

Program Overview:

Host a workshop at Safe Havens Meeting 2026

SEA Differently: An Asian Lens on Artistic Freedom

1. What is the 'Safe Havens Meeting' that the workshop will be part of?

Active since 2013, the annual Safe Havens meeting has established itself as a key global network meeting between artists, activists, NGOs, lawyers and intergovernmental organisations, on topics related to artistic freedom and support to artists, writers and other culture producers and academics who face threats, persecution and censorship – sometimes referred to as the Arts Rights Justice sector.

In 2026, Safe Havens will come to Southeast Asia for the first time, thanks to a collaboration between SHIFT, Living Arts International (including Mekong Cultural Hub and Cambodian Living Arts), and ArtsEquator, working with local host organisation CICADA, Cambodia's membership association for the Cultural & Creative Industries.

The partners have mutually agreed to co-organise the Safe Havens meeting in SEA, seeing significant opportunity in cross-pollinating our local, regional and global networks for a two-way exchange of ideas and experiences that will enrich both the international policy and funding ecosystem for artistic freedom and the on-the-ground reality for artists and cultural groups regionally.

2. What do you mean by artistic freedom?

Artistic freedom gained traction as a priority issue for the international cultural sector around 15 years ago. Since then, there has been a proliferation of INGOs and CSOs documenting violations of artistic freedom, and providing support to artists, including relocating those at risk.

In large part, these have involved artists persecuted for works which transgress political or social boundaries. While this is urgent work, such cases may dominate and shape the narrative of what constitutes artistic freedom, at least on the global stage. There is a risk of blurring the boundaries between artists and human rights defenders.

This may cause us to overlook and even undermine the experiences of hundreds of thousands of arts and cultural practitioners who may not position themselves on the front lines of political opposition, but whose artistic freedom is nonetheless hampered for a myriad of reasons.

UNESCO's six rights of artistic freedom provide a useful starting point in unpacking this complex issue:

- Right to create freely without censorship and intimidation
- Right to have artistic work supported, distributed and remunerated
- Right to freedom of movement
- Right to freedom of association
- Right to social and economic rights protection
- Right to participate in cultural life

With Safe Havens 2026, SH|FT, and Living Arts International want to create space for conversations that expand what we mean when we talk about artistic freedom. In joining forces, we hope to open up new pathways for strengthening artists' ability to play a vital role in society.

3. What are the online sessions I am expected to take part in if my proposal is selected?

As well as supporting you with a micro-grant to run your workshop, MCH (on behalf of the Safe Havens project team) arranges an orientation meeting and two online networking sessions with all the selected hosts in October and November. Each session will last two hours, from 5pm-7pm ICT (Bangkok time). The dates are set in advance and will be:

- Monday 19 Oct
- Monday 2 Nov
- Monday 16 Nov

These sessions will be facilitated by the Safe Havens Workshop Coordinator, Som Silak, and MCH Program Manager Zun Ei Phyu, both of whom will also be present with you in Siem Reap.

Participating in these sessions is a requirement of the program, and all selected Hosts are expected to attend all sessions. The purpose of these sessions is to:

- Build networks and connections between the Hosts
- Share practices, interests and experiences that will enrich dialogues between cultural practitioners in Asia, which can also support your workshop preparation.
- Ensure the Hosts are well briefed on Safe Havens, and have the opportunity to strengthen the connection between their session and the overall program
- Support the Hosts and the Safe Havens Production Team to be well-prepared for the smooth-running of your workshops

4. What do selected Workshop Hosts have to do during the Safe Havens meeting in Siem Reap?

Aside from running their sessions, the main expectation of the Hosts will be to fully engage with the rest of the Safe Havens Meeting, for example by joining and enjoying the other talks, workshops and experiences on offer at the Meeting, and using the chance to meet and connect with the other participants.

