WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AS A ROUTE TO GREATER EMPOWERMENT

CAMBODIA CASE STUDY

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

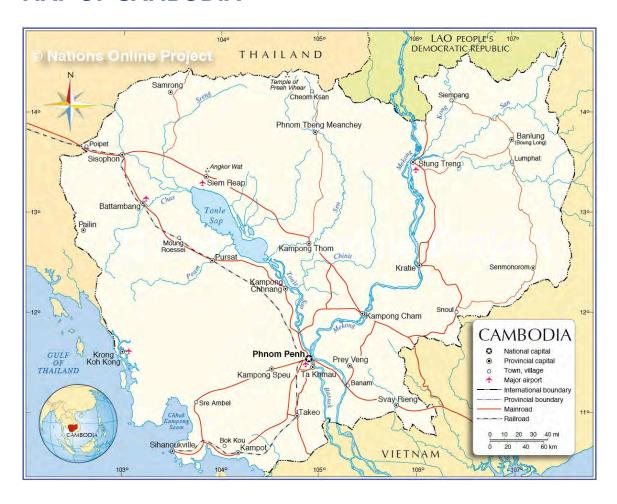|	
AGAP	Accountability in Governance and Politics (USAID)
CCHR	Cambodian Committee for Human Rights
CDRI	Cambodia Development Resource Institute
CEDAW	Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEPPS	Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening
CLEC	Community Legal Education Center
CNRP	Cambodia National Rescue Party
COMFREL	Committee for Free and Fair Elections
CPP	Cambodian People's Party
CPWP	Committee to Promote Women in Politics
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DCHA	Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance
DRG	Democracy, Human Rights and Governance
EPP	Elections and Political Processes
EPT	Elections and Political Transitions
GADC	Gender and Development for Cambodia
GII	Gender Inequality Index (UNDP)
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IFES	International Foundation for Elections Systems
IRI	International Republican Institute
LICADHO	Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MNA	Member of the National Assembly (Cambodia)
MSI	Management Systems International
MOWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs (Cambodia)
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NEC	National Election Commission
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PM	Prime Minister
PSA	Public Service Announcement
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VBNK	Vicheastan Bamreu Neak Samrabsamroul Karngea Akphiwat
WEAI	Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index
WfP	Women for Prosperity
WiP	Women in Power
YCC	Youth Council of Cambodia

MAP OF CAMBODIA

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This case study of Cambodia is one of five country case studies executed under the Women in Power (WiP) learning project supported by the Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG) in the Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) bureau of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The case studies will enhance the findings of the WiP desktop study of 56 DRG programs to promote women's political leadership and representation by assessing the contributions and lessons learned of selected programs in each country. Research methods include review of program documents, published research and other secondary sources, and interviews with USAID, implementers, local partners, beneficiaries and stakeholders.

The case studies also assess the opportunities and constraints for women's leadership and empowerment in the broader political context and document the extent to which women have gained top leadership positions in four sectors of government: the parliament or congress, the executive, the judiciary and the security sector. Finally, building on these assessments, the case studies offer recommendations for future USAID programming in each country to further support gender equality in political processes and transitions. The case studies will complement other assessments and evaluations conducted by USAID and other actors as a rich source of country-specific information on women's political leadership and empowerment.

Country Context

Cambodia's governance is semi-authoritarian; Freedom House rates it as "not free" due to its restrictions on civil and political liberties. Similarly, the BTI Index (2014) rates Cambodia's democracy as 103rd of 129 countries that are not part of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), stating that "political stability is guaranteed at the expense of political participation and civil liberties." USAID reports indicate that the degree of political openness overall has been declining for several years, notwithstanding a brief opening around the July 2013 elections. Yet some elements of democratic governance — and gender equality — have taken hold in Cambodia. Since the early 1990s, democratically-oriented Cambodian political and social leaders and international donors have established some legal, policy and institutional foundations of a democratic state.

The 1993 constitution enshrines equal rights for all citizens, and policies to decentralize governance to the subnational level include provisions to ensure that women are both elected and appointed to leadership positions, especially to address women's and children's issues. Cambodia's Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) coordinates gender mainstreaming efforts within the government. The prime minister reportedly even issued a number of statements and directives supportive of increasing women's roles in politics; gender equality may not have much of a constituency beyond women's groups in Cambodia, but it is not seen as a sensitive political threat, as some other human rights issues are.

The main barriers to women's political empowerment lie in several hard-to-change sources, including historical patriarchal social structures and culture that assign public roles to men and household roles to women; patronage and vested interests that exclude women; an electoral law that lacks measures to address discrimination; and a closed proportional representation system that allows (patriarchal) parties to control their candidate lists in secrecy.

USAID Programs

The case study focused on the women's political leadership activities supported through the Accountability in Politics and Governance Program (AGAP), implemented by the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) partners: International Foundation for Elections Systems (IFES), International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI) from 2009–2014. The main activities of interest were funded with $500,000 from the DRG/Elections and Political Processes (EPP) fund.

The activities included training in election administration/women's empowerment (IFES and local partner Vicheastan Bamreu Neak Samrabsamroul Karngea Akphiwat [VBNK]); joint training by IFES and NDI for women civil society and political leaders in the provinces; several constituency dialogues (NDI); and a regional exchange among women civil society and political leaders in the Lower Mekong Region (IRI). These activities were intended to be strategic, if small-scale, and build on a previous regional exchange and support women's leadership in the 2013 elections. However, their primary impacts were on the individual women who participated rather than at any collective level. The activities varied in their effectiveness. Participants in the IFES/VBNK election administration program said it built self-confidence and knowledge, and led to temporary election jobs and other new public roles. The NDI political leadership training received mixed reviews, partly because the curriculum was not fully adapted to the context of the participants at the subnational level. Participants of the constituency dialogues and the regional exchange conveyed positive, if vague, memories, including noting that the implementers did not follow-up to support them in taking action on issues raised.

The case study team heard from women politicians at the subnational level about previous women's political leadership training programs implemented by Cambodian civil society organizations (CSOs), especially SILAKA, Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC), Women for Prosperity (WfP) and VBNK that had helped them become effective leaders. Interviews with the leaders of these CSOs, all of whom are involved in USAID programs, indicated that they have much to contribute and have probably been underutilized. This should change with USAID's emphasis on partnering with and strengthening local institutions.

Women's Political Empowerment Benchmarks

Women in Cambodia, like in many countries, have made the most inroads to top leadership positions in the legislative branch of government at the national level (20.3 percent of elected representatives, compared to 22.5 percent average globally.) Although the team heard that the greatest opportunities for women to enter politics are at the subnational level, only 17.8 percent of commune councilors are female. Other relatively high shares of top positions include the second and third tiers of the executive branch (20.5 percent secretary of state and 17.6 percent undersecretary, respectively), and the third tier of the judiciary (court clerk, 22.1 percent).

Paxton and Hughes (2013) report that women's scope for political influence is often limited under authoritarian regimes, whose governments may manipulate women's political representation to improve their positioning internationally. While these challenges are found in Cambodia, women have space (and use it) to address women's and children's issues such as gender-based violence, community-level services and even human resource practices in government. Moreover, research suggests that the symbolic effects of women in leadership positions are potentially very powerful, as they can positively change public attitudes about women's capacities (Barnes and Burchard 2012).

Recommendations for Future USAID Programming

USAID can use several practical approaches in future efforts to strengthen women's political leadership in Cambodia. The recommendations emphasize building on previous program successes, supporting civil society to create pressure on the government and parties for gender equality and taking advantage of opportunities to effect change at the subnational level and with youth.

Training and mentoring activities

To counter women's gender socialization and relative lack of access to formal and informal opportunities to learn democratic politics, USAID should work with local partners to provide practical and culturally appropriate training opportunities to women, youth and men, especially at the subnational level. Local CSOs could lead an effort to update previous successful training curricula to meet new goals. This would increase the supply of motivated and qualified women to enter — and possibly advance in — politics.

Women respondents strongly valued ongoing, practically oriented support. USAID could capitalize on this interest through a mentoring program, in which women who have had some level of success in government are paired with women who are new to, or trying to enter, that sphere. Thus, women who have already served a term on a commune council could be paired with women of the same party who have just won election for the first time.

Media activities

Similarly, to build democratic culture, change public attitudes and build women leaders' skills in public engagement, USAID should expand its support for all kinds of media programs that encourage participation, dialogue and social media interaction. The space for gender equality is relatively open, and youth are energetically searching for ways to express themselves and build their country's future.

Civil society advocacy and social accountability activities

Given the limited political will in the parties and the national election administration to adopt improved policies for gender equality, USAID should provide grants and technical assistance to civil society organizations and networks pressuring these institutions for change. Civil society social accountability activities, such as a gender equality scorecard, would keep pressure on the government to fully implement current policies. As a United Nations Development Program (UNDP) representative suggested to the team, USAID's support for civil society is absolutely vital to keep pressure on the government to change.

