

“It's a place that empowers people, and when they leave, they can grow on their own.”

A Conversation with Bobbee Thothong, Amphone Lorkham, Phonethavy Khommaly, and Harn Thoummaly, graduates of Digital Divide Data

Ambika Samarthya-Howard
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Ambika Samarthya Howard: We'd like to know who you all are and how you came to Digital Divide Data. Where are you from—Vientiane or another province? What were you doing before joining DDD? While at DDD, what did you do and what did you learn? And after leaving DDD, what have you been doing? Whoever is ready can start first.

Phonethavy Khommaly: My first experience with DDD came when I was a high school student from another province, Vientiane Province. During a summer break in my 10th and 11th grade years, I came to work at a garment factory in Dongpailab. While I was working there, a colleague told me about DDD. She said her younger brother was studying there and that DDD provides educational opportunities and financial assistance for education.

I stayed with DDD for a while before returning home to finish my last year of high school. After I graduated, I came back to the same garment factory. I also decided to apply to DDD because I wanted to grow and continue my education. I became part of DDD, starting as a volunteer, because I had no previous experience with computers or the English language.

DDD taught me so much, especially basic computer skills, English, communication, and teamwork. I first started at DDD as a volunteer, and then I became an employee. After working there for several years, starting in 2008, DDD saw my dedication and effort. They promoted me to a team leader on one of their projects. From there, I was selected to be a supervisor, which helped DDD achieve its goals.

In 2013, I left DDD because I felt I had gained a lot of experience and wanted to try something new. I wanted to use the knowledge I had gained from DDD elsewhere to see what new challenges I could face. At the same time, I was also studying hotel and tourism. After leaving DDD, I applied for a job in the hotel and tourism industry, but after about four to five months, I decided it wasn't the right fit.

A friend then recommended I apply for a job in banking. I thought it would be a completely different role from what I had done at DDD, and I didn't think I would be a good fit or even get the job. But my friend kept encouraging me, so I applied and started working in banking in 2013. I've been working in the banking sector ever since.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: For the others, are your experiences similar?

Bobbee Thothong: Hello, my name is Bobbee Phothong. I'm from Pak Ngum district in Vientiane Capital, which is a suburban area. After graduating from high school, I moved to the city to continue my studies, and a friend of mine told me about DDD. At the time, I had no idea what DDD was, but my friend made it sound interesting, so I applied. I was selected to study with them.

When I first started, I didn't even know how to turn on a computer. I was too afraid to try it myself, so I watched my classmates to learn. Before that, I had no experience with computers or technology at all.

Once I started at DDD, I learned the basics of using a computer. I was a trainee in a six-month program. After the program, I took an exam to become a full-time employee, which was a test to see if I had the right qualifications. I passed and became an employee. During that same period, in 2008, I was also studying marketing at the Comcenter College. After I became a DDD employee, the organization helped me with my college tuition as well.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: Where are you working now?

Bobbee Thothong: Right now, I'm working at a non-governmental organization (NGO) that provides assistance for eye health, helps with people's livelihoods, and offers financial support to people with disabilities in Laos. We provide funding for them to create their own projects.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: Do you think you have applied the skills you gained from DDD in your current work?

Bobbee Thothong: I have definitely used the skills and knowledge I gained from DDD in my work, especially with computers and English, as they've been helpful for communication.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: At DDD, was there also English language training? I'm asking because I'm not really sure.

Phonethavy Khommaly: Yes.

Bobbee Thothong: Yes, there is. They teach computer skills, English, and especially typing, which is a crucial foundation and the main focus of DDD.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: For the others, do your experiences differ in any way? Especially for you, as the only woman in this group.

Amphone Lorkham: First, I will share my perspective on my past experiences. If there is anything you would like to know more about, feel free to ask.

I started as a student at DDD in 2002, after finishing high school around 2001-2002. I was one of the people who met DDD's criteria for assistance, someone from a poor background, because after I graduated, I didn't have money to continue my studies. At that time, I was working at a garment factory to earn money for myself and my family. However, I was determined to continue my education to improve my situation, as I didn't want to do physical labor forever, especially as a woman.