Hosts are expected to:

- Arrive to Siem Reap on 1st December 2026 (except any hosts who are from Siem Reap)
 - Logistics arrangements will be made for you by the Safe Havens Production Team
- Take part in a Hosts workshop, site check and preparation for your session on December 2nd 2026 (half day)
- Run your 90 minutes workshop for approximately 30 participants on either December 3rd or 4th at the programmed time (time set by Safe Havens team)
- Join the other programs of Safe Havens Meeting 2026 on December 2nd, 3rd, 4th 2026
- Depart from Siem Reap on 5th December 2026

5. What are the benefits of this program?

By running a workshop at Safe Havens Meeting 2026, the Hosts* will benefit from:

- A \$300 USD unrestricted micro-grant to support organizing your workshop
- Growing your networks in Asia by meeting and exchanging with the other Hosts
- Raising the profile of your work/ your concerns with a global community of practitioners from the arts and civil society who are interested in artistic freedom
- Being supported to attend the Safe Havens Meeting in Siem Reap, with all logistics and costs** supported by Safe Havens from 1st-5th December 2026 (including travelling date of 1st and 5th)
- Getting new insights into artistic freedom through exchanging with the other participants of the Safe Havens Meeting

** In the case of workshops organized by a group or collective, we will be able to support a maximum of **two** representatives of the group to attend the Safe Havens meeting.*

*** Flight costs can only be covered for travel within Asia.*

6. What resources will be made available for my session?

We will ensure that you are provided with a physical space in which to conduct your session, which will be either an indoor workshop room or a semi-outdoor space (with a roof cover). We will have chairs, tables and floor mats available. We will not provide sound and light equipment - and we do not expect to select hi-tech workshops.

If you need materials for your session e.g. paper and pens, fabric or food - you will be expected to purchase these with your micro-grant. If you want to buy these materials on arrival in Siem Reap, we will have staff/ volunteers who can help you to do this.

The session should be delivered in English as this will be the common working language; if you need to arrange translation this must be budgeted within your micro-grant.

7. Who are the target participants for this program?

To be eligible for this program, you must be:

- A cultural or social practitioner, working on art and social action in Asia; this includes but is not limited to artists, managers, researchers, and rights defenders
- A citizen of Southeast Asia, South Asia or East Asia
 - If applying on behalf of a collective or an organization, it is expected that the collective or organisation is based in one of these places, and at least one person who will facilitate the workshop has citizenship of one of the above places
 - If you are applying for two people to facilitate the workshop, the second facilitator may have citizenship of another country. However please note that we can only support travel within Asia.
- Able to commit to all key program dates, particularly the 3 online orientation and networking sessions (2 hours per session from Zoom) and the travel dates for Safe Havens in Siem Reap 2026.

To be eligible, the workshop that you propose must be:

- Connected to the theme '*SEA Differently: An Asian Lens on Artistic Freedom*'
- Interactive in nature
- Suitable for a group of approximately 30 people
- Designed to be 90 minutes long

8. What are the selection criteria for this program?

The criteria that we will use to select participants for this program include:

- Adherence to the eligibility criteria
- Contribution of the workshop to the Safe Havens theme
- Degree of interactivity
- Ability of the hosts to effectively deliver the workshop
- Evidence of interest and enthusiasm to take part, including commitment to sharing and learning with fellow hosts and participants of Safe Havens
- Originality and creativity

Our selection will also consider diversity of perspectives, voices and themes; and we will seek diversity among the hosts in terms of geography, identity and practice.

9. What is the selection process for this program?

- When you send your proposal, we will confirm that we have received it. If you have not heard from us within 3 working days of sending your application, please contact us again.
- Shortly after the closing date, we will review all proposals for eligibility
- All proposals meeting the eligibility criteria will then be reviewed according to the selection criteria listed above
 - A scoring system will be used so that applications can be consistently compared
- Shortlisted candidates will be invited for a short online interview on June

15th or 16th 2026

- All candidates will get the email of the selection result by June 17th 2026

10. Recap of key dates

| Date | Time | Activity |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Wednesday, May 13th 2026 | 5pm ICT (Bangkok time) | Q&A session for interested applicants |
| Monday June 1st 2026 | 11:59 PM ICT | Deadline for proposals |
| June 15th-16th 2026 | Various | Interviews with shortlisted candidates |
| June 17th 2026 | n/a | Results communicated to all applicants |
| October 19th | 5pm - 7pm ICT (Bangkok time) | Orientation session |
| November 2nd | 5pm - 7pm ICT (Bangkok time) | Online exchange session 1 |
| November 16th | 5pm - 7pm ICT (Bangkok time) | Online exchange session 2 |
| December 1st-5th, 2026 | n/a | Attending Safe Havens Meeting in Siem Reap (including travel days) |