Unesco handbook to help counter disinformation

Sok Srey Lux / Khmer Times

Minister of Information Khieu Kanharith said the book is a timely resource, especially with the prevalence of misinformation. KT/Khem Sovannara

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation yesterday launched its handbook titled “Journalism, Fake News and Disinformation: Handbook for Journalism Education and Training,” which aims to educate practising reporters and editors and the public on how to best navigate the news environment.

Speaking at the event, Minister of Information Khieu Kanharith said the book is a timely resource, especially with the prevalence of orchestrated campaigns that spread unverified and distorted news.

The book, which has a translated Khmer version, can significantly improve the media literacy of Cambodians, including how to verify the credibility of and critically assess information, said Kanharith.

He added that during the pandemic, there has been a clamour for a law to combat disinformation, however, he said uncertainties on how to enact such a law without restricting the citizens’ freedom of speech and expression has stopped the government from doing so.
Chak Sopheap, executive director of the Cambodian Center for Human Rights, lauded the minister’s choice to educate the people rather than to pass legislation which, if enforced improperly, could lead to an infringement on the citizens’ rights.

“In a democratic society, people are entitled to various opinions. We simply have to be aware of whether such opinions exercise or abuse our freedoms,” she said.

Magnus Saemundsson, first secretary of the Swedish Embassy of Cambodia, during the event, said that for the past 15 years, Cambodia has had access to information via radio and television broadcasting networks. But now, the advent of social media has provided people with more alternative channels.

In the past, he said, only one percent of Cambodia had access to the internet – a figure which has since shot up to 58 percent.

“Social media platforms, such as Facebook, is a big part of Cambodia’s [information resource]. None of these is controlled unlike radio stations and print media. That’s why we have journalists and people to double-check information found online – its purpose, whether it is true or not and so on,” said Saemundsson.

Prime Minister Hun Sen during a press conference on January called on social media users and journalists to be prudent in reporting the status of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country.

Details: https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50748184/unesco-handbook-to-help-counter-disinformation/