of Science, Harvard University.







## Workshop II: Research Framework: Qualitative and Quantitative

7-9 June 2024

Sihanoukville, Cambodia



Building upon the success of Workshop I, the Workshop II on Research Framework: Qualitative and Quantitative, held from 7-9 June 2024, at the Sea Breeze Hotel & Villa in Sihanoukville, Cambodia, served as the second milestone in the Workshop Series. This workshop aimed to deepen participants' understanding of research frameworks, emphasizing their importance in aligning methodologies with research objectives and ensuring the rigor and relevance of academic research.

All the 20 participants from Workshop I attended Workshop II. They were guided by a distinguished team of resource persons such as Dr. Un Leang, Dr. Kuok Fidero (Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology, and Innovation), Dr. Lay Sok Heng (National Bank of Cambodia), Dr. Heng Kimkong (Cambodian Education Forum), Dr. Keo Chanvuthy, and Dr. Po Sovinda. Participants had several rounds of mentorship from the resource persons to help them design their research frameworks, integrate theoretical perspectives, and address ethical challenges in research. Structured sessions, including expert-led presentations, interactive mentoring, and peer collaboration, ensured participants had practical opportunities to apply their learning.













### **Workshop III: Research Methodology and Findings**

9-11 August 2024

Siem Reap, Cambodia

The Workshop III on Research Methodology and Findings, held from 9-11 August 2024, at Mony Rothna Villa in Siem Reap, Cambodia, was the third session of the Workshop Series. This third workshop focused on equipping participants with advanced skills in qualitative and quantitative data collection, analysis, and the presentation of findings, building upon their previous milestones in the series.

The workshop hosted 16 participants, reduced from the original 20, due to the workshop series' rigorous milestone requirements. Only participants who submitted their milestones from previous workshops within the workshop series—such as drafting and submitting earlier components of their research proposals—were eligible to progress to subsequent sessions. This requirement was to ensure that participants remained committed to their research journeys and were prepared for the advanced content of this session.

Under the guidance of our esteemed resource persons, including Dr. Un Leang, Dr. Sok Serey, and Dr. Po Sovinda, participants gained hands-on experience with practical methods for data collection and analysis, alongside effective strategies for writing and presenting research findings. The workshop emphasized an interactive approach, combining personalized mentorship with collaborative learning, which allowed participants to refine their research methodologies and enhance the quality of their results. With a dynamic and supportive environment, this workshop upheld high standards of engagement and achievement, further advancing the RUPP-AAS collaboration's mission to build a sustainable and impactful research culture in Cambodia.













## Workshop IV: Writing Up Your PhD Thesis Proposal and Journal Article

27-29 November 2024

Kirirom National Park, Kampong Speu, Cambodia



The Workshop IV on Writing Up Your PhD Thesis Proposal and Journal Article, held from 27-29 November 2024, at Kirirom National Park, Kampong Speu, Cambodia, marked the final session of the Workshop Series. This culminating workshop provided participants with the opportunity to synthesize their work into a well-structured PhD thesis proposal and a publishable journal article, while celebrating the achievements of the 2024 journey. Guided by a distinguished panel of resource persons—Dr. Un Kheang, Dr. Soeng Reth (Ministry of Economy and Finance), Dr. Un Leang, Dr. Keuk Chan Narith (Institute of Foreign Languages, RUPP), Dr. Peou Chivoine, and Dr. Po Sovinda—this final workshop of the 2024 workshop series emphasized advanced mentoring and collaborative feedback to 12 remaining participants, reduced from 16 in the third workshop, at the final stage of their work throughout the whole 2024 journey with the workshop series.

A standout moment of the workshop was the announcement of three research grants, each valued at USD 2,000, awarded to Ms. Sun Theary, Mr. Aun Youvara, and Ms. Bou Sesil to support field studies for their research projects. While Ms. Bou Sesil was unable to attend the final workshop, her absence marked a significant achievement as she had recently been awarded an Australian Awards Scholarship to pursue her PhD at the Australian National University in Australia. Notably, she acknowledged the invaluable contribution of the workshop series, which played a significant role in preparing her for both her PhD application and her successful Australian Awards Scholarship. This highlights the transformative impact of the program in shaping participants' academic and professional trajectories, which demonstrates the profound influence of the projects on advancing participants' academic and professional goals.

