

Cambodia

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Is the Woman's Place Still in the Home?

A Report on Cambodia by Thida C. Khus, SILAKA

INTRODUCTION

The Cambodian population was 13.1 million in 2001 and is projected to grow to 16.6 million in 2006. Fifty-two percent of the population are women. Interestingly, a baby boom occurred in 1980, two decades after the civil war. Thus in today's Cambodia, 56% of the population are under 20 years of age. The war wrecked not only the physical but also the country's social infrastructure, showing serious marks on the population. Some 25% of women household heads are the poorest in the country. The poverty rate is 36%, and some 90% of the poor live in the rural areas.

In Cambodian society, women are considered lower in status than men although they compose the majority of the labor force, and at 82%, represent the highest rate of labor participation in Southeast Asia.

Table 1: Empowering Women: Cambodia Millennium Development Goal¹

Key Indicators	Value	Year	2005	2010	2015
Reduce Gender Disparity in Secondary Education	48	2001	59	80	100
Reduce Gender Disparity in Tertiary in Education	38	2001	50	70	100
Eliminate Gender Disparity in Wage Employment in All Economic Sectors					
Women Share of Wage Employment in Agriculture	35	1998	50	50	50
Women Share of Wage Employment in Industry	44	1998	50	50	50
Women Share in Wage Employment in Service	21	1998	30	37	50
Eliminate Gender Disparity in Government					
Proportion of Seat in National Assembly	12	2003	17	24	30
Proportion of Female in Senate	13	2003	17	24	30
Proportion of Female Ministers	8	2003	9	12	15
Proportion of Female Secretary of State	6	2003	8	15	18
Proportion of Female Provincial Governors	0	2003	4	8	15
Reduce All Forms of Violence to Women					
% of Population Aware that Violence Against Women is Wrongful Behavior and a Criminal Act	N/A	N/A	25	50	100

¹Cambodia Millennium Development Goal 2003. Challenges and Framework for Action

THE FINDINGS

Public Service and Politics

After over 2 decades of civil strife and a 1993 subsequent intervention by the United Nations, Cambodia has adopted a multi-party system with a 5-year cycle election of national assembly representatives.

The Constitution of Cambodia decrees three branches of government: the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary. A king, without executive power, heads the Kingdom of Cambodia. The legislature consists of 123 members of the National Assembly. The provision for a legislature was amended in 1999, which added an upper body, the senate, with 61 appointed members from the political parties in the Assembly. Supreme power resides in the Constitutional Council, the ultimate institution to interpret the constitution.

The territory of Cambodia is divided into 24 provinces and municipalities with 187 districts or khanh. The 187 districts are further divided into 1,621 communes.

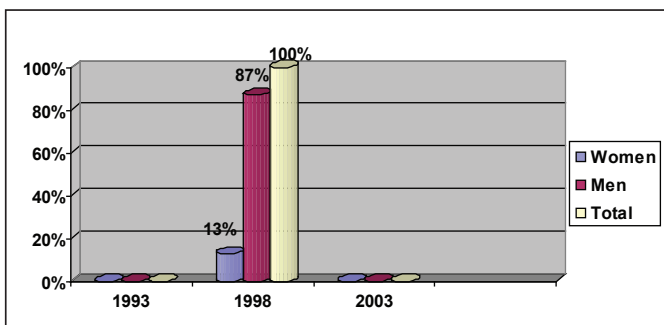
Ratio of Women to Men in Elected/Appointed Government Positions (From National Level to Local Level)

Cambodian Legislature

Institution	Role and Power	Status of Women Power
1. Constitutional Council (CC)	CC is the supreme legislative body whose responsibility is the last level for interpreting the constitution of the country. The CC is also the body that reviews all laws passed by the NA and Senate to make sure that they are in compliance with the constitution. The CC has a 9 -year term with 9 members, with 3 -year members rotating among themselves.	There are no women sitting in the Constitutional Council.
2. National Assembly	The Cambodian National Assembly started in June of 1993 with the support of the United National Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). UNTAC organized the first elections in June 1993, after the Paris Peace Accord in 1991 and the national multi-party election. A government was formed by the contending parties.	There are a total of 120 to 123 members from 1993 to 2003. There has been an improvement in the number of women elected to office in the last 12 years of the National Assembly.

