

## Women's Empowerment in Politics

### There are few women in the executive branch.

#### Few women are appointed to senior positions in government

Over the past 10 years, there have been only two women ministers in the entire cabinet at any one time. One of these has always been the Minister for Women's Affairs. Only 8.2 percent and 9.3 percent of Secretaries of State and Under-secretaries of State, respectively, are women. Several ministries have no women in these senior positions and of those that do, there is only one women appointee among the secretary or under-secretary of state positions per ministry.



#### The number of women in the civil service is also low

1. The Cambodian Civil Service employs a total of 167,220 salaried civil servants, of which 51,046 are women (31 percent). In 14 ministries, female staffs comprise 20 percent or less of the total staff.
2. Data from 9 line ministries show that only 5-20 percent of senior civil service positions (Director Generals, Deputy Director Generals, of Departments and Deputy Directors of Departments) are women.

#### Women have less access than men to training and professional development opportunities in the civil service

1. Very few women have access to training and professional development, particularly those that entail international travel.  
Since women still bear the bulk of domestic responsibilities, they have trouble leaving their families for extended periods of time, unless they have supportive husband or family members.
2. Information from the Royal School of Administration (RSA) shows fewer women than men in per-service training: out of 81 graduates in 2005, 15 were female (18.5 percent) Of the civil servants that received after joining the civil service as preparation for promotion,  
Only 23 out 194 trainees (11.8 percent) were women in 2006.

**Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans (GMAPs) are a good start but more effort is needed to address deeper barriers**

1. Fifteen government institutions have developed Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans (GMAPs) and two more were being prepared as of March 2008.
2. Most GMAP acknowledge that there are considerable gender disparities in the overall number of staff, the numbers of staff in senior positions, and access of women staff to training opportunities, particularly overseas training. All GMAPs have strategies to reduce disparities in recruitment, promotion and access to professional development although targets – both types and quantities – vary.
3. The GMAPs represent a positive step towards achievement of gender equity in decision making and if well implemented, should yield results. However, issues of recruitment, training, and promotion are embedded within deeper-rooted barriers of institutional culture, disadvantages faced by women in becoming and overall social status of women. If unaddressed, gender disparities decision-making will persist.

### **There are few women in provincial, district and village administration.**

#### **Women's participation in provincial and district administration is very low**

1. No women have been appointed as provincial governor or deputy governor.
2. Only 2.7 percent of deputy district governors are female. Female representation in line ministry department at the provincial and districts levels is low, with the exception of the Provincial Departments of Women's Affairs.
3. Data from seven line ministries show that women hold under 25 percent of management positions in provincial departments and district offices.

#### **Women make up 30% of the village administration**

Only 453 village chiefs are women in Cambodia's 13,890 villages, and 9,450 village committee members are women. According to article 22 of sub-decree 22 on Decentralization of Powers, Roles and Duties to Commune/Sangkat Councils, one in three village leaders must be women.

### **Women's representation in the legislative branch is gradually increasing.**

#### **Women have been appointed to 14.8 percent of Senate seats**

1. In 1999, women were appointed to 13 percent of Senate seats. In 2004, when the Senate was re-appointed, 13 out of 61 senators (21 percent) were women.
2. In 2005, a new law was adopted on the election of the Senate. This law mandates that Senate would be indirectly elected by commune councilors. This election was held in 2006 and the current number of women senators is 9 out of 61 (14.8 percent). The percentage is lower than the target set of 17 percent under the CMDGs.

#### **Women's participation in the National Assembly is showing a gradual increase**

In the 2003 National Elections, 19 percent (24 out of 123 members) elected to the National Assembly were women. This was an increase from 1993 and 1998, when 5 percent and 11.5 percent respectively of elected representatives were women.

### **Efforts are being made to attract and nominate women for the 2008 National Elections**

1. The 2008 National Elections will be held on July 27, 2008. Efforts to attract and nominate women include voter education. Voter mobilization and voter outreach with gender components to increase voter's awareness of the need to have a gender balance among elected officials. Agencies are also lobbying political parties to increase the number of women candidates, and more importantly, placing them higher on the list.
2. Cambodian NGOs, particularly the Committee to Promote Women in Politics (CPWP), are conducting training, networking and other capacity and building interventions for women candidates.

### **Women's representation in commune councils and commune leadership is increasing**

#### **Women's participation in Commune Councils increased from 2002 to 2007**

##### **The second Commune Council Elections were held on April 1, 2007**

1. *The proportion of female candidate increased from 16 percent (2002) to 21 percent (2007).* All parties increased the numbers of female candidates from the last election.
2. *Women were placed higher on party lists in the 2007 elections:* The number of female candidates ranked in the top three positions in the lists of 12 political parties was 2,328, as compared with 1,161 in the 2002 elections. The number of first-ranked female candidates also increased markedly.
3. *Women commune councilors increased from 8 percent (2002) to 14.6 percent (2007).* Out of the total 11,353 commune councilors, 1662 are female. This percentage varies by province, from a low of 9.4 percent to a high of 22.0 percent. The percent of communes with no female councilors has decreased from 66 percent in 2002 to 23 percent (385 communes) in 2007.
4. *The number of female commune chiefs and deputy chiefs has increased:* Four percent of commune councils have a women commune chief (69 out of 1621), up from 2 percent in 2002 (34 out of 1621). The number of female first and second deputy commune chiefs is 161 and 110 respectively.

