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CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN CAMBODIA:

MAPPING THEIR SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

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THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

This report aims at understanding the landscape of informal cultural and creative industries in Cambodia, mapping demographic background, education and skills, working conditions, livelihood characteristics, and challenges and careers path ways of informal cultural artists and workers defined as those classified as freelance, self-employment, volunteer, non-full-time, informal owners of enterprise and family business.

The study employed online and in-person questionnaire surveys of a total of 414 artists and workers from different parts of Cambodia and conducted unstructured interviews with seven key informants who participated in the survey to understand their concerns, challenges, and prospects.

This research is funded by UNESCO's International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD).

WHO ARE THEY?

Two-thirds of informal cultural artists and workers are males even though females, too, are the significant actors for arts and culture preservation.

71.7% of artists are married, and 22.7% are single (Fig. 3). A small number of these artists are either divorced or have partners. While cultural artistic works are believed to be for people with non-disability, about 7.2% of the surveyed artists claim they are artists with disability, mostly physical impairments.



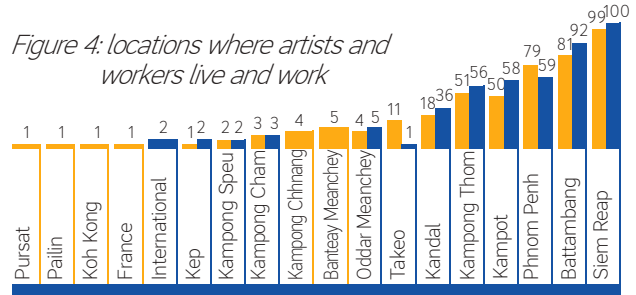
Figure 2: Gender of artists and workers



Figure 3: Marital status of artists and workers

■ Live ■ Work

Figure 4: locations where artists and workers live and work



59 artists told us that they live in Phnom Penh, but about 79 artists work in Phnom Penh. In Battambang, where 92 artists live, only 81 artists said they work in the province. Phnom Penh and Siem Reap are popular workplaces for artists to work in as they are both touristic and economic centers of the country.

EDUCATION AND CULTURAL SKILLS

A majority of artists and workers do not need university degrees to work in the informal cultural industries. Their skills and practices are passed through informal training from one generation to another.

- Self-learning or trained by relatives
- Training by other trainers



Figure 5: How artists and workers acquired their skills

EDUCATIONAL LEVELS OF ARTISTS AND WORKERS

Informal artists and workers possess many skills, but music and performing arts are their primary and secondary skills, and they tend to acquire the skills through informal, but less expensive, training.

- Primary School
- Secondary School
- High School Diploma
- Bachelor's Degree
- Illiterate
- Informal (literacy) education
- Associate Degree
- Master's Degree

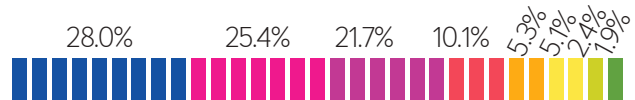


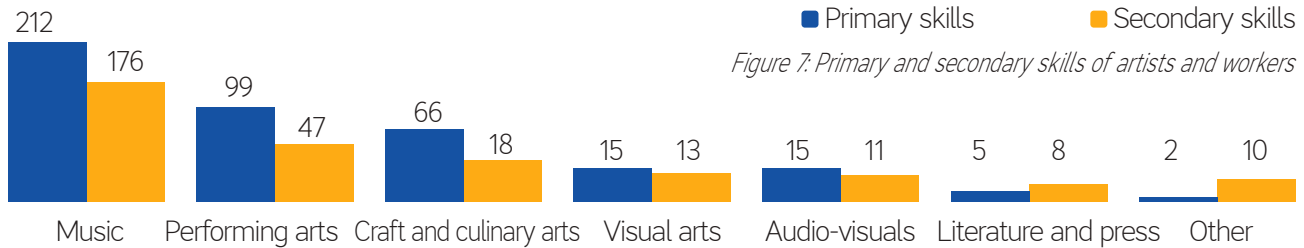
Figure 6: Educational levels of artists and workers

(Most of the cultural and creative workers are educated up to the primary school level (28%), whereas 25.4% of them finished secondary school. 21.7% of cultural and creative artists obtained or finished a high school level of education. 5.3% claim they are illiterate (unable to read, write and calculate), and 5.1% obtained informal education (such as reading and writing).