Institution	Role and Power	Status of Women Power
3. Senate	The Senate was created in 1999 to give a semblance of balance in the law-making process. The Senate is the upper level of the legislature. The selection of members to the Senate is done by the political parties in the National Assembly and the King, proportionate to the number of seats in the National Assembly. The King has the power to appoint two members to the Senate. Since the birth of the Senate, there has only been one reversal of the laws passed by the National Assembly. The National Assembly was supposed to call elections in 2003 but the charter for the election of both Senate and Assembly has yet to be drafted.	Of 61 senate members, 13% are women.
4. Commune Council	The 1,621 communes were decentralized as part of the democratization reform of the government in 2002. The communes operate as the local administrative units. There are between 5 to 11 members of the commune council in each commune. The number of councils is determined according to a formula based on the population of the communes. In February 2002, 50.44% of women voted to elect their council members.	977 women, who represent 9% of the total number of council members, were elected in 1,621 communes across the country. There are a total of 11,283 council members.

Figure 1: Women in Senate (Appointed)



Source: Cambodian Ministry of Interior, 2003

Obstacles to Women's Election to Office

Social and Cultural Factors

In Cambodia, women are not considered suitable for holding public positions of responsibility, much less in the political arena. Political work is considered full of violence and replete with dirty tricks women cannot handle. Until recently, political positions have been associated with violence and therefore cut out only for tough men.

Society considers positions of responsibility too heavy for women whose principal task is the care of the home and children. Working outside the home, venturing in the social arena is not seen as women's priority.

Women cannot go out at night and should they venture out, they have to stay close to home because of prevailing laws. After 2 decades of civil war, security is still a major concern for women and inhibits many of them from stepping out alone in the community or speaking in public.

At the same time, women are not considered capable of handling stress, which is required of leaders in public office, not to mention the fierce competitiveness that goes with political work. Lastly, women are believed not trained and educated enough to hold social positions, especially public office.

With such a cultural environment, it is not surprising to see many women who have internalized the belief that they are not qualified to hold public office and have no competence to get involved in any political competition.

Because of this belief and rigid role expectations, women usually do not enjoy the support of their spouses and families to run for office. Likewise, they lack the necessary support from the larger community and from the women voters themselves.

Burdened with their primary roles as housewife and mother, women have little time and energy to enter the political arena. They are too preoccupied with household chores, raising children and keeping the family together. In fact, most of them are too busy with problems of survival and have to devote themselves to income generating activities.

Women are also discouraged by the fact that running for office requires a sizable amount of money. To get their names on the political party list, women have to contribute to the party, and the size of their contribution determines their ranking in the party. But unlike men, women are not willing to sell their assets simply to run for political office. They would probably do it for their husbands but not for themselves. Again unlike most men, they do not see running for office as an acceptable way to generate income.

With such a social environment and constraints, few women have acquired enough experience to master the political system. Women are generally not aware of the political mechanisms and networks they need to handle on the national and the local electoral systems. In a personal interview with local women candidates, one woman said that she asked to be on Level 2 on the list of candidates only because of what she learned from the Women for Prosperity training (WFP), a group that trains women candidates from all political parties on the political system in Cambodia.

Interestingly, women elected to office are still unable to form a caucus to change state policy and laws and help women in general. They have yet to band together to design and adopt an agenda to support Cambodian women and their concerns.

The Cambodian Political System

The Cambodian Legislature and Government have yet to understand the concept of redressing gender imbalance in governance and have yet to engage in affirmative actions to give more opportunities to women candidates.

Men from the national level to the grassroots level control the political parties' mechanism and this domination persists. In 1998, for example, when civil society demanded that a quota of 30% be given to women, most men in power refused to grant the quota, seeing this as an unacceptable bias for women. However, the same male politicians promised to do so when their political parties took this affirmative stance. In the recruitment process, however, the promise was diluted and they were mostly men who were put on the higher order of the parties' list for election. It can be safely said that women are given token political roles, made to appear on stage but not given real opportunities to participate in decision-making bodies.

Another weakness of the political system is the sizable amount of money required by political campaigns. There is no state system to help cut the candidates' expenses in the political campaign. For the past three elections since 1993, campaigns have been costly for all political parties.

Transparency is another problem. The political party system is not open and transparent regarding the management and appointment of candidates. It is well known that to be on top of the list, candidates have to pay money to the party list holder, and the highest ranking goes to the highest bidder. This grease money is in addition to the funds used for the specific campaign as well as contributions to the national campaign.

Lastly, the Cambodian electoral system is proportional. Political parties present a list of candidates to the national election committee for official listing. The

number of elected candidates is proportional to the votes received by each party. Excess candidates are put on a waiting line for any vacancy in the 5-year term of office. During the term of office, parties have the right to remove an elected party official from the party membership, and once removed, the official's seat in the national assembly is given to the next in line.