Finally, strengthening women's leadership in civil society — the public sphere, if not strictly political — is another alternative program direction for USAID. There are already many strong women CSO leaders in Phnom Penh, and the emerging activism by grassroots groups and networks includes women leaders. A crosscutting effort to support women's leadership development in all these civil society issue areas could contribute a great deal toward expanding the numbers and skills of women leading Cambodia's future development and democratization.

II. CAMBODIA CASE STUDY COUNTRY REPORT

Introduction

Project background

The Women in Power project (WiP) is a learning activity supported by the Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) in the DCHA Bureau. Its goal is to further USAID's understanding about women's political leadership and empowerment, including the results of selected agency programs. The project is also piloting a new measure of women's leadership and political influence while providing specific recommendations for future programming and research. This work is in three phases over the course of a year, October 2013 through September 2014:

- *Phase I* of the project examines USAID programming dedicated to increasing women's descriptive representation and leadership. The main deliverable is a desktop study of ongoing and completed programs supported by DCHA/DRG's Elections and Political Transitions (EPT) team to better understand their technical approaches, results and lessons learned.
- *Phase II* of the project will consist of five qualitative case studies selected from the desktop study. The project teams will take a deeper look at the objectives and achievements of select programs in the five countries. Through these case studies, the project team will draw out lessons learned and examine the relationship between select USAID-funded programs to strengthen women's political empowerment and the current state of women's leadership in these countries.
- *Phase III* of the project will test a new measure of women's leadership and power across all formal government sectors (executive, judicial, security and legislative) to advance critical thinking and guide future programming around women's leadership and political empowerment. This model will be tested in at least 20 countries, including the five selected case study countries.

Managed by a four-member DCHA/DRG team, this project is being implemented in partnership with Management Systems International (MSI). The MSI team includes three leading academic specialists on women's political empowerment. Building on the findings from all three phases, DCHA/DRG will convene a group of other leading international donors to share experiences and consider creating a coordinated global learning agenda around increasing women's political leadership and empowerment.

Cambodia Case Study Methodology

The WiP team chose Cambodia as the Asia region's country that best fit several criteria for selecting the case studies, including: USAID expectation of ongoing programming; a relatively restricted political environment, as reflected in a "not free" rating by Freedom House; and programs that were at least moderately successful in meeting their targets, to assess achievements and lessons learned. USAID works in many countries with restricted political contexts, and they tend to have particular constraints on women's political leadership (Paxton and Hughes 2013), so the case study was designed to explore these dynamics.

The WiP research team developed a common analytic framework with guiding questions (see Annex 1), which was adapted to each of the five case studies by the respective country teams.

The Cambodia research team consisted of four members: Darcy Ashman, DBA, the team lead from MSI, Johanna Wilkie, USAID DCHA/DRG team member, Sopeat Mer, a Cambodian researcher who also served as research coordinator and Sopheap Sreng, a Cambodian gender and project development specialist at the USAID mission in Phnom Penh.

The Cambodia country team conducted semi-structured interviews with program implementers and participants, key stakeholders, women political and civil society leaders, CSOs, USAID/Cambodia, other donors funding women's political empowerment and other respondents recommended by USAID/Cambodia and other sources in the country.

Prior to the U.S.-based team members' arrival in Cambodia, the names of prospective interview respondents were identified through consultations with USAID/Cambodia, the USAID/Washington Regional Bureau for Asia and the Washington-based offices of the three implementing partners (IFES, IRI and NDI). The Cambodian team members put together a contact list and the research coordinator scheduled the interviews. The team conducted interviews for 11 days in Cambodia. The list of interview respondents is in Annex 2.

Interviews took place in Phnom Penh and two provinces where subnational activities had been implemented. The team visited two provinces for four days to interview program participants, stakeholders in the programs such as election and party officials and women political leaders. A translator accompanied these interviews to facilitate Khmer-English communication.

At the midpoint and close of in-country data collection, the research team shared its observations, reflections and analyses to establish what had been learned and what questions still needed to be addressed. The team shared its preliminary findings with USAID prior to departing the country. The final case study report incorporates feedback from USAID/Cambodia and USAID/Washington.

Key case study research questions

Research on women's political empowerment globally suggests three main reasons behind most movements to increase women's leadership and participation in politics (Paxton and Hughes, 2014):

- *Descriptive representation.* In a democracy, all population groups should be represented. Women are often 50 percent of the population but only a small proportion of elected leaders.
- *Substantive representation.* Elected and appointed women leaders can build coalitions to address issues facing women and other under-represented groups.
- *Symbolic representation.* Women leaders are role models, demonstrating public leadership and inspiring more confidence in girls and women to run for office.

Given these overarching goals for increasing women's representation and leadership in politics, the Cambodian case study framed four key questions (or sets of questions) about the country context, the USAID programs, and recommendations for the future. These questions are addressed in four sections of this report:

- *Cambodia Country Context:* How does the country context shape the opportunities and constraints for gender equality and women's political leadership?
- *Assessment of USAID Program Activities and Results:* Considering the country context and influence of other women's empowerment programs, what did the USAID activities achieve? What lessons were learned about overcoming challenges and successfully supporting women's political leadership?
- *Women's Political Empowerment Benchmarks:* How do these results relate to the broader benchmarks of women's political empowerment in Cambodia? To what extent have women broken the "glass ceiling" in Cambodia and reached the top levels of politics and government? How do women enter politics in Cambodia, and what kind of influence do the most senior women leaders enjoy?
- *Recommendations:* Considering the results and lessons learned from USAID program activities, as well as the opportunities and constraints on women's political empowerment in the broader context, how should USAID design future program activities to promote further progress in women's political leadership and representation?

Cambodia Country Context

Key question: How does the country context shape the opportunities and constraints for gender equality and women's political leadership?

Cambodia has been the focus of significant international donor support for democratic development since at least the early 1990s Paris Peace Agreement. The case study team drew on global statistical reports and research on Cambodian democracy and gender equality (much of which was produced by Cambodian sources) to frame the following summary of the key factors shaping the country context for women's political leadership and empowerment.

History

Most research describes Cambodia as semi-authoritarian or partially democratic (Blue et al 2008; Ojendal and Lilja 2009). Its formal liberal democratic constitution and institutions, established in the early 1990s, coexist with significant top-down control of the government, media and the economy by the prime minister and the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). Political violence has declined significantly in the last two decades, but patronage and intimidation remain key to the political culture. Cambodia is rated "not free" by Freedom House (2013), which cites numerous violations of democratic civil and political liberties.

Elements of democratic governance have taken hold in Cambodia (Sedara and Ojendal 2014; Sedara et al. 2012): Parties compete for votes in periodic elections despite an uneven playing field and reported election irregularities (e.g., faulty voter lists and vote buying); there is increased democratic governance at the subnational level due to years of decentralization and deconcentration reforms (Sedara et al. 2012); and civil society is organized and active in areas including human rights and gender equality, despite recent bans on public protests and tightening restrictions in a new draft law on associations and non-governmental organizations reportedly sent to the Council of Ministers in early 2014. International donor support since the early 1990s has been an important factor influencing these reforms, along with popular demand.

In the July 2013 elections, two opposition parties merged, creating the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), which won a significant number of seats in the National Assembly. However, at the time of this case study in May 2014, CNRP had refused to take its seats due to election irregularities, as detailed in reports by the Committee for Free and Fair Elections (COMFREL) and the Cambodian Committee for Human Rights (CCHR). The government has closed down visible political space, such as the right to protest in a central Phnom Penh area named Freedom Park, which now has a barbed-wire barricade across it.

Status of women

The state of gender equality in Cambodia is firmly situated between these competing and contradictory forces. Cultural gender norms are evolving, particularly for Cambodian youth, but rooted in traditional patriarchal and hierarchical beliefs that give men higher status and allocate public political roles to them while women are expected to manage the household, rear children and bring in income (de Wijn 2012; Sedara et al 2012).

Recent studies and gender equality indices suggest that real advances in gender equality have been made even as significant obstacles and constraints remain — there is both "light and dark," as noted by the German donor Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) representative (interview, May 21, 2014). According to the most recent World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index, in which a score of 1.00 indicates gender equality, women in Cambodia are significantly more unequal in politics (.09) compared to health (.98), education (.88) and economy (.65). The indicator measures the relative share of women in the highest level of decision-making in the legislative and executive branches, e.g., ratio of women to men ministers, parliamentary positions and

years as highest executive (president or prime minister). Although most countries globally are relatively more unequal on political indicators than those for health, education and economy, in political equality Cambodia (96 of 135) ranks lower than its nearest neighbors: Lao PDR (73), Vietnam (80), and Thailand (89). Overall, Cambodia's GII score (.65) ranks it quite low globally, at 104 of 135 countries. Cambodia also ranks significantly below its neighbors Lao PDR (60 of 135), Thailand (65 of 135) and Vietnam (66 of 135).

Cambodian women, like those in Southeast Asia more broadly, have greater decision-making power at the household level compared with women in other developing regions.[1] They are also more likely to have control over their own earnings (IFAD 2013) when it comes to household expenses. However, according to the Ministry of Women's and Veteran's Affairs (2004), gender norms in Cambodia have dictated that male heads of household rely on women's contributions to household income when they take political positions, since they tend to bring low salaries but high status (MoWVA 2004, in deWijn 2012).