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SKILLS OF ARTISTS AND WORKERS

Informal cultural artists have multiple skills. More than half of the artists categorized their primary skills as musical aspects (51%) as they are traditional and modern song singers and musical instruments players (Fig. 7). Music categories are also classified as the secondary skills of the artists, especially those in performing arts, craft and culinary and arts etc. The second most popular skills are performing arts, up to

23.91% categorized themselves within this category, and about 11.3% consider performing arts as their secondary skills. Craft and culinary arts (those who worked on wood, metal, stone, chefs, jewelry, weaving, pottery, leather, cooking and culinary artistic activities) ranked third place, having 15.9% and 4.3% of the artists consider these categories their primary and secondary skills, respectively.



MEMBERSHIP AND AFFILIATION

"We are not aware of any governmental and non-governmental membership organizations that we should be affiliated with to represent us and our interests. We are often contacted through our group leaders in our village."

7% Membership 93% No membership

Figure 8: Membership status of artists and workers

When asked why they are not members of or affiliated with any organizations, several answers were provided, but most of which was that they were not aware of any membership organizations. Of those who have membership (29 respondents), 45% of them work in the music category, audio-visuals (21%) and literature and press (14%).

EMPLOYMENT AND WORK CONDITIONS

Most artists and workers are self-employed, and most of them are those working in music and performing arts.



Figure 10: Working and employment conditions of artists and workers

- Self-employment 86%
- Entrepreneur/owner/family business 4%
- Salary but no contract 3%
- Freelance but affiliated with MoCFA 3%
- Volunteer 2%
- Fixed-term contract 1%
- Part-time 1%

A majority of informal cultural artists and workers are self-employed (86%), claiming that they are freelance and independent performers, singers, service providers, and creators/producers, whereas 4% of them considered themselves entrepreneurs, such as owners of their business or family business (Fig. 10).

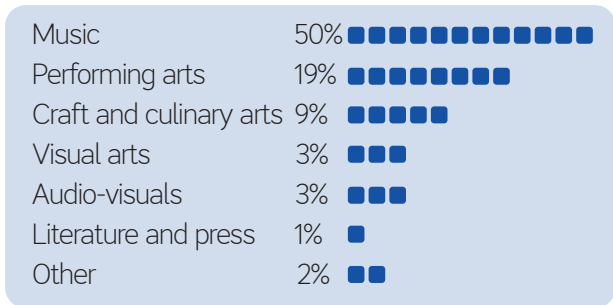


Figure 11: Artists and workers with self-employment status
86% (356) of self-employed artists and workers, 50% are classified as music category and 19% in performing arts. Craft and culinary categories (9%) are ranked the third most popular self-employment category, and visual and audio-visual arts are in fourth place (Fig. 11).

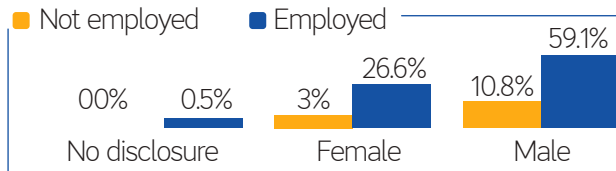


Figure 13: Employment in the past six months by gender

In the past six months (2022), about 70% of the artists said they worked, while about 30% did not work. Of the 70% employed artists, 59.10% are males, and about 10% are female. This indicated that the unemployed rate during the last six months of 2022 was high (almost 30%), mostly males as they are the majority of artists and workers (Fig. 13), and thus, they inevitably faced financial hardship in the last six months.

Up to 90% of artists and workers worked for their clients without written contracts or agreements.



Figure 14: Contractual and working conditions

OTHER BENEFITS RECEIVED BY ARTISTS AND WORKERS

Most informal cultural artists and workers never received any benefits, such as insurance and social protection, other than service fees from their clients or employers. Some artists and workers are poor.