After leaving the garment factory, I started selling things at the market and changed jobs frequently, but most of them were manual labor, which I didn't enjoy. Later, I learned about DDD. Back then, I didn't have a phone, and it was very difficult to access information, there were no newspapers or magazines. I knew a person from the same village, Nongbuathong, who worked as a cleaning staff at DDD, which was located in Dongpailap at the time. When I heard about it, I thought DDD was what I was looking for, so I applied to study there.

My studies were free. I learned basic computer skills and typing. DDD told me that if I could pass the exam with the required score, I could become an employee and receive a salary. When I heard that, I felt it was a great opportunity and I was determined to pass. I don't know if it was luck or my determination, but I passed in just three months, while some people took six months, a year, or even failed and had to leave to find other work.

When I became an employee, I received more benefits. For example, if you were a DDD employee and wanted to continue your studies, DDD would help pay for about 70-80% of your tuition, which was a very high amount. I was so happy because I really wanted to continue my education, as I mentioned before. So, I took the entrance exam for the English program at the National University of Laos, and DDD helped me pay the tuition.

One thing I love about DDD is that it always teaches you to be a giver. I started as a receiver, but then I developed into a giver, providing opportunities for others. Everyone there exchanged and shared knowledge, and I felt a great sense of love for one another. At the time, I didn't want to leave DDD at all. As a shy person who didn't socialize much, I felt comfortable working there and didn't want to go anywhere else. We ate meals together, did many activities together, and played sports together. However, a part of me also wanted to try new experiences.

I was with DDD from 2002 until 2008, which was the same time I graduated from the National University. I left DDD to work at the Ministry of Education and Sports because someone had recommended the job to me. It was a government position, which was perfect because my father, who was a government teacher, also wanted his children to work for the government. At the time, I was one of seven siblings, and none of them were government employees, so I decided to fulfill my father's wish and try out a new experience at the same time.

As I mentioned earlier, DDD always taught us to be givers. Back then, there were only about 20 people, and I had the opportunity to be a substitute teacher, teaching computer skills and English. Since I was studying English at the National University of Laos (Dong Dok campus), it was a great opportunity to practice teaching. After that, I also had the opportunity to be a team leader, helping to mentor and share knowledge with others until the day I left DDD.

Overall, I think I learned so much from my time with DDD, including teamwork, mutual help, being a giver, being a developer, and more. These skills have helped me in my current work at the Ministry of Education and Sports, as I have to work all over Laos and interact with people and communities. I need skills in approaching people, adapting to different situations, and knowing how to behave and work as a team. That's about it.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: As for you, since you are the last one, are your experiences similar to those who have spoken before, or how are they different?

Harn (Thongphanh) Thoummaly: Hello, my name is Thongphanh Thoummaly. I joined DDD around 2009-2010. Before I knew about DDD, an older student at my university told me that DDD was a place where I could improve my English and computer skills. I applied to study with DDD because I fit one of their target demographics: being an underprivileged person from another province. I'm from Xieng Khouang province.

At that time, I was living in Vientiane with my aunt. I was about to finish high school, but my aunt told me she couldn't afford to send me to college because she also had to pay for her own children's education. So, I had to find a scholarship on my own because I wanted to use education to escape poverty. Coming from a rural background, I knew how important an education was.

I applied to DDD but didn't get in. I tried again a second time and was accepted. After studying with DDD for about three months, I was promoted to an employee.

The thing I learned most from DDD that I don't think any other place in Laos could provide was typing skills, specifically, fast typing. It's so helpful for real-world work or when you continue your studies, like when writing reports. Working at DDD really taught me patience. Every morning, I had to start work at 6:00 a.m. and spend two hours just typing. I became so good and proficient that I could even type with my eyes closed.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: You four who were once at DDD were there during different periods, some around 2003, others around 2007, and not all of you knew each other since you studied at different times. But what is noticeable is that each of you shares a sense of care, and something in common is the positive mindset and willingness to share, creating a sense of community. I would like to know how DDD fostered this, what did they do, or how did they teach you, that helped each of you develop such a positive attitude? I want to understand this because I'm interested in DDD's management approach that helped build such a strong sense of care and community among you.

Harn (Thongphanh) Thoummaly: For me, DDD is like DNA; we have a lot in common. Many of us came from different provinces and similar backgrounds, which made us feel close when we met in the big city. It's like how I, as a Lao person, feel good when I meet another Lao person abroad because we're from the same country.

