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គម្រោងការងារសម្រាប់ការអភិវឌ្ឍន៍សេរីភាព
CCIM
Cambodian Center for Independent Media

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

Gender Study in Cambodia

Analysis of media knowledge and behavior among Cambodian youth

YOUTH VOICES MATTER!

Supporting independent youth media in Cambodia

Background

DW Akademie is Germany's leading organization for international media development. It supports the development of free and transparent media systems by strengthening journalistic quality and media competency. DW Akademie has been active in media development in Cambodia for over a decade. The organization has teamed up with the Women's Media Centre of Cambodia (WMC) and the Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM) for the project "Youth Voices Matter!" (2020 to 2022), which is financed through a grant under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, funded by the European Union. The objective of this project is to empower rural and urban youth and university students to use media in order to participate in the public debate and democratic processes. In this way, they can effectively exercise their human rights to Freedom of Expression (FoE) and Access to Information (AtI) as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this **Gender Study** is to better understand the media knowledge and behavior of Cambodian youth and identify their learning needs and interests regarding FoE and AtI. In addition, it identifies the risks and challenges associated with FoE and AtI for young Cambodians aged 15 to 30 years. A special focus of the study is its gender aspect. The objective here is to determine whether there are gender-specific differences in terms of knowledge, learning needs and interests, as well as specific risks and challenges associated with FoE and AtI.

Target Groups/Areas

The **Gender Study** was conducted based on a qualitative survey with 237 participants (141 or 60% of whom were females). The participants included youths, university students (university students majoring in media with advanced media knowledge and students in other fields [hereafter: general students]) and young media professionals. These three clusters concur with the main target groups of the project "Youth Voices Matter!". In this study, the second cluster is segmented once more to consider the different levels

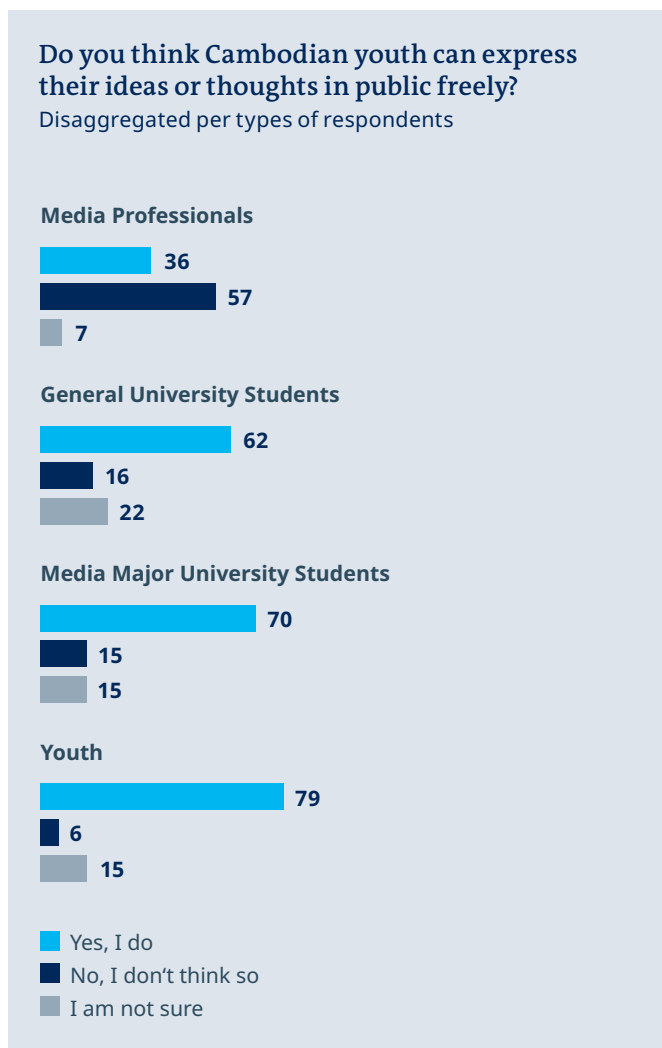


Figure 1 Perceived level of Freedom of Expression
Source: Own research. Numbers in percent.

