



**មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលសិទ្ធិមនុស្សកម្ពុជា**  
Cambodian Center for Human Rights

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**Results of the Commune/Sangkat Council Elections 2012: further efforts required to achieve quantitative and qualitative female representation in politics in Cambodia**

The results of the Commune/Sangkat Elections, which took place on 3 June 2012, were released on 24 June 2012 by the National Election Committee (“NEC”). Women were elected to 2,038 seats, 17.79% of the total number of seats (11,459). While this does mark an improvement from the 2007 elections, where women won 14.64% of seats, the increase in representation is minor and a far cry from the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals (“CMDG”) of the Royal Government of Cambodia’s (“RGC”) target 25% of women’s representation in commune councils by 2015.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the positions women were elected to were overwhelmingly Member seats with 1,590 of those elected, with only 164 of the women voted in being elected to Second Deputy; 189 to First Deputy; and a very minimal 95 to the most senior seat in the Councils, that of Commune Chief.

Although ten political parties ran candidates<sup>2</sup>, only seven parties won seats. Of the total number of seats won by the ruling Cambodian People’s Party (“CPP”), 21.48% went to women, the highest percentage of representation among all political parties. Women candidates of the main opposition party, the Sam Rainsy Party (“SRP”), won the second highest percentage of seats allocated to their party (11%) – almost half of that of the CPP. Three additional parties included very minimal female representation: the Norodom Ranariddh Party (5.77%); FUNCINPEC (3.31%); and the Human Rights Party (1.50%). Lastly, two parties achieved no female representation whatsoever: the League for Democracy Party; and the Cambodian National Party. The low numbers of women elected to Commune Councils is due in large part to the fact that many parties not only include a small number of women candidates on their electoral lists but also tend to avoid placing women in the top spots on the lists.

Looking at the results by province, only seven out of 24 provinces achieved more than 20% of female representation in commune councils. The only province where the CMDG of 25% of women's representation in commune councils was achieved is Pailin province with 28.85%, while the capital Phnom Penh just missed the target with 24.57%. It is interesting to note that in Kampong Cham, the most populated province in Cambodia, only 13.67% of seats were filled by women. The province of Takeo achieved the lowest percentage of female commune councilors in the country, reaching only half of the target level, a paltry 12.50%.

While these results do show a slight improvement in female political representation since 2007, we, CPWP, GADC, COMFREL and CCHR urge the RGC to recognize that the system as it stands continues to contribute to under-representation of women in politics, in particular with regards to their chances of being elected to more senior positions. Therefore, it remains of utmost

<sup>1</sup> The CMDG target for seats held by women at the national level, including the National Assembly and the Senate is 30% by 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Out of 111,056 total candidates, 28,481 were women. Only 501 women (representing 0.45% of total candidates and 1.76% of women candidates) were placed on the first spot on electoral lists.

importance for the RGC and all political parties in Cambodia to increase their efforts to tackle the institutional and societal obstructions to equality, particularly as the National Elections are to be held next year. We therefore strongly recommend the RGC to incorporate a quota system in election law, which would legally require the parties to allocate 30% of seats on their lists to women, thereby restricting the maximum level of male representation to 70%, and which would allow for sanctions on parties which do not adhere to the quota requirements. We further recommend that the quota system include a mechanism that prohibits parties from placing women candidates merely at the lower end of their lists, such as the so-called “zipper-system” which requires political parties to alternate the names of male and female candidates on electoral lists. Finally, we recommend that, pending an implementation at the national level of a quota system, political parties should adopt internal policies to ensure that women make up 30% of electoral lists and that the names of women candidate are equally distributed throughout the lists.

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