At the final session, participants presented their finalized proposals and journal articles and received constructive critiques to refine their work further. The sessions focused on writing their conclusions, enhancing academic rigor, coherence, and readiness for publication. In addition, Workshop IV also featured a special guest lecture titled “Communicating Your Research Findings to the Publics” by Mr. Leang Delux, Executive Director of ThmeyThmey News. This session covered the critical importance of effectively translating complexity of academic research into accessible narratives for broader audiences.



The workshop series concluded with a comprehensive wrap-up report delivered by Dr. Un Leang, summarizing the significant milestones and accomplishments of the 2024 journey. Dr. Un Leang highlighted the participants’ progress throughout the workshop series and emphasized how each workshop systematically contributed to enhancing their research capabilities, from developing foundational concepts to preparing final PhD proposals and journal articles. He also acknowledged the dedication of the resource persons and organizers in providing continuous mentorship and creating a supportive learning environment. The wrap-up underscored the series’ role in fostering a collaborative research community and its contribution to the broader goal of building sustainable academic excellence in Cambodia.



Following the report, Prof. Chet Chealy, Rector of RUPP, delivered heartfelt closing remarks. He commended the participants for their unwavering commitment to advancing their academic pursuits and praised the transformative nature of the workshop series in empowering Cambodia’s next generation of scholars. Prof. Chet Chealy reaffirmed the critical importance of such initiatives, not only in developing individual research skills but also in strengthening the

country’s higher education and social sciences and humanities research landscape. His remarks concluded with a message of encouragement for participants to continue contributing to Cambodia’s academic growth and global research dialogue.





# 2024 Journey: Beyond Participation – Elevating Voices of Cambodian Scholars at Regional and Global Academic Conferences



**AAS 2024 Annual Conference**  
14-17 March 2024  
Washington, United States





# AAS Finance Training

25-27 March 2024

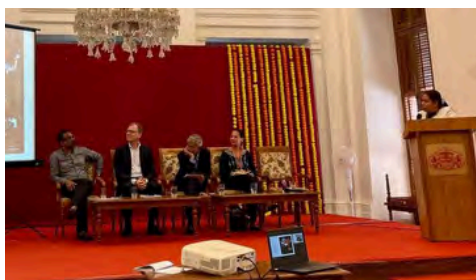
Chiang Mai, Thailand



# Collaboration and Learning Team Project Meeting on "Cultivating the Humanities and Social Sciences and Supporting Under-Represented Scholars of Asia"

16-20 May 2024

Savitribai Pule Pune University, Pune, India









# AAS Symposium "Mobilities Beyond Boundaries: Upward Social and Spatial Trajectories in Asia"

6-8 July 2024

Yogyakarta, Indonesia



# AAS-in-Asia Conference "Global Asias: Latent Histories, Manifest Impacts"

9-11 July 2024

Yogyakarta, Indonesia



# Recipients of 2024 Research Grants



## **Ms. Bou Sesil**

An Integrated DPSIR and Linguistic Z-Fuzzy-DEMATEL Approach for Structural Analysis of Key Factors Influencing Carbon Pricing: A Case Study in Cambodia



## **Ms. Sun Theary**

Program Development to Enhance Social Skills of Early Childhood Autistic Children



## **Mr. Aun Youvara**

The Colonial Legacy in Cambodia: French Reform Agendas on Labor Practices, Land Ownership, and Taxation



# The Journey and Its Contributors

## Testimonial Message from Resource Persons



### **Dr. Un Kheang**

Resource Person in the Developing Capacity-Building Program Journey in 2022 and in the Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities Research Journey in 2024

Serving as a resource person for this groundbreaking initiative, twice in 2022 and in 2024, has been an immensely rewarding experience. The project stands as a testament to the vision and commitment of the Royal University of Phnom Penh to elevate the quality of research and academic publishing in Cambodia. With participants carefully selected from diverse universities and disciplines within the field of social sciences and humanities, the project embodied a multidisciplinary approach that is critical to addressing complex societal challenges.

