



COMMITTEE FOR FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS IN CAMBODIA

Report



Women's Participation in Politics and 2008 National Assembly Elections

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Acronyms

MPs	Members of parliament
NA	National Assembly
CDRI	Cambodia Development Research Institute
COMFREL	Committee for free and Fair Elections in Cambodia
CPWP	Committee to Promote Women in Politics
CWPD	Cambodia Women for Peace and Development
GAD/C	Gender and Development for Cambodia
NICFEC	Neutral and Impartial Committee for and fair Election in Cambodia
SILAKA	SILAKA
WFP	Women for Prosperity

Political parties

CPP	Cambodian People's Party
FUNCINPEC or FCP	National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia
HDDMP	Hang Dara Democratic Movement Party
HRP	Human Rights Party
KAPP	Khmer Anti-Poverty Party
KDP	Khmer Democratic Party
KRP	Khmer Republican Party
LDP	League for Democracy Party
NRP	Norodom Ranariddh Party
SJP	Social Justice Party
SRP	Sam Rainsy Party

I. Introduction

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia protects some personal basic freedoms. As Cambodia enjoys its new political stability, which is the enhancing reconstruction of infrastructure and growth of the national economy, a number of reports are claiming that the Constitution is being countered by weaknesses in law enforcement and imbalances among the Executive, Legislative and Judiciary bodies, as well as a lack of absolute separation among the three powers.

In addition to these imbalances, Cambodia is facing in equality with regard to empowerment between men and women: most Cambodian politicians are male, with women gaining few opportunities to take part in politics. Some of the main factors discouraging women's participation in politics are conservative traditions and Khmer culture, which considers women inferior to men in all fields in society. Further, poverty, illiteracy, discrimination, discouragement, lack of opportunities and an absence of clear policy on promoting and giving opportunities to women also prevent women from obtaining equality and the benefits of social affairs and political life.

Cambodia has yet to reach gender equality within a political context, particularly with regard to female election candidates. Although female voters account for 53% of the population, the number of elected female parliamentarians represents only 22% of all 123 parliamentarians elected in the 2008 fourth mandate parliamentary elections; the number of elected female commune councilors accounted for 20% of all elected commune councilors in the second mandate commune council elections. According to the UN Development Program's (UNDP's) Human Development Index in 2007/08, Cambodia has among the lowest gender equity in Asia, with a Gender Development Index rating of 0.594 and a Gender Empowerment Index rating of 0.377. Although the results reveal improvements, gender issues still face various impediments and reforms and policy implementation are still weak.

Even though the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has moved on a step by nominating for the first time 23 women as provincial/municipal deputy-governors across the country (except Kep) and 169 women as district/khan deputy-governors in all 185 districts/khans,¹ there is still a lack of commitment by Members of Parliament (MPs) and the RGC to set up a sufficient legal framework promoting women's participation in politics. In contrast, both elected officials and MPs are in favor of pushing government's implementation of the Cambodia Millennium Development Goals (CMDGs) following their respective political party lines.

Cambodia organized its fourth mandate parliamentary elections on July 27, 2008. The first elections were organized by the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in 1993, since which parliamentary elections have been held every five years, in compliance with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia. Commune council elections have been held twice nationwide, in 2002 and 2007.

These elections have yet to reach international standards: during each election phase, irregularities, political murders/violence, intimidation, technical errors and other issues have arisen continuously, regardless of the existing Electoral Law and the National Election Committee's (NEC's) Regulations and Procedures, which outline a range of penalties for individuals, groups of people or political parties committing offences. Enforcement of existing laws and the NEC's Regulations and Procedures is at a low level and subject to bias. However, the 2008 elections created many opportunities to gain the confidence of the public and the number of cases of violence decreased.

In the 2008 parliamentary elections, 2,478 electoral candidates (1,162 titular candidate and 1,316 alternate candidates) competed to gain the 123 National Assembly (NA) seats. Among those were 422 female electoral candidates (172 titular candidates – 14.8% – and 250 alternate candidates – 19%) in 11 political parties. Only 8 political parties registered individual candidates to compete in all constituencies in 24 provinces/municipalities.