#### **Women councilors still find it difficult to be heard in decision-making processes.**

1. The challenges women councilors elected in 2002 face were many – they were usually in the minority in the councils, they faced discrimination by colleagues, and had limited experience with public decision-making and negotiation. These factors remain barriers today.
2. Experience in nine provinces show that strategies such as networking, skills building in leadership and problem solving resulted in increased confidence, improved relations with colleagues, and increased ability to deal with general commune problems and issues.

### **There are few women in the judicial branch.**

#### **There are very few female judges and prosecutors.**

1. Of 206 currently-appointed judges in Cambodia, only 17 are women (8.5%). There is only one female judge in the 15 judges in the Supreme Court, and a woman judge heads the Court of Appeals (Supreme Court 2008). The same judge

also serves as the sole female judge on the Supreme Council of Magistracy. There are only 11 female judges and one female prosecutor among the 156 judges and prosecutors in the provincial courts. There is no female representation in the military court.

2. A mere 2 out of 74 prosecutors and prosecutor-generals are women (2.7 percent), one of whom serves as a prosecutor in the Extraordinary Chambers of Court of Cambodia (ECCC) and the other as a prosecutor-general in the provincial court of Kandal province (MoJ 2007) These numbers show a modest increase compared with 2004 where only 14 of 198 judges and prosecutors were women (7%).

### **The number of female lawyers shows greater involvement of women**

1. 103 out of 578 registered lawyers are women (17.8 percent).
2. The Bar Association of the Kingdom of Cambodia, which regulates the legal profession in Cambodia, has 19 elected members, 2 of which are women (10.5 percent).

### **No special initiatives are in place to increase the number of women in the judicial branch linked to judicial reform**

- Numerous donors provide support to the Government on various aspects of legal and judicial reform to improve the transparency and efficiency of the justice system.
- Current efforts do not include any special initiatives that aim to increase the number of women in the judiciary. However, work has just begun on the development of MOJ's gender mainstreaming strategy.

### **Obstacles and opportunities to increase the voice of women in policy formulation and decision making processes**

#### **Social and traditional norms are a major barrier to entering politics**

#### **Few women aspire to participating in public decision making and those that do face challenges in translating these aspirations into tangible action**

1. Chhap Srey, the traditional code for women, emphasizes that public decision-making is the domain of men.
2. Events of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century have led to further masculinization and promotion of male voices in the public sphere.
3. Both men and women believe that women are less capable, less skilled and less suited to play a promotion role in public decision-making.

### **Women who enter public decision-making are unlikely to be preferentially nominated or chosen for positions**

- To obtain a position in government in Cambodia, as in other countries, individuals need to forge alliances with political parties. Further, campaigning requires financial resources as well as the ability to garner support and persuade individuals.
- Women often lack the financial resources and also are less vocal in promoting themselves, either to be nominated or to be placed on the party lists.

- Negotiating and campaigning for political positions also requires a great deal of confidence, and many Cambodian women are more tentative and hesitant to openly express themselves in public.

### **Levels of female education remain a major constraint**

1. Gender disparities in upper secondary and tertiary education mean that fewer women are qualified to apply for positions in government.
2. Once appointed or elected into positions within the government, women are less likely than their male colleagues to obtain professional advancement. There is thus a continuous cycle of few women being able to qualify for position, and then fewer women being able to advance and be promoted due to lower qualifications.

### **Workplace culture and policy barriers continue to be a constraint to increasing the role of women in leadership**

- Current GMAPs address some but not all of the underlying workplace culture and policy barriers that women face. These include:
  - Male superiors and colleagues may not be as interested in gender equity:
  - Lack of support structures in the workplace:
  - Poor access to training and advancement opportunities.
  - Poor investment in language skills and expertise building.
  - Fewer opportunities for promotion and recruitment.
  - Limited awareness on how to implement equal opportunity principles.

### **Understanding of temporary special measures to reduce existing inequalities is only just developing**

Affirmative action includes using quotas and targets as temporary special measure. The CEDAW Committee recommended temporary special measure for Cambodia. There is a debate in Cambodia about whether and how quotas/targets can be best applied.

### **Women leaders are well-regarded which they do obtain positions**

People perceive that Cambodian women in leadership are more honest, more trustworthy, and harder-working. Research in other countries also shows that women and men appear to have different styles of leadership.

### **Current efforts are largely fragmented and address only a small proportion of the needs and opportunities for intervention**

- At the village level, women can be (and arguably, are) encouraged to become village leaders. The requirement that 1-in-3 village leaders a woman certainly helps to promote women at this level.
- At higher levels, there are no quotas. Targets are set for only a few of the key positions.
- Current efforts are focused on the commune and village level but limited coverage.