In recent years across Southeast Asia, gender mainstreaming efforts have increased women's representation in formal community and local decision-making bodies, but not as much in leadership positions (IFAD 2013). As IFAD (2013) notes, "many types of rural organizations supported by the Government of Cambodia have rules mandating female representation on leadership committees or are subject to policies that promote women's participation. Despite this, most leaders in these organizations are men."

However, the upward trend in the share of elected women political leaders must be recognized, even if women are still not well represented in top appointed positions. The percentage of female members of the national assembly (MNAs) in Cambodia (20.3 percent) is not far below the global average of 22.5 percent and even above the norm for Asia, 19 percent (IPU).

Cambodia has seen a steady increase of women elected to the Parliament, from 4.16 percent in 1993 to 12.19 percent in 2003, 16.26 percent in 2008, and 20.32 percent in 2013. Many observers note a slight decrease in the number of women MNAs since 2008, but they are referring to the share of women MNAs after the government has been formed (21.13 percent), when candidates who have won seats (men) are appointed to higher positions, leaving their seats to be filled by the next candidate on the party list, who is sometimes been female. (In fact, Women for Prosperity reports in its 2013 Update that in every election since 1993, the share of female MNAs after the government was formed has been higher than the share elected.) Since the current government had not yet been formed at the time of study, the corrected percentage was not available.

The percentage of female candidates for parliament rose from 5 percent in 1993 to 19.25 percent in 1998 and 27.16 percent in 2003, and then fell to 17.02 percent in 2008 before rising again in 2013 to 22.55 percent (Women for Prosperity 2013). The downturn in 2008 should be understood in the context of a decline in the total number of candidates, male and female, and a decline in voter participation during the same period, suggesting a general popular distancing from the democratic process, not only women's political leadership.

At the subnational level, the share of women elected to commune councils increased from 8.45 percent in 2002 to 16 percent in 2007 (corrected in 2010) and 17.78 percent in 2012 (Women for Prosperity 2013).

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[1] Similarly, Dr. K. Lucas, director of the Office of Food Security and Environment in USAID/Cambodia, reported that Cambodia scored the highest on the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) of any country where USAID had tested the index (interview, May 23). The WEAI measures empowerment at the household level.

Major influences on women's political empowerment

One way to understand the changing context for gender equality in politics in Cambodia is through a force field analysis[2] that assesses both the driving and restraining forces. The driving forces include actors, policies and institutions that have promoted women's political participation, while the restraining influences include those that function as obstacles or barriers to gender equality. This is not to oversimplify the context, which is in reality a complex political/economic/cultural system with elements that do not fall neatly into the driving or restraining categories. Instead, the purpose of this section is to provide a brief overview of key forces working for — and against — gender equality in politics in Cambodia, to better understand the forces with which USAID program activities and results had to contend.

Driving forces. Progress toward gender equality in Cambodia is linked with (but not the same as) progress toward the development of a liberal democratic policy framework and institutions. Key proponents of change include Cambodian leadership, civil society advocacy, popular demand and international donors (Sedara and Ojendal 2014; Sedara et al 2012; de Wijn 2012). Women leaders, both those who returned to Cambodia in the early 1990s after the peace agreement and those who remained in the country, play leading roles in politics and civil society, including Mu Sochua of the opposition CNRP, Nanda Pok of Women for Prosperity and Thida Khus of SILAKA. The values and discourse driving women's empowerment are those of liberal democracy and women's equal rights, e.g., "women are half the population but hold a small proportion of leadership positions."

The policy framework for gender equality in Cambodia is reported to be quite good, if largely underfunded and unimplemented. Examples include the Cambodian constitution of 1993, which includes equal rights for men and women; the establishment of the Ministry of Women Affairs (MOWA), which oversees national policies on women's issues, conducts gender training for all other ministries and coordinates with international donors (albeit with a limited budget); and the 2009 affirmative action policy mandating that every ministry must have one female secretary of state and one undersecretary, and provinces and districts at least one female deputy each. Each ministry is also required to have a gender focal point to ensure coordination of gender mainstreaming and training with MOWA.

Cambodia is a signatory to the Convention to End Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration, among other international human rights instruments, and has included targets for gender equality in its own Cambodian Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). MOWA has established a gender technical working group that involves Cambodians and international donors, and Prime Minister Hun Sen has issued several directives to increase the number of women in leadership positions in government and the political parties, and to promote gender equality, including lesbian and gay rights.

Provisions in the evolving decentralization legislation since 2001 establish the commune level as the key level for democratic development, provide for a female commune councilor to take charge of women's and children's affairs (2001) and establish a mandate for ensuring that women (2005, 2008) and vulnerable groups and indigenous minorities (2005) can participate in decision-making and representation in politics at the capital/province/municipal/district/khan and commune/sangkat levels (Parliamentary Institute of Cambodia 2013). (In Phnom Penh, the districts are called "khan," and their subdivisions "sangkat.")

Although many of these policy provisions are not fully implemented, they were cited many times as evidence of progress in Cambodia, suggesting that they still have meaning. Even if there are few

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[2] Force field analysis (Lewin 1943) posits that human behavior is caused by forces — beliefs, expectations, cultural norms, etc. — within the "life space" of an individual, organization or society. These forces can propel us toward or away from a given behavior. Force field diagrams are used to map the driving and restraining forces that affect a central question or problem. See www.skymark.com/resources/tools/force_field_diagram.asp.

means by which the government can be held accountable, the policies serve as advocacy tools for activists and carry symbolic value, establishing these norms and values as part of the Cambodian legal framework.

Finally, Cambodian youth have an important role in driving change. Those under age 30 account for nearly 68 percent of the population (United Nations World Statistics Pocketbook) and are increasingly politically active. Youth will likely redefine culture and politics in the years to come. They have not experienced the violence and instability that led the older generations to value the stability provided by PM Hun Sen and the CPP, and they are more connected to each other and the global community through social media and the Internet. Undoubtedly, they will transform some gender roles, even as they retain their Cambodian identities, including some of the associated traditional gender norms, as often happens (Ridgeway 2011). A case study funded by IFES and conducted by the Committee to Promote Women in Politics (CPWP) found that young women voiced traditional attitudes about participating in politics — e.g., their first obligation was to bring home income to support the family — unless they had participated in CSO empowerment groups (Mehrvar, 2012).

Restraining forces. The main barriers to women's empowerment and gender equality in Cambodia lie in historical social structures and culture, "high politics" and vested interests that manifest in electoral and political party processes that limit women's political participation (Griffith 2010, cited in Sedara and Odenjal 2014). At the time of this report, the National Election Commission (NEC) was neither independent nor open to gender equality initiatives (interview with IFES, May 12[3]). The electoral law lacks specific measures to redress discrimination and advance women's participation, while the electoral system, closed proportional representation, gives (male-dominated) political parties a dominant gatekeeper role, as they determine who gets placed on the candidate list and their rankings. Parties lack the necessary policies and capacities to increase women's participation, with women marginalized from key decision-making processes.

Neither of the two leading parties demonstrates a strong policy commitment to internal gender equality, although the CPP is reported to have a more democratic internal structure and greater inclusion of women in leadership positions. The CPP placed the most active and respected women engaging with civil society in the community at the top of the candidate list for the 2013 elections. At the local level, several women commune councilors said they had been recruited by party leaders who were implementing directives to do so. The CNRP is said to be still developing its policies and internal structure. Opposition parties reportedly resist placing female candidates in "winnable districts" or at the top of candidate lists because they feel pressure to win and fear that women candidates would work against them. Opposition parties also fear being infiltrated by the regime, so they are more reluctant to include all newcomers, not just women.

Culture and traditional gender socialization also impedes the supply of women candidates: Due to their lack of opportunities to gain experience in political/public roles, women themselves lack confidence and the skills needed for these roles. Men frequently point to women's lack of capacity as a reason not to include them or promote more women to leadership positions. Many women internalize values that they should take care of the family and bring in household income before they take on public service. Greater economic inequality for women and their relative lack of access to higher education also severely constrain their abilities to gain political leadership opportunities.

Chbap Pros and *Chbap Srey* are traditional cultural codes of conduct for men and women, respectively; they are less dominant than they once were, but still influential (de Wijn 2012; several interviews). Expectations for women as wives include caring for households (hers and her spouse's, her parents' and his parents') and demonstrating that she is her husband's inferior, including being patient and submissive. The team was told that the prime minister's wife had recently said that she would like to

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[3] This may change with the prospective appointment at the end of July 2014 of a new independent ninth NEC member agreed on by the two main parties, Dr. C. Kek Pung, President of LICADHO.

bring back these norms (interview May 19), so they must have eroded enough in practice to cause concern for the most traditional elements of Cambodian society.