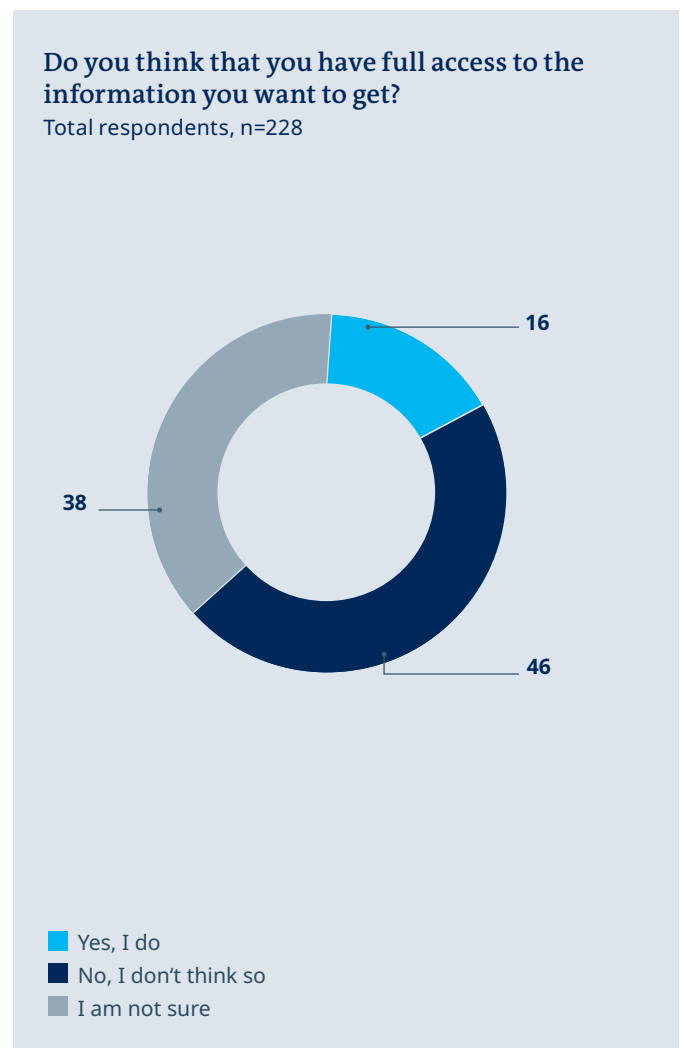


Figure 2 Perceived level of Access to Information
Source: Own research. Numbers in percent.

of media expertise between media students and those studying other subjects. Participants were from Phnom Penh and the provinces of Battambang and Siem Reap.

Methodology

The study was conducted with all respondents online. Questionnaires covered relevant questions about their knowledge, learning needs and challenges in relation to FoE and AtI. As the number of participants was limited, the results are not representative of the general opinions or attitudes of all Cambodian youth. The questionnaire included multiple choice and open questions. Based on the survey results, recommendations were developed for the implementation of the project.

Key Findings

Media and Information Literacy (MIL): The participants' knowledge of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is very limited. Only a little more than one-third of all respondents (39%) had heard or learned about it. A gender difference is noticeable here as half of the male respondents (51%) but only a third of the female ones (31%) demonstrate a basic knowledge of MIL. While knowledge about the concept of MIL is relatively low, the general roles and functions of media in a democratic society are much clearer to the participants (68%). Journalists, media professionals and media students clearly understand this (100%), but awareness of the topic is significantly lower among youth (60%) and general university students (45%).

Freedom of Expression (FoE): Most respondents (73%) understand the basic idea of FoE. While many know what FoE is about, fewer (68%) have the impression that Cambodian youth can freely express their ideas in public. However, looking at the survey sub-groups, we see that only 36% of media professionals and journalists share this opinion. By contrast, 79% of the youth believe that they can express themselves freely in public. Another difference is that more male (71%) than female youth (63%) feel like they enjoy freedom of expression in public. Asked to explain this, the participants cite discrimination against women, social pressure, shyness and adherence to traditional norms and behaviors. Only 23% of all participants think that policy makers take their opinions or voices reflected through the media into consideration when making decisions. 10% more males than females think their opinion counts on the political level. The main risk or challenge respondents see to their right to FoE are threats to their personal security.

Access to Information (AtI): Half of the respondents (50%) confirm that they have already 'known, heard or learned about AtI', while a third states that they are not sure (33%); less than a quarter (17%) have never heard about it. There is no gender difference with respect to knowledge about AtI. The participants of the survey access information mainly through three types of media: 1) internet (91%), 2) broadcast media such as radio and TV (43%) and 3) print media (20%). The participants express a special interest in accessing information on social issues (77%), education, job/career (71%), health (71%) and politics (63%). However, almost half of the respondents (46%) don't think they have full access to the information they want because of 1) false information; 2) perceived influence of the government on media outlets; 3) media bias and 4) censorship of information

(e.g. politics). It is striking that 79% of media professionals and journalists believe that their access is limited, but only 37% of the media major university students do. Only 16% of all participants are convinced they have full access to information. According to the participants, 'political information' is the most difficult information to access (77%), followed by 'law and crime' (43%) and 'social issues' (37%). The obstacles or difficulties related to AtI that respondents most often report are 1) disinformation, misinformation and a lack of reliable sources, 2) a lack of trust in information, 3) a lack of independent media, 4) governmental control and 5) digital vulnerability (cookies or viruses). A little more than a quarter (27%) of all respondents sees a difference between how young females and males use media to access information, although another quarter (25%) does not believe there is a difference. The most frequently cited reason for such a presumed gender difference in information access is a 'difference in skills to use media'. Young women seem to be more disadvantaged here.