There are also limited efforts focused on the legislative branch at  
The national level The GMAPs represent one positive step in the  
Executive branch

- Women's participation in the judiciary and provincial administration is especially low as higher levels of education, stronger contacts and networks, and a high degree of support from other leaders are needed to obtain these positions.
- The organic laws provide an entry point to increase the number of at sub national level more broadly and MoWA is advocating for such increases. Nonetheless, gender equity in high-level positions such as judges, prosecutor, provincial governors and deputy provincial governors will only be achieved when the highest levels of leaderships focus on appointing more women to these positions.

## **Strategy to be implemented**

### **Strengthen the enabling environment for women in politics and public decision making at all levels and in all breaches of the government**

(Article 24 of the CEDAW Committee's response to Cambodia's periodic report urges such an initiative in order to increase the number of women in elected and appointed offices.)

- Determine a Cambodia-specific approach to affirmative action through discussion among senior government officials on the use of temporary special measures, including the benefits and possible difficulties of the various options in order to assist the government and political parties in choosing between these.
- Ensure consistent, accessible, and reliable sex-disaggregated information on employment in government by level of position.

### **Build a more supportive environment for women in the executive branch (Politically appointed and in the civil service)**

- Strengthen existing GMAPs and incorporate into new GMAPs strategies to ensure that larger issues of discrimination against women are addressed. This could include establishing special measures to ensure equal representation of women at all levels; ensuring equity in benefits; providing flexibility for staff who bear primary responsibility for the family; providing parental leave for childbirth; establishing grievance mechanisms; and ensuring gender balance in recruitment panels
- Provide gender orientation to male and female officials including briefings on the rationale for increasing the participation of women in public decision making from both rights and effectiveness perspectives and the barriers women face, and offering incentives (e.g., recognition, awards) for promotion and supporting women in the workplace
- Raise awareness on sexual harassment and discrimination against women among both men and women.
- Lobby at the highest levels of government for more women to be appointed to senior positions, especially as provincial governors and deputy governors.

### **Build the capacity and confidence of women who aspire to leadership positions in the civil service**

- Ensure preferential access for women in all capacity-building activities, either by designing activities specifically for women or giving preference to women. This

would include training (in-service training, special courses for women, and advanced leadership training for women); coaching, mentoring and other support in applying what has been learned in training; professional development opportunities; and donors-set quotas for oversea training/workshops (Line ministries, CAR/SSCS, donors, NGOs).

- Showcase strong women leaders as role models for men and women.
- Provide networking opportunities for women leaders including ensuring adequate support for gender mainstreaming action groups in line ministries, and support for women's networks and women's caucuses.

### **Increase the proportion of women in the legislative branch**

1. Promote more women candidates in elections at all levels, including lobbying political parties to include women higher up on lists; more women candidates; numeric targets/ quotas for female candidates; and, training for female candidates.
2. Develop pre-training programs to help women stand for election (MoWA, NGOs, political parties)
3. Lobby political parties for funds to be set aside for women to campaign.
4. Ensure adequate representation of women on the indirectly elected Senate and Provincial and District Councils, including educating the commune councilors which elect these bodies on the importance of female representation, and lobbying political parties.

### **Strengthen female leadership at the sub-national level**

- Further strengthen female commune councilors developing tailored training suitable to their education level such as forums; establish networks with provincial and district women's affairs; and provide more opportunities for women to work for the benefits of women ( i.e. donor's support programs to include female commune councilors among key actors ) and expand coverage; continue to support and expand coverage of female commune councilor forums; encourage and train more women to stand for the next elections; and create more networking opportunities.
- Lobby for increases in the number of women in provincial and district administration including establishing targets for women in provincial and district departments of all ministries and in provincial and district councils
- Endure adequate female representation in the indirectly-elected province/ municipality and district/khan councils.

### **Increase the proportion of women in the judicial branch**

- Train and appoint more female judges and prosecutors.
- Showcase female judges and prosecutors.
- Encourage female lawyers to enter the judicial branch.

## **Key indicators and targets**

<u>CMDG Indicators</u>	<u>2005 Baseline</u>		<u>Target</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2015</u>
	<u>Year</u>	<u>Value</u>			<u>Actual</u>	<u>Target</u>	<u>Target</u>
Proportion of seats held By women in national assembly	1998	11.5	17	19	19	24	30
Proportion of seats held by women In Senate	1999	13	17	13	14.8	24	30
Proportion of female Ministers	2003	8	9	7.6	7.7	12	15
Proportion of female Secretaries	2003	6	8	7.4	8.2	15	18
Proportion of female under Secretaries of State	2003	5	8	8	9.3	17	20
Proportion of female provincial Governors	2003	0	3	0	0	6	10
Proportion of female deputy Provincial governors	2003	1	4	0	0	8	25
Proportion of seats held by women In commune councils	2003	8	8	8	14.6	15	25