In summary, the context in Cambodia for women's political leadership constitutes a mixed picture of driving and restraining forces, "both light and dark," as one respondent noted (interview May 20). The environment seems more dynamic than expected for a restricted context, with numerous individual and institutional actors driving change. Yet, as the final section of this report addresses, some of the hardest changes — often for gender equality and democratic development alike — may lie ahead: reforming the electoral law, improving party policies and practices with gender-based quotas or affirmative action, establishing mechanisms for accountability for policy implementation, building skills for women (as well as men) to exercise democratic political leadership, political space for advocacy on emerging issues and transforming cultural biases against women in politics.

The next section picks up on the particular challenges addressed, activities and results achieved by the USAID program Accountability in Governance and Politics Program (AGAP), implemented by CEPPS partners IFES, IRI and NDI from 2009–2014.

Assessment of USAID Program Activities and Results

Key question: Considering the country context and influence of other women's empowerment programs, what did the selected USAID activities achieve? What lessons were learned about overcoming challenges and successfully supporting women's political leadership?

USAID and a number of other donors in Cambodia fund activities to strengthen gender equality and women's political participation. However, USAID seems to be the only bilateral donor that focuses on elections, political parties and civil society advocacy for democratic accountability and transparency. The other bilateral and multilateral donors have established cooperative relationships with MOWA and fund various policy and governmental capacity-building initiatives. Therefore, USAID programs address vitally important areas, potentially affecting the supply of motivated and qualified women candidates, as well as the demand for such candidates by political parties, electoral institutions and Cambodian voters.

This section is divided into four main components; the first two summarize existing documentation and the last two present the team's findings from the country visit. The first section summarizes the AGAP gender/women's leadership activities; the second summarizes the results as documented by the partners and USAID; the third provides a synthesis of partner and stakeholder perspectives on the activities and their results; and the fourth presents the key findings by the case study team, which focuses on issues of program design, capacity building and local partnering.

AGAP gender mainstreaming and women's leadership activities

AGAP focused on increasing the accountability of elected officials and transparency of policies and institutions. It addressed three main challenges: strengthen accountability and expand transparency and access to information; generate progressive leadership; and support election systems (CEPPS 2009). Gender issues are noted only with respect to the second challenge, generating progressive leadership, specifically women's exclusion from politics and various barriers to their participation.

Overall, the program aimed to increase accountability and transparency in policymaking and implementation, and each of the CEPPs partners addressed two or three specific objectives toward this larger goal. In the original program, IFES was the only one of the three to include a specific objective related to women, e.g., "strengthen the political understanding and participation of women in appointed government positions." Building on the IFES relationship with the National Election Commission (NEC), they proposed two activities: create an ad hoc working group on gender and elections to promote women's progressive leadership in election administration, and collaborate with

a local subgrantee on a pilot project to train and certify a core group of women in election administration, beginning with midlevel committees (in the districts and provinces).

The CEPPS performance monitoring plan (PMP FY14), or M&E plan, indicates that IFES tracked indicators related to these activities and all three partners tracked sex-disaggregated data for some activities, e.g., constituency dialogues, candidate debates, party campaign training (NDI) and party training for youth and youth activist networks (IRI).

The original award was about $16 million, of which about $3 million went to IFES, $7 million to IRI and $6 million to NDI.

Amendment for women's leadership activities. In July 2012, USAID issued an amendment to the AGAP program description to address new strategic opportunities in social media and women's leadership. They included a new intermediate result, "Women's political leadership strengthened," under the sub-objective of generating progressive leadership. This amendment was funded with an additional $900,000 for about one year (August 2012 to September 2013). The three partners each received about a third of this amount. Of the total amount, $500,000 was from the Elections and Political Processes (EPP) fund to strengthen women's political leadership following the June 2012 commune council elections and possibly the 2013 national elections. The EPP resources were intended to enable the CEPPS partners to build on the Lower Mekong Initiative women's forum that had occurred the previous year. The specific activities to be completed over the year included:

- IRI to organize a regional exchange program gathering women political and civil society leaders to increase cooperation among the five countries of the Lower Mekong Region (Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Burma/Myanmar), enhance leadership skills and increase their knowledge of how to lead initiatives to create gender equality.

- IFES and NDI to collaborate to organize three-day leadership trainings in four provinces for women civil society, political party and elected leaders to advance policies for women's interests and representation, and to provide critical skills such as communication, networking, advocacy, etc. IFES partnered with local CSOs VBNK in the training and the Committee to Promote Women in Politics (CPWP) in the training and in documentation and dissemination of case studies and other positive messages about women's political participation through the media. NDI provided political leadership training to increase their capacity to advocate for women's interests, advance in their respective parties and become more visible in Cambodian political life, especially in advance of the 2013 poll.

- NDI to organize policy meetings in six provinces with participation of women from the training workshops. NDI to issue subgrants to local organizations to assist in implementing six public dialogues following the policy meetings. NDI to monitor and evaluate progress made after the dialogues.

- NDI to host a national roundtable for elected women from the commune councils, the National Assembly and civil society to review policy issues discussed during the public dialogues, share experiences and lessons learned, and offer strategies for next steps. Finally, NDI to support interested elected women leaders, if any, to re-create a women's leadership caucus.

Program results: Existing documentation

Program reports and evaluations by the CEPPS partners and USAID present quite different assessments of the women's leadership activities, which may be due to the different levels of analyses used by the authors. The implementers focused on the effects of the activities on the individuals who participated in them, while USAID focused on the overall effects on women's political leadership in Cambodia.

The WiP desktop study (2014)[4] identified the following key outcomes for the women who participated in the women's leadership activities through a review of existing program documentation by the CEPPS partners.

IFES women's progressive leadership training (original program description):

- Of 196 graduates who applied to work as electoral administrators during the commune council elections, 124 (63 percent) succeeded.
- Twenty-five graduates ran for commune council seats and six won (24 percent).
- The National Election Commission accredited 108 women graduates as local election observers, although only 27 got jobs as election observers.

NDI Constituency Dialogues

- Participants in focus groups viewed women leaders more positively after the policy-focused constituency dialogues.

IRI Lower Mekong Regional Exchange

- 100 percent of women participants found the exchange to be useful.

Two key lessons learned were reported by the partners:

- Participants value refresher training and employment coaching skills in the IFES women's leadership program.
- Consistent and sustained training is needed due to the low capacity levels of Cambodian women in public life.

More nuanced assessments of the activities are provided in several program reports and evaluations provide additional information about achievements and challenges, most importantly the IFES Cambodia Women's Progressive Leadership in Election Management and Administration Impact Assessment (February 2014), the IFES Final Report on Evaluation of the Women's Progressive Leadership in Election Management and Administration (November 2013) and the NDI Women's Political Participation Training Report (December 2012).

IFES conducted pre-and post-tests with training participants and contracted an independent evaluation of their training activities. These methods affirmed that the participants gained significant benefits from the training, especially in "empowerment" or increased self-confidence and skills needed for public leadership, including presenting ideas to a group, public speaking, planning and managing an event and dispute resolution through negotiation. The evaluator noted the contributions of both IFES and its training partner VBNK in creating an effective learning environment for women, including attending to child care and related gender-based considerations. The two "tangible outcomes" observed included short-term/temporary involvement in the electoral process as election administrators and long-term change of status in their family and community.

NDI also used pre- and post-tests to assess the effect of the training on the participants in their political leadership training program. Their report presents both achievements and limitations of the training. Led by an international trainer, topics included party advancement, message development, outreach and public speaking.

The participants improved their understanding of basic advocacy and political messages, and the participants from different parties and civil society demonstrated good cooperation and networking across the party lines and among political and civil society leaders. However, participants were not

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[4] This information is cited from the CEPPS partners' reports; it may warrant further discussion between the partners and USAID Cambodia.

able to plan advocacy initiatives or set long-term goals. Due to the top-down practices of their parties, they did not accept the practice encouraged by NDI in other countries, where women initiate party projects to raise their visibility and outreach. NDI remarked on the "extremely low capacity" of the women and acknowledged that "more has to be done on a continuous basis to build the capacity of women leaders."

The USAID evaluation of the women's leadership activities was fairly critical of their achievements:

"Efforts to elevate women's political leadership were largely unsuccessful, as a result of limited and scattered interventions. Confined to gender balance and advocacy in election administration under the original award, the advancement of women's political leadership was only given more attention following a program extension in 2012, which introduced targeted training and roundtables. Though beneficial, these activities remained too limited to significantly impact the low capacity levels of Cambodian women. [Emphasis added.] Despite limited progress in the 2012 commune elections, not only there was a significant decrease in women candidates for the National Assembly between 2008 and 2013, but a common old-school thinking persists within political parties and civil society that assign women an inferior role as too scared, unqualified or devoid of resources necessary to campaign."

Note that the statement in the evaluation about the decrease in number of women candidates is different from statistics from Women for Prosperity (2013), which report that 428 female candidates ran in the 2013 National Assembly elections, a slight increase compared to the 422 in 2008. Further research may be needed to determine the actual situation.

