

“I have become the backbone of my family—the one they rely on for financial stability and support.”

A Conversation with Yous Samreth, graduate of Digital Divide Data

Socheata Hean
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Socheata Hean: Can you please introduce yourself and your relationship with DDD?

Yous Samreth: I completed high school in 2012, and in 2013 I joined DDD. At first, I went through six months of training, and after that, in October 2013, I officially started working full-time with DDD. I continued working there until 2017.

After my first year at DDD, I was fortunate to receive a scholarship that covered 60% of my university tuition, while I contributed the remaining 40%. That support meant a lot to me and made it possible to continue my education. During my years at DDD, I had the opportunity to work on three different projects: scanning and digitizing newspapers, entering phone numbers into databases, and using Photoshop to remove backgrounds from images. These projects gave me very practical, hands-on experience with different types of work.

When I reached my third year of university, I decided to leave DDD because I had been accepted to the Royal Administrative School. I studied there for a year, from 2017 to 2018. After completing that program, I began working in government service. I was placed at the Civil Society Forum under the Cabinet Office in Cambodia, where my role focused on building connections and bridging the gap between the government and civil society organizations.

Socheata Hean: What are the knowledge and skills you gained from DDD?

Yous Samreth: During my time at DDD, I developed a wide range of knowledge and skills. On the technical side, I learned typing, mathematics for data handling, history from working with newspapers, and very importantly, computer skills. I started at DDD with very limited knowledge—almost from zero—but step by step, I built up my experience and competence.

DDD also helped me to become more flexible and adaptable. That means I developed the ability to quickly catch up with new skills, adjust myself to new environments, and learn faster. Another thing DDD equipped me was a strong sense of responsibility—to meet deadlines and job requirements with quality. Whenever I felt I was falling behind, I made an effort to improve myself. Sometimes, if my team leader noticed I was struggling, they would approach me and ask if I was okay, if I was facing any challenges, or if I needed additional support. I also learned to seek help from more experienced peers whenever I had weaknesses. That environment of guidance and teamwork encouraged me to keep improving.

Socheata Hean: Have you ever imagined what would have happened if you hadn't joined DDD training back then?

Yous Samreth: It is very hard to imagine. Before I joined DDD and received the scholarship, I was working for a small local NGO focused on agriculture. If I had not joined DDD, I probably would have continued working with that agricultural organization, chosen agriculture as my major, and ended up working as a trainer for farmers in community development projects.

Back in high school, my family's financial situation was very difficult. My mother had to migrate to Thailand to work for a small income, and my family had debts to repay. At that time, I felt hopeless and even fell into a depressed state. I spent most of my time alone, not engaging with other people, and I mostly stayed inside reading books. I didn't have money, and I didn't know what to do with my future.

Everything changed because of DDD. Those six months of training completely shifted my life. Without DDD, I don't think I could have come this far. Today, I consider myself successful to a certain extent, especially when I compare my present to my past as a struggling student. Given my family's financial hardship, it seemed impossible that I would complete university. But now, I not only graduated, I also secured a good job, and I am even able to support my younger sister by paying her tuition so she could also finish university.

I have become the backbone of my family—the one they rely on for financial stability and support.

Socheata Hean: How have the skills and knowledge gained from DDD contributed to you, your family, and society? How do you see your contribution?

Yous Samreth: DDD's scholarship program was designed with a clear goal: to enable young people to pursue higher education, complete university, and then be in a position to secure better jobs and livelihoods. That was exactly my case.

Beyond myself, I try to give back to the community. I often advise younger people to apply for scholarships, including the DDD program, and I mentor them to prepare for their academic path. For me, getting the DDD scholarship was a life-changing and eye-opening experience. As a young student, I was completely lost. I didn't know how I could continue my studies. I kept asking myself: I don't have money, so how can I go to university? How can I build a future?

Now that I have gone through that struggle and found a way forward, I feel a responsibility to guide others who are in the same position I once was—confused, financially challenged, but capable. I want to help open doors for them, provide guidance, and prepare them for academic and career readiness. For me, this is one way to give back to society.

Socheata Hean: In your view, how has DDD changed the tech scene in your country?

Yous Samreth: From my perspective, DDD has built a large pool of skilled human resources for Cambodia's tech sector, particularly for young people passionate about technology and, more recently, artificial intelligence. Many of my peers who graduated from DDD are now working in technology-related fields, and some have even taken on leading roles in this sector. I believe DDD has played a very significant role in producing high-quality human resources who are contributing to the growth of technology in Cambodia.

Socheata Hean: Is there anything DDD should improve or do differently?

Yous Samreth: I think DDD should continue developing itself to stay aligned with the latest technological trends. Cambodia is now moving into Industry 4.0, with AI and digital transformation becoming key drivers of the economy. If DDD can adapt its training to meet the demands of these new technologies, it could open up more opportunities for Cambodian youth—not just any jobs, but higher-paying and more competitive jobs.

Also, for a personal observation: from my experience engaging with different generations of DDD graduates, I feel that earlier cohorts had stronger English proficiency compared to more recent graduates. This is just my personal impression, but I think DDD could consider reinforcing English training to ensure younger graduates remain competitive because English is always important for the global workforce.

Socheata Hean: Thank you.

Socheata Hean is a Cambodian multimedia journalist dedicated to training the next generation of independent reporters through digital storytelling. Since 2013, she has built her career in journalism, producing impactful stories and advancing media innovation.

** This interview has been edited and condensed.*