At DDD, we loved and cared for each other because we did so many activities together. We played sports and went on excursions together. These things are why we shared a strong bond, even though we came from different parts of Laos.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: Do you have anything you would like to share?

Amphone Lorkham: Sure. For me, the reason why we at DDD were so close was because, for one thing, there weren't a lot of people when I was there, which made it easier to communicate. It might also be because of the easy-going culture of Lao people. When we lived together at DDD, combined with the organization's culture, everyone became like family, and we all helped each other. That made me feel comforted and very impressed.

Also, when I was at DDD, there were people with disabilities living together with us. Naturally, they sometimes had a difficult life, so the non-disabled people, including myself, had to help each other. DDD always taught us to help one another. And even though there were two work shifts, morning and afternoon, we still had a chance to meet during group activities.

DDD always tried to ensure everyone developed their skills, not just in typing but in other areas as well. They had competitions to encourage development, like typing races, where the fastest person would get a prize. These activities helped people build strong bonds.

Another important thing I like about DDD is that it makes sure everyone stays in touch. Even today, I and other DDD alumni still meet regularly because DDD tries to hold gatherings for us once or twice a year, even if we graduated a long time ago. I see that DDD still has many activities for people to do together.

As for myself, I now work at the Ministry of Education and Sports, focusing on social skills, strengthening, gender roles, leadership, communication, and teamwork. Sometimes, I even get the chance to exchange lessons with DDD. Overall, I think DDD is still a great environment that gives people a chance to connect and meet. For example, DDD once had a joint donation project where they donated books, clothes, and school supplies to underprivileged children in other provinces. This gave alumni a chance to meet again. It's a really good thing.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: The interesting point is that all of you are working in the same job market, but none of you feel competitive with each other. That's what I'm curious about. Because I see more collaboration than competition, even you guys working in the same industry.

Phonethavy Khommaly: From what I understand, you're asking why students who graduate from DDD continue to have a strong bond with each other, even after they've left. Different generations of alumni maintain a good relationship and see themselves as collaborators in the job market, not competitors.

Amphone Lorkham: I don't understand the question well, because I don't know why we should compete. We should be cooperating instead. For example, when applying for a job at a bank, we might apply for different roles, not the same position.

Phonethavy Khommaly: I think another important reason is that DDD created a family-like atmosphere where everyone loved and cared for each other. When we were together, there was no discrimination based on where someone came from, their background, or whether they had a disability. Even after we left, we still maintained that same bond when we met elsewhere.

For example, in my current job in the banking sector, there is some discrimination, but at DDD, there was none at all. Another reason why alumni don't compete for jobs is because everyone studied in different fields at different universities, so they ended up working in their respective fields. For instance, I graduated with a degree in hotel and tourism management and initially worked in that field, but I didn't enjoy it much. I then

switched to banking and found that I liked it more, even though it wasn't my field of study. I was still able to use skills from DDD, such as service and computer skills.

There are other DDD alumni working in the same bank as me, about 4 or 5 of them now, but each person has a different role based on their studies, so there is no sense of competition. We still communicate with each other and stay in touch. DDD also continues to invite us to events. Overall, DDD is a place that fosters love and care among everyone. No matter where we are, when we meet, we still care for each other the same as before.

Harn (Thongphanh) Thoummaly: In my opinion, the reason why everyone who graduates from DDD has a good relationship and cooperates well is that we all went on to study different subjects. Some studied business administration, others studied English, and I personally studied mapping (GIS). When we graduated, we all went into different fields, which is why there isn't much competition.

In my current organization, there's also someone who graduated from DDD, but we work in different positions. He works in the legal field, and I work in mapping, so we cooperate rather than compete. For me and many others, DDD was a supplementary course, not our main field of study for our careers.

Amphone Lorkham: I also have something I'd like to add. Based on my understanding of working with DDD, from the past to the present, one thing I learned from them, even after I left, is the importance of having continuous shared activities, as I mentioned before.

Of course, when I was with DDD, they helped me with my education and financial support. Beyond that, when you feel ready to move on to a new place, DDD is always ready to support you, whether by recommending you for job applications or providing access to various job opportunities, which is something I really appreciate about them.

