

“The biggest achievements are the income, the knowledge, and the time-management skills I gained.”

A Conversation with Kunthea Maeu, graduate of Digital Divide Data

May Titthara
August 23, 2025

May Titthara: Can you introduce yourself?

Kunthea Maeu: My name is Kunthea Maeu. I'm from Pailin province and I'm currently working in a private company as an accountant. I finished high school in 2015 and then studied accounting at university. During that time, I really needed financial support to continue my study and build my knowledge. At first, my plan was just to find a job. Then I encountered DDD through an announcement recruiting college students for part-time work. I applied, joined DDD's training program—which focused on English and computer skills—and later became a data entry associate.

When I first came to Phnom Penh, I stayed at my cousin's house. One day, when I was riding my motorcycle, I saw DDD's announcement posted on an information board. I stopped to ask for details, submitted my application, and later went for the interview. Back then, information about job opportunities was not as accessible as today. Now we can easily find everything through phones, social media, and websites. I still follow DDD's Facebook page and can see a lot of improvement and their outreach to many different places now.

May Titthara: Since you are from Pailin province, what made you decide to leave your hometown and come to Phnom Penh?

Kunthea Maeu: Because I came from a less developed province, I wanted to move to Phnom Penh to access better education and job opportunities. My parents are farmers. In the countryside, we always joked that one day we wanted to work in an office with an air-conditioner. Fortunately, I got a fully-funded scholarship from my university. Even

though my parents didn't want me to live so far away, I was lucky to have cousins in Phnom Penh, so I convinced them to let me go.

May Tiththara: What were your challenges when you first moved to Phnom Penh?

Kunthea Maeu: Honestly, the first month was really hard. I often cried because I am the only daughter in my family. Sometimes I questioned my decision to come to Phnom Penh. However, what kept me going was knowing my family was poor. I told myself if I studied and worked hard here, I could lessen their financial burden. I always imagined my future when I could get a good job, so I was determined to stay strong and continue my journey here. It's been 10 years now.

May Tiththara: What soft skills did you gain from DDD, and how do you apply them in your work and life today?

Kunthea Maeu: When I was studying at university and training at DDD at the same time, the first thing I learned was time management. Later on, through training and working with others, I also learned teamwork and communication skills.

I was with DDD for about one year and left in 2017 when my school required me to do an accounting internship as part of the curriculum. Even after leaving, I still keep in touch with DDD and join activities when I can. I really love DDD. We still exchange ideas through our group chat and connect during alumni meet-ups. I rarely miss any alumni events and always contribute whenever DDD needs a helping hand.

May Tiththara: How has your life changed since your time with DDD?

Kunthea Maeu: I'm most grateful for the financial support. Working with DDD helped reduce my family's burden and allowed me to support my own living costs and study expenses. It was a big relief for me and my family.

May Tiththara: What are the greatest things you learned from DDD?

Kunthea Maeu: At DDD, we didn't feel like we were just employees. It felt like home. DDD was flexible and allowed us to change our work shifts to match our study schedule. Since I worked part-time, I could balance my studies and work well.

I remember my cousin had a hard time managing her full-time job and study, but I was lucky DDD gave me that balance. I also loved that DDD work contributed to society—it made me feel that my small effort was part of something meaningful.

May Tiththara: Do you have any memorable experiences from DDD that you would like to share?

Kunthea Maeu: For young people and students, DDD is a great place to start your career if you have no experience yet. Like me and later my younger cousins—we all started at DDD. It's like a learning hub for youth, a place that builds our attitude and how we interact with others. DDD is also very diverse, bringing together students from different provinces across Cambodia.

May Tiththara: How would you like to see DDD in the next 10 or 20 years?

Kunthea Maeu: I want to see DDD continue to grow and maintain what it's doing now. As a DDD alumna, I want to contribute to its growth and help guide younger generations. I hope more alumni will join DDD's outreach activities. When I have time, I also want to join and share my experience with new students who might be interested in joining DDD.

May Tiththara: What do you consider your most successful achievement from DDD?

Kunthea Maeu: For me, the biggest achievements are the income, the knowledge, and the time-management skills I gained. Because of DDD, I can support myself and help my family and younger siblings.

Without DDD, I don't think I would be where I am today. Back then, it was rare for first- or second-year students to find work opportunities, but DDD gave us that chance. We could work, study, and grow at the same time.

May Tiththara: Do you see any shortcomings or things to improve about DDD's program?

Kunthea Maeu: Honestly, I can't think of anything negative. DDD does so much for students and also for society. They donate part of their profit to social enterprise activities and support young people through education and training. During my time there, I even joined social activities like tree planting. It was a meaningful experience for me.

May Tiththara: Thank you.

May Titthara is an award-winning journalist based in Cambodia, recognized for his reporting on deforestation, land grabbing, economic land concessions, and forced evictions. Over his career, he has received numerous awards for breaking news coverage and human rights reporting. In addition to his journalism, he works as a media specialist with Internews Cambodia and serves as the executive director of the Cambodia Journalists Alliance, where he supports press freedom and professional development for local journalists.

** This interview has been edited and condensed.*