Program results in the Cambodian context: Partner and stakeholder perspectives

The team interviewed the three CEPPS implementers and their Cambodian CSO partners in Phnom Penh, along with a small group of youth participants in IRI's Future Leaders program implemented with its partner, Youth Council of Cambodia (YCC). In two provinces, Kampong Thom and Kampong Cham, the team interviewed selected groups of program participants, primarily from the IFES training program in women's progressive leadership in election management and administration. (One NDI participant also was included.) The team also interviewed a provincial elections commissioner to learn his view of the election training program.

A number of women political leaders in the provinces and Phnom Penh who had not participated in CEPPS programs, but were recommended as successful examples of women leaders, took part in interviews. Many had participated in earlier CSO training programs on women's political leadership and participation implemented by SILAKA or Women for Prosperity. They provided insights about successful training methodologies, as well as their own political recruitment and career paths.

Finally, to increase understanding of the broader context, all the respondents shared their views of the opportunities and constraints for women in politics in Cambodia, as well as their suggestions for future programs to advance women's representation.

This section presents the key points emerging from the interviews that shed additional light on the program activities and their results. (The team's results assessment follows.)

Perspectives of CEPPS implementers and Cambodian partners.

➢ *IFES:*

- Was selective in recruiting university graduates for its election program, which may have contributed to more successful outcomes than the joint NDI training participants had.
- Spoke highly of local partners, e.g., VBNK (with whom IFES is discussing a follow-up pilot program with former trainees to facilitate community conversations about democracy issues and election reform), CPWP and Women's Media Center.

- Suggested that advocacy with parties to include women at the top of candidate lists would be more effective if the terminology were changed to something like "no more than 60 percent from one gender" in the top portion of the list, compared to 50/50 or the "zippered list" concept that is being discussed.
- Noted that the National Election Committee is not open to including gender sensitization training in EC-strengthening; in general, an "unwilling partner."

➢ *IRI:*

- Provided no information about the Lower Mekong Regional Exchange, despite questions asked by the team; discussed only its recent and forthcoming youth programs, emphasizing that the winners of the recent debate program had been female. Shared plans for a sequence of educational programs targeting different age groups to address the need for democracy education among Cambodian youth. Spoke positively of partnership with YCC.
- Have found the Ministry of Education to be open to programming ideas, whereas MOWA maintains the status quo, saying, "they will not rock the boat."

➢ *NDI:*

- Reaffirmed their view that the main reason for low performance was limited time and resources allocated for women's training and policy dialogues (they cited a figure of about $50,000, much less than the actual $305,000), and emphasized the "low capacity" of women at the subnational level, calling them "barely literate." NDI reports indicate that the trainers revised the curriculum during the training once they realized the participants' capacities.
- Pointed to the parties and their lack of interest/political will as the key barrier to advancing women's political participation in Cambodia; observed that NDI requires female participation but in practice finds it very difficult to get them to send female participants to training and other events.
- Noted that women face a vicious cycle of not having opportunities to enter politics, so they don't develop skills, which in turn is used by male politicians as a reason not to involve women or give them leadership positions.

➢ *Cambodian CSO Partners* and other providers of women's political empowerment training (CPWP (implemented by GADC and SILIKA), Women for Prosperity, VBNK):

- Noted that the IRI regional exchange was good, but there was no follow-up, which lessened the potential impact, according to a top civil society woman leader.
- Reflected that previously, women-led CSOs had worked with UNDP and NDI at the parliament level, but it was unsuccessful because it was too political; the CSOs shifted focus to the subnational level.
- Advised that the current climate is too polarized and not conducive for civil society to attempt to forge political alliances among women leaders.
- Pointed out that curricula designed by Cambodian women (since 1994) are geared to engage Cambodian women and build their knowledge and skills; said training programs should work with women as they are, not criticize their "low capacity."
- Observed that affirmative action works when paired with training. Women appointed to political positions may be seen as "parachuting in" rather than earning their positions, but when they receive training, they rapidly improve their performance.
- Remarked that youth attitudes are changing, so it is difficult to recruit young women who "have heart" and are willing to work at the subnational level. The implication is that young potential CSO program staff are more urbanized now and would prefer to remain in Phnom Penh than the more remote cities and provinces.
- Current needs/recommendations:

- o Radio call-in shows (produced with IFES' support) should be continued, they were effective in getting parties and civil society to discuss real issues; they were rebroadcast many times and people remembered them.
- o More training at local level for both women and men who need information about elections, democratic systems, etc.
- o The most effective approach to strengthening women as political leaders: build their confidence, then support them in gaining leadership positions, then build networks among them.
- o Create space to encourage women candidates/politicians/voters to talk; work with them on how to analyze issues.
- o The parties need to be pressured to adopt and implement better gender-equality policies. CPWP felt that nationals, rather than international NGOs, should lead efforts to influence the parties, even as they acknowledged that it may be difficult for CPWP to play a lead role in advocacy with CPP due to political differences associated with the chairperson and the government. That said, many individual CPWP members have good relations with the government.
- o IRI should engage existing structures rather than set up new working groups on key policy issues, as they had proposed at the time of the case study.
- o U.S. NGOs should not simply direct local organizations in implementing international programs, but involve them in design and planning from the outset.
- o Donors should engage local NGOs to cooperate together strategically; currently they are competing.

Participants' and stakeholders' views. Several participants and other local women elected leaders had participated in previous training programs for women's political empowerment by the same or other CSOs. They often spoke highly of these programs and reported what they had gained from them, despite having taken place years before the interviews. Key points include:

- Training can enable women to counter their gender socialization and prevailing social attitudes and take up public roles when it assists women to build their knowledge and confidence. Even the training in election management at the subnational level had a women's empowerment component, which was contributed by VBNK. This also enabled some participants to seek other public leadership jobs beyond the temporary election administration jobs.
- Especially at the subnational level, there is a huge need for more training. In the words of one interviewee, "one grain of salt does not make the water salty."
- The most effective methods are hands-on and practical, such as SILAKA's approach of having participants work in teams to carry out village-level projects, which built skills, confidence, relationships and community regard.
- One group of IFES trainees gained election administration jobs easily, while others had to really push for their appointments. This was due to support from the election officials in one area who had been secured by the implementers prior to the start of the training. Also, as they took the new training and jobs, participants were able to overcome jealousy or criticism from family, friends or neighbors by informing them about what they were learning.

WiP team results assessment: Design, capacity building, and local partnering

The WiP case study team was tasked with assessing program results from the perspective of global approaches to supporting women's political leadership and with identifying useful findings for future programming by USAID at the country and U.S. national levels. This section presents the team's key findings, building on the partner, participant and stakeholder perspectives summarized above.

Program design considerations

There was little focus on gender-equality or women's empowerment objectives enforced in the first round of AGAP. CEPPS partners reported that a women's empowerment activity in the original proposal had been dropped to stay within the budget, so this gap seems to be due to a lack of priority on the parts of both USAID and the CEPPS partners.

The July 2012 amendment added relatively few resources for women's empowerment activities ($500,000 among three partners) for a relatively short period of time (one year). It is not surprising that the activities did not seem to make much of an impact beyond the personal capacity development of some participants.

Cooperation among the three CEPPS partners on gender and women's leadership does not seem strong; other than the IFES–NDI joint trainings, each appears to be working primarily on their own programs. Similarly, perceptions that NDI does not have a good relationship with the CPP, while IRI works well with both, may affect their abilities to cooperate. Having worked in country for 20-plus years, the CEPPS partners clearly have a lot of experience. However, their history and relationships in the country may affect programming, including their ability to influence the parties or the National Election Committee to improve their gender policies and implementation of those policies.

Capacity building of women, political processes and institutions

➢ *Women*

- Young women participants in IFES and IRI activities showed the most positive outcomes, especially in confidence and skills-building, both of which are essential in the Cambodian context of generally negative attitudes and lack of opportunities for women in politics.
- Recruitment of university graduates by IFES was likely associated with the success of their participants in learning the material and successfully getting jobs. Training should be designed for participants' levels, whatever they are, per the theory of "start where they are."
- The Cambodian CSOs were vital partners in designing and implementing effective training and media activities (VBNK, CPWP members).

➢ *Political processes and institutions*

- The key next step to increase women's political leadership in Cambodia is for the parties to improve their gender-equality policies, such as requiring a percentage of women at the top of candidate lists. They do not demonstrate political will, so external pressure and influence is needed for them to adopt and implement new policies. Civil society and international donors are the most likely sources of such pressure.
- At the national level, the current environment is too polarized for women civil society leaders to develop networks with elected women, as conceptualized in the AGAP activities. There is a better environment for supporting such networks at the local level. At the national level, women civil society leaders should advocate for their issues and constituencies, including pressuring the parties to adopt improved measures to achieve gender equality.
- At the time of the case study, the NEC was viewed as not independent from the ruling party and not open to developing its gender equality capacity. Since the latest negotiation in July 2014 between the parties on NEC reform, there may be an opportunity for USAID to support these reforms.

➢ *Local partnering*

- In hindsight, USAID and CEPPS partners appear to have been underutilizing local CSOs, a perspective shared by USAID. Granted, CEPPS partners in AGAP had limited scope and resources available. However, given trends in USAID and other donors to better support

local institutions, CSOs should be recognized for their expertise and included at early stages of program design so that the activities they implement will have a better chance of effectiveness and sustainability. As required, programming also should strengthen the capacity of local organizations and program participants to sustain new skills and knowledge.

