

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



ហ្វារពន្លឺសឺល្យាក់®

Phare Ponleu Selpak

changing lives through the arts



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Message from our Executive Director
- Who we are
- Covid 19: Impact and Response
- Lokru Bandul Ceremony
- Phare World Guinness Record
- Programs
- Figures
- Performing Arts School
- Visual and Applied Arts School
- Education
- Student Social Support & Development
- Financial Report
- Donors & Partners



MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Many words come to mind when reflecting on 2021 - fear, resilience, fatigue, vigour, hopelessness, opportunity, paralysis, catalysis, sadness, enlightenment. After faring relatively well through 2020 with limited COVID-19 cases in Cambodia and the organization carefully utilizing its reserves to survive, we were hopeful for a quick recovery as we started the first quarter by launching shows in Phnom Penh; only to be thrown into uncertainty a month later with the sudden rise of COVID-19 cases. By March schools were ordered closed with the rapid spread of the highly contagious omicron variant of the virus. Our hopes we yet again shattered. Most of the year was spent constantly adjusting plans and adapting to the ever-changing situation. However, one thing was certain, that the pandemic will last much longer than anyone expected. It was time to accept the inevitable of a new-normal, to accept that with the ongoing suspension of shows at our social enterprise and our own big top, our self-generated income will be restricted, and we are on our own for several years to come. We had to tap into our spirit of resilience and creativity to carve new paths forward.

The 24-hour non-stop circus marathon and our first virtual fundraising gala with the aim to set a Guinness World record was the epitome of Phare's unique creativity, incredible solidarity, and teamwork to demonstrate resilience at work first hand. A hugely successful event, never to be forgotten, put Phare in the spotlight in Cambodia and around the world, winning 12 awards from prestigious organizations. The efforts also brought in the much need lifeline of a \$150,000, thanks to generous donors from around the world and for the first time a large number of in-country donors, raising almost \$40,000.

2021 will also be never forgotten for the shock that rippled through the entire Phare and arts community when our beloved co-founder Lokru Srey Bandaul succumbed to COVID-19 in August. We were distraught to lose such a gentle, kind and compassionate soul so early. His passing has a profound impact on me. Leading the organization through this shock felt at times a bigger challenge than the rest of the pandemic related challenges combined. However, the community came together and curated a most moving memorial service to beautifully honour a man who has touched the lives of countless people. There is no doubt that Lokru Bandaul's story and the impact of his actions will live on.

Operationally priorities were readjusted with the social support program continuing to focus on COVID relief for the most affected families, while teachers engaged students in creative ways through worksheets, projects and online learning. Teachers also used any spare time to execute projects to generate income until schools reopened in the last quarter of the year. Of course, health and safety were prioritized in all activities.

At the end of the year, I look back with great pride for a team, which has endured so much yet made tremendous sacrifices to not only keep the organization alive but also continue to make an impact in the lives of our beneficiaries. I look back with gratitude for Lokru Bandaul for his guidance, vision, inspiration and most importantly compassion and love.... And I look forward with renewed vigour and hope for better times with the continuing support of our generous supporters.

Osman Khawaja
Executive Director
31 March 2022

WHO WE ARE

Phare Ponleu Selpak (PPS) or “The Brightness of the Arts” in Khmer is a non-profit Cambodian arts school changing the lives of children, young adults, and their families with art schools, educational programs, and student social support and development.

The story of Phare Ponleu Selpak began in 1986 in the Site 2 refugee camp on the Thai-Cambodian border, at the initiative of drawing teacher Véronique Decrop, who was determined to assist youths in overcoming their traumas of war through the arts.

When the camp closed in the early 1990s, Véronique and nine of her students - **Srey Bandaul, Tor Vutha, Khuon Det, Lon Lor, Chea Yoa, Svay Sareth, Chan Vuttouk, Dy Mala and Rin Nak** - chose to start a social and artistic center in Battambang to support the most disadvantaged children in the surrounding communities especially those left reeling after the genocide. Communities needed to be brought together, while the children needed a safe space to overcome their traumas.



After the initial years of using arts to heal the wounds of a society left in turmoil after the war, Phare evolved into comprehensive visual and performing arts schools. 28 years later, Phare Ponleu Selpak has strengthened its professional arts vocational training and has contributed to promote Cambodian culture and youth employability. Phare has also expanded its accessibility to youth from various parts of the countries through its financial aid program.

Through the programs, Phare continues to support children's self-development toward sustainable social development.

