DIGITAL ASIA ACCELERATOR

The Digital Asia Accelerator ("the Accelerator") aims to advance economic development by increasing businesses' and citizens' capacities to use digital technology safely and effectively. The Accelerator is part of the Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership, a whole of U.S. government effort to promote an open, interoperable, secure, and reliable internet. USAID's Accelerator is improving digital safety practices among local businesses and civil society organizations.

As the world's fastest growing digital economy, the Indo-Pacific region has the potential to be an even more valuable market for American and partner countries' companies. To help realize this opportunity, and in close coordination with the U.S. State Department, USAID's Accelerator is improving digital skills and safety practices among micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and civil society and increasing their capacity to engage on digital economy policy issues.

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IMPROVING DIGITAL LITERACY, SKILLS, AND POLICY ENGAGEMENT TO STRENGTHEN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

Just over a decade ago, 80 percent of Southeast Asians had limited or no internet connectivity. Today, Southeast Asians are the most engaged mobile internet users in the world. According to some estimates, the region's digital economy has the potential to add over $1 trillion to its GDP over the next ten years. The Accelerator takes a three-pronged approach to addressing the core challenges associated with this rapid digital transformation in Southeast Asia and Mongolia: (1) increase public awareness of digital safety issues, (2) improve MSMEs digital skills, and (3) strengthen the private sector and civil society's ability to engage on digital policy issues.

Across the region, citizens need access to simple, clear information and easy-to-employ practices on how to protect themselves online. To address this information gap, the Accelerator is employing a variety of on- and offline tactics to reach key audiences, such as a competition inviting youth to design short videos for social media with tips on how to stay safe online.

A lack of digital skills is another important obstacle that prevents businesses from taking full advantage of the opportunities brought by the digital economy. In partnership with American and local companies, the Accelerator is supporting training modules and programs for MSMEs across Southeast Asia.

As countries in the region develop digital policy frameworks, USAID will work with them to incorporate core digital development principles, including upholding user privacy and ensuring data security. To facilitate this, and building upon its awareness raising and upskilling work, the Accelerator will strengthen citizens' ability to meaningfully engage in the policy-making process.

IMPACT AND RESULTS

In Southeast Asia, scams, hacking, and fake news schemes target vulnerable users and employ fear tactics to generate confusion and/or steal personal information. To address this, the Digital Asia Accelerator has conducted awareness building campaigns in Cambodia, Mongolia and Myanmar. For example, through the USAID-funded "Online Safety" campaign, the Digital Asia Accelerator reached more than 1.3 million Facebook users with simple digital safety messages designed to give Cambodian MSMEs practical tips to protect themselves and their businesses. The Facebook-based campaign used ten short and engaging video messages and mobilized the project's networks of MSME and digital education champions to raise cyber awareness. Through Online Safety, Cambodians now have access to critical digital safety information to protect themselves, their data, and their businesses online.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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