



## WDE Commentary No. 4

### “E-Health Management”

**Hay Seangmey:** *Intern at the Centre for Inclusive Digital Economy (CIDE) of the Asian Vision Institute (AVI).*

**The WDE Policy Dialogue**  
**វគ្គទី ៤៖ "ការគ្រប់គ្រងសុខាភិបាល  
តាមប្រព័ន្ធអេឡិចត្រូនិច"**  
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វិទ្យាសាស្ត្រ បច្ចេកវិទ្យា និងនវានុវត្តន៍

**វគ្គនិក្ខិយស**  
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យើងនៃក្រុមហ៊ុន ហ្វីល វីម៉ូន ថេក អេស៊ី

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Woomentum Cambodia AVI  
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The 4<sup>th</sup> episode of WDE Policy Dialogue titled “E-Health Management” was hosted on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021 via Zoom and live-streamed on AVI’s Facebook page. The two distinguished guest speakers in this dialogue were H.E. Heng Sok Kung, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology, and Innovation, Ms Pong Limsan, a co-founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at Peth Yoeung of First Womentech Asia, and Ms Pin Netra, CEO of SingMed Medical Centre. The session was hosted by Ms Touch Socheata, Director of Woomentum.

The dialogue began with a discussion on the overview of e-health. It then proceeded with the benefits and progress of technology incorporated into the health sector in Cambodia. The guest speakers further discussed the role of women in the health and e-health sector. Finally, the discussion ended by touching upon the challenges, suggestions, recommendations as well as short messages highlighting the importance of e-health in Cambodia during the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to H.E. Heng Sok Kung, the health care system in Cambodia consists of four generations from 1970 until the present. Health 4.0 refers to the digitalisation of health system which focuses on Cyber Physical System (CPS) such as telemedicine, and medical IoT (Internet of Things). It started in 2020, and it is this fourth generation, which witnesses the existence of e-health in Cambodia. In addition, Ms Limsan and Ms Netra both agreed with H.E. Sok Kung’s explanation, emphasising that technology and women play an indispensable role in advancing Cambodia’s health care system.

Based on the discussion elaborated earlier, there are two key takeaways as follows. First, it is vital to acknowledge that e-health is inevitable in local health system development, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Both H.E. Sok Kung and Ms Limsan agreed that, in general, local medical teams are capable in terms of their ability and expertise; however, what is lacking is their operational infrastructure. Practising e-health or incorporating technology into the health care system in both public and private hospitals would save time, reduce transportation costs, build support for hospital teams in rural areas, provide health care information, and provide a clearer symptom analysis based on patients’ medical history.

The mentioned examples of e-health include a patient’s medical record system, teleconsultation and social media groups usage such as Telegram group. The record system would store previous personal health data such as X-rays and past diagnoses, thus helping doctors better understand each patient’s overall health conditions. Teleconsultation does not only bring patients closer to local doctors but also doctors overseas. The consultation could be done regardless of timing and place. Furthermore, medical specialists and individuals of all disciplines could form a Telegram group to exchange advice and support in times of need and emergencies.

Additionally, e-health provides crucial assistance during COVID-19 in Cambodia. Call centres have been created across the country and in the hospitals providing COVID-19 treatment. Citizens who have questions or suspicions about their conditions could easily dial the number and consult with doctors. In COVID-19

treatment hospitals, patients could also dial the number to update doctors about their conditions. In education, technology also allows medical students to continue their studies virtually despite the pandemic.

Secondly, women play a significant role in Cambodia's health sector and, in this digital age, e-health is beneficial to all women regardless of their profession. H.E. Sok Kung mentioned that women in the health sector are generally capable and strong. He raised the examples of the two female guest speakers participating alongside him in the dialogue, emphasising that both are highly talented. He also mentioned that both WHO and UNICEF representatives in Cambodia are women. In addition, at the governmental level, two influential high ranking officials in the Ministry of Health, including H.E. Or Vandine and H.E. Yuk Sambath, are also female figures.

Regarding how women could benefit from e-health, Ms Netra said that women of all professions, including housewife, SMEs owner, or office worker could find their lifestyle made easier by getting information from electronic sources related to lifestyle and healthcare when needed. For example, as a mother, if her kids have mild symptoms such as fever, she does not need to visit a pharmacy or go to a hospital directly, especially during this COVID-19 pandemic since physical contact at public places is at high risk. Instead, she could first search online in Khmer or English language via app or Google for basic home remedies.

Similarly, in cases of injuries and emergencies, immediately, the mother could also practice first aid as instructed in her electronic sources. To emphasise on mother's role in taking care of the child, Ms

Limsan briefly and precisely mentioned that when the child is sick, the responsibility mostly falls on his or her mother; thus, the care from mothers is critical.

The guest speakers suggested three policy recommendations. Firstly, there should be more focus and incentives to encourage more participation from women in the health sector. Although there are potential women in the health sector, they make up a much smaller percentage than men. H.E. Sok Kung mentioned that as a leader of the Doctor Alliance of the Union of Youth Federation of Cambodia (D.A YUFC), he noticed that among approximately 5,000 members in the association, only 30 per cent of them are female. Ms Limsan mentioned that there is still a traditional belief that parents do not prefer their daughter to choose a career in the technological or medical fields. From parents' perspectives, H.E. Sok Kung added that studying medicine requires a long period and might interfere with other essential personal events in their life, such as marriage.

Speaking of governmental effort, H.E. Sok Kung mentioned that there is only a special tax incentive on healthcare-related factories or manufacturing companies; however, the incentive on women in e-health has not seen much significance, one of the main points which the government should focus on.

Secondly, both female guest speakers suggested that more coordination and collaboration from local hospitals and government are highly required to advance e-health in Cambodia. All hospitals should consider applying digitalisation in their operation. It would help them connect

easily with each other, share data of patients, and allow easier access from patients in terms of communicating with specialists or making appointments.

Lastly, public participation and government awareness are vital to advance e-health in the country further. For example, when there is a new technology in the health sector, such as the Stop COVID QR Code initiative, the government could publicly inform the public about its role, importance and usage. As a result, the public could be more aware of it. In reverse, the people themselves should trust the recommendations from relevant ministries or governmental agencies and follow as advised.

In conclusion, the past two or three years witnessed an emerging digitalisation in the health care system in Cambodia; both the government and the public have started to realise its importance and adopted it into the health care system. E-health surely brings benefits to users including women in general and mothers in the family. The role of women is also vital in health care advancement in Cambodia. However, since participation of women in health care and e-health is still limited, more focus and effort to encourage and involve women in this sector is inevitable to equally balance gender role and strengthen health care area in the country.

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