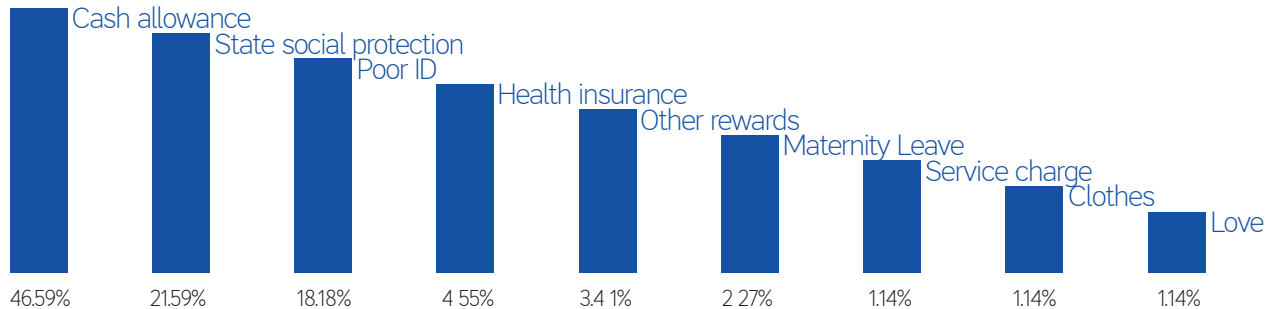


Figure 15: Other benefits received by artists and workers

LIVELIHOODS

All informal cultural artists and workers tend to get employed through network and friendship. Networks are important for them.

Most informal cultural artists and workers got hired for service and performance and selling their cultural products through network and friend connections (76.40%). 15% of cultural artists and workers said they got hired to perform and produce artistic works as someone or an organization approached them directly.

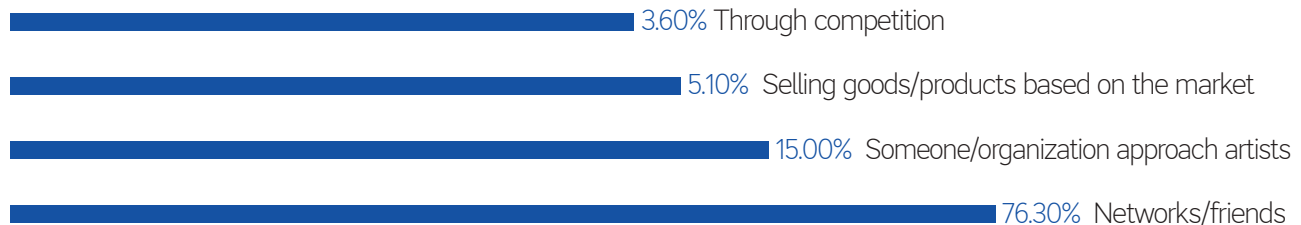


Figure 17: How artists and workers get employed

Cultural industries are not the only source of income for artists and workers to sustain their livelihoods. Artists and workers survive by working in other sectors, mainly farming.

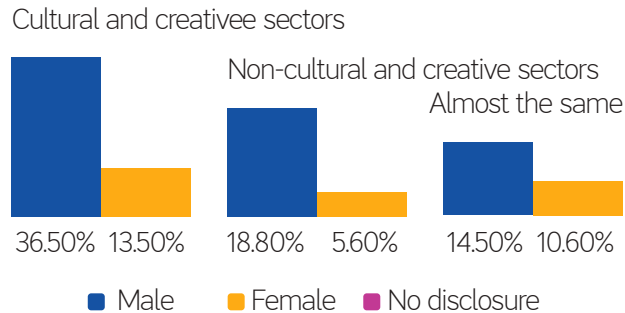


Figure 18: Primary sources of income of artists and workers

50% of the artists and workers said their main incomes are from the cultural sector, whereas 24.40% said their income from cultural and non-cultural industries was the same. This result suggests that at least 25.10% of artists and workers did not rely wholly on cultural work to maintain their livelihoods.

SERVICE FEE CHARGED PER DAY BY GENDER

Women artists and workers tend to charge service fee per day more expensive than men, but their incomes are seasonal, and women tend to leave cultural industries earlier than men. Some said, “the service fee could not cover the expenses to perform the service.



Figure 19: Service fee charged per day by gender

TREND OF THE ESTIMATED ANNUAL INCOME OF ARTISTS AND WORKERS FROM 2019 TO 2022

The trend of annual income earned by individual artists and workers declined significantly in recent years, and the ability to recover is very slow due to myriad reasons. Regardless of the change in their income, artists' and workers' annual incomes have proven their active contribution to the economy.