What truly impressed me was the rigorous structure of the program. By requiring participants to join the program with pre-selected topics and well-defined research questions, the workshops became vibrant writing laboratories where ideas were honed, frameworks strengthened, and drafts transformed into polished academic projects. This approach not only optimized the learning process but also instilled in participants a sense of purpose and confidence in their scholarly pursuits. The dedication and eagerness of the participants were nothing short of inspiring. Sharing my experience in academic publishing and engaging with young scholars reaffirmed the tremendous potential of Cambodia's future scholars. Furthermore, witnessing their determination to publish and contribute to the regional academic discourse filled me with optimism about the future of higher education and research in Cambodia.

This initiative has set a benchmark for capacity-building programs, which demonstrates the power of well-executed mentorship and training in shaping the next generation of Cambodian scholars in Social Sciences and Humanities. It has been an honor to contribute to this journey, which I believe will leave a lasting impact on Cambodia's academic landscape and its role in the global intellectual arena.



### **Prof. Chhem K. Rithy**

Resource Person in the Expanding Capacity-Building Program Journey in 2023



Serving as a resource person for the Expanding Capacity-Building Program Journey in 2023 has been a profoundly rewarding experience. This program's success is rooted in the unwavering dedication of its participants and the collaborative efforts of visiting scholars and faculty within the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. Through interactive workshops, stimulating discussions, and meaningful mentorships between senior and emerging scholars, this initiative has cultivated a dynamic scholarly community committed to addressing Cambodia's unique challenges with creativity, innovation, and accountability. It is clear that responsible mentorship is pivotal in shaping the future leaders of academia, policy, and society. Mentoring these young Cambodian scholars has been both inspiring and a solemn responsibility. It is through these relationships that we equip them with the tools, vision, and ethical grounding to drive sustainable and inclusive progress for Cambodia.

This program represents far more than academic training - it is a transformative journey that underscores the critical role of mentorship in fostering a generation ready to lead with integrity and purpose. It has been an honor to support this vital endeavor and to witness the exceptional potential of Cambodia's next generation of researchers. Their determination and passion are a testament to the importance of cultivating a culture of mentorship that prioritizes both intellectual growth and social responsibility.





### **Dr. Jenna Grant**

Resource Person in Expanding Capacity-  
Building Program Journey in 2023



I helped develop and organize the workshops: Writing your PhD Research Proposal in 2023. There were three workshops: 1) Topic & Research Questions; 2) Literature, Theory & You; 3) Methods, Data, Ethics & Writing. For these workshops, I worked with Dr. Un Leang and Dr. Keo Chanvuthy to identify and invite guest speakers based in Cambodia and the U.S. (some via zoom); develop the syllabus, including exercises; give feedback on student work; and generally, help with running the workshops, with the RUPP FSSH Khmer Studies PhD Program team. Students worked very hard during the workshops. They were challenged to think and write quite a lot. I was impressed with their dedication and how they came together during the workshops to support and encourage each other. Students have many pressures on their time and energy, including work and family, in addition to their PhD studies. Outside the workshops, it was hard to keep the community going as their commitments sometimes took over.

This was some of the most rewarding work I have done. I was challenged by the students to decolonize my approach to teaching theory, methods, and literature reviews. I learned a lot from them and my colleagues and brought some of the lessons home to my teaching of research design at the University of Washington in 2024. I also value becoming familiar with their research topics and those of our guest speakers, and more generally getting to know a bit more about higher education in Cambodia. Whereas I want to encourage students and faculty to participate in workshops such as 'Writing your PhD proposal', I also want to support Dr. Un Leang, Dr. Keo Chanvuthy, and their team to not have to rely on workshops to educate their students. The Khmer Studies PhD faculty and staff work extremely hard with few resources and structural support. It is hard to know how I can best contribute over the long term in a meaningful and sustainable way.