Table 2: Commune Council: Local Governance Election Results

Positions	Women	%	Men	%	Total
Candidate	12,375	16.43%	62,912	83.57%	75,287
Elected Officials	977	9.00 %	10,306	91.00%	11,260
Commune Chief	34	2.09%	1,587	97.91%	1,621
First Vice Chief	54	3.33%	1,567	96.67%	1,621
Second Vice Chief	78	5.00 %	1,543	95.00%	1,621
Council Members	811	13.00%	5,587	87.00%	6,398

Source: Cambodian Ministry of Interior, 2003

In the 1,621 communes across Cambodia, the Ministry of Interior has selected and appointed a total of 184 women clerks.

Problems and Obstacles for Local Elected Officials

First of all, council members do not get a livable compensation. As a result, many women council members who feel pressure from their family members to earn a family income choose to leave their political posts for the traditional roles of wife and mother. Other women who wish to volunteer their time to political work are not even able to do so because of the level of family dependence on them.

Another obstacle consists in the general view of political activities as violent and rough, and of women as security problems in their commune. However, in interviews of women commune council members, commune officials said they have not failed in their responsibilities nor have they faced security problems in the implementation of their work.

Because of gender role expectations in the communities, it is believed that women themselves would not vote for women candidates. However, election

results show that the community does not discriminate against women candidates as much as generally believed. Of the 16.43% candidates for commune elections, 9% who won were women. However, when it came to holding high positions in the council, for example that of chief or vice chief, the women who got promoted were only 2% to 5% of the total. This seems to prove that women are not considered favorably by their own political parties, and consequently are not ranked high on the party slate. Obstacles to women in elections consist in their lack of experience in the political system, the system of appointment within parties, and the selection process of high officials after the voting.

Nevertheless, women do collaborate with one another to better serve their constituents. This collaboration is possible when the leader of the commune facilitates communication and coordination across political parties. Usually, however, the management skills of the chief of the commune council are weak and sometimes create conflicts between council members coming from different political parties. It must be noted that officials still take direction from their district chiefs, and along political lines.

The chiefs of the communes control most of the decision-making authority, including that on finance. Yet, many chiefs who are dissatisfied with their situation do not know how to “intervene” with higher officials. One commune leader, for example, complained that most of the collected local tax or locally earned income is taken by district and provincial governors yet they cannot do anything about it.

It is worthwhile noting that the commune chiefs concede success when delegating activities to women councils. Women have been particularly successful in raising counterpart contributions to development projects in the villages. Despite this proven skill, most of the men in the councils continue to control finance.

Women council members also complain that male members do not take them seriously during council deliberations. Thus, women’s needs and issues are not properly addressed in the communes.

The Judiciary

Table 3: Appointment of Women in the Judiciary

	Role and Appointment/Selection	Status of Women
Supreme Council of Magistracy	The Supreme Council of Magistracy was created in 1994 to integrate the Cambodian legal laws and make them conform to the constitution. The council's role is to maintain justice and independence, to issue the internal regulation of the judges in accordance with the law and the constitution. However, the Council has been inactive since its birth and has played a minimal role in the past decade. The members come from the Cambodia court, and were appointed by the government prior to the election of 1993.	A woman has been appointed to the highest level of the legislative body, which has 9 members, and includes the King as Chair.
Appeals Court	There is only one appeals court in Cambodia and it is based in the city. Key government officials were initially appointed members of the appeals court.	There are 2 women among the appeals court's 19 members.
Judge	Women are very poorly represented in the judicial system. Efforts are being made to recruit and train women to become judges and prosecutors.	Of 198 judges in the whole country, 14 are women. In addition, 6 women among 50 judges are currently being trained at the Royal School for Judges and Prosecutors.
Prosecutors	Same as above in terms of recruitment.	Only 1.2% of prosecutors are women.
Court Clerk	Same as above in terms of recruitment.	Only 16.2% of court clerks are women.
Bar Association	Not many women lawyers practice or are graduates of Cambodia. This situation is reflected in the low number of women lawyers in the Bar Association.	Of the total number of lawyers practicing in Cambodia, 10.5% are women and 89.5% are men.

