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DIGITAL ASIA ACCELERATOR (2019-2022)

In direct support of USAID’s strategic approach to implementing the Indo-Pacific Vision, the Digital Asia Accelerator (“the Accelerator”) aims to advance economic development by increasing businesses’ and citizens’ capacities to use digital technology safely and effectively. The Accelerator is part of the Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership, a whole of U.S. government effort to promote an open, interoperable, secure, and reliable internet.

As the world’s fastest growing digital economy, the Indo-Pacific region has the potential to be an even more valuable market for American and partner countries’ companies. To help realize this opportunity, and in close coordination with the U.S. State Department, USAID’s Accelerator will improve digital safety practices among local businesses and civil society organizations, and increase their capacity to engage on digital economy policy issues. This improved self-reliance will enable countries to be better partners for the U.S. in the digital revolution.

IMPROVING DIGITAL LITERACY, SKILLS, AND POLICY ENGAGEMENT TO STRENGTHEN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

Just over a decade ago, four in five Southeast Asians had limited or no internet connectivity. Today, Southeast Asians are the most engaged mobile internet users in the world. According to some estimates, the region's digital economy has the potential to add over \$1 trillion to its GDP over the next 10 years. The Accelerator takes a three-pronged approach to addressing the core challenges associated with this rapid digital transformation: (1) increase public awareness of digital safety issues, (2) improve entrepreneurs' digital skills, and (3) strengthen the private sector and civil society's ability to engage on digital policy issues.

Across the region, citizens need access to simple, clear information and easy to employ practices on how to protect themselves online. To address this information gap, the Accelerator will employ a variety of on and offline tactics to reach key audiences, including, for example, a competition inviting youth to design short videos for social media with tips on how to stay safe online.

A lack of digital skills is another important obstacle that prevents businesses from taking full advantage of the opportunities brought by the digital economy. In partnership with U.S. and local companies, the Accelerator will support training modules and programs for industry associations to train small and medium enterprises across Southeast Asia.

As countries in the region develop digital policy frameworks, USAID will work with them to incorporate core democratic values, including the rule of law, civil liberties, and human rights. To facilitate this, and building upon its awareness raising and upskilling work, the Accelerator will strengthen citizens' ability to meaningfully engage in the policy-making process by, for example, supporting public consultations on a country's draft cybersecurity law.

IMPACT AND RESULTS

Through this activity, USAID seeks to ensure that the building blocks and necessary regulatory policies are in place so that the evolution of the digital economy in partner countries benefits and protects their citizens equitably. In line with this philosophy, and in direct support of the U.S. Government's multi-year Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership, the Accelerator will support countries in Southeast Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific to develop the human and institutional capacity to participate in a secure digital economy and to establish sound policy frameworks, so they become increasingly self-reliant and grow into strong U.S. partners.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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