## Dr. Peou Chivoin

Resource Person in the Developing Capacity-Building Program Journey in 2022 and in the Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities Research Journey in 2024



It was truly a privilege to be part of this groundbreaking project as a workshop facilitator. Having the opportunity to introduce methods, concepts, and examples for participants to consider in documenting and analyzing contemporary Cambodia was both inspiring and humbling. The workshop was designed to create a space for local researchers to pursue their interest by exploring a research strategy to tackle critical issues based on their local observations and knowledge. This was a shared journey among emerging Cambodian researchers that will hopefully inspire further interest and effort to question contemporary Cambodia and generate locally grounded knowledge about Cambodian society. What made this initiative particularly meaningful was its focus on enabling emerging Cambodian scholars to take ownership of their research journeys. This initiative was more than just a training—it was a shared intellectual journey that I believe will inspire further efforts to question, document, and analyze the complexities of Cambodian life from research perspective. The enthusiasm, commitment, and intellectual curiosity I witnessed during the workshop reaffirm my confidence in the potential of future Cambodian scholars and their contribution to our country. It has been an honor to contribute to this journey, and I look forward to seeing the lasting impact these scholars will make in the academic and social landscapes of Cambodia.



## Special Feature: The Journey and Its Impact Testimonial Message from Participants

### Ms. Sun Theary

Participant in the Expanding Capacity-Building Program Journey in 2023 and in the Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities Research Journey in 2024



#### Core skills of Early Childhood Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD): Perspectives of Teachers and Parents


Objective: To explore core skills of early childhood children with ASD before entering primary school inclusive mainstream education from teachers and parents perspectives.

RQ1: What core skills are identified by parents and teachers for early childhood children with ASD before entering primary school inclusive mainstream education?

RQ2: What are the similarities and differences between the parents and teachers regarding the identified core skills?

My journey as an educator began in high school, where I taught English, and later transitioned to higher education, teaching tourism and hotel management. However, my life took a deep personal turn when my son was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Suddenly, I wasn't just an educator—I became a mother determined to find solutions for my child in a system that offered little support for children with ASD.

Living in Kampong Thom province, 200 kilometers from Phnom Penh, I faced significant challenges in finding resources and understanding autism in rural Cambodia. When I enrolled my son in a local school with neurotypical children, I hoped he would adapt and flourish. Instead, he faced discrimination and isolation due to his social and communication difficulties. These painful experiences made me realize that the current educational system in Cambodia does not fit the needs of children with ASD and inspired me to take action. Determined to make a change, I embarked on a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction, focusing on identifying the core social skills children with ASD need to thrive in mainstream education. My goal is to develop an educational model tailored to Cambodia's context—one that gives children like my son a chance to grow and be included.



Joining the Workshop Series, “Mentorship on PhD Writing Journey and Journal Article Writing” has been a transformative experience in my academic and personal journey. The workshops provided structured guidance and close mentorship, which have been instrumental in shaping my research. Through this program, I learned how to frame my research questions, develop a solid methodology, and write effectively to communicate my findings. The mentors not only offered academic guidance but also encouraged me to connect my personal story with my research, giving my work both depth and meaning. One of the most impactful moments of the workshop series was receiving a research grant of \$2,000 to support my data collection. While the amount may seem modest, it has made a world of difference for me.

This grant has allowed me to travel to rural areas, conduct interviews, and gather the necessary data to support my study. For a researcher like me, working in a resource-limited setting, this support has been both practical and empowering. It has enabled me to move forward with confidence and focus. Furthermore, the close mentorship offered by the workshop has been invaluable. Over the months, the mentors have not only monitored my progress but have also provided constructive feedback at every step. They helped me refine my research framework, focus on achievable objectives, and prepare for academic publication. This personalized guidance has brought me closer to completing my research and achieving my vision of creating a model of education that fits Cambodia’s unique context.

My research is not just about my son—it is about the many children with ASD in Cambodia who deserve better opportunities. I believe investing in early childhood education for children with autism is not just a necessity for families like mine; it is a societal imperative. Early intervention unlocks the potential of these children, allowing them to contribute meaningfully to our communities. Thanks to the workshop series, I am now equipped with the tools, knowledge, and support to bring my research to life. Together, we can bridge the gaps in special education and create a more inclusive Cambodia—one where every child, regardless of ability, has the opportunity to thrive for a better future.