The final election results showed that only 5 political parties received support from the Cambodian people, winning NA seats: the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) with 90 seats; the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) with 26

¹ Sub-decree on Determination of Number of Phnom Penh Municipal/Provincial Councilors and Town/District/Khan Councilors in the First Mandate, dated January 12, 2009.

seats; the Human Rights Party (HRP) with 3 seats; Funcinpec with 2 seats and the Norodom Ranariddh Party (NRP) with 2 seats. Among all 123 seats, the total number of elected female candidates was **27, equal to 22%** of all elected MPs, all from the CPP and SRP.

Below can be found case studies on women's participation in politics and a survey on women's viewpoints on women's participation in the 2008 elections.

II. Women's Participation in Politics and the 2008 Parliamentary Elections

II.1. Female candidates and elected female representatives

II.1.1. Selection of female candidates

Major political parties with a number of seats in parliament and on commune/sangkat councils raised similar issues related to candidate nomination. Some political party leaders complained about a decrease in the total number of ballots received and of not receiving ballots or NA seats after they had appointed more women to run in the elections. Putting women's names on the candidate list is seen as a "waste". They added that putting a name on the candidate list basically depended on capacity, popularity, high commitment and long-lasting political background. This caused a huge obstacle for women willing to stand for election. Prior to the candidate registration period, the government and civil society organizations (CSOs), in the form of the Committee for Promoting Women in Politics (CPWP), whose 7 members are the Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL), the Neutral and Impartial Committee for Free and Fair Elections (NICFEC), Women for Prosperity (WFP), Gender and Development/Cambodia (GAD/C), Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI), Silaka and Cambodian Women for Peace and Development (CWPD), pushed for political parties to alternate the names of men and women at the top of their respective political party candidate name list to ensure that women would be elected.

As a result, according to figures obtained from the 2008 NA elections, among the 3 major political parties (CPP, SRP and Funcinpec), the CPP increased the number of female candidates listed at the top of its candidate list ranging from number 1 to 3 from 3.61% to 10.27%. The SRP slightly increased the total number of its female candidates from 12.22% to 13.06%. Some female candidates and political party members revealed to observers that discrimination against female candidates had taken place within the party during candidate nomination and candidate selection. Most male politicians stated that they had had difficulties promoting and motivating more women to take part in politics. Is their statement practical or just an excuse?

Other factors were that putting female candidates' names at the top of the candidate list created competition with male candidates. Additionally, the political atmosphere during the election process saw intimidation and problems negatively influencing women and causing them to hesitate to participate in politics.

Notably, female politicians were not seen joining a meeting among European Union (EU) election observers, political party leaders and high-ranking government officials to discuss the 2008 elections (in which 172 female candidates participated, equal to 14.80% of 1,162 competitive candidates).

It should be remembered that 27% of all candidates who stood for the 2003 parliamentary elections were women, from 23 political parties. This figure discloses a decrease in the number of female election candidates by 12.20%. In spite of this, the CPP increased its total number of female candidates from 14 (11.38% of all 2003 election candidates) to 20 (16.26% of all 2008 election candidates). Similarly, the SRP increased its female candidates from 15 (12.19% in 2003) to 17 (13.82% in 2008).

Table 1: Number of women standing for the fourth mandate NA election from 11 registered parties

	Political party	No. of female titular candidates	%	No. of female alternate candidates	%	No. of constituencies
1	CPP	20	16.26	26	18.30	24
2	Hang Dara Democratic Movement	10	8.13	17	12.05	24
3	NRP	11	8.94	15	10.64	24
4	Funcinpec	10	8.13	16	11.34	24
5	HRP	6	4.87	3	2.12	24
6	Society of Justice Party	14	30.43	18	39.13	7
7	League for Democracy Party	24	19.51	43	30.49	24
8	SRP	17	13.82	16	11.34	24
9	Khmer Anti-poverty Party	14	23.33	29	48.33	7
10	Khmer Democratic Party	37	30	53	35.81	24
11	United People of Cambodia	9	12.50	14	19.44	9
	Total of 11 parties	172	14.80	250	19	