Participation in a project on Media and Information Literacy

The majority of respondents (74%) are interested in participating in a youth MIL project. There is no difference between the genders here. However, significantly more young media professionals and journalists (93%) than youth (83%), media major

Do you think your opinion voiced through the media is taken into consideration by policy makers for governmental decisions?

Disaggregated by gender

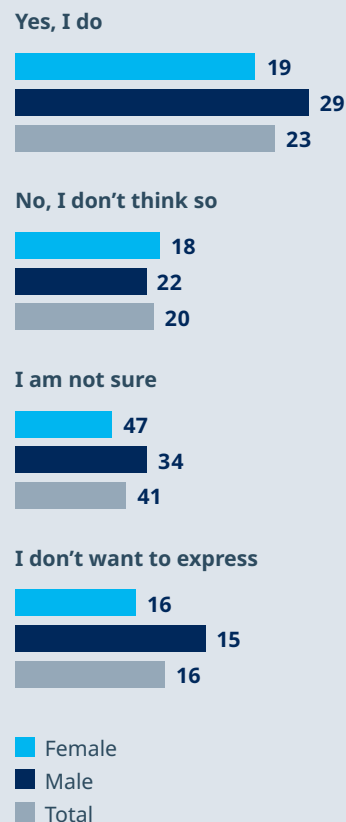


Figure 3 Perceived impact of youth statements in the media on policy makers
Source: Own research. Numbers in percent, totals are rounded.

university students (77%) and general university students (57%) want to take part in such a program. The main topics they are interested in are: 1) MIL, FoE and AtI in general; 2) laws and rights regarding FoE and AtI; 3) different media platforms; 4) media safety and security; 5) identifying and analysing factual news versus disinformation and 6) gender equality in the media sector. The respondents would like to receive capacity building in the media field through activities such as 1) media workshops/events /public forums as well as 2) trainings and coaching. They are also interested in general information about media education, study materials and leaflets. Regarding potential risks of participating in a MIL workshop, the most common concerns are 1) finding the time for it, 2) political reasons, 3) personal security/safety and 4) social and family pressure. Only a very few participants said they worried about health risks in connection with Covid-19.

Gender Gap Analysis

41% of all study participants think that men and women are treated equally in Cambodian society. An almost equal number (39%) disagrees. While 44% of all male respondents are convinced that men and women are treated equally, only 39% of all females share this opinion. Those respondents who do believe that Cambodians enjoy gender equality stress that men and women are equal by law since they share the same rights and have the same opportunities in education and leadership. A third of the respondents (31%) have already taken part in trainings about gender issues, compared to almost half of all respondents (46%) who have never attended workshops on that topic. This applies to women as well as men.

Recommendations

This Gender Study has identified central needs, interests, risks and challenges for the implementation of a youth MIL project with focus on AtI and FoE in Cambodia and, based on the survey results, recommends the following:

– Ensure equal participation of both females and males in the project, take proactive measures to give young women enough space to express their concerns and ideas.

Provide mentoring and coaching if necessary. Bear in mind that traditional shyness and gender roles may inhibit successful female participation.

- Use an academic or otherwise trustworthy platform to inform youth and the general public about the project. This also helps parents or guardians understand the importance of allowing their children to join project activities. The format could be a short video explaining the project in Khmer, shared also via social media, which the youth could show their parents.
- Use multiple training methods; offer several dates for workshops to make it easier for youths to take part; include personal coaching/mentoring and online training. Gender is a new topic for most participants, therefore, a basic session about gender equality in media should be provided.
- Conduct pre-assessment and post-assessment/post-tests anonymously so that participants, especially females, feel as free as possible to express their opinions.
- Sensitive topics need to be considered as part of the risks and challenges to the successful implementation of activities; this should be reflected in any session plan or curriculum. Trainers need to be professional and know how to handle these sensitive issues during trainings to avoid complaints from non-participating stakeholders.

DW Akademie

DW Akademie is Deutsche Welle's center for international media development, journalism training and knowledge transfer. Our projects strengthen the human right to freedom of expression and unhindered access to information. DW Akademie empowers people worldwide to make independent decisions based on reliable facts and constructive dialogue.

DW Akademie is a strategic partner of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. We also receive funding from the Federal Foreign Office and the European Union and are active in approximately 50 developing countries and emerging economies.

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