**Ms. Bou Sesil**

Participant in the Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities Research Journey in 2024

Embarking on a PhD journey often stems from a deep desire to explore, understand, and contribute meaningfully to addressing complex issues. For me, this decision emerged after a decade-long career as a tax advisor. While I excelled at crafting solutions to immediate challenges, I realized I needed more tools to deeply analyze and address the systemic problems underlying these issues. The decision to transition from a seasoned professional to an early-career researcher wasn't easy. I spent over a year resolving personal and financial considerations, weighing the security of a stable career against the uncertainty of a four-year PhD journey. Ultimately, I decided to pursue research on economic policy, an area closely aligned with my professional expertise and growing interests.



While developing my research proposal and seeking potential supervisors and funding, I came across a Facebook post from the Faculty of the Social Sciences and Humanities of the Royal University of Phnom Penh announcing a workshop series for PhD students and early-career researchers. Despite initial doubts, I applied and was thrilled to be accepted. The workshop series became a turning point in my journey. I vividly remember the first workshop in April 2024, where I was surrounded by my peers and mentors from diverse fields. The workshops provided invaluable opportunities to refine my research proposal through insightful feedback that challenged my assumptions. The ideas and discussions sparked during these sessions shaped how I articulated my research vision in my application for the Australia Awards Scholarship.

The resource persons and speakers were incredibly knowledgeable and supportive. The guidance of resource persons like Dr. Kuok Fidero went beyond academic support; it created opportunities for collaboration that significantly strengthened my research proposal. During the workshop series period, I had the opportunity to collaborate with Dr. Kuok Fidero on a research article proposal, which enabled me to compete for the RUPP-AAS Research Grant to support my data collection. Around the same time, furthermore, I received an invitation to interview for the Australia Awards Scholarship. Remarkably, the questions I faced during the interview mirrored those posed by mentors during the workshops. This experience made me realize how thoroughly the workshops had prepared me for the scholarship process.

Now, as an accepted PhD student at the Australian National University, set to begin in 2025, I reflect on the transformative role the three RUPP workshops played in my journey. They not only sharpened my critical thinking but also pushed me beyond my comfort zone, both academically and professionally. I remain deeply grateful to the organizers, resource persons, and mentors for their dedication to developing Cambodian research capacity and supporting aspiring scholars like me.



Ms. Meng Huyteang

Participant in the Expanding Capacity-Building Program Journey in 2023



Participating in the RUPP-AAS workshop series has been a wonderful experience, which has bridged my roles as both a practitioner and a researcher in education policy. The 2023 workshop series I participated in has provided me with a brilliant platform to expand my academic horizons, refine my research skills, and build meaningful connections with peers and experts alike. It has been instrumental in equipping me to tackle complex issues in education policy with greater depth.

As someone who balances the practical challenges of policy implementation with the intellectual demands of academic research, this series has been a game-changer. It offered a rare and dedicated space where I could immerse myself in writing, supported by a network of resource persons and mentors who deeply understood my dual roles. Their tailored guidance not only sharpened my research focus but also enabled me to see the broader implications of my work in shaping education policy. Beyond the technical skills, the workshops provided a vibrant community of scholars who shared a commitment to advancing knowledge and addressing societal challenges. The mentorship and encouragement I received from experienced researchers and senior scholars were invaluable in bridging the gap between my practice-based insights and academic pursuits. This unique synergy has inspired me to pursue research that not only contributes to the academic discourse but also informs meaningful policy changes in the education sector.

I am profoundly grateful to RUPP and AAS for organizing this exceptional workshop series. It has not only empowered me to grow as a researcher but also reaffirmed my commitment to driving impactful change in education policy through evidence-based research and thoughtful advocacy. This experience has been a cornerstone of my journey, igniting a renewed sense of purpose and determination to contribute to the development of education in Cambodia.