II.1.2. Elected female candidates

The total number of directly elected female candidates in the 2008 parliamentary elections slightly increased if compared with the 2003 elections (18 equal to 14.63% in 2008 and 15 equal to 12.19% in 2003). CSOs highly applauded the newly formed RGC for replacing some of the directly elected male candidates appointed to government positions with female candidates listed below them. Thus, after the fourth mandate RGC was formed, the total number of female MPs increased to 27, equal to 22%, of 123. Among these, 21, equal to 23.33% of 90 MPs, are from the CPP and 6, equal to 23.07% of 26 MPs, are from the SRP. The other parties (Funcinpec, NRP and HRP) with seats at the NA have no elected female candidates.

It should be noticed that the total number of female MPs in the third mandate (2003-2008) increased gradually from one year to another until the end of the term (from 15 equal to 12.19% of all directly elected MPs to 25 equal to 20.32%). This figure should be impressive, but it should be asked whether female MPs were able to fulfill their roles effectively when there was only 1, 2 or 3 years left of the term. Inadequate time and opportunities to execute tasks not only caused women difficulties, but also decreased the value of their job performance and confidence in women. Thus, from a social point of view, the public still look down on women, stating that female leaders did not perform their tasks as effectively as men, so should not have been promoted to high positions.

There has been a slight increase in immediately elected female MPs, by **2.44%** (18 equal to 14.63% in the 2008 elections and 15 equal to 12.19% in 2003), with an increase by the end of the process of only **1.68%** (25 equal to 20.32% in 2003 and 27 equal to 22% in 2008 up to now). This is a small and slow increase, inadequate for reaching the CMDGs, which determine that at least 30% of women will be included in decision making at national level by 2015, by which time parliamentary elections will have been held only one more time, in 2013. If the rate of increase remains at **1.68%** for the fifth mandate elections, the total number of elected female MPs will be equal to only **23.68%** (assuming that strategies and political platforms of registered parties and the government are the same as those in the fourth mandate).

Table 2: Number of elected female MPs in the fourth mandate

	Elected female MPs in 4 th mandate			No. of seats received
	Political party	No. of elected female MPs	%	
1	CPP	21	23.33	90
2	SRP	6	23.07	26
3	HRP	0		3
4	Funcinpec	0		2
5	NRP	0		2
Total		27	22	123

II.2. Political Party Policy on Women's Issues

During the 2008 parliamentary election campaign, from June 16 to July 25, 2008, all 11 registered political parties conducted a political campaign on women's and children's issues to be resolved in the fourth mandate to attract voters to support their own political platform. The main political platforms and promises below were extracted from three sources: the Center for Social Development's (CSD's) document on voter guidelines in accordance with a letter issued by the NEC dated June 23, 2008; the political debate forum on measures against women and children trafficking held by COMFREL on July 16, 2008 with 10 registered political parties; and CPP political platform document on policy to promote women and children's rights (owing to the absence of the CPP during the debate forum).

Table 3: Political platform, strategies and recommendations of political parties to resolve women's and children's issues

	Political platform of political parties	Political parties
1	Oppose impunity law, corruption, violence, human trafficking, drug trafficking, crime and all means of discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP • SRP • HRP • NRP

