

Supporting greater digital literacy for students and journalists in Cambodia

As part of the [INSPIRES project](#), Flexible Response Funds (FRFs) are designed to provide USAID missions and partners with easily accessible and flexible support in the form of technical assistance and subgrants to local organizations that can help address urgent and emerging threats to civic space.

In **Cambodia**, Internews collaborated with local and regional partners including FactCheq Lab, University of Cambodia, University of Svay Rieng, Go Global School, and Panasastra University to support stronger digital literacy and fact-checking skills among different populations in the country. This was done through three key activities:

- Developing basic digital literacy and fact-check guidelines to promote critical thinking for online information consumption;
- Conducting digital literacy trainings for provincial youth, journalists, and university students; and,
- Integrating digital literacy and fact-checking lesson in a bachelor's degree programs at university's media schools.

Support was provided over the course of 10 months from March - December 2022.

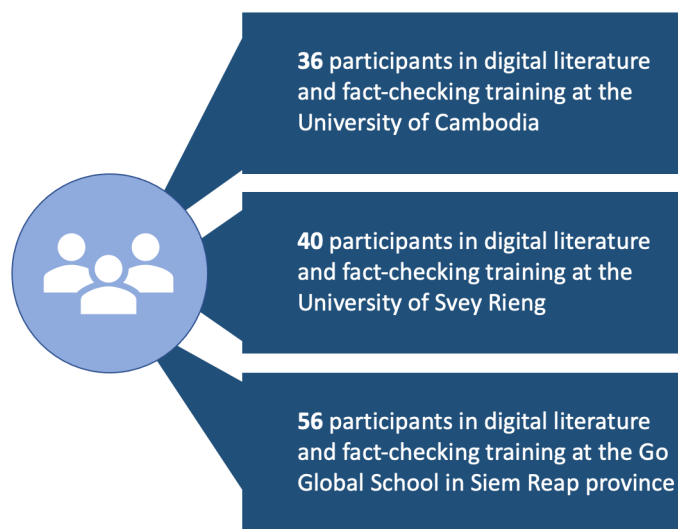
In this summary brief, we share learnings and lessons from key informant interviews and document reviews for these activities.

Outputs and Outcomes

The FRF activities in Cambodia were designed to produce several key outputs, including guidelines and trainings for a diverse set of audiences.

Based on interviews with key informants who were involved in the program, the Cambodia team and partners achieved several key outputs, as highlighted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. FRF Outputs



Evidence from key informant interviews as well as documentation from partners suggest that the FRF activities contributed to several key outcomes:

Provision of easy-to-use fact-checking tools. Informants noted that training participants responded positively to the simple tools and tips that they provided on how to identify misinformation. Rather than requiring extensive training and complex processes, trainers highlighted the easy ways that young people and journalists could quickly assess the likely accuracy of the news they are reading, and participants shared their excitement to integrate these tools and guidance into their everyday lives.

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“We saw in the training and after when we spoke to participants that one of the things they were very interested in was fact-checking tools, and we gave them simple tools. For example, if you read something that sounds strange or too good to be true, just go and google it. And sometimes you will see it is actually not true. To give them such easy tips to do it themselves, they found that to be very useful.”

- Key informant interview, February 2023

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Building fact-checking skills in underserved populations. Internews and partners deliberately selected a diverse set of locations and audiences for the trainings. Specifically, Internews chose to work with both journalists and young people, including university students, to ensure that it was not only people who undertake professional reporting who are able to identify disinformation. Further, the trainings took place both within Phnom Penh and outside of the capital, sharing knowledge and resources outside of places that are often the targets of such trainings.

Integrating fact-checking skills into university curriculum. As part of these activities, Internews sought to make this work more sustainable by working with universities to build the training into their regular curriculum for students. Since the FRF activities ended, the University of Cambodia has added the curriculum on media literacy and fact checking for its sophomore year requirements for students pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Media and Communications, creating a potential ripple effect of these activities beyond the initial cohort of trainees.

Helping and Hindering Factors. Key informants were asked about factors perceived to help or hinder this work. Understanding these factors can help support the implementation of future activities.

Helping factors include:

- **Connections with the universities and Ministry of Education:** Due to the sensitive political context in Cambodia, informants noted that it was critical that they had team members with contacts at both the universities and the government to get buy-in to conduct these trainings.
- **Flexible process for applying for support:** Given the small and rapid nature of this activity, informants recognized the value of having a simple process for applying for the FRF funding.
- **Strong interest from university students:** Finally, informants stated that there was a highly engaged audience for this content, which helped make the trainings successful.

Hindering factors include:

- **Adapting and tailoring materials:** The training was designed to take a similar approach for different audiences and contexts, but informants noted that it may have been more successful if it had been adapted to the specific needs of the different training locations and participants.
- **Administrative challenges with staff turnover and short timelines:** One informant highlighted that there was some team turnover that occurred during the FRF activities. Because the timeline for these activities was so short, this change created challenges in assuring that guidance and trainings could be completed according to the workplan.

For more information about this FRF, please contact: info@inspiresconsortium.org.



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