**Mr. Hun Chhunteg:** My Personal Journey: Placing a Keystone for a Great Temple Participant in the Expanding Capacity-Building Program Journey in 2023 and in the Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities Research Journey in 2024



I am currently an Associate Professor at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, where I specialize in Khmer epigraphy, particularly the Old Khmer language. With over ten years of experience in higher education, I have noticed that many students struggle with the basics of the Khmer language. They frequently devote significant effort to understanding ancient literature that should be more accessible. Furthermore, many high school teachers lack knowledge of Khmer inscriptions, resulting in the spread of incorrect information due to the absence of key texts on Cambodian epigraphy in the Khmer language. This situation creates a cyclical effect in which minor knowledge gaps grow into substantial inadequacies over time. This issue reminds me of the keystones in a temple; without a proper keystone, the structure will collapse.

Reflecting on my educational journey, I recall visiting the Pursat Provincial Museum in eighth grade, where I saw two sandstone doorframes carved with Old Khmer scripts. This experience spurred my interest in reading and comprehending Khmer inscriptions, which motivated me to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Khmer Literature, a Master's degree in Linguistics, and, most recently, a PhD in Khmer Studies. Throughout my academic career, I have faced two significant challenges: resource availability and study methods. Promoting the field to students and the general public has been difficult, as many important documents are in foreign languages, and there is limited interest in Khmer literature. Furthermore, I have struggled with a lack of confidence in my research abilities, particularly in terms of publishing internationally recognized works. These challenges inspired me to enroll in a PhD program and attend courses designed to improve my skills.





The journey with the workshop series with the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of the Royal University of Phnom Penh has provided treasured insights into the process of producing and publishing articles in peer-reviewed journals. Engaging with seasoned researchers and experts from other sectors has greatly expanded my understanding and knowledge. As part of my PhD program, I am required to publish two articles—one globally and one locally—so my participation in this series has been especially valuable. My PhD research focuses on the evolution of the Khmer script, which has been largely overlooked by previous scholars.

While many researchers have prioritized reading Cambodian epigraphy to reconstruct the knowledge of history, culture, and religion, the evolution of the Khmer script has received scant attention. Although this subject appears neglected, much of the knowledge gained over a century ago is still mentioned in textbooks without sufficient verification. When discussing the evolution of the script, it is critical to evaluate not just the script itself but also its relationships to society in various contexts. The script is an important part of national identity since it reflects the cultural and historical narrative of the Khmer people.

Finally, my goal is to provide comprehensive publications on Cambodian epigraphy in the Khmer language, promoting this knowledge within Khmer society while critically evaluating and decolonizing current narratives established by French and Western researchers. To accomplish this, I must first develop a solid understanding of the Old Khmer script and its historical relationships with society. Once again, I compare my initial steps to a keystone, which is critical to the structural integrity of a great temple.





**Mr. Leb Ke**

Participant in the Cultivating Social Sciences and Humanities Research Journey in 2024



I am deeply grateful to you, your dedicated team, and your colleagues for your unwavering commitment to advancing academic capacity in Cambodia. Being part of the 2024 Workshop Series: Mentorship on PhD Writing Journey and Journal Article Writing has been one of the most transformative experiences of my academic journey. This series was not just a series of workshops—it was a gateway to new knowledge, profound inspiration, and invaluable connections that will shape my path as a researcher.

The wisdom and expertise shared by the resource persons were nothing short of extraordinary. Each session was thoughtfully designed to address the challenges we face as emerging scholars, equipping us with tools to conduct meaningful research and share it effectively with the world. Beyond the technical skills, the workshops fostered an atmosphere of encouragement and collaboration. I had the privilege of building networks with local and international scholars, as well as with emerging Cambodian researchers, creating bonds that I believe will continue to enrich my academic pursuits.



# Special Thanks to Core Team, Resource Persons, and Participants of 2022-2024 Journey

## 2022-2024 Core Team

Dr. Un Leang  
Dr. Keo Chanvuthy  
Mr. Leng Sokchea  
Mr. Ly Makara  
Mr. Ses Ded  
Ms. Phos Sokeng  
Ms. Se Senglom  
Ms. Khek Loreine

## 2022 Resource Persons

Prof. Chet Chealy  
Dr. Un Kheang  
Dr. Un Leang  
Dr. Peou Chivoin  
Dr. Keo Chanvuthy  
Dr. Jennifer Estes  
Dr. John Forrest  
Dr. Nathan Green  
Dr. Sokphea Young  
Dr. Timothy Rackett