Source: Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 2003

Problems and Obstacles

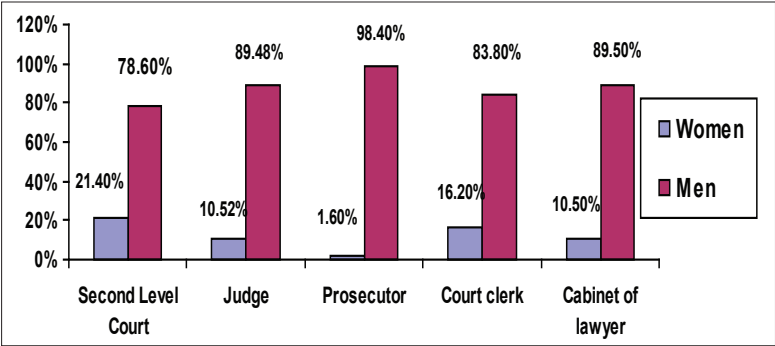
In the twenty years following the civil war, the Cambodian government selected key people from the military to be trained for different positions in the Cambodian judiciary system.

The Cambodian judicial system is considered dysfunctional and cannot provide justice to the people. Furthermore, the system is corrupt and biased towards wealthy and powerful people. Consequently, most citizens avoid going to court and would rather settle outside the legal system.

The court system deals mainly with criminal cases and not so much with social and structural problems. Given this, women are not interested in associating with the court since most criminal cases involve men.

Up to the present, men make all the decisions on appointments, and women do not ask for roles in decision-making positions. In any event, women were seldom found at the top levels of political parties from 1979 to 1991.

Figure 2: Women in the Cambodian Judicial System



Source: Ministry of Interior, 2003

Executive Office

There has been an improvement in the past 10 years from 1993 to 2003 for women holding high executive positions in government. In 1998, two women held ministerial posts in the Ministry of Women’s and Veteran’s Affairs (MOWVA) and the Ministry for Culture and Fine Arts. This was significant because in 1993 there were none.

In 1998, three women were appointed to positions in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Vocational Training and two in the MOWVA. In 1993 there

were none. Both in 1993 and 1998, five women occupied positions as undersecretaries of state. There are still no women provincial and municipal governors. Only one woman has been named 1st deputy governor in 1993 and only one woman as 2nd deputy governor in 1998.

There is no improvement in the number of women holding positions in the governorship at the provincial and district levels. However, there is a slight improvement in the number of deputy chiefs in the 551 districts and Khanhs across the countries, which was an increase from 2 women holding deputy chief positions in the district, in 1993, to 5 women in 1998.

Election Committee

There is an improvement in the number of women on the most important positions in the political machinery, the National Election Committee. In 1998, there were no women members on the National Election Committee of 11 members. But in 2003, there were 2 women appointed to the 5-member National Election Committee. The two members have been influential in institutionalizing the disaggregated data collection in the election process.

Table 4: Women in Key Government Positions

Position	1993		1998	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Ministers	100.00%	0.00%	92.60%	7.40%
Secretary of State	100.00%	0.00%	94.00%	6.00%
Undersecretary of state	96.00%	4.00%	96.00%	4.00%
Provincial/Municipal Governors	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
1 st Deputy Governors	98.58%	1.42%	100.00%	0.00%
2 nd Deputy Governors	100.00%	0.00%	98.58%	1.42%
District/ Khanh Governor	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Deputy Chief of Khanh and district	99.60%	0.36%	0.99%	0.90%

Source: Ministry of Interior and Women for Prosperity, 2003

Ratio of Women Among Public Servants by Levels (Support Staff, Technical, Supervisory)

Because of resource and time constraints, this paper cannot assess the number of support, technical, and supervisory staff in the ministries where, to begin with, there was no available data. The ministries keep only the number of women and men staff but not a sex-disaggregated data on the different levels

of staff. Measures, however, have been taken to improve sex-disaggregated data collection.

Problems Experienced by Women in Public Service

1. Work outside the home, especially in the public sector, is considered a man's domain.²
2. People generally believe that men are more decisive than women.
3. Only 0.09% of men prefer to work for a woman, 50% prefer to work for a man while the rest judge their superior based on qualification and personality, not gender. In contrast, 66% of women prefer to work for a woman and 34% prefer to work for a man.
4. Women are at a disadvantage in job promotion, that is, usually based on favoritism, political alignment, and corruption. Men are more willing to pay for their promotion, instead of relying on merit. They have more experience in political parties and usually make the decisions on whom to promote.
5. Women in civil service experience discrimination, and as a result, only 31% of civil servants are women. Data on positions that women occupy are not available, but a quick assessment of 10 ministries shows that women hold only 9.1% of management positions. The number of women in management positions ranges from 25.8% at the Ministry of Health to 0% in the Ministry of Social Action. There is no woman Director General in any of the ministries. Only 11% of deputy director generals and 10% of department directors or deputy directors are women. Women in those ministries believe that they are not treated fairly in the matter of promotions. They feel that their supervisors do not believe in their capability and that they have no access to trainings.
6. Women civil servants fear they will lose their jobs when the Civil Administration Reform is implemented. The consultation reveals that men, who occupy most decision-making positions, are unwilling to consider gender issues in promotions. Women do not qualify for additional benefits for their unemployed spouses whereas men do.
7. Of the 1,470 trainees at the Royal School of Administration, only 6% are women trainees.

