



Joint Media Release

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AUSTRALIA, THE ASIA FOUNDATION AND FUTURE FORUM CELEBRATE THE NEXT GENERATION OF POLICY THINKERS

Today, Future Forum, in partnership with the Australian Government and The Asia Foundation, hosted the graduation ceremony of the Inclusive Policy Fellowship 2025 and launched the capstone publication, *“Small Ideas for Inclusive Futures.”*

The event brought together government representatives, think tank and civil society leaders and senior research fellows to celebrate the transition of 28 exceptional young Cambodian researchers from trainees to thought leaders.

Over the past 12 months, this diverse cohort of fellows including women, indigenous people and LGBTQ+ advocates have undergone rigorous training in policy analysis under the Australian Government funded Ponlok Chomnes II program. Their work culminated in 30 youth-driven policy solutions focused on lean governance, structural equity and efficient state interventions, compiled into a capstone book to contribute to Cambodia's evidence-informed civic discourse.

At the graduation, Australian Ambassador to the Kingdom of Cambodia, Derek Yip, emphasised Australia's longstanding support to Cambodia's knowledge sector. Ambassador Yip noted the advantages created by Cambodia's young population, and the importance of investing in young people's skills, ideas and leadership. He said the Inclusive Policy Fellowship reflected Australia's broader support for Cambodia's human capital development and future leaders, with fellows contributing evidence and fresh perspectives on issues ranging from progressive taxation and decentralised public spaces to digital basic income and gender-responsive infrastructure.

Ms. Dolgion Aldar, Program Director of Ponlok Chomnes II, highlighted the program's strategic partnership with Future Forum. “Young people are not always given enough space in policy discussions, but this fellowship shows what becomes possible when they are,” Ms. Aldar said. “The fellows have used evidence, lived experience and strong policy research skills to engage with complex issues. Many have taken their analysis into public debate, national media and direct conversations with decision-makers, showing how young researchers can contribute meaningfully to Cambodia's policy conversations today.”

The event featured an official certificate presentation, a book reveal and presentations by three selected fellows reflecting on their fellowship journey and research. The capstone book, *“Small Ideas for Inclusive Futures”* explores critical, human-centric solutions across six thematic areas: advancing equal citizenship, redefining the social contract, building a fairer economy, educating for future careers, safeguarding healthy populations and designing human-centric living spaces.

The Inclusive Policy Fellowship is an initiative of the Ponlok Chomnes II: Data and Dialogue for Development in Cambodia program, funded by the Australian Government and implemented by The Asia Foundation. The program strengthens Cambodia's knowledge sector by building collaboration between policymakers, researchers, and communities, and integrating gender equality, disability and social inclusion into research and dialogue.

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