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**1. How did COVID-19 related restrictions affect the turnout of women voters in local and national elections in your country/region? What are the best measures to ensure greater women voters' turnout in the future?**

In 2020 and 2021, Cambodia has no elections. Nowadays, in 2022, Cambodia is organizing the fifth mandate Commune Council Elections (local elections). Our expected, women voters' turnout to vote will be a huge percent since the COVID-19 pandemic situation in Cambodia is better. Most people got Covid-19 vaccination. The government reopens all fields including schools (public and private), private sector, institutions and state/ministries, and Khmer New Year will be celebrated as well. However, we are looking forward to seeing voters' turnout (especially women voters) on election day (Sunday, 05 June 2022).

**2. How did COVID-19 related restrictions affect women's ability to run for office and get elected at the local and national levels in your country/region? What can political parties, lawmakers, and governments do to make sure women have equal access to elected positions?**

Through the three workshops in 2021 via online and offline (two at the provinces and one at the national level), co-organized by the Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia-COMFREL and CSO's Women Working Group and meetings with key stakeholders, the political parties showed a strong commitment to formulating gender equality policy within the party, as well as

amending the election laws to bring about real equality in Cambodia. Furthermore, 17 political parties who were participated and involved in the workshops and recently COMFREL's monitoring work committed to promoting women's roles in their parties and placing many women as candidates for the upcoming Commune Council Elections (CCE) 2022 and National Assembly Elections (NAE) 2023. For instance, the ruling party - Cambodian People's Party-CPP would place more women candidates for CCE 2022 while Ministry of Women's Affairs-MoWA responded the same that they have worked to promote the number of women in politics and decision-making level by collaboration with civil society. Moreover, the Candlelight Party-CP committed to encourage more women candidates for the CC and NA elections 2022 and 2023 and it plans to establish women wing at the national and will formulate women policy and women in leadership in the next.

With strong efforts, a National Policy on Gender Equality was formulated in 2019 by the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) through took a led by the Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA) with inputs from NGOs and the private sector for increasing gender equality in all fields. Until now this policy was not adopted by the Office of the Council of Ministers (OCM) due to COVID-19 pandemic

As a result, women candidates for the fifth mandate Commune Council Elections 2022 is at 31.5 percent (slightly increased), according to the primarily result of political party registration and list of candidates released by the National Election Committee-NEC on 7 March 2022 from 17 political parties for CCE 2022. It should be noted that most of the parties placed more women candidate from 38% to 54.4%. For instance, FUNCINPEC party placed 38% women candidates, Khmer National United Party-KNUP has 44.3% women candidates, the Cambodia National Love Party-CNLP has 40.6% women candidates, Cambodian Nationality Party-CNP at 54.4% women candidates, and Khmer Will Party-KWP has 49% women candidates while the highest potential parties; CPP at 26% and Candlelight Party-CP at 22.6% women candidates. This number will be changed when the complaint solution was finished.

**3. What is the gender impact of virtual parliamentary work and participation? Have remote parliamentary arrangements affected your parliament's gender-sensitivity and diversity?**

Nothing changed of number of women members of parliament (Women MPs), make up only 20% (26) until now.

The total percent of elected women and men as parliamentarian is very uneven between the sexes. We have 20 percent women elected and 80 percent men elected. This figure shows the significant disproportion between the number of elected men and women which is a reflection of the lack of promoting women's participation in politics and decision-making level and perpetuates a large gender gap.

**4. Has violence against women in politics, including online harassment and abuse, increased in the last two years in your country/region? If so, please provide details and concrete suggestions to make politics a safe space for women.**

According to the result of COMFREL's survey in cooperated with the Consultants in 2020 on "Women Political Activist's Participation in Politics" revealed that 71% of the participants experienced violence against women in politics (VAWIP). The study showed that women in politics both in the ruling party, opposition party, and other parties face the violence of multiple types, dimensions and at all levels. Both female commune councilors and female parliamentarians experienced violence against them but in different forms and degrees. The violence against female commune councilors and female parliamentarians from the opposition party (i.e., former CNRP) is more obvious, dreadful, and frequent than women in the ruling party or other small parties. In the meantime, the female commune councilors experienced more abusive and direct violence against them than the female parliamentarians.

The most common form of VAWIP is threat and psychological violence have been mentioned during the survey by women political activists, members of the commune councillors, and elected representatives of National Assembly. In these forms 82 percent of the participants experienced threat and 71 percent psychological violence. Another serious form of VAWIP is physical abuse and sexual harassment. Women experienced physical abuse at 35 percent and 8 percent experienced sexual harassment. It's not acceptable with these immorality acts and it contradicted with international convention – CEDAW and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) commitments Cambodia has taken on to protect women from discrimination and violence as well as empower women and girls. Consequently, all forms of abuse and violence against women in politics are the main issues and concerns that prohibit active participation and potential of women in politics.

the VAWIP has a negative impact on women's equal participation in politics especially it isolates and discourages them from engaging in politics. The road for women to become political leaders in a party and elected representative are

exceptionally challenging. They need more supports, empowerments and opportunities from the government, political party, public institution, civil society, National Election Committee (NEC) and so forth in order to overcome the challenges.

Even though, most active political participated women face discrimination and violence against them, the effects of the Covid-19 and the political arena in Cambodia is not women-friendly, 85.50% of the women who joined the survey are still interested in politics especially elections in the next 2 or 3 years around 2022 and 2023 and they remain keep their willingness and activism in political engagement and participation.