²Dr. Bo Chum Sin. *Women and Leadership*. p. 77, 1994.

Table 5: Women in Public Service

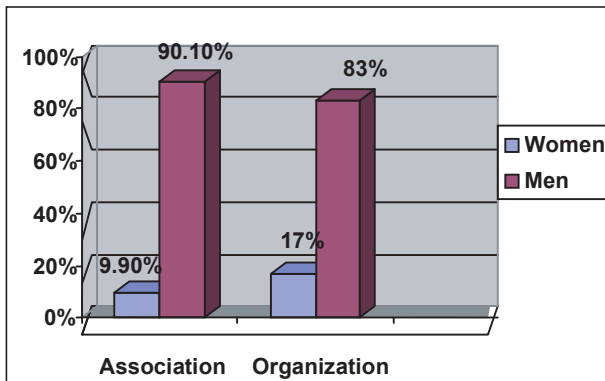
Position	Women%	Men%	Total	Total%
Ministry of Health	23.50%	76.50%	3,772	100%
Ministry of Education Youth and Sport	31.30%	68.70%	3,101	100%
Ministry of Agriculture			100%	100%
Ministry of Information and Press	29.50%	70.50%	1,296	100%
Ministry of Public Work& Transport	31.00%	69.00%	491	100%
Ministry of Posts and Telecommunication	36.30%	63.70%	1,360	100%
Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs	69.00%	31.00%	216	100%
Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts	35.40%	64.60%	1,625	100%
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation	36.30%	63.70%	457	100%
Ministry of Justice	14.40%	85.60%	1,187	100%

Source: Ministry of Interior and Women for Prosperity, 2003

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP OF ORGANIZATIONS

1. Comparative Share of Women and Men in Leadership of NGOs

Figure 3: Comparative Share of Women and Men in Leadership of NGOs



Source: Ministry of Interior and Women for Prosperity, 2003

Women hold leadership positions in 17% of organizations and 9.9% of associations.

An association is seen as a membership organization, in which leaders are voted in office by their members. These women got into the leadership positions because of their capacity and leadership, not because they were hired to lead the organization.

Obstacles Women Face in Leading Organizations:

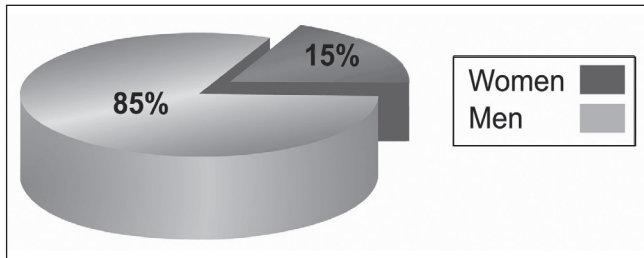
1. Women leaders are perceived to be weak and have to work harder to prove themselves to other staff members.
2. Women face a double burden, working as a leader and taking care of the household, husband and children.
3. Women leaders are also under a lot of pressure to contribute time and money to local temples and other groups, community functions and events.
4. Women in top leadership positions feel lonely without group support in their day-to-day problems.
5. Women leaders are pressured to stay “soft.” They are considered “witches” if they are strong while male leaders are expected to be strong.
6. Women in leadership positions find it difficult to attend social functions at night even when this is part of their job. Going out without their husband is considered improper and they are pressured to stay home with their family and community.
7. Women leaders find it difficult to fulfill their responsibilities when they have a child. There is no social support for child rearing. Their organization cannot afford to give them longer maternity leaves.

2. Comparative Share of Women and Men in Leadership of Trade Unions

The imbalance in the ratio of men and women leaders is greatest in trade unions. There are only 2 women leaders in 16 trade unions of female garment workers in Cambodia. Although many recognize that women can solve problems more effectively than men, trade unions have not been able to promote more women to leadership positions. The reasons are:

1. Women do not vote for women. They do not believe that women can handle leadership positions in trade unions and are strong enough to face authorities in strike situations.