Women's Political Empowerment Benchmarks (Diamond Model)

Key question: How do the program results described above relate to the broader benchmarks of women's political empowerment in Cambodia? To what extent have women broken the glass ceiling in Cambodia and reached the top levels of politics and government? How do women enter politics in Cambodia?

The evidence suggests little, if any, direct relationship between even the most positive USAID program results discussed previously and significant changes in the overall numbers of women in elected or appointed leadership positions. Some activities, such as the NDI dialogues and NDI–IFES trainings, were not designed to achieve such changes, focusing instead on the quality of policymaking on women's issues, and further skills development for women leaders in elected positions and in civil society. Others, such as the original IFES training program implemented with VBNK, sought to increase the number of elected and appointed women at the local level — and succeeded to some extent, in that some local women graduates were elected to the commune council (if an unintended positive result) and some election administration alumni got jobs, albeit short-term and low-level.

The most important findings of the program results assessment relate to the methods used by effective training programs and the extent of current demand for additional training for women (and youth and men at the subnational level) in democratic political processes and institutions, including elections, running for office, building and serving constituencies, developing and implementing policies, etc. This topic is further elaborated on in the recommendations section that follows.

The team's interviews and secondary sources confirm that the Cambodian context is challenging for women seeking to enter politics, advance to senior leadership positions and bring about policy changes to benefit women and other underrepresented groups. It is just as challenging, if not more so, for women in other government roles in the executive, judicial and security sectors, as the following data will show.

Diamond Model data

Over the last two decades, global women's movements, donor programs and researchers on women's political empowerment have focused on increasing the number of women elected to legislatures. Increased numbers are expected to translate into increased power and influence for women through the three kinds of representation described in the introduction section (descriptive, substantive and symbolic).

Women in many countries have increased their share of seats in legislatures, but it is less clear that elected women have increased their power and influence to effect the kinds of policy and social changes that women's movement and democracy supporters envision. The globally accepted standard measure, the proportion of women in legislature, is now questioned as the sole or best measure of women's political empowerment.

USAID hypothesizes reasons that elected women are not gaining significant power or influence, including (a) once elected, women are not appointed to the leadership of the most powerful committees in legislatures, and (b) the legislature is not the most powerful branch of government in every country. They have developed a new measure, the "Diamond Model," to measure the number of women in the top three leadership tiers of each of four subsectors of government: legislature, executive, judiciary and security (military and police). This new index should produce a better measure of women's political empowerment than simply the number of women in the legislature.

The WiP project is pilot-testing this model and each of the case studies was tasked with collecting data to fill gaps.

Share of women leaders in Cambodian politics and government

To assess the extent to which women have gained leadership roles, this section presents the relative (or in some cases, absolute) number of women in the top leadership positions in four sectors of government in Cambodia, including the legislative, executive, judicial and security.

Main sources for this data include Planning and Statistics Office, MOWA, January 2014, and Women for Prosperity Update, September 2013.

TABLE 1: WOMEN'S SHARE OF LEGISLATIVE SECTOR POSITIONS

Position	Share Held by Women
Senate *(appointed)*	14.8%
Members of the National Assembly (MNA) *(elected)*	20.3%
NA Committee Chairs	22% (2 of 9)*
Party Leaders	0%
Provincial and Municipal *(indirect election)*	10.1% (2010)
District and Khan *(indirect election)*	12.6% (2010)
Commune Council *(elected)*	17.8%
Commune Chief	5.8%

* Women and Social Affairs; Labor, Mines and Energy

TABLE 2: WOMEN'S SHARE OF EXECUTIVE SECTOR POSITIONS

Position	Share Held by Women	MOWA Target 2015
Ministers	10.7%	15%
Secretary of State	20.5%	18%
Undersecretary of State	17.6%	20%
Managerial Levels (Top 3)*	10%	N/A
Provincial Governor	0%	N/A
Deputy Provincial Governor	14.3%**	25%

* General Director, Deputy General Director, Director of Department
** At least one female per province; some provinces have up to five deputies.

TABLE 3: WOMEN'S SHARE OF JUDICIAL SECTOR POSITIONS

Positions	Share Held by Women
Appellate Judges	7%
Provincial Court Judges	6%
Prosecutors	10.2%
Court Clerks	22.1%
Total Judges	**13.9%**

TABLE 4: WOMEN'S SHARE OF SECURITY SECTOR POSITIONS*

Branch	Positions	Number of Women
Police	Police Deputy Commissioners General	17% (1 of 6)**
Military	Army Three-Star General Commander	2
	Army Two-Star General Commander	4
	Army General Commander	1
	Total Number in Military	3,177

*Army and police; only absolute numbers available for military.

**She is in charge of the Justice Police, which handles crimes not solved by regular police, criminal investigations, anti-economic crime, countering trafficking in persons, juvenile protection and anti-drug cases.

Women and power in Cambodia

The data presented in the preceding tables confirm that gender inequality in politics and leadership extends across all branches of government, from the legislative to the executive, judicial and security. The largest gains for women have been in the National Assembly (20.3 percent) and local commune councils (17.8 percent), the second and third tiers of the executive branch (20.5 percent secretary of state and 17.6 percent undersecretary) and the third tier of the judiciary (22.1 percent court clerks).

It is interesting to note that, although researchers and practitioners alike assert that there is greater opening for women at the local level, the statistics (17.8 percent at the local level compared to 20.3 percent at the national level) do not support this assertion, at least not yet. Despite the years of decentralization policies and subnational institutional development, women numerous factors still hold women back at the local level, including traditional attitudes, their workloads of managing households and contributing income, lack of party or family support and relatively low pay of local elected positions.

Ranking the four branches. If one were to rank order the relative power of the four branches in Cambodia, the executive would be first, followed by the security sector, then the legislature and the judiciary. Although the legislature is sometimes seen as a "rubber stamp" for the executive, it would place before the judiciary due to the real competition for votes, especially as witnessed in the July 2013 elections, and to the visibility of certain leaders, such as Mu Sochua, a female opposition leader who is widely respected for her bravery and voice. The judiciary is not independent.

What do these gains for women, especially in the legislature and the executive, mean for women in Cambodia? Are most women at the more senior levels of leadership today essentially allies of the

dominant (patriarchal) regime, or have they begun to make some inroads even at the symbolic level, as posited by Melanie Hughes, lead author of the Diamond Model pilot test (email, June19):

> Research from Africa and communist regimes of Eastern Europe indicates that in authoritarian systems, where policy is often developed from the top down, women's ability to influence legislation or otherwise make an impact may be limited (Paxton and Hughes 2013). Authoritarian regimes may even manipulate women's political representation to improve their international reputation and to maintain power (e.g., Reyntjens 2010). However, even in contexts that are not fully democratic, gains in women's political leadership may have important symbolic effects, influencing women's behavior and attitudes about women's capacities in positive ways (Barnes and Burchard 2012; Johnson, Kabuchu, and Vusiya Kayonga 2003).

Some of the opening for women in government policies and party practices may be due to the regime's perception that it is necessary to receive international donor funding. Moreover, the team was informed that gender issues and women in decision-making are not regarded as highly political issues (a perception also reported in Sri Lanka, another authoritarian country). However, the prime minister's directives promoting gender equality have not led to real power-sharing.

The other institution, albeit informal, that must be noted in any discussion of political power in Cambodia is the traditional patronage system, which is also patriarchal (Sedara and Ojendal 2014; Ojendal and Lilja 2009). It is beyond the focus of this case study to analyze the effect of the patronage system on women in politics, but one key issue that surfaced several times in interviews is that many women are negatively impacted by the typical practice of paying for higher-level positions in the party and government. To the extent that women (or other groups) do not have as much access to resources for this purpose, they are excluded from opportunities to get involved and advance to more senior positions.

Also, some wealthy and highly placed women have their own networks and positions of influence, legitimate and otherwise, suggesting that Cambodian "matronage networks" may be a topic for future research.

Women's political recruitment/career paths and influence in office. The team focused some in-country interviews with elected and appointed women leaders at national (three) and subnational (17) levels on developing an understanding of women's recruitment and career paths in politics, as well as of the kinds of power and influence they directly experienced in office. The themes and insights from these interviews are suggestive of women's experience and provide useful insights into why certain kinds of training programs were successful in assisting women to become politically active.

In a country like Cambodia, where culture and social structures work against them, what motivates women to be interested in political office, and how do they get opportunities to run for elected office and get appointed or promoted to positions? Common themes from both the national and subnational levels include:

- *Motivation is internal:* One woman said she knew she had the ability, another said she was inspired by the U.N.-supervised elections; one of the two groups of IFES alumni said they had to push their local election commission to hire them when they applied.
- *Support of the party (primarily males):* All but the young women IFES alumni acknowledged that they would not have their positions without their party's support and encouragement to run; one deputy provincial governor said she had been patient, working under several bosses who ignored her potential until she got one who was more supportive.
- *Party affirmative action pressure:* In several cases, women got an opportunity because a senior (male) party leader was searching for a woman in response to pressure from above.
- *Support from family (including males):* This was a factor especially for local commune councilors and chiefs, who said they could not take on the extra burdens of public office without the support of their family members.