COVID 19: IMPACT AND RESPONSE

Following the announcement from Ministry, on March 21 2021, all schools, including Phare Ponleu Selpak, were obliged to close due to the COVID-19 rising number of cases. After the ordinance, all our school activities stopped immediately, causing considerable distress for students and families. The

In 2021, we continued to provide the most affected families with COVID relief packages donated by local and international sponsors to reduce the family burden during the critical period. 120 relief packages were distributed to 24 Low-income families 5 times between June and December. They received different package sizes depending on the family size (distinguished into three groups: families with 1 to 3 members, families with 4 to 6 members, and families with 7 to 9 members). The packages included rice, fish sauce, soy sauce, cooking oil, canned tuna, salt, sugar and soap.

The challenges faced included:

- Families in economic distress not encouraging their children to study online.
- Some students entirely quit school to work to support themselves and their families.
- Some students could not attend online lessons or trainings because they had no smartphones and/or no money for data service.
- With shows shut, students could not perform and earn an income.
- Less engagement of the students as they needed to find a job to support their families.
- Some activities were not possible to convert online (e.g. some circus techniques are too dangerous in nature to conduct without in-person supervision; some courses requiring access to computers and specific computer software)



COVID 19 IMPACT AND RESPONSE

Teachers responded by adjusting the programs to make them suitable for online or distance learning methods. And after the initial couple months of closure and when smaller group interactions were allowed, we started engaging the performing arts students in specific performance and creation projects in small groups following COVID prevention guidelines. The final year Visual & Applied Arts students were given access to computers to 5 - 8 people at a time, sitting in safe distances, so they could work on their personal projects.

The Kindergarten teachers prepared weekly worksheet assignments for parents to pick up and take home to the children to work on. This way the parents had creative activities to keep the young ones engaged with.

Meanwhile, many teachers took on income generating projects to make up for lost revenues to keep salaries, albeit at a pay cut, going. A lot of effort was put in fundraising events and staying relevant with our supporters.



While the uncertainty and constant changes kept us on our toes, at a more strategic level we have realized the value of online and hybrid learning and how quality creative digital content is key for the future. We also experienced engaging many more donors through the virtual fundraiser as the barrier to participate in a physical gala had been removed. These lessons have put us on a path to push for hybrid learning, and more programs in digital content creation i.e. for videos and film.

LOKRU SREY BANDAUL

We would have never thought a man whose life so purpose driven with many more dreams yet to fulfill would leave us so abruptly.

The impact Lokru Bandaul has had on us, is hard to capture and describe. He was the spirit of Phare – the light that shown bright. Many saw beyond the veil of gentleness, a man driven by a deep passion for humanity and the arts - more specifically how art enables us to connect with our inner selves and empowers us to find peace and align with our higher purposes; something which he experienced and embodied himself.

Lokru Bandaul believed that each of us is an artist – that we all have a well of creativity within. He learnt from his teacher in the refugee camp, Veronique Decrop, that all you have to do is to put a pencil or paintbrush in the hands of a person. Just by providing the tools we enable the creativity to flow – enabling transformations – even enlightenment.

In his last years at Phare, Lokru found a renewed energy and with quiet determination he led the way, usually from behind the scenes, stepping up into the front when needed but always with humility. When he stood up to speak everyone listened not just out of respect but because he spoke directly to the heart.

He was the one behind bringing art festivals into Battambang town, constantly engaging with the artists and anyone willing to lend him an ear, encouraging us to come out of the shadows and use art as a medium to first heal ourselves, then use it to give voice to issues and raise the collective consciousness.

Lokru Bandaul is a hero to many – a hero who sacrificed his entire life for the revival and development of the arts. A hero who enlightened countless lives. He took time to connect one on one, listening deeply and sharing from his heart. He believed arts to be a crucial element for society to live peacefully and develop creatively.

His last unfinished paintings, of Buddha and celestial planets and stars is almost a foreboding to his early departure – as if he was called to ascend to higher dimensions. Many blank canvases he left behind – now inviting us to pick our brushes and create a better world.

Those of us who have crossed paths with him, however brief, all remember him for his kindness, compassionate nature and gentle smile. May he rest in peace.