Figure 4: Comparative Share of Women and Men in Leadership Positions Within Trade Unions



Source: Cambodian Labor Organization, April 2004

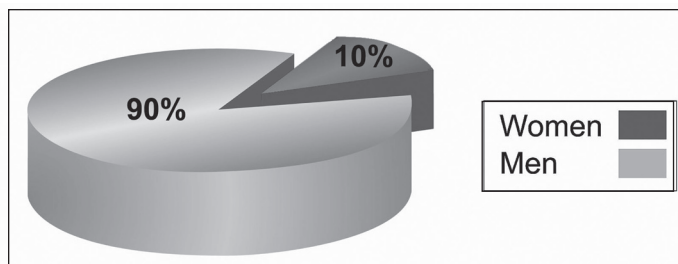
2. Women themselves give the leadership roles to men, surrendering their candidacy in favor of a man when there is competition.
3. Men do not take women leaders seriously although during strikes, women are sent out to confront the authorities because they are seen as better negotiators with company owners. They are also better at mediation and are seen less likely to be hit by policemen.
4. People believe men are physically stronger. Sewing is not considered physically demanding or heavy work and is therefore given as jobs to women.
5. Women are believed to be slow in getting information because they have a lot of household chores and do not have time to get out and forge links with other workers.
6. Women believe that they are not educated enough to be union leaders.
7. It is believed that women do not have sufficient management and policy-making experience.

3. Comparative Share of Female Leadership in Educational Institutions

Corruption is the main obstacle in the appointment of women to top civil service positions. The decision makers in major political parties appoint the individual who is willing to pay the most money for the position. In short he (and occasionally she) buys the job.

Civil service rules do not protect women from discrimination. Women are bypassed for promotions even in their areas of expertise.

Figure 5: Women in Leadership Positions Within Educational Institutions



Source: Ministry of Education Youth and Sports, April 2004

Lack of active support from spouse and community is also a major problem because women are burdened with work within and outside their home. They are expected to prioritize their role as homemaker.

High positions are viewed by society as political, therefore, outside women's concerns.

Women are not encouraged to seek higher levels of education. Girls are usually kept at home to help with household chores. When parents cannot afford to send all their children to school, girls are asked to stay at home while boys continue their studies. If girls are able to go to school, they are expected to support the family so boys can also go to school.

Table 6: Girls in School

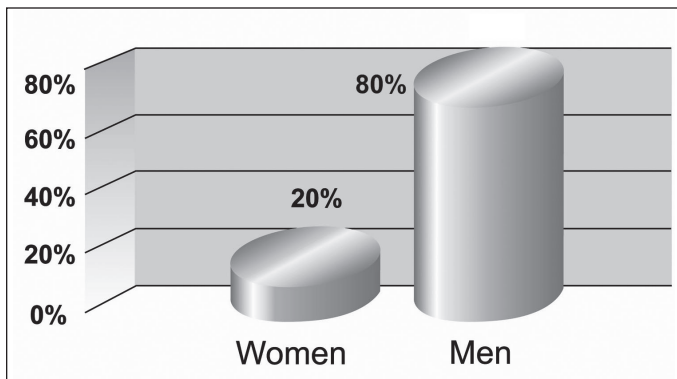
	Female	%	Male	%	Total
Students at Lower Secondary Level					
Lower Secondary Level	135,937	38.65	215,698	61.35	351,635
Higher Secondary Level	36,411	32.10	76,993	67.90	113,404
Students Learning at Higher Education					
Scholarship Students	2,301	26.00	6,546	74.00	8,847
Fee Paying	6,198	31.40	13,535	68.60	19,733
Total	8,499	30.00	20,081	70.27	28,580

Source: Women for Prosperity Publication, 2004

There are fewer girls than boys on all educational levels, as indicated in Table 6. At the lower secondary school level, girls make up 39% of total dropouts. 74% of scholars are boys while 26% are girls. The education system must rectify this inequality. It is clear that the Cambodian government does not have an affirmative system that supports more girls who want higher education and want to take on more responsibilities in their home and in society.

4. Comparative Share of Women and Men in Leadership of Cooperatives

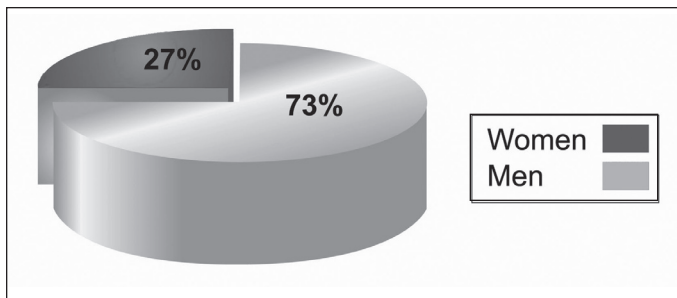
Figure 6: Comparative Share of Women and Men in Leadership of Cooperatives