- *Social capital:* One youth party leader, whose father is a human rights activist, said she was motivated to participate in politics because she grew up around the people affected by the issues; she was familiar with people in human rights networks and how they worked.

Once in office, what are the benefits they enjoy? What kinds of power and influence do they experience? What are the challenges or downsides to office and to advancing up the hierarchy?

- *Women value public leadership roles to serve their country, strengthen democracy, protect human rights and help their communities.* Women have been officially sanctioned in politics primarily to take on gender-prescribed roles focusing on women and children's issues. Many women leaders feel it is important to address these issues, as male leaders tend to marginalize or ignore them. At the same time, Cambodian women leaders like Mu Sochua, Dr. C. Kek Pung and Thida Khus are in the forefront of efforts to strengthen democracy, human rights and pro-poor development. As one respondent from CCHR suggested, increased publicity of the positive roles and contributions of women leaders is needed to change old attitudes and gender stereotypes.
- *Women mentor other women* to enter and advance in politics; the secretary of state for the Ministry of Interior, well-respected by civil society and donors, said she pressed the prime minister to increase the number of women in the ministry and promote them to higher levels.
- *Women commune councilors work together across parties* to address community issues, although this may have been the result of having been in training workshops together and assigned joint projects. At the national level, women do not cross party lines or work closely with women civil society leaders.
- *Challenges for commune councilors* include having to add political work to their existing household and income-generating responsibilities, low pay that does not contribute much to their households or even cover expenses they incur in carrying out their office, and seeing little opportunity to advance to higher levels, partly due to their lack of education.
- *Opportunities for youth* are needed; one youth activist, an assistant to Mu Sochua, said she appreciates the extent to which Sochua creates opportunities for young women to get experience by passing on public speaking invitations and other types of public engagement.

Recommendations

Key question: Considering the results and lessons learned from USAID program activities, as well as the opportunities and constraints on women's political empowerment in the broader context, how should USAID design future program activities to promote further progress?

USAID's current strategic objectives in Cambodia related to strengthening democracy and reducing gender inequality are relevant to the current context and the aspirations of pro-democratic forces in the country. Among these forces are many women who want to advance or get involved in politics and like-minded men who understand the contributions women make and work on shared interests and issues. Also included are civil society groups, youth who demand a voice and seek a better future for their country, and reformers inside the government who would like to see Cambodia transition away from patronage politics toward more accountable, transparent and just governance.

Women have made important gains in entering the public sphere in Cambodia during the past 20 years, but as noted in this report, if these gains are to be consolidated and expanded, tough changes in institutions, policies and political culture lie ahead. Examples include reform of the electoral law, enacting party policies for gender-based quotas or affirmative action, protecting political space for advocacy, the development of effective processes and mechanisms for citizens to hold government accountable and transforming persistent cultural biases against women's leadership roles in politics and public affairs. While recent public opinion surveys indicate that public attitudes are changing to

support both men and women as political leaders, respondents and secondary sources for this study suggest that cultural norms are still influential barriers to women entering and advancing in politics and the public sphere.

The following recommendations are practical approaches that USAID can use going forward in efforts to strengthen women's political leadership in Cambodia. They emphasize building on previous program successes, supporting civil society to create pressure on the government and parties for gender equality, and taking advantage of opportunities to effect change at the subnational level and with youth.

Use training programs to increase the number and skills of women leaders, especially at the subnational level.

Adequately funded, well-designed and effectively delivered training programs counter women's lack of confidence, knowledge and skills created by traditional structural and cultural factors such as the lack of access to education, lack of resources to use for politics, lack of family support, attitudes that women don't belong in politics and lack of opportunities to gain experience. The need and demand for such training is apparent, especially at the subnational level of the provinces, districts and commune councils.

Key elements of successful training programs:

Target groups: Women, men, and youth at the subnational levels. At the local level, men and youth who want to improve their communities are almost as disenfranchised as women; there is great potential for them to be allies in strengthening democracy at the local level. In addition, youth can engage at the national level, where use of social media and education levels are higher.

For more strategic impact, program in particular provinces, districts and commune councils where the need is greatest, avoid duplicating programs, and coordinate with authorities.

Methods: Hands-on, practical content with opportunities to practice and apply. Incorporate "real" activities that get the participants engaged with constituencies, building networks among themselves and with resource groups. Refresher trainings and employment coaching have been found effective.

Design and delivery: Use local trainers and organizations who understand the target groups to design curricula and methods. For women participants, include confidence-building activities and address knowledge gaps. For males, link gender equality and women's leadership to core democratic values, knowledge and skills. For youth, include social media and link youth with national platforms and networks.

Impact: In addition to the considerations above, plan for adequate funds and a long enough time frame to make a significant impact on the number of women reached and their success in subsequent efforts to get elected or employed.

Sustainability considerations: Cambodian CSOs, especially SILAKA, CPWP and VBNK, have pre-existing experience, curricula and networks that could be built upon in designing and delivering updated and expanded programs. They are more likely than international NGOs to sustain programs and adapt them to changing needs of the society. WfP is considered too close to the government to represent civil society, but this mutual trust may give WfP scope for influence if they choose to push for greater women's leadership.

Include the leadership in designing goals, strategy and approach in the current political context. Assess sustainability, e.g., what local stakeholders might have an interest in these programs, which local counterparts might continue to provide training, etc. What existing mechanisms for reaching citizens nationwide or institutions for education and training can be engaged?

Promote mentoring programs to increase the skills and confidence of women new to politics, government and civil society leadership.

Several women respondents pointed out the importance of mentoring and their interest in helping other women enter politics and take up leadership roles. Like training, mentoring programs that leverage the knowledge and skills of experienced women in government can provide support to women who are newly elected or appointed, or considering running for office. They can also provide routes to leadership that otherwise would not exist within parties or high-level government bodies.

Public-sector mentoring activities could be implemented at the commune council level or even within the national legislature and ministries. Any mentoring programs within legislative bodies should work within parties rather than across them, as past crossparty programming has been problematic. Mentoring activities may also be useful within other branches of government as well as among civil society organizations. VBNK has a program to develop second-level leaders, which reportedly uses mentoring as one of its methodologies.

Media programs can spur public dialogue about meaningful issues, promote positive images of women leaders and change attitudes about the role of women in politics.

Investments in public outreach, awareness-raising and education can capitalize on the perceived low political threat of gender issues and women in decision-making. These are also great opportunities for women of all ages to gain experience in public speaking and for women politicians to interact with public constituencies.

Although traditional media is constrained, there is space for radio, IT and social media, and social marketing methods to reach Cambodian citizens and influence public opinion. Interactive media like radio call-in shows engage citizens and promote dialogue, needed skills in democratic societies.

Several CSOs (CPWP, Women's Media Center and CCHR) have produced materials (hard copies and web-based) featuring positive images of women leaders or publicizing case study results. These kinds of efforts could be amplified to expand the symbolic impact of existing women leaders and change public attitudes to be more supportive of aspiring ones. Public service announcements (PSAs) that specifically target men would also be valuable.

Civil society advocacy can pressure the government on important issues.

Advocacy by civil society, including both women's CSOs and gender-integrated CSOs, can keep pressure on the government and parties to address critical gender equality and democratic issues and to strengthen women's leadership in civil society.

Policy and institutional reforms. Electoral law reform, National Election Commission (NEC) reform and party quotas or affirmative action policies for gender equality in the candidate lists are the most important next steps to advance policy and institutional changes. USAID should provide grants and technical assistance to local CSOs to strengthen their advocacy for these reforms.

Social accountability activities like a gender equality scorecard would enable civil society groups to pressure the government to more fully implement current gender equality provisions in the decentralization policies and other top level directives.

None of these policy/institutional change targets will be easy to address, and desired results may include things like keeping the pressure for change on the government and ensuring that the alternative critical perspectives are heard, rather than the policy and institutional changes themselves. Yet these are crucially important results if Cambodia is to continue to advance toward democracy and gender equality.

Local CSOs like the Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL), the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO), the Cambodian

Center for Human Rights (CCHR), CPWP and perhaps others are well placed to carry out increased advocacy and accountability activities.

Research and policy briefs. USAID and civil society partners might also partner with research institutes such as the Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) to produce policy briefs that analyze the current policy and legal framework and bring in examples of reforms from other countries to promote dialogue and critical thinking about the possibilities for Cambodia.

Further research on the influence and contributions of current progressive women leaders would add evidence to support advocacy for increased numbers of women in politics and government. This evidence would add to current rights-based claims to show how women leaders produce results that benefit the country.