Cambodian women and men have been fully and equally guaranteed by the Cambodian constitution on their political participations and interests. However, women-friendly and enabling environments, policies, election laws and operational measurements have not been realistically responsive to the status of women's participation in politics. The gaps in gender-responsive policies and election laws, operational measurements, and investments have strengthened the inequality of women's representation and participation. Therefore, gender equality policy in the party, gender-responsive election laws, and recognize the need to create a safe and enabling secure political environment within a party for women and it's well implemented will become an effective tool for women to claim their rights and grasp equal opportunities as candidates and elected while the high commitment of leaders and political will are necessary to support.

To increase gender equality and women's political empowerment, the following measures should be taken:

### **Political Party**

- ❖ Recognize the need to create a safe and enabling secure political environment within a party for women; for example, gender equality policy, persons in charge of VAWIP, and code of conduct against VAWIP in a party.
- ❖ Enable the inclusion of more women party members in the central, selection committees, and parliamentary committees. Also, publish data on women's leadership in political parties.
- ❖ Put in place and respect the law enacted to fight violence against women. Additionally, put in place mechanisms to protect women from all forms of violence against them and penalize the perpetrators, protect women when they file complaints on violence.

- ❖ Ensuring to formulate gender equality policy within the party by political parties and it's well implemented to promote women's equal participation within political parties; being part of the policy-making process, decision-maker and leadership roles, candidates, and elected representatives. The gender equality policy is an effective tool to encourage all political parties to place more women candidates on the party list by using the sandwich system from the top to bottom for ranking between women and men candidates and increase gender equality at all levels within the party.

### **National Assembly and Senate**

- ❖ Ensuring to formulate gender-responsive election laws in both LEMNA and LEMCC as affirmative action to promote gender equality and provide opportunities for women's equal participation in politics and its well implemented. The affirmative action is an effective solution to encourage all political parties to place more female candidates on the party list. The political parties should be encouraged to implement reforms to the legal framework by amending electoral laws. The law can be improved establishing criteria to the political party's candidate registration procedure requiring the use of a sandwich system from the top to bottom for ranking on the political party candidate list. There should also be an amendment to the Law on Elections of Members of National Assembly (LEMNA) Chapter 4, Article 27 and 28 "the list of candidates in each constituency has to use sandwich system from top to bottom between women candidates and men candidates." And the Law on Elections of Members of Commune Council (LEMCC) Chapter 6, Article 39 "candidate lists of each political party must alternate female candidates and male candidates from the top to bottom ranking."

### **State and Public Institutions**

- ❖ Put in place structures, and formulate policies and laws that combat violence against women in politics. Establish an independent observation body that identifies violence against women in politics and regularly reports on the information to relevant stakeholders and the public.
- ❖ The government (line ministries) should provide all kinds of support such as funding, resources, and human resources to elected women and women leaders, in order to facilitate and increase the efficiency and quality of women's work, political participation and leadership.

- ❖ The government needs to reconsider and pay more attention to the women politicians in the ruling party or other women politicians who have an active voice or are about to enter politics by encouraging, protecting, providing equal opportunities to them and ensuring their full participation in politics.
- ❖ The government must strengthen respect for women's political rights and ensure the exercise of these rights by making it easier for women to exercise their rights to political participation, especially in the political activities of women politicians from the opposition party and other parties to provide more opportunities for them to involve in politics and decision-making in line with the CEDAW Convention and Cambodia's Sustainable Development Goals (CSDG).
- ❖ The Ministry of Interior and relevant authorities for democratic development at the sub-national level shall ensure that all Commune/Sangkat Councilors, especially women, have full access to their roles, duties and powers in accordance with the Law on Commune/Sangkat Administration and CEDAW. For example, setting up a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to oversee their working conditions and challenges.

### **CSOs, Educational Institutions and Academies**

- ❖ Increase support mechanism for women politicians such as capacity development (self-confident and skill sets needed to participate in politics including developing effective campaign and lobbying strategies), empowerment and special political funding for women in politics.
- ❖ Increase academic research, debate, and discussions on VAWIP and women's political leadership and facilitate political grooming of potential female politicians in order to raise public awareness about the impact of VAWIP on women and society as a whole.
- ❖ Increase civic and political education in Cambodia (capacity and skill development, how to enter politics, and mindset changes) in order to reshape the way Cambodian society perceives politics including the important roles of women in politics, and supporting them.
- ❖ Utilise both the social media and mass media to campaign on women's rights with emphasis on the importance of women's political participation and leadership role

- ❖ Continue accelerating the elimination of gender disparity at the public and household level

### **National Election Committee (NEC)**

- ❖ Ensuring to formulate gender-responsive election/NEC's procedure and regulation for increasing gender equality and providing equal opportunities for women candidates running the elections. The election/NEC's procedure and regulation can be improved by establishing criteria to the political party's candidate registration procedure requiring the use of a sandwich system from the top to bottom for ranking between women candidates and men candidates on the political party candidate list.



## About us

iKNOW Politics is a unique platform on women in politics, designed to connect users and build knowledge through e-Discussions, interviews, videos, a rich online library of resources, a calendar of events and daily world news. Created in 2007, iKNOW Politics is a joint project of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN Women).



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