"We are fortunate to be born as human beings, and get to know other people around us, so we should be tolerant, forgiving, loving others because when we die, we can never see each other again. The Earth is just a temporary abode for all of us, so while living, as a friend, a brother, a sister, a father, a mother, a family, one must love each other. The Earth is a place for sharing love, experience, forgiveness, compassion to each other. We only live once; we have a chance which is "now" to do all the good things because death could separate and take us away forever"

- Srey Bandaul 2021





PHARE GUINNESS WORLD RECORD



On March 7th and 8th, 2021 Phare Ponleu Selpak made history when 90 of our circus performers succeeded in performing a live 24-hour circus show in Battambang, viewed by half a million people online. This was a Guinness World Record Attempt designed to help us raise funds as we struggled for survival as a result of COVID.

As well as Cambodian viewers, global circus fans from dozens of countries across the planet including the United States, Japan, Canada, UK, France, Ukraine, Greece, Turkey, China and Australia joined the event via online viewing events, YouTube and Facebook.

This incredible effort didn't go unnoticed with 10 awards won in 2021 for the Phare into the Future event, including the prestigious Global Stevie Awards in the following categories:

- Gold for Best Cultural Event 2021
- Gold for Best Event For a Cause 2021
- Gold for Best Communications Campaign For A Non-Profit 2021
- Gold for Best Fundraising Event 2021

PHARE GUINNESS WORLD RECORD

"The Guinness World Record attempt for the longest circus show was a fantastic event that engaged almost 100 artists, students, staff, volunteers and the community. It was our first attempt, which lasted 24 hours 10 min. Coordinating such an epic challenge was the best experience I have ever had. It required a strong determination and collaboration among artists and all participants and well preparation to ensure its success".

Vuthyra Thang - HR Administrator

"It was an essential event for Phare to raise funds to continue its mission during Covid 19. I remember it was a difficult time for me, but also for the artists, students, and other staff. However, we worked hard to present all the performances we had to Cambodian and international audiences. We did it!"

Brendy Nem - Circus Teacher

"I'm so happy I was part of the amazing event like the 24 hours circus marathon. I put a lot of effort and went all in for my performances, and so did other artists. I was so touched to see our unity for this great cause."

Seyla Hang - Contemporary Dance Teacher

"What I would never forget is that everyone in my group was so excited when we found out that we had to perform at 5am. We all stayed awake the whole night. For me, I didn't want to miss even a second of every breathtakingly show that was being performed until our turn"

Sarann Yu - Contemporary Dance Student



PROGRAMS

PERFORMING ARTS
SCHOOL

VISUAL AND APPLIED
ARTS SCHOOL

EDUCATION

STUDENT SOCIAL
SUPPORT &
DEVELOPMENT

2021 PHARE NUMBERS

207,274

Followers combined on Facebook,
Instagram and Twitter

over 1 million

people reached through our annual
social media posts

459

Students from VAAS and PAS

185

Kindergarten Students

84

Total Staff

800

the young people supported by
Social Support Program

2,781

hours of courses
taken by the staff

120

Covid-19 Relief
package distributed



PERFORMING ARTS SCHOOL

The Performing Arts School (PAS) provides four main arts skills training including circus, dance, music, and theatre. In 2021, 331 students (148 female) enrolled in the school, considering leisure classes, preparatory and vocational training.

- **Leisure program** (101 students), given foundations of traditional, classic games related to each skill within the circus, modern, classical and traditional music and theatrical games.
- **Preparatory program** (88 students) given a foundation in various disciplines of juggling, flexibility, acrobatics, and balancing as well as three different musical forms such as modern, classical and traditional.
- **Vocational program** (142 students) students trained in classical and traditional gestures, juggling contortions, acrobatics, banquine, trapeze, aerial silk, balancing and rola bola,





CIRCUS

Leisure program: 16 (5 Female)
Preparatory program: 24 (5 Female)
Vocational Program: 40 (10 Female)

DANCE

Leisure program: 10 (8 Female)
Preparatory program: 39 (28 Female)
Vocational Program: 31 (22 Female)

THEATRE

Leisure program: 3 (3 Female)
Preparatory program: 11 (7 Female)
Vocational Program: 10 (8 Female)

MUSIC

Leisure program: 113 (40 Female)
Preparatory program: 14 (7 Female)
Vocational Program: 20 (5 Female)

In 2021 students and teachers were involved in workshops, training and exchange experiences including English classes, Computer classes, Child Protection Refresher, Acting for Screen, Do No Harm, Coaching for Leaders, Leadership and Life Skills, PAS mission and values and Ready for Business Facilitators' training, MHM & ASRHR, Contemporary Dance and Hip Hop.