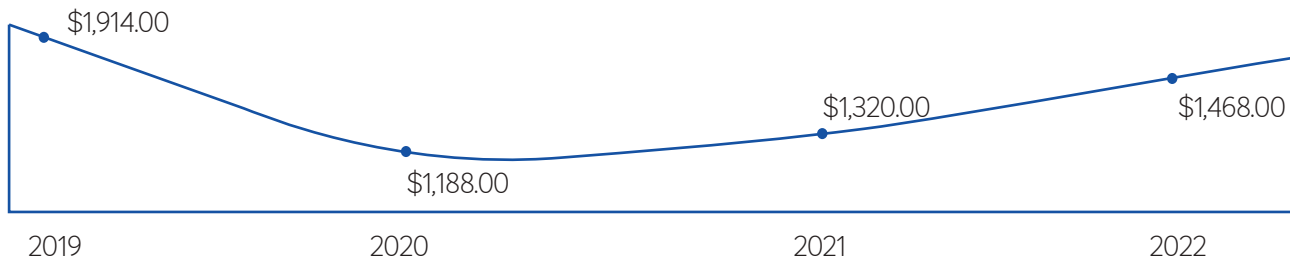


Figure 20: Trend of the estimated annual income of artists and workers from 2019 to 2022

In 2019, the income earned by artists and workers was slightly above Cambodia's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (\$1,671) in the same year. The average earning in 2021 was significantly lower than the average GDP in 2020 (\$1,577). While the average country's GDP recovered to \$1,625 in 2021, the artists and workers remained lower. The slow improvement can be due to the slow improvement of domestic and international tourists and the slow revival of the domestic economy.

TREND OF AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME EARNED BY ARTISTS AND WORKERS IN EACH CULTURAL INDUSTRY CATEGORY

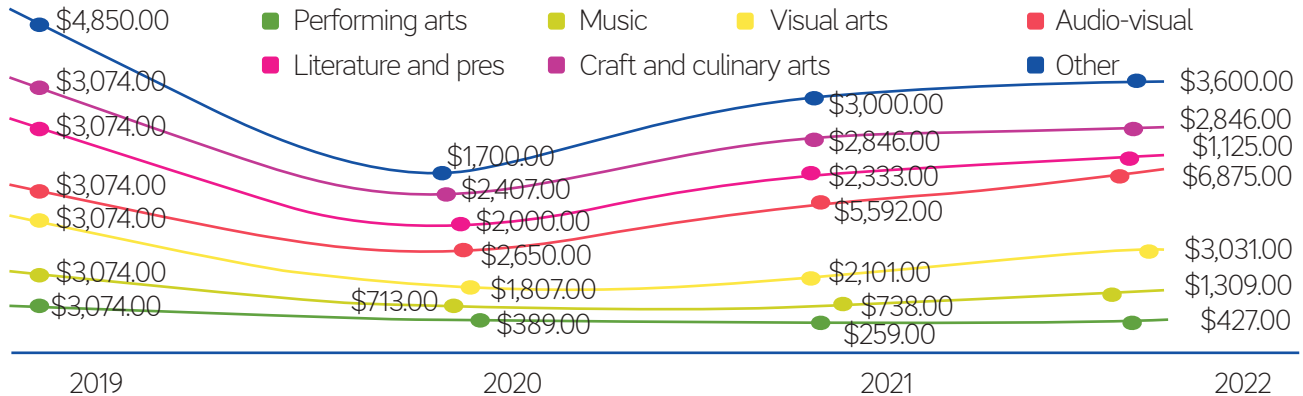
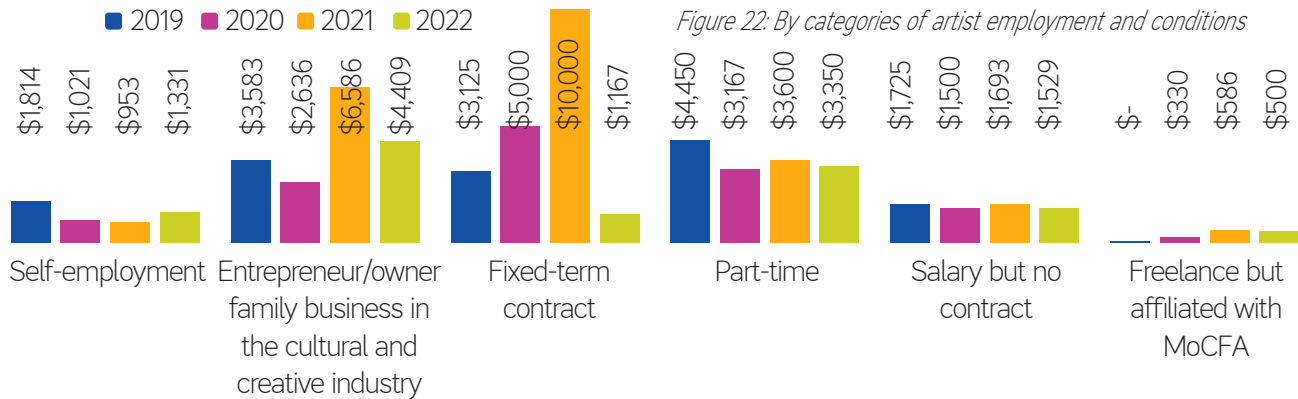