As I said before, I work at the Ministry of Education and Sports, which involves working with many different sectors, including other government departments, international organizations, and various United Nations agencies. When I know that these organizations are hiring, I help share those opportunities with the younger people at DDD. This is something I value and learned from DDD: that work requires a strong team and a wide network to facilitate coordination.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: At the same time, DDD is still a business and needs revenue to sustain its operations. And revenue requires stability, because without stability, it would not be able to continue operating to this day.

Bobbee Thothong: In my opinion, DDD isn't a company but an organization that works for society. That's my belief. It's a place that empowers people, and when they leave, they can grow on their own.

Harn (Thongphanh) Thoummaly: I'd like to add that DDD is a place that helps and gives opportunities to people. It's true that at the time, the salary was around \$35–\$64, but in reality, it was a stipend to support the students, not a direct salary. While it's a company, overall it feels more like a help center. If I remember correctly, the first month I got paid, it was \$35. After that, it was \$64, then about \$84, and the highest I ever received was around \$130.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: Most of the work I have heard you talk about is related to printing and general computer basics. But nowadays, AI is becoming increasingly prevalent. Surely, some of the tasks you do might no longer be necessary because AI could replace them. How do you see the world in the future, maybe 10, 20, or 25 years from now?

Viengsone Keosychanh: I want to address this point. First, I'd like to talk about the work we've been doing for over 20 years. In the last two decades, DDD has focused on fundamental typing skills, which are our core, and we've also done content work.

In the current era, with the advent of AI, there are many challenges for our business. DDD, which works in the technology sector, is now starting to shift our work towards machine learning and robotics. We are trying to work in these areas to generate more income. When we earn more, we can provide more opportunities for people. And when people receive more opportunities, they can contribute to our business, creating a cycle of growth.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: How much has DDD changed the tech landscape of Laos?

Viengsone Keosychanh: In this case, I'd like to say that we don't have any clients in Laos; we get investments from other countries. DDD, in Laos, is a very unique IT company.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: Previously, I asked DDD's management about future challenges, including current ones related to AI, which presents many challenges.

Of course, AI is useful for daily work, but at the same time, it is a challenge in the labor market, especially for printing and basic computer work, which could be replaced by AI. How do you see yourself in about 25 years in the era of AI, and how do you envision the situation in Laos in the age of AI?

Phonethavy Khommaly: I believe AI plays a significant role in many jobs and can replace humans in many tasks, but not all of them. In the banking sector where I work, AI can help with analyzing accounting and finance, which is a big plus because it can reduce the number of people and the amount of time needed.

However, a reduction in staff doesn't mean those people are fired. Instead, their job descriptions are adjusted to tasks that AI can't do. Currently, the banking sector is using a lot of AI.

Overall, AI can be very helpful if you know how to use it because it can make work faster. It can assist in various areas, like translation, where you used to need many people. Now, with AI, you don't need as many. I think it can help about 99% of the time, speaking from the perspective of the banking sector I'm in.

Harn (Thongphanh) Thoummaly: I think AI is something that can't be avoided. Therefore, it would be good if DDD added courses on AI for people to learn.

Phonethavy Khommaly: Well, because many companies are already using AI in their work, as I mentioned before, in accounting and finance. For example, before AI helped, it took many days and nights to do the work. But with AI, it only takes 30-40 minutes, and people only have to check it afterward to see if it's correct. So, I think it would be great if DDD could add more courses on AI.

Amphone Lorkham: I'm not entirely sure what kind of information you're looking for. Do you mean the challenges or the risk of job loss? I'd like you to repeat the question.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: I would like to know what you think about the arrival of AI, what risks and challenges do you see?

Amphone Lorkham: Speaking of DDD, which already works in IT, we use a certain level of AI to assist with our work every day, so I think we'll be able to adapt.

As for the country of Laos, I can't say how well it will be able to adapt to technological changes. This issue will likely depend on the government's leadership and what policies they have to deal with it. A backup plan is needed to prepare for the changes, and if they do happen, I believe there will certainly be a way to handle them.

Even though I'm no longer a DDD employee, I still trust that DDD will have a way to cope. And even if AI replaces some positions, I still believe that DDD will be able to reassign tasks to those who are let go, so they aren't simply fired without a new job to fall back on.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: Has the experience you gained from DDD helped you get better jobs, earn more money, or improve your overall life compared to

someone who did not go through DDD? And what other benefits do you think you have gained from joining DDD?

