



SNAPSHOT

Cambodian Youth Groups Take Their Debates Digital



Young people from [Khmer Youth Association](#), one of the seven YCUD members, hold up stickers with the debate website to help promote the platform on social media.

[Photo: Youth Coalition for Unity and Development]

Want to sign up for the YCUD debate platform?

Visit this link: <http://lycud.org/register>

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Telling Our Story

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In 2015, youth coalition group [Youth Coalition for Unity and Development \(YCUD\)](#) worked with NGO [Youth Resource Development Program](#) to conduct research on youth perceptions of candidates for Cambodia's national and sub-national elections. They were interested in what young people knew about the candidates and how they engaged politically. The study found that 85% of 1,000 young people surveyed used the internet, including Facebook, to search for political information. According to the 2016 Open Institute mobile phone and internet survey, 74% of young Cambodians (aged 15 to 24) say that they use or have used Facebook, and the majority access Facebook through their mobiles. While it is clear young Cambodians spend a lot of time on social media, they don't always know how to find a specific debate space for the topics of their choice, or feel safe debating the issues openly. As a result, YCUD decided to create a platform called "[Youth Coalition Forum](#)" for all its youth group members – over 77,700 people from seven YCUD member groups – to discuss and debate specific issues and see if people would engage digitally.

In December 2015, [Development Innovations](#) provided a grant to YCUD to build and test this platform to help young people express their views. The project developed the online platform to foster productive debate and find common ground for solutions. From the debates, YCUD takes data about overall opinions and generates opinion reports. These youth voice reports help YCUD make demands on behalf of their peers to decision makers, including donors, researchers, and the government.

One month after the platform was launched, YCUD was awarded another grant from the European Union (in cooperation with the [PDP Center](#)) to promote youth participation in upcoming elections in 2017 and 2018, and they included the platform in their successful project design.

Four months after the launch, almost 600 young people were registered on the platform, and 240 users engaged and participated as debaters. Popular topics included alcohol abuse and accident prevention, voter rights, youth concerns and education quality. As a result of these successes, [OXFAM](#) awarded YCUD another grant for one year to cover the hosting cost and social media campaign to promote the platform. By December 2016, more than 1,100 young people were registered on the platform.

Users report this tool is working for them. "This platform provides me a lot of information. There are many good ideas from both sides. Moreover, they also provide suggested solutions to tackle those social issues. I read those debates and analyze what is right or wrong then think of a better solution. And I often raise those ideas that I got from the platform in the debate at school," said Ms. Saing Lyneth, 20, a 1st year student majoring in law at Royal University of Law and Economics. She continued, "I know that everyone is busy, yet we should spend five to ten minutes to engage in debates on the platform. When we have more youth engagement [on the platform], we can use this as an influential tool that the government should care."