Figure 21: trend of average annual income earned by artists and workers in each cultural industry category

Performing arts earned the lowest (\$1,125 in 2019, \$259 in 2020) compared with music (earned \$1,676 in 2019, \$713 in 2020) the second lowest, and visual arts, the third lowest income earner (Fig. 21). Those artists and workers in other categories (selling goods and film producers) and craft and culinary arts were ranked the highest earners in cultural industries.

INCOME EARNED BY CATEGORIES OF ARTIST EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

Performing arts and music artists and workers earned the lowest amount of annual income compared with other categories. Their average annual income is significantly lower than Cambodia's gross domestic product per capita.



Those who are freelance and affiliated with MoCFA earn the lowest income (\$330-\$586), while self-employed artists earned the second lowest, between \$953 to \$1,814 a year. Those in family business or entrepreneur categories tend to earn more up to \$6,586 a year. Intermittent fixed contract artists could earn up to \$10,000 per year (Fig. 22)

INDEBTEDNESS STATUS OF ARTISTS AND WORKERS

Almost fifty percent of the artists and workers said they are in debt. At least eighty percent of artists and workers do not have savings either in cash or in their bank account.

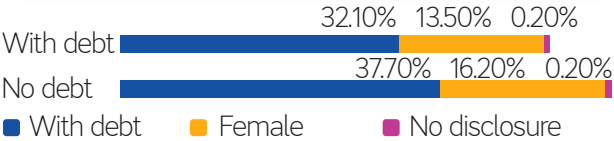


Figure 23: Indebtedness status of artists and workers

Regardless of their income generation activities and employment conditions, 45.8% of all artists and workers (a majority of which are males) are in debt as they borrowed money from different sources, including money lenders, relatives, microfinance institutions and banks (Fig. 23).



THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC

At least eighty percent of all artists and workers were severely affected by the pandemic. Those in music and performing art are affected severely, becoming the most vulnerable artists and workers in the informal cultural industry.

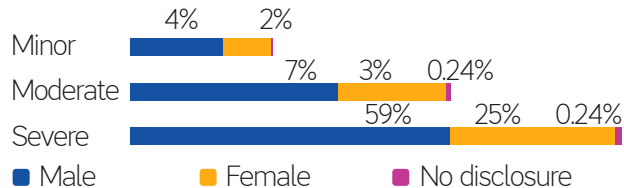


Figure 25: The degree to which the pandemic affects their livelihoods and occupation

Those who earned less annually, especially those in performing arts and music categories, tend to be affected severely by the pandemic-induced economic crisis. These artists and workers are prone and critically susceptible to adverse economic change.

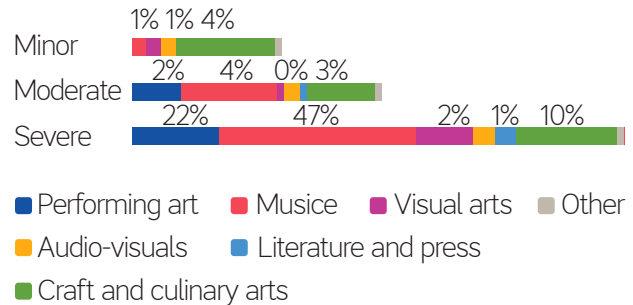


Figure 26: Severity of adverse impacts of the pandemic on each category of the cultural industry

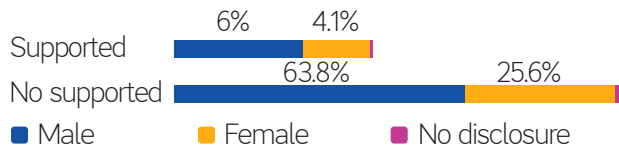


Figure 27: Support by different actors during the lockdown

Most artists and workers said that they did not receive any support for their livelihoods (88.80%), especially during the lockdown period (Fig. 27). Around 10% said they received support during the lockdown from commune councils and the government programs including cash for poor households.

CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

At least twenty-two percent of artists and workers are likely to switch their careers to other sectors for the betterment of their livelihoods.

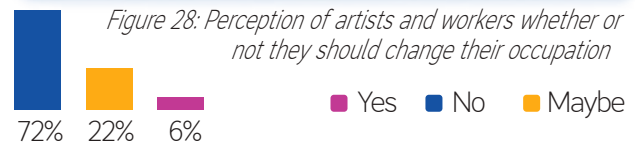


Figure 28: Perception of artists and workers whether or not they should change their occupation

Almost half of the artists and workers want to acquire skills in digital media and technologies for networking and enhancing their career prospects in the cultural industry.

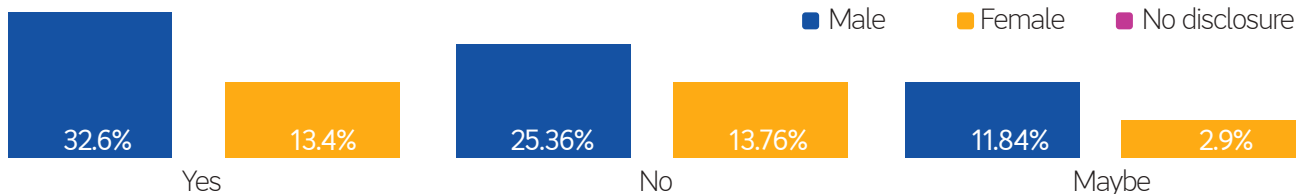


Figure 29: Willingness of artists and workers in learning digital technologies to enhance their career

Those who want to acquire skills in digital technologies tend to be artists and workers under 40 years old. While 39.12% of them said they do not want to acquire digital technology skills, 14.74% said they were unsure as to how learning skills in digital technologies would benefit their career in the future.

“Working in the cultural industry means preserving our invaluable “culture values and traditions” but such commitment has never been appreciated or recognized by relevant stakeholders either through financial or non-financial support and inspiration.”

“Some artists and workers said they want to leave the cultural industry because “no incentives, such as financial and non-financial support, are provided to them to continue working in the sector.”

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the findings, this study would like to convey and recommend the following points to relevant stakeholders:

- The survey found that artists and workers have contributed to the Cambodian economy, as attested by their ability to generate sustained income per capita. However, these artists and workers have not been supported by any social protection schemes, such as equity cards and ID poor cards, even though they have striven to maintain and preserve Cambodia's invaluable culture and traditions. There should be a social protection or insurance scheme for these artists and workers, especially those working in music

and performing arts who travel very often to perform elsewhere far from their community.

Maintaining Cambodia's invaluable culture

- requires financial and non-financial incentives to support artists and workers to preserve cultures and pass their experience and relevant skills in cultural industries to the next generations in their communities, districts and provinces. Governmental and non-governmental institutional stakeholders should provide incentives, such as grants and training programs, to support groups of artists, workers, and those who want to enter the cultural industry careers.

- Artists and workers lack access to information and opportunities as they live and work in different locations without proper representation. While most artists and workers are connected and facilitated by their group leaders in each village, commune and district, the leaders per se have very limited connection with governmental and non-governmental organizations to support their activities.
- There is a need to create a digital platform that allows all artists and workers to communicate and connect to share information and resources and explore opportunities related to cultural and creative industrial activities. Regular news should be shared on the platform that artists and workers from all walks of life, skills and areas can access. The platform will also allow artists and workers to express their opinions and share information that are essential for their careers and livelihoods.
- To all stakeholders, especially the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts (MoCFA) and the provincial department of culture and fine arts, there is a need to empower and value women's participation in cultural and creative industries in order to sustain and maintain women's roles in the cultural and creative economy. This can be also done through emotional support or motivation from MoCFA and or the communities.
- Digital technologies have influenced every aspect of the Cambodian economy and culture. Artists and workers have access to the internet and social media, but most artists and workers have limited capacity to use technologies to benefit their careers. At least 45% of the artists were interested in learning digital media and technologies to enrich their careers.



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