Land rights and labor rights are also issue areas in which CSO advocacy and women's leadership goals would be crosscutting. Although these areas have not been discussed previously in this report, the team met with the East-West Management Institute (which manages the USAID-funded Project on Rights and Justice), several human rights CSOs and members of the Prey Lang community forest network (which aims to protect sections of the forest dedicated for community use from encroachment by illegal loggers). These issues affect women and disenfranchised groups directly, and women have taken leadership roles in organizing protests and demanding groups' rights. Both the Community Legal Education Center (CLEC) and LICADHO provide assistance to the more informally organized groups.

Include leadership development for women and youth as a crosscutting component to all these grants and technical forms of support.

Program design, funding and other issues

USAID should include these types of activities to promote women's political leadership within programs and projects addressing the broader goals of inclusive democratic governance, making the linkages clear between activities, intermediate results and overall goals and objectives. AGAP sent mixed messages to U.S. and Cambodian counterparts in not requiring gender integration in most activities, and the women's leadership activities were separate from the main activities, in addition to being of shorter and not funded as well. Future programs should be better designed to integrate gender equality analysis and objectives. This would be more consistent with the current USAID policy on gender equality and female empowerment. Moreover, activities should engage men wherever possible in realizing shared values for inclusive democratic governance.

USAID should fund a comprehensive and longer-term set of activities to bring about real changes in the extent and quality of women's leadership, rather than more isolated short-term activities that produce few sustainable results.

Finally, USAID should continue to engage with Cambodian government and civil society on gender equality and women's political leadership through nonfunding relationships that extend and enhance USAID's knowledge and ability to address emerging opportunities, such as participating in the MOWA technical working group on gender and attending multistakeholder conferences on critical issues.

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ANNEX 1. WOMEN IN POWER (WIP) CASE STUDY RESEARCH ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK AND REPORT OUTLINE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

MAP OF COUNTRY

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

II. INTRODUCTION (5% of the narrative sections of the report)

1. Background on the WiP project and purpose of the assessment
2. How assessment was carried out, methods employed
3. Scope of assessment

III. CONTEXT: KEY ACTORS, INSTITUTIONS, STRUCTURES AND FRAMES (20% of the narrative sections of the report)

Contextual factors (1 paragraph)

This section should provide a brief overview of relevant historical legacies, political and economic context, diversity implications and other particularities of the country that impact women's overall status and political advancement. Much of this can be obtained from existing USAID, CEPPS, and other NGO reports.

Overall status of women in country (1 paragraph)

This section should provide a brief overview of the status of women (Education, health, economic and political participation of women); a look at the gender gap (Gender Gap Index); and attitudes toward gender equality and women's leadership (existing surveys, e.g., Asiabarometer, Afrobarometer, Latinobarometer)

What have been the MAJOR changes in the country in women's leadership and political empowerment since women's political advancement came onto the political agenda?

- What specific historic political conditions influence women's political empowerment?
- When did women's political empowerment come onto the agenda of women's movements and other actors? Why? How?
- How have strategies, goals, and actors changed over time?
- How important is political empowerment relative to other issues? How does it interact with other women's rights concerns?

Influences on Women's Political Empowerment

- Which have been the main drivers of change in women's political empowerment (e.g, Women's Parliamentary Caucus, women's organizations, women's policy agencies, parties, media, civil society, donors, networks)? What are their goals, interests, resources and strategies?

- Which have been the main institutional influences and obstacles to women's political empowerment? (e.g, executive, judiciary, legislative, informal). This can be brief because it is elaborated on in VIII.A.2.
- Which are the main structural obstacles and how have they been addressed? What economic and political structural changes might be influencing changes in women's status? How are women's rights, for example, affected by a growing middle class or civil society, higher levels of female education, or increased labor force participation? Is there a post-conflict dynamic at play or have there been changes in levels of democracy that influence women's representation?
- What have been the main ideological and cultural influences on women's political empowerment and how have they been addressed? How are women's rights framed by proponents of women's political empowerment?

IV. USAID PROGRAM RESULTS ASSESSMENT (30% of the narrative sections of the report)

- What were USAID goals in programming regarding women's political empowerment?
- What activities and which partners were supported to achieve these goals?
    - Direct support
    - Indirect support (synergies)
- What were other donors doing in this these same areas?
- What were the key accomplishments in women's leadership and political empowerment achieved by the USAID-supported program(s) in the country?
    - Summary of results documented plus in-country information? (Focus may include women political leaders, legislature, parties, electoral authorities, civil society, media, etc.)
        - Direct results
        - Indirect results
        - Unanticipated results
    - Changes from the previous status quo/baseline?
    - Why/how do these changes matter for women's political empowerment?
    - Best practices to be replicated here and elsewhere?
        - Program interventions and activities that succeed in engaging males as allies, extending program reach through training of trainers, empowering newly elected women to lead, etc.
        - Program design, funding, and management
    - Lessons learned
- What were the main challenges encountered, e.g. backlash against gains, lack of resources for women, win-lose mentalities, etc.?
- What other programs or initiatives [by whom?] also contributed to (or hindered) these successes?
- How sustainable are these gains in the present context?
- Is USAID continuing to work in this area beyond the life/scope of the current program? Why or why not?

V. Women's Political Empowerment Benchmarks (30% of the narrative sections)

NB: This section addresses the parallel on-going study, "Diamond Model". Researchers should refer to the Progress Update of May 4 and the country-specific status report from Melanie Hughes. The country reports tell which information is known and what still needs to be gathered. The researchers should gather whatever information they can, and if necessary recommend ways to get the information after the team leaves the country.

A second objective of this section is to gather qualitative information addressing the following questions. Researchers should select those most relevant to their particular case study.

- Which institutions are most influential within the country? How well are women represented in those institutions? Where are women in these institutions (positions of power or influence?)?
- What types of women are represented (how inclusive are they)?
- What factors influenced their promotion?
- How supportive are men in these institutions?
- Where are the glass ceilings and how hard are they?
- Where is informal power located?
- How influential are women in informal institutions (patronage networks, ethnic bases of power, secret societies)?
- What impact have women had in these institutions in influencing women's status and other policy issues that they have attempted?
- What symbolic impacts are evident? What does the public think about women in politics? How does the political empowerment of lack of empowerment affect women's attitudes toward government? Do quotas, for example, lead women to feel more politically empowered and active as citizens? Do they affect men differently?

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USAID PROGRAMMING (15% of the narrative sections of the report)

Considering the current Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) and other priorities of the Mission -- based on the program accomplishments and contextual assessment of women's access to leadership/power -- what goals and intervention strategies should future USAID programming address?

Key questions to consider:

- How can future programs build on accomplishments to date and incorporate lessons learned/best practices to extend and enhance women's political leadership and empowerment?
- Given the broader assessment of women's leadership across government, what new areas of programming should USAID consider?
- How might local partners be further empowered to deliver programming?
- What other donors should USAID consider coordinating with to better harmonize programming and enhance results?
- How can USAID best integrate women's political empowerment programming into its overall strategic agenda for the country, based on current or planned CDCS, Development Objectives, Results Frameworks, etc.?

VII. INTERVIEWS

VIII. REFERENCES

ANNEX 2. LIST OF INTERVIEWS

1. Jessica Keegan, Resident Country Director, International Republican Institute (IRI)
2. Laura Thornton, Resident Country Director, National Democratic Institute (NDI)
3. Chiv Kimsrun, Sr. Program Officer, NDI
4. Robert Patterson, Country Director, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)
5. Yim Sokun Mealea, IFES
6. Ros Sopheap, Executive Director, Gender and Development in Cambodia (GADC)
7. Andrew Boname, Chief of Party, Regional Director, South East Asia, East West Management Institute (EWMI)
8. Terry Parnell, Advisor, EWMI
9. Sin Kim Sean, Bar liaison and Grants Coordinator, EWMI
10. Nanda Pok, Executive Director, Women for Prosperity (WfP)
11. Thida Khus, Executive Driector, SILAKA
12. Sophoan Chan, Program Coordinator, SILAKA
13. HE Chu Bung Eng, Secretary of State, Ministry of Interior
14. Serey Voleak, Education and Gender Coordinator, Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL)
15. Nhean Sochetra, Director Gender of Gender Equity Department, Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA)
16. Sovatana Yac, Youth Secretary, Cambodia national Rescue Party (CNRP)
17. Socheata Sou, Sr. Project Officer, Saving for Change, Oxfam
18. C. Kek Pung, President, LICADO
19. Silja Rajander, UN Women
20. Chak Sopheap, Executive Director, Cambodia Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
21. Chor Chantyda, Project Coordinator, CCHR
22. Pamela Jawad, EU SPACE Coordinator, Deutsche Gessellschaft fur Internationale Zusammernarbeit (GIZ)
23. Sothea Sak, Program Advisor, GIZ
24. Chum Narin, Unit Head, Land and Natural Resources, Community Legal Education Center (CLEC)
25. Mouen Tola, Unit Head Labor Program, CLEC
26. Vuon Soviry, Advisor, Women's Media Center (WMC)
27. Tep Bunthan, Program Unit Manager, WMC
28. Vanly Virya, Executive Director, VBNK
29. April O'Neill, Democracy Officer, USAID Cambodia
30. Patricia Orlowitz, Project Development Officer, USAID Cambodia