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funcinpec • Khmer Anti-poverty Party • Khmer Democratic Party • League for Democracy Party • Hang Dara Democratic Movement • United People of Cambodia
2	Create a proportional system of women's participation at all levels/fields to maximize the number of women in national institutions and CSOs in a bid to pave way for women to take part in decision-making activities, making development plans and governance at both national and local levels as well as building women's capacity through education and training to make them feel more confident in their social affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP • SRP
3	Accurately scrutinize companies sending Cambodian female workers abroad and foreigners working locally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funcinpec • SRP • NRP • League for Democracy Party • Society of Justice Party • Hang Dara Democratic Movement
4	Create a loan system for at least 50,000 young men and women per year to carry on their studies at university by paying back long-term installments from 15-30 years after they graduate and get a job with sustainable salary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRP
5	Create vocational training schools at local grassroots level for youths to receive specific skills according to the market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRP • United People of Cambodia • Khmer Democratic Party
6	Ensure effectiveness and enhance human rights compliance, particularly rights of women, children and minorities, as well as encouraging more women's participation in all levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP • NRP • Funcinpec
7	Enhance healthiness of elderly people, orphans, victim women, street people, veterans and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Khmer Democratic Party • Khmer Anti-poverty Party
8	Crack down on brothels, especially pimps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society of Justice Party
9	Use all stratagems to suppress women's and children's trafficking, and ensure local authorities, ministries and Khmer embassies in foreign countries think about citizens who work in foreign countries and are violated, especially cheated and sold; practice laws strictly, monitoring and controlling private companies that employ in Cambodia and take workers out to foreign countries, especially Malaysia and Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP • NRP • League of Democracy Party • Society of Justice Party • Hang Dara Democratic Movement
10	Ban media that spread sex through magazines and website that cause sex trafficking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRP • Khmer Republican Party
!!	Obstruct tourists who come to Cambodia to find sex or take sex videos to sell in foreign countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP • SRP • NRP • Khmer Republican Party
12	Create announcements and short education pieces on radio and television and in newspapers and magazines for citizens to understand clearly about trafficking and sexual violence towards women and children; set up training courses on human resources and general knowledge at village and province level to reinforce networks in communities; ensure professional skills for women and children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP • HRP • Khmer Republican Party • NRP
13	Enhance the rights of children, reinforce the comfort of children, support orphans, disabled children and children from poor families in communities; create education, rehabilitation and professional skills training for victim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP

	children; push children to become good citizens in the future	
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II.3. Woman Candidates of NEC C/PEC C/SEC and constituencies

A minority of women have governmental roles in organizing elections: 2 among 5 persons at the NEC and 153 persons, equal to 17.79%, at the NEC’s office. There are few women at capital/provincial election commissions (C/PECs) (only 122 persons, or 10%) and commune/sangkat election commissions (C/SECs) (1,464, or 13.02%). Office election committees (OEC) have 29,551, equal to 32.29%. Only a few women are in positioned in decision making in terms of the elections: 17% are chairpersons.

II.4. Women Observers

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international NGOs, embassies and political parties sent their observers and representatives to communes/sangkats and constituencies of the capital city, provinces and cities to observe electoral progress in 2008. According to the NEC, about 35% of NGO observers were women, while 17% of political party observers were women.

- 3,126 of the 10,901 national observers allowed by the NEC were women, or 34.86%, from communities and 72 NGOs. Actual presence of national observers during the elections was 17,219, with 6,082 women (35.32%).
- 592 international observers included 194 women (32.77%), from international NGOs and 29 countries.
- 140,804 political representatives included 24,865 women, equal to 17.65%, from 6 parties during registration and 9 parties during the elections and vote counting.

II.5. Woman Voters

For the fourth mandate NA elections, there were 8,125,529 citizens registered and named on the electoral list, with 4,347,405 women, equal to 53.51%.² Voter turnout was 6,110,828, equal to 75.21%, with more women than men going to vote on July 27, 2008. 2,014,701 persons with the right to vote did not turn up. Women (as well as men) met obstructions to their rights: 1) voters could not find their names on the lists; 2) voters did not know about polling stations because they did not receive new cards or did not know about the changing codes of electoral offices; and 3) voters were confused about using their cards for the elections. Electoral office assistants did not complete their work efficiently or did not have the capacity to help voters solve the above problems.

