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Success Story

Women with Disabilities Learn to Amplify Their Voices



Women with Disabilities hold a group discussion and learn how to use ICT and improve decision making; Khoun Socheata (first right) increased her sales by 30%

The ‘Amplifying Voices of Young Women with Disability’ pilot showed Agile Development Group the need to scale the program across Cambodia, developing a network of supportive YWwDs with the strength and skills to advocate on their own behalf. Strong partnerships have not just been cultivated with Ministries, and local NGOs, but with local private sector actors. With the support of PACT/ WE Act and USAID, Agile aims to secure additional funding to create a nationwide amplified voice of women living with disabilities to continue to create better lives and influence policies and create a more accessible and supportive Cambodia.

Find out more information about Agile Development Group:

Website: <https://agiledg.com/>

Facebook Agile: <https://www.facebook.com/agiledg/>

Facebook Amplifying Voice project:
<https://www.facebook.com/AmplifyingVoicesWomenWithDisabilities/>

Media coverage:

Khmer Times: <https://bre.is/5Gshompo>

The Phnom Penh Post: <https://bre.is/DPdhDqd3>

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Telling Our Story

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From July to December 2019, Agile Development Group designed and delivered a unique “**Amplifying Voices of Young Women with Disability**” program. The program trained women with disabilities to be capable of utilizing ICT and improve decision-making skills in order to have more economic opportunities, and amplify their voices, empowering them to advocate for their rights, their needs, and social justice.

Agile is a disability enterprise development agency that creates economic opportunities and independent lifestyles for people living with disabilities (PwDs). We believe that by bringing design, innovation, and enterprise together with people with disabilities, we can create a more accessible world.

In Cambodia, 47.8% of people with disabilities are women, and in the group of young women aged between 15-35 years approximately 450,000 are living with a disability. They experience significantly **higher rates of emotional, physical and sexual violence by household members** compared to women without disability, and they are viewed as less valuable and more burdensome within the household; 2.5 times more likely to require permission from a partner to seek healthcare, and experience higher rates of psychological distress and are less able to disclose family violence or seek appropriate support. Many feel isolated without the ability or skills to advocate using their own individual voices.

The saturation of smartphone technology in Cambodia and the use of social media channels in urban areas provided unique opportunities for the participants in the program, allowing them to use newly found ICT skills to break down many barriers to isolation and influence policy makers. Through the delivery of a final forum that invited policy makers to listen to the personal experience of the women, participants were able to **connect and share their stories to influence decision-makers in civil society, local support organizations and governmental agencies.**

Over 40 women with disabilities – ranging from students, to entrepreneurs, factory workers, and NGO workers - joined three separate workshops, learned how to utilize ICT [G-mail, Google Maps, Facebook]. These new skills helped to build self-confidence and they shared their stories on the program Facebook page reaching a total of over 24,116 people, (shared almost 200 times), and garnering 288 comments and 1,38 likes. This significantly raised the profile of women with disabilities.

Ms. Khoun Socheata, a participant who joined the first workshop, currently has her own business farming prawns and frogs, and a selection of fruit trees. Before attending the ICT workshop, she never realized that she could use Facebook as a tool to promote her business, and **after the training she has increased her income by close to 30%**. “I used to sell products offline and through networking, but when I completed the ICT course [G-mail, Google Maps, Facebook] I use my personal Facebook to promote my produce, and I notice that my clients and income is greater than before”, she added.

The final forum invited key policy makers from the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGoC), with representatives from the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA), Ministry of Youth, Social Veterans Affairs, and the Disability Action Council (DAC). They passionately discussed the key challenges unearthed during the program: job and employment, accessing transportation and changing parental attitudes to allow YWwDs to thrive and not be held back because of their disability.