

Press Release

New CamboJA study reveals consequences of threats to digital rights and online freedom of expression in Cambodia.

Phnom Penh, November 23, 2023- A new impacts study from CamboJA finds that journalists and active online citizens have serious concerns regarding the state of internet freedom, digital rights, and online safety in Cambodia. Additionally, some even expressed fears of escalating threats to personal safety stemming from the internet.

The in-depth study conducted by CamboJA, “The Impacts of Digital Rights Restrictions on Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression on the Internet,” examines the impact of internet restrictions in Cambodia on journalists and active online citizens. The study aims to shed light on the challenges faced by journalists and active citizens in the online sphere due to limitations on digital rights.

The primary objectives of the study were threefold: first, to analyze the repercussions of restrictions on digital rights and press freedom, particularly concerning freedom of expression for journalists and active citizens online; second, to explore and comprehend the diverse perspectives of independent journalists and online citizens regarding the impact of digital rights restrictions; and third, to provide stakeholders and relevant parties with a comprehensive understanding of the issues along with policy recommendations to enhance Cambodia's digital rights landscape.

Key takeaways from the study include:

1. **Internet as a double-edged sword:** While the internet has become an integral part of life in Cambodia, facilitating communication, information dissemination, and diverse viewpoints, concerns are rising regarding government monitoring and the growth in internet usage.
2. **Perceived lack of internet freedom:** Respondents expressed concerns about a perceived lack of internet freedom, citing surveillance of journalists and activists by both the government and Internet Service Providers (ISPs).
3. **Apprehensions about legal tools:** The majority of respondents voiced apprehension about the government's use of legal tools to curtail internet activity, expressing concerns about the potential negative implications on freedom of expression.

- 4. Innovation impediment: While acknowledging the internet's potential for understanding different perspectives, respondents highlighted how current limitations impede innovation and restrict access to crucial information for citizens and policymakers.
- 5. Security threats and self-censorship: Fear of personal safety and security threats stemming from online activities was a prominent concern, influencing comfort levels and potentially leading to self-censorship, particularly in disseminating politically sensitive information.
- 6. Digital security concerns: Respondents cited concerns about big data mining, malware attacks, and government surveillance, contributing to an atmosphere of unease.

Vy Nop, Camboja's Executive Director, said "I think this report is very important for government and stakeholders to understand the needs, concerns on digital rights and internet freedom that should be addressed through the provided recommendations."

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