II.6. Other Activities to Enhance Women’s Involvement in Politics

To encourage women’s involvement in politics and leadership for the 2008 NA elections, CPWP worked hard to help those standing for election: training political party activists; holding of women’s forums; dissemination of educational documents to voters; broadcast of short educational stories and women’s programs on radio and television; advocacy and lobbying; etc. COMFREL published documents and broadcast programs across the country: 300 pamphlets; 30,000 question and answer books; 33,125 picture books; 20,000 calendars; 9,000 stickers; 11-minute educational spots on TV9 and TV 11/Apsara TV (38 times); broadcasts of “Civil Society Voice” on FM105, FM90, FM88.5 and FM 90.25 (10 times); and frequent broadcasts of “Women Can Do It”. Moreover, COMFREL held 3 training courses for activists of political parties with seats in commune/sangkat councils (CPP, SRP, Funcinpec, NRP) in Kampong Cham and Kampong Seam districts, Kampong Cham province, and 4 public forums in Kampong Seam district to educate voters; and prepared political discussion forums for political parties to debate and talk about their policies related to prevention of trafficking of women and children. However, there is a great deal of work to do to promote women in politics and to enhance the potential of women in politics and public works.

2. Report of the NEC on controlling the voter lists in 2007, on the NEC website on June 28, 2008.

III. Case studies in Kandal, Takeo and Kampong Thom Provinces

III.1. Objectives and Methods in Collecting Data

COMFREL prepared three training courses in Kampong Thom, Takeo and Kandal provinces to collect data and interview woman voters. We chose to train 60 woman students on how to choose target groups and how to interview and collect data (before during after), how to send reports and how to introduce educational documents to voters. Among contact persons at district/sangkat level, COMFREL chose 20 woman candidates to train for one morning at the district office. When they finished, they introduced educational documents to and interviewed women who had ink on their finger (i.e. voted) and who did not have ink on their finger (i.e. did not vote). First we trained 20 woman voters in Stung Sen district of Kampong Thom province on July 12, 2008. Then we trained 20 woman voters in Sa'ang district, Kandal province. Finally, we trained 20 woman voters in at Donkeov district, Takeo province on July 20, 2008.

Number of trainees and interviewees (woman target groups)

No	District/province	No. of trainees and interviewees	Target groups with ink	Target groups without ink
1	Sa'ang district, Kandal province	20 persons	20 x 3 = 60	20 x 2 = 40
2	Donkeov district, Takeo province	20 persons	20 x 3 = 60	20 x 2 = 40
3	Stung Sen district, Kampong Thom province	20 persons	20 x 3 = 60	20 x 2 = 40
		60 persons	180 persons	120 persons

We interviewed 300 woman voters, with 10 unusable question forms. Among 290 usable forms, we had 90 forms from those who did not vote. Each province also held three focus groups discussions, combining 8-11 non-voters in one group of 8 to 11 persons.

This project aimed to explore ideas, vision and understandings regarding women in politics, especially relevant to the fourth mandate NA elections, and to look for obstacles to voting for women from 18 years old and the reasons why the number of voters had decreased.

Questions were detailed and were both quantitative and qualitative, and different for focus groups than for individuals. Questions included:

1. Did you join in electoral activities?
2. How did you vote? Why?
3. What did you hope to receive when you voted?
4. Why did not you go to vote? (Interviewees did not have ink on their finger)
5. Do you think the involvement of women is important to ensure equal rights between men and women?
6. Do you think it is important to have women candidates?

III.2. Data Analysis

Did you join in electoral activities?

	No.	%
Were not involved in the campaign	128	51.2
Were involved the campaign	55	22.0
Listened	53	21.2
Did not concentrate on the campaign	14	5.6
Total	250 persons	100

- 57% of women did not join in activities. The reason for this was that they thought the electoral campaign did not have anything new for them: they did not see the importance of the political promises made during the elections with regard to changing their lives. Some thought they should stay neutral; some were not allowed by their parents to join in for fear of problems; some did not want others to know which party they supported; some wanted to protect their own security and prosperity. Some said the

campaign was not important in comparison with their daily business; elections are an issue for politicians who are in it to see benefits for themselves.