Source: Cambodian Association for Income Development (CAID), April 2004

5. Comparative Share of Women in Leadership of Small Businesses

Figure 7: Comparative Share of Women in Leadership of Small Businesses



Source: A Study of the Situation of Young Women Studying Non-Traditional Skills in Cambodia, Gender and Development for Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 2002

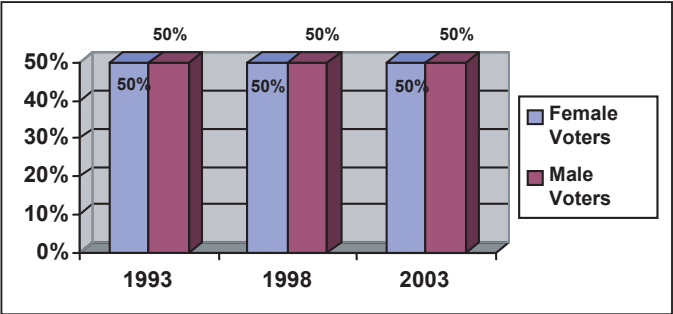
PARTICIPATION IN ELECTORAL POLITICS

1. Women’s Legal Right to Vote

Cambodian women’s right to vote was recognized in 1947. Article 7 of the Cambodian Constitution guarantees equal voting rights for women and men. The laws also guarantee women’s right to stand for election as well as to lead or organize non-governmental organizations and political parties.

2. Proportion of Women Voters to Male Voters

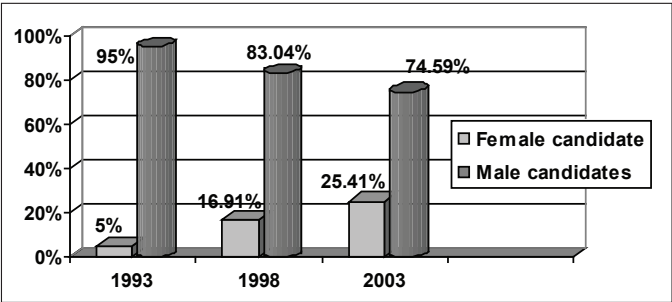
Figure 8: Proportion of Women Voters to Male Voters



Source: National Election Committee, 2004

3. Proportion of Women Candidates to Male Candidates

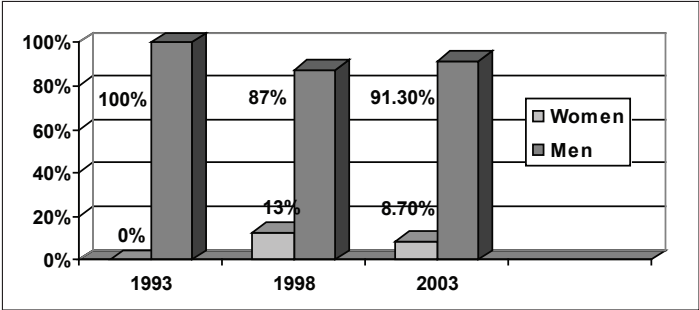
Figure 9: Proportion of Women Candidates to Male Candidates



Source: Ministry of Interior, 2003

4. Leadership in Political Parties

Figure 10: Proportion of Women's Leadership to Male Leadership in Political Parties



Source: Ministry of Interior, 2003

5. Obstacles to Women's Participation in Electoral Politics

There are no constraints on women's right to vote. However, women have less access to information that will help them make informed decisions when they do vote. The following are some of the constraints on women candidates:

1. Political involvement is considered dangerous and violent, and therefore, outside women's sphere.
2. Husbands and families do not support women who aspire political positions because most believe that women should mainly be wives and mothers.
3. Women are not willing to spend money for their candidacy.
4. Women are not politically experienced.
5. Women do not have the confidence to play political roles.
6. There is a lack of role models for women political leaders.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Women in Politics

The Ministry of Women and Veteran Affairs (MOWVA) has been advocating mainstreaming gender within national and sectoral policies. Neary Ratanakak, a ministry policy for the advancement for women, has been incorporated into the second Social Economic Development Plan, 2001 to 2005 and significantly includes women's issues.

A "Poverty Monitoring Assessment Unit" has likewise been created in the Ministry of Planning to monitor the National Poverty Reduction Strategy. This unit has the mandate to get sex-disaggregated numbers in its poverty data collection.

MOWVA has been successful in advocating an affirmative action decree for commune level women with the National Committee for the Support of the Commune Council. The decree calls for a woman to head the commune committee on women and children. A woman is appointed if the council does not have a female member. This decree has been implemented with a fair amount of success.