During COVID time students had the opportunities to perform both live and recorded performances under the Big Top for global virtual audiences in order to keep on building their capacities in performing skills

HIGHLIGHTS

- Circus marathon for the Guinness World Record attempt for the longest circus show 24h and 1 minute on March 7th and 8th, 2021 under the Big-top of PPSA in Battambang.
- Contemporary dance show called "Living drawing", "moon of love" in the memorial service of Mr. SREY Bandal on November 20th, 2021 in PPSA, Battambang.
- A diversified skills performance called "Inheritance" created.
- Several Hip Hop performances as well as internal Breakdance Battle supported by Norec.
- The contemporary Lakhon khaol (circus with dance) performance was refreshed and improved.
- Performed Blessing Dance for the Provincial hall for their new members of women association announcement on December 8th, 2021.



VISUAL AND APPLIED ARTS SCHOOL

The Visual and Applied Arts School (VAAS) provides a 3-year arts vocational training program to enable careers in the creative industries. Students obtain a solid visual arts foundation and specialize in graphic design, animation or continue with visual arts.

In 2021, 128 students (62 females) were enrolled in the program while 16 students (10 females) graduated from the program with 100% of them finding jobs one month after graduation.



The beginning of the year saw 23 new students selected out of 66 applicants for the vocational training program, however after 2 months of studies the school closures disrupted classes. When school reopened, social distancing requirements only allowed smaller student groups at a time. The focus was to assist the final year students completing their projects and the 2nd year students completing their course work so they could head off to their 3-month long internships. Classes for the new intake were postponed to January 2022.

After some strategic decisions, the teachers worked on revamping the curriculum, shortening the vocational training programs to 21 months for Graphic Design and 23 months for Animation and Visual Arts. This will allow to quicker integration into jobs in the growing creative industry, while make room for the future expansion of VAAS into a diploma and eventually degree program.

The teachers also expanded their video skills by taking on several video production projects for the likes of UNDP and Forum ZFD and by assisting with with several performance videos, both for live virtual events and pre-recorded events.

After the passing our Lokru Bandal, the art school students spent a good month preparing the memorial service - creating a deeply meaningful memorial are installation and giant lotus made together with the wider community.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Curriculum revamp.
- VAAS re-opened from October to December 2021 for VAAS Students final year and 2nd year students.
- VAAS team was produced videos for FORUM ZFD, UNDP, and VOICE during school closure.
- VAAS department created and executed creative installations to honor Mr Srey Bandaul.



Video Shooting of Smile Project at Home for Forum ZFD



Video Documentary Shooting for UNDP Mine Action at Samlot and at Koh Kralor, Battambang



Video making and Sculptures dedicated to Co-Founder Mr. SREY Bandaul

EDUCATION

Kindergarten

In 2020-2021, we had 170 (82 female) students studying in Khmer class, and we had 15 (8 female) students studying in English class. In Khmer class, we had 5 subjects, such as Khmer language, Math, Social studying (community), Science and Motion. English language was also taught in the Khmer class. We also integrated art for art classes like drawing, dance and music in the Kindergarten program. With an Art Education Specialist brought on board, all teachers were trained in how to use arts to teach the main subjects as well.

THANKS TO THE COOPERATION WITH VISUAL ARTS SCHOOL, WE PROVIDED DRAWING CLASSES TO 185 KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS IN 4 CLASSES, 14 TIMES DURING THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-2021.

Child Development Centre

In this academic year 2020-2021, we had 50 students (Female 31). Following the announcement of the ministry, we were obliged to close the school and CDC teachers managed to use online platforms to keep up with the learning agenda of the students. Teachers created ad-hoc lessons that were adaptable to online tools, and accessible for students to work on. In families where electronic devices were not available, teachers designed worksheets and distributed them.

COVID-19 Response

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the obligation to close the school, the Kindergarten teachers provided worksheets to students through their parents. Parents were shown on how to have their children use the worksheets. The teachers also supported students from a distance through videos or photos, helping kids to complete their homework.

Computer Classes

We provided computer classes to 29 students (Female 13) at Visual and Applied Arts Classes in the academic year 2020-2021 and to 5 students (Female 4) for 1 class at Performing Arts School in the academic year 2020-2021. Besides, there were 11 PPS staff (Female 2) who joined Computer Class.