- 22% were heavily involved in the campaigns, saying that they were busy and happy to be involved and wanted to know all the different political policies. Some women said that the village chief went to people's houses and they replaced their parents in these activities. There was a great deal of understanding about party political campaigning. Some said they joined in by following others, felt happy, had rice to eat and had money to take a taxi (5,000 Riel). Some said they went to support their party, helped to encourage candidates and talked to candidates directly. They were able to see which parties had money or not and then could announce their support.
- 21% listened to the radio and watched TV because they were busy studying, working or looking after children. They wanted to know the news of each party, although they felt that all parties talked about benefits and good ideas but did nothing. This got citizens to understand their role in decision making and democracy: they knew the date of the election and other information through news, which helped them join in.

Example: Women in Balang village, Damrey Chanklar commune, Stoeung Sen, district Kampong Thom province said: "Through the electoral campaign we could know about parties' political programs, promises and policies on election. We could know which party was good; we could compare them and make decisions as to whether we needed to change and vote in a new one and how."

How did you vote? Why?

	No.	%
Decided to vote by themselves	151	96.2
Decided to vote by following their parents	4	2.5
Authority or society persuaded	2	1.3
Total	157	100

Most women went to vote by themselves. According to the interviews, we saw:

- 96.2% decided to vote by themselves, wanting a leader who was loyal, moral and kind; had a strong stance on helping the weak and poor; and would lead the country to achieve developing, durability and security.
- 2.5% of women went along with their parents to vote.
- 1.3% of women went to vote because the authorities or society persuaded them, but there was a reluctance to vote because they lost time to carry out their domestic work.

What did you hope to receive when you voted?

	No.	%
Had great importance, decided to vote by self	123	81.5
Had some importance	23	15.2
Did not have importance	5	3.3
Total	151	100

- 81.5% of women said the decision to vote was very important, to choose a representative whom they liked and hoped could solve their problems.
- 15.2% said there was some importance, because all people had to vote.
- 3.3% said there was no importance.
- Citizens wanted a good leader, for people to have good lives and good jobs, and for those elected to reinforce justice and solve inflation.

Example: Some women in Takeo province wanted to see the country developed as in other countries. "Especially, our children and the next generation can have a chance to study at university and have good job when they finish school. If we have a good leader, corruption will be solved, we will have jobs and salaries and our situation will be better. We try to change the leadership through this election."

Why did not you go to vote? (Interviewees did not have ink on their finger)

	No.	%
Didn't get news	25	30.1
Health problems	17	20.5
Didn't have transportation	13	15.7
Busy at work and doing business	9	10.8
Accident	7	8.5
Didn't concentrate	5	6.0
Busy at home	4	4.8
Illiteracy	3	3.6
Total	83	100

- 30.1% said their houses were very far, they did not register, they did not have the necessary cards or documents, they did not find their name on the list, they were confused on their cards and the right to vote, etc.
- 20.5% had personal problems (health, pregnancy, headache, tired, old, not well, infection, in hospital, serious illness, giving birth, children in hospital).
- 15.7% had no transportation.
- 10.8% were busy at work (business, did farming, moving house).
- 8.4% had an accident.
- 6% did not care and said that they could not be bothered to vote for any party. In this group, some said that they were preparing to take exams. For some, their parents did not think it was important for them to vote, saying that whichever party was elected everything would still be expensive.
- 4.8% stayed at home because nobody else would do the cooking.
- 3.6% answered that they were illiterate; they did not understand the problems or the strategies of the leaders of each party to lead the country and were afraid to vote for someone whom they disliked.

Do you think the involvement of women is important to ensure equal rights between men and women?

	No.	%
Important	241	96.4
Unimportant	9	3.6
Total	250	100

- 96.6% felt women and men had equal rights on all problems; not only men had the vote but women also. Women think more thoroughly than men and are better at discussion to solve women's and children's problems; women vote more than men in some places and are the most important force in society. If a family has no women then it has many difficulties, although women's work is more difficult. Women must be involved in a balanced way in society as they are important for social and family harmony.
- 3.6% said that they could not make decisions as men can, that women are weak, have a great deal of domestic work and children to look after.

Do you think it is important to have women candidates?