## 2023 Resource Persons

Prof. Chet Chealy  
Dr. Un Leang  
Dr. Keo Chanvuthy  
Dr. Vong Sotheara  
Dr. Sok Serey  
Dr. Sou Veasna  
Dr. Op Vanna  
Dr. Ly Kimlong  
Dr. Jenna Grant  
Dr. Ret Thearom  
Prof. Chhem Kieth Rethy  
Dr. Eng Sothy  
Dr. Im Soksamphoas  
Dr. Khuon Vichheka  
Dr. Keo Piseth  
Dr. Chhom Kunthea  
Dr. Po Sovinda  
Prof. John Marston

## 2024 Resource Persons

Prof. Chet Chealy  
Dr. Un Kheang  
Dr. Ky Sereyvath  
Dr. Chheang Vannarith  
Dr. Seong Reth  
Dr. Un Leang  
Dr. Keo Chanvuthy  
Dr. Po Sovinda  
Dr. Alisa Freedman  
Dr. Kouk Fidero  
Dr. Heng Kimkong  
Dr. Lay Sok Heng  
Dr. Sok Serey  
Dr. Peou Chivoin  
Dr. Keuk Channarith  
Dr. Our Chenda  
Mr. Leang Deluxe  
Mr. Hok Kimheang  
Mr. Taylor Coplen  
Mr. Pong Pheakdey Boramy

## 2022 Participants

Mr. Bou Bora  
Mr. Chem Vuthy  
Mr. Hor Sithy  
Mr. Hum Chan  
Mr. Kan Sovannthourm  
Mr. Khan Lyna  
Mr. Khem Than  
Mr. Leng Sokchea  
Mr. Meurn Sophalla  
Mr. Ngin Sovann  
Mr. Pen Dina  
Mr. Pong Pheakdey Boramy  
Mr. Sek Bunsong  
Mr. Soeung Bunly  
Mr. Sun Socheat  
Mr. Uy Sareth  
Ms. Chea Mueykim  
Ms. Chhom Theavy

Ms. Keo Monirath  
Ms. Keo Priyaneth  
Ms. Ket Chanracksmeay  
Ms. Kong Rattanakhthida  
Ms. Meng Huyteang  
Ms. Sim Lida  
Ms. Tong Bona  
Ms. Um Thavy  
Ms. You Saokeo Khantey

## 2023 Participants

Mr. Aun Youvara  
Mr. Chan Sopheap  
Mr. Chem Vuthy  
Mr. Chhea Sokha  
Mr. Hun Chhnteng  
Mr. Kuong Keany  
Mr. Lach Phors  
Mr. Long Ratha  
Mr. Mot Vephea  
Mr. Penchhoum Chhareth  
Mr. Phul Sophearith  
Mr. Ros Sokunthy  
Mr. Sear Borin  
Mr. Sou Lalin  
Mr. Srun Hour  
Mr. Tep Kongkea  
Mr. Tha Leang Ang  
Mr. Thay Sovannpitou  
Mr. Thol Ngornteng  
Mr. Thy Naroeun  
Mr. Uy Sareth  
Mrs. Heng Chhorvon  
Mrs. Huon Kalyan  
Mrs. Kim Socheata  
Mrs. Long Chandavy  
Mrs. Mech Samphors  
Mrs. Set Sreyni  
Mrs. Sun Theary  
Mrs. Tuo Solineath  
Mrs. Leng Soknaram

Ms. Kong Rattanakhthida  
Ms. Meng Huyteang

## 2024 Participants

Mrs. Bou Sesil  
Mr. Hun Chhnteng  
Ms. Kong Rattanakhthida  
Mr. Kuong Keany  
Mrs. Sok Raksa  
Mrs. Sun Theary  
Mr. Ngin Pidor  
Mrs. Tann Channarath  
Mr. Thay Sovannpitou  
Mr. Tha Leang Ang  
Mr. Leb Ke  
Mr. Aun Youvara  
Ms. Chamreoun Nivicheta  
Mr. Song Pheakra  
Mr. Long Ratha  
Ms. Chea Mueykim  
Mrs. Set Sreyni





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