English Classes

Prior to school closure 60 students across VAAS and PAS were taking in English language classes. However, with school closure, we shifted the English classes online, using Google classroom for lessons and assignments. After 3 months, we moved to the Zoom platform for easier communication with students and for checking their improvement in speaking and reading. We has some students from the performing arts school not able to continue the online lessons for various reasons. 48 students across the 2 schools kept engaged with the online English classes.



STUDENT SOCIAL SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT

The **Student Social Support & Development Department** of Phare Ponleu Selpak is improving the standard of living for local children and their families. We aim to promote human dignity and respect for children's rights: human dignity implies respect and recognition of the value of human life, and children's rights include the right to education, food access, health care, fair treatment, and a violence-free childhood and being heard. We take a holistic approach providing emotional support as well as professional and life skills training throughout their time with us.

The Social Support Program works to support the 800 young people accessing Phare's programs and attending the on-site Government School. Of those 800, 220 particularly vulnerable children are appointed one specific Social Worker to manage their case.

There are four social workers in the team; each holding between 35 and 50 cases distributed by commune. They are responsible for monitoring cases and ensuring that children live in a family setting with enough food and parental care, accessing education and access essential services.

Target Area: 6 Sangkats (Ochar, Chamcar Samrong, Toul Taek, Svay Por, Watkor and Preak Preasdach), in Battambang municipality, Battambang province.

Target group: Vulnerable children/young adults and their families.

Social Support Staff: 10 (1 Student Social Support & Development Manager, 1 Health Service, 1 Student Service, 1 Nutrition & Health Specialist, 4 Social Workers and 2 Cooks)

Child Protection Program:

Under this sponsorship, students receive food support, health and referral service, and a stipend for personal development. The stipend and food allocation are apportioned after a needs assessment by one of PPS's social workers.

In 2021, 83 students received lunch support; during Covid, students were required to study online and do worksheets from home, and in this new context, we provided lunch support to 40 children.



Love Does Not Hurt Project

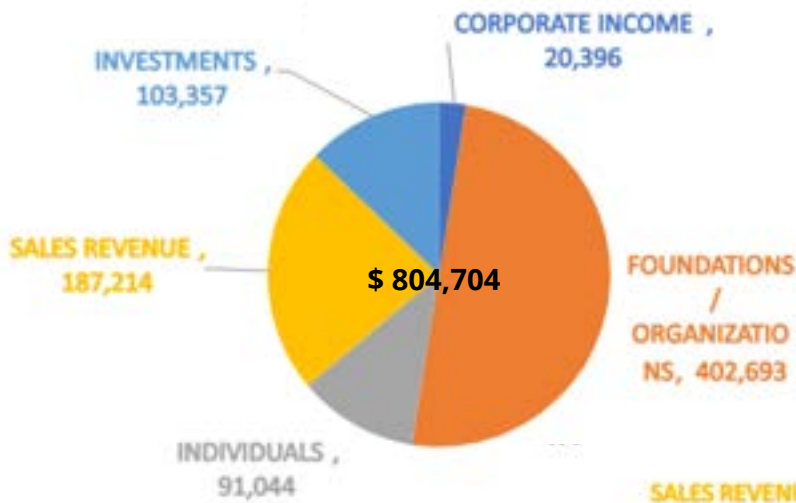
The regional campaign against corporal punishment is a project that aims to “contribute to the elimination of corporal punishment of children and adolescents and the promotion of the concept and practice of Positive Discipline (PD)” in four (4) ASEAN countries. Represented by four (4) organizations called country partners, they develop synergies to earn more political influence and overall effect in Southeast Asia. Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) is the lead organization in implementing this Project. PETA realizes the Project in the Philippines and coordinates the overall implementation on the ASEAN level, together with GabFai Community Theatre Inc. of Thailand, Phare Ponleu Selpak Association (PPSA) in Cambodia, and Association for Community Development (ACD) in Laos PDR.