Phonethavy Khommaly: From what I understand, his question is whether the knowledge and experience gained from DDD gave us an advantage in our jobs after we left, compared to colleagues who didn't come from DDD, including salary.

For me, in my current job, one of the most important skills I gained from DDD is basic typing and English. Compared to colleagues who started with me and didn't come from DDD, my computer skills are much better. This isn't limited to the people who started with me; it also includes those who have been working longer than me. My computer skills, like typing, are very fast, which is a skill I got from DDD, along with my English skills. These things have helped me grow in my career.

Another point is that it also depended on my own perseverance and desire to learn. After only six months on the job, I was promoted to a unit head, and shortly after that, I was promoted to a department head. This was a result of my work efficiency, which came from my prior experience at DDD.

It's safe to say that anyone who graduates from DDD will have a strong knowledge of computers. English skills might vary, but when it comes to computer skills, I can confidently say we have much more knowledge than people who didn't graduate from DDD. For example, a colleague once asked me, "How do you type so fast? Where did you learn that?" This is a skill that gave me an advantage over others who didn't come from DDD.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: You mentioned that the skills you gained from DDD, like typing, computer skills, and English, have helped you get better jobs and higher salaries. But aside from that, how has it affected your life? Has it made you happier or improved your overall quality of life?

Phonethavy Khommaly: Yes, I'm satisfied. After more than 10 years of working, I'm content because I've been able to support myself and my family. I can send my children to school, and my family's overall quality of life has improved, including my wife, children, and parents. All of this comes from the knowledge and skills I first gained at DDD, combined with my own self-learning. I can now pass these skills on to my children as well.

Bobbee Phothong: Because at DDD, I learned about leadership and other skills, which helped me understand things more quickly at work thanks to the experience I got from DDD.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: I'd like to know more about how the money you earn has improved your life. Sometimes getting a better job and earning more money doesn't always translate into a better life, so I'm curious how it has affected yours.

Phonethavy Khommaly: I'd like to say that I got married because I was at DDD [laughs]. This is another reason why DDD helped me have a family. My family and parents were so happy.

Looking back, when I finished high school and came to DDD, my family couldn't help me continue my education because we were poor, and my parents didn't have the money to send me to school. But I was determined to study on my own and came to DDD. They gave me the opportunity to study and helped me with my education from my first to my fourth year.

When I went back home, my parents were happy that I had continued my studies because none of my older siblings did; only my younger brother and I did. After I graduated, I had a job and a salary to support myself. When I returned home, my parents, family, and friends were happy and proud of my success. I went from having nothing to having a better status, with my own car and house.

Overall, my life is better now.

Harn (Thongphanh) Thoummaly: For me, if you ask about the impact of DDD on my life, here is my experience: I first got to know about English in 2004. Then, in 2005–2006, I talked to my mom about wanting to learn English. The only place to study it at that time was in Vientiane Capital, where I had a cousin who could help me. From that, my dream to learn a new language began, and I discovered that DDD also offered basic English training. Can you imagine? From the time I joined DDD until I finished university, I was able to develop my skills and later apply for a scholarship, which gave me the chance to study abroad. All of this started from DDD, and I am very grateful for it.

Regarding work, even if you are in the same position or workplace, the boss still recognizes your capacities and how much you can do. One of the advantages of graduating from DDD is gaining strong computer skills, which has helped me a lot.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: How did English help you?

Harn (Thongphanh) Thoummaly: Of course, it helps me with communication and traveling abroad, as it's conducted in English. Back in the 2000s, English was very rare and difficult to find and learn compared to today. In my time, even high school students didn't know what English was. And taking an English course then was quite expensive

for me, but at DDD, they provided it free of charge. And if you ask what happened after getting a better job, I would say I honestly get more income, and my life is better. Looking back to when I first came to DDD, I had nothing and didn't have much money. But now, I get more money than I did back then. I can support my family and send my kids to good schools, better than the one I went to in the past.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: Where do you see DDD in the next 25 years?

Harn (Thongphanh) Thoummaly: I would say, add an AI course to the current list of courses. Since DDD is already providing basic computer-related courses, why not include an AI-related one? We can't deny its importance, so people can be well-prepared.

Phonethavy Khommaly: As for me, I still believe in the potential of DDD's management and trust that DDD will continue to exist. I believe that even with the arrival of AI, DDD will certainly be able to develop, build upon its strengths, and adapt. They will have a good way of handling this by improving skills and offering courses related to AI.

