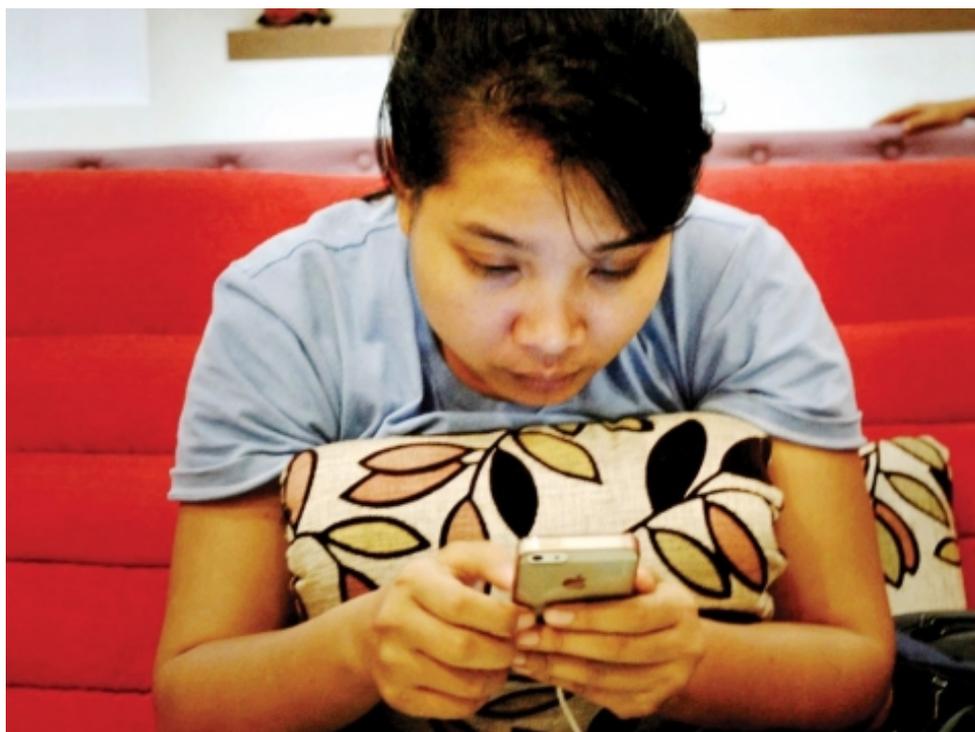


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Women With Clout: The Blue Lady Leaves for Singapore

Thursday, 31 July 2014; News by Khmer Times/Nou Sotheavy



Keo Kounilla checking her smart phone for news of Air Algerie's plane crash. (KT Photo: Nou Sotheavy)

PHNOM PENH, (Khmer Times) – Kounilla Keo, 26, Cambodia's pioneering English blogger and youth community organizer based pulled up stakes last week and moved to Singapore.

Currently working at 5D labs on a three year project about the technology and innovations on Cambodia, she co-founded Film Camp, organized a film exhibition, and Blog fest Asia 2012. As an icon of this generation's move into social media, Keo recounts how Cambodia is affected by global issues.

In a recent Youtube video, Keo's arranged a line dance with a bunch of "geeks" to the popular William Pharrell's "Happy" song.

Unlike a similar video released in May, six Iranian men and women dancing to the same song in Tehran, Keo was not arrested. Although Cambodia still has many challenges, Keo appreciated the freedom Cambodia in social media

compared to the other countries.

In an intensive five day digital security workshop, Keo discovered how Iran's whole country - and their Internet - was censored and closely monitor by the government. Iran has "The religion police, the ones that log on to the Internet to spy on the people.", Although many Cambodians media may be limited, the Internet is still an available tool for uncensored news.

Censorship has already affected Cambodia's neighbors, Vietnam. Keo compared Vietnam to Iran, "Iran has more capabilities to spy on its own citizens than Vietnam," because Iran has set their restrictions longer. Other countries like Malaysia or Singapore are very active online."

Concerned over the ASEAN integration in 2015, Keo wants to educate Cambodia's next generation in preparation of the competition expected in the work force and online advantages.

Although many Khmer youths have a good command of English, Keo wants them to continue to improve their language skills.

Keo's The Blue Lady Blog started when she wanted to improve her English by posting articles which showed positive changes in Cambodia, "My blog doesn't reach the total population of Cambodia, but I can present a person a perception." Jobs opportunities for English skills are valued across the borders.

In 2011 Keo spent three months in Germany. She wants to challenge herself further in Singapore by investing in an education and developing a network.

Studying public policy, she plans to become a person with analytical skills. She also wants to develop her critical thinking skills in this field. Four other Cambodians - who have also received full scholarships - will join Keo in Singapore in the pursuit of two-year master degrees.

While Keo initially plans to work at a top multinational company overseas, she will still be a part of the Cambodian community. With a sad sigh, and a small smile, Keo whispers "Singapore and Cambodia are just two hours away".

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