	No.	%
Important	235	94
Unimportant	15	6
Total	250	100

- 94% felt women should stand for election to raise women to join all activities in society, communities and families. When women stand for election and become leaders and educators, it is easier to communicate with each other. They know women's worries: if they become representatives they can help women in their work and difficulties. Women are mothers and can forgive each other. Active women leaders in society can solve discrimination, violence, rape, trafficking and violence. Women have different needs; they need an opportunity to show their ability in leading and developing the country. According to the past, women have been good leaders. They are easier to talk to, kinder and more

tolerant than men. They know more about problems than men do. When women have problems, it is difficult to find a man who will listen and discuss it. Discussions between women are easier, as women have more difficulties in their lives than men.

- 6% women felt women are weak and cannot work as men do.

III.3. Conclusions

Involvement of women in electoral campaigning and voting decreased because women were busy with other issues, because the election issues were complex and difficult and because they felt they would gain no benefits from going to vote. Some did not go to vote because they had seen in the past no benefits from being involved in elections, feeling that their living conditions remained poor and elections could not change them.

III.4. Recommendations

All political parties have to take all possible measure to enhance women's role in politics. Listing women at the top of the candidate lists should be listed in party policies. Furthermore, all stakeholders should actively raise women's involvement by building up women's abilities and through advocacy/lobbying with leaders on major policies and quotas in laws and party policies. It is vital to create and support strategies such as:

- Reinforcing legal practices and policies of government by concentrating on an agreement to eliminate discrimination against women.
- Encouraging formal and non-formal education of women in economics, reproductive health, legal protection, laws against domestic violence, etc.
- Reinforcing and building women's ability in human resources and other issues.
- Providing opportunities to women to be involved in politics across the board and eliminating discrimination against women in society in order to enable women to express their ideas to develop the country and claim their rights to stand for election.

IV. Conclusions/Recommendations

- Woman candidates in 2008 decreased by 12.20% (27% in 2003 and 14.80% in 2008). However, the number of women in the CPP increased from 14 persons in 2003 (11.38%) to 20 in 2008 (16.26%); in the SRP the increase was from 15 persons in 2003 (12.19%) to 17 in 2008 (13.82%).
- The number of elected women increased a little compared with previous election (18 persons equal to 14.63% in 2008 and 15 persons equal to 12.19% in 2003, elected immediately).
- In the campaign progress in 2008, from June, 26 to July 25, all 11 parties campaigned to show voters policies that were relevant to woman and children's problems.
- Numbers of women are still low in the lower level electoral commissions (C/PECs and C/SECs). Few women have supervisory roles or are involved in decision making regarding elections.
- NGOs had more woman observers (35%) than political parties did (17%).
- There were more woman voters than men on Election Day in July 2008.
- Case studies revealed that some women did not get involved or go to vote because they were busy, poor or confused or did not care (past electoral experiences did not provide them with benefits to citizens: they were still poor and nothing changed).

To raise equality gender and to provide power to women, some issues should be dealt with:

1. **Party policies and quota:** In providing opportunities to women and eliminating discrimination regarding involvement of women in politics, we must use a quota system. Electoral law and party policies must have quotas in place and these must be reinforced by a legal framework. At least 30% of titular candidates must be women. There is support from women and reinforced public campaigning on the importance of quotas to ensure increased representation of women in politics.
2. **Building abilities of woman candidates:** There is a need to encourage women candidates/political activist through short training courses before and after the elections to woman candidates and by instilling in them a sense of self-worth and belief in their ability to work. There should be training to potential woman leaders and next generation candidates, through NGOs and training of trainers by political parties, to strengthen their awareness and their abilities.

3. **Voter education:** The NEC and NGOs must concentrate more on education of citizens, especially before registration. There should be broad cooperation in dissemination of electoral education so voters in cities and the countryside can understand the election processes and can vote correctly. Government, the NEC and NGOs must consider low literacy in Cambodia and innovate to reach such groups, such as by creating a study program to be provided by private and public education institutions at all levels.
4. **Media:** The media have a role of responsible and efficient reporting to local communities related to the roles of women in politics, government, organizing and resource management. Media must also educate local people about the roles, responsibilities and mandates of councilors elected by the people so citizens can understand clearly the power of woman candidates. News must be easy for local people to understand.