The National Council of Women (NCW) was created by the government in 2001 and is responsible for writing the CEDAW Country Report. The council distributes copies to the provincial and local levels. However, these are not enough for a significant change in the status of women.

A law on domestic violence was passed by council ministers but is now on hold at the National Assembly and is unlikely to be adopted soon. The law has drawn a lot of opposition from the National Assembly members owing to a lack of general understanding and awareness of the issue.

Women in Government

There is no specific measure for affirmative action for women in government. The Government Action Plan, an administrative reform plan, has included gender issues as indicators for monitoring. The CAR is committed to quotas in the promotion of women, but so far there has been little progress.

Sexual Harassment Policy

No specific measure has been adopted by the government.

Experiences in the Implementation of Policies

There has been no implementation of these affirmative action policies. There have been discussions and verbal commitments, but so far there has been little progress in introducing affirmative action for women's promotion.

DISCRIMINATED GROUPS OF WOMEN

Women in Armed Conflict

Women are important players in the weapons reduction program in Cambodia.³ They are seen as strong advocates in lobbying for the program and will work with local authorities to turn in weapons since it is they who understand how peace is kept, both in the family and in the community. Local authorities and program coordinators recognize that women's participation in the program is vital for its success. A recent survey shows that although women's participation in urban areas is 50%, in the rural areas, 50% of men and 70% of women are involved in the weapons reduction program. The survey conclusively finds that women play important roles as peacemakers as well as conflict mediators.

Violence Against Women

Several forms of violence against women exist in Cambodia. Trafficking is the most blatant violation of their rights. An estimated 100,000 women and children have been trafficked and an equal amount of women are known to take on sex work. In Phnom Penh alone, there are 5,000 under aged sex workers. An estimated 47% of these sex workers were tricked and sold into white slavery.⁴

Some women who are victims of abuse have no way of escaping their captors and have very limited options. In the 2000 survey by CADHS, 2 out of 5 abused women have no one to help them financially if they decide to leave an abusive relationship.

Policies and their Implementation

The issue of trafficking is complicated by the victims' poverty, weaknesses in law enforcement, corruption among law enforcers, and the culture of gender

³Gender Issues and Weapon Reduction, Working Group on Weapon Reduction, November 2003

⁴C DHS 2000 and ADHOC and Cambodian Women Crisis Center

inequality. Trafficked women are not only exploited at the time they are prostituted, but are also shunned and treated poorly by their communities when they return home. In the case of non-Cambodian women, Cambodian authorities and the legal system consider trafficked girls as illegal migrants, as shown by the case of 14 Vietnamese girls who were involved in a raid in June 2002 and who were seen as undeserving of legal protection.

As for domestic violence, although it is a criminal act under the current legal framework, very few women are willing to take their husbands to court because, aside from social and cultural factors that mitigate against their doing so, most women cannot afford to pay the prohibitive legal costs. The coming years will determine whether women's movements and statecraft will combine to lift Cambodian women's spirits and provide them the space in which to make important political contributions.

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Lists of Person Interviewed

No	Name	Sex	Position	Organization
1	Ms. POK Nanda	F	Executive Director	Women For Prosperity
2	Mrs. EK Sophanna	F	Gender and Development Coordinator	NGO Forum
3	Her Excellency KOY Veth	F	Member Of National Election Committee	National Election Committee/Khmer Women Voice Center
4	Mr. SENG Phally	M	Executive Director	Cambodian Labor Organization
5	Ms. ROS Sopheap	F	Executive Director	Gender And Development
7	Ms. Mony	F	Chief of Women Unit	ADHOC
8	YIM Minola	F	Executive Director	KWVC
9	UNG Chanthol	F	Executive Director	Cambodian Women Crisis Center
10	NHEK Aun	F	Member	Commune Council
11	HENG Kim	F	Member	Commune Council
12	PHON Sarim	F	Member	Commune Council
13	KON Van	F	Second Deputy	Commune Council
14	PHAN Phat	M	Deputy	Commune Council
15	ATH Sophat	F	Clerk	Commune Council

Acronyms

ADHOC	Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association
CAR	Council for Administration Reform
CC	Constitutional Council
CDHS	Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CLO	Cambodia Labor Organization
CWCC	Cambodian Women Crisis Center
GAD	Gender and Development for Cambodia
KWVC	Khmer Women's Voice Center
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOWVA	Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs
NA	National Assembly
NCW	National Council of Women
NEC	National Election Committee
NGOs Forum	The Non-Governmental Organizations Forum on Cambodia
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
WFP	Women for Prosperity