Regarding personnel, I am confident that DDD will have a good strategy for the future because AI will play a role not only in DDD but also in other organizations. They will already have methods and strategies in place to prepare for these changes.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: From listening to your perspective on AI, I noticed that you see it more positively than negatively. For example, you emphasized the importance of adapting to make the best use of AI. People who are inclined to use it can always learn more to improve, while those who are not familiar or skilled in AI can still contribute in other areas where they are capable.

Amphone Lorkham: I see another perspective on AI. I feel like I've been through a lot in life, starting from zero and gradually building myself up until I became the strong person I am today.

My message to DDD is about how they will adapt in the age of AI. If AI one day becomes very prominent, how will DDD empower its employees? How will they live with AI? We have to always remember that our world is constantly changing. We're in the age of AI now, but who knows what it will be like in 5 or 10 years? Therefore, before doing anything, we need to be prepared and have good prior experience.

For example, I have what I have today because I was at DDD back then, which gave me the knowledge and skills I have now. But it wouldn't be right to say it's all because of DDD, because I also learned a lot from other places. For example, if I were married and

relied only on my husband, I wouldn't be able to live on my own if he were gone. So, in the end, people have to be self-reliant.

Therefore, when the age of AI truly arrives, DDD must provide guidance on how to live and use AI for maximum benefit. This is in the context of the present and near future, because talking about 5 or 10 years from now might be too far off. I'm not an IT expert, so I might not be able to give an accurate answer.

I use AI in my work today to make things easier and faster, and to speed up research and data analysis. But in the end, it still depends on how much we use AI. I want to go back to the time I was about to leave DDD. I was sad and worried because I thought I couldn't live without DDD since I had been there for so long. But in the end, when I left, I had to be on my own. So, there's no need to worry about changes that haven't arrived yet. Instead, we should prepare ourselves and think about how we'll cope if those changes do happen.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: How about you?

Harn (Thongphanh) Thoummaly: I agree with Amphone. However, thinking 25 years ahead is quite a long time. I feel like that's too far away. We should think more about how to handle the next 5-10 years. I also believe that DDD already has a plan to prepare because I'm confident that DDD will be able to continue its work. I've seen how DDD created a foundation for us and for hundreds and thousands of others to have what they have today. Therefore, DDD won't fail or collapse just because of AI.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: Is there anything you want to say regarding DDD? Maybe not in the next 25 years but the near future.

Amphone Lorkham: Planning ahead is always difficult. Finally, I'd like to tell DDD to continue the good work it's been doing, like the activities for alumni and current DDD students. In my current job at the Ministry of Education and Sports, I work on many topics, including mental health, which is very important today. I can help share my knowledge on this topic with DDD. For example, how to live happily under pressure and manage our thoughts. We can share this knowledge through joint activities.

Furthermore, since I work for the Ministry of Education and DDD also works on providing people with knowledge and skills for work, if they want to update their teaching skills, my ministry is ready to provide our opinions and share.

I'd like to see DDD maintain what it has done in the past because it has been so good and to continue to develop. As for me, working in the banking sector now, if DDD would like to exchange lessons with the bank or send DDD students for internships, I'd be

more than happy to help. I'm also ready to share other useful information with DDD, and besides work, I'm also willing to give personal advice.

Bobbee Phothong: I'd like to see DDD continue what it has been doing. Since I've already studied and received opportunities with DDD, if I see people in my hometown who don't have opportunities, I will introduce them to DDD so they can access education. Sometimes when I work in other provinces, I see people who aren't ready to continue their studies, so I will recommend DDD to them as an option for accessing education.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard: Thank you all.

Ambika Samarthya-Howard (she/her) is Solutions Journalism Network's Chief Innovation Officer. She strategizes on communications, metrics, impact, product and technology, leveraging platforms for the network and creating cool content. She also leads the Solutions Insights Lab, an initiative of SJN that uses targeted research and analysis to identify and interrogate what's working and what's not in a particular sector or field. She has an MFA from Columbia's film program and has been creating, teaching and writing at the intersection of storytelling and social good for two decades. She has produced content for Current TV, UNICEF, Havas, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Prism.

** This interview has been edited and condensed.*