During the reporting period of 2021, the project team provided capacity building about Positive Discipline and Corporal Punishment to 27 youth (18 female), 62 teachers (female 25), and 22 commune council members (female 4). In addition they:

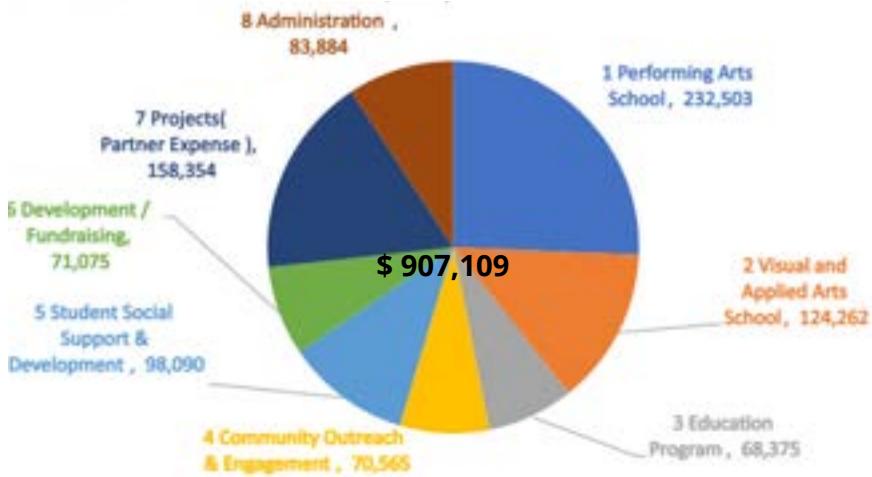
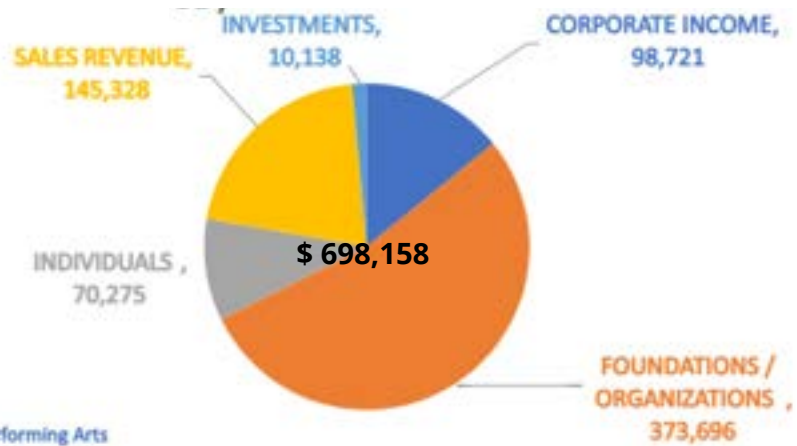
- Conducted community awareness on children’s rights to 333 participants (female 268)
- Meet with communities and relevant stakeholders to reflect on child abuse and promote children’s rights, 16 locals attended (female 2)



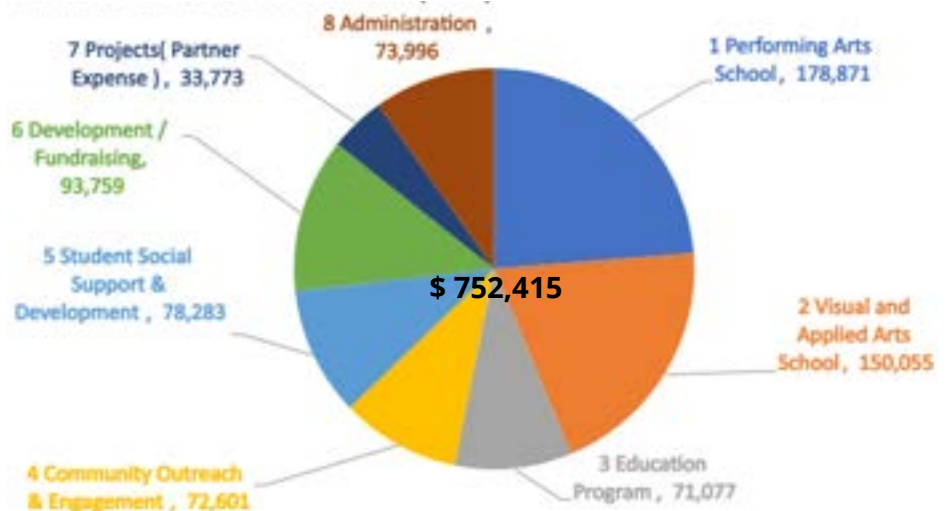
FINANCIAL REPORT



2021 Income in USD



2021 Expense by program in USD



DONORS & PARTNERS

DONORS, DEVELOPMENT & PROGRAM PARTNERS



GOVERNMENT PARTNERS





changing lives through the arts

P.O Box 316 BTB

Anh chanh Village Ochar Commune

Battambang Kingdom of Cambodia

+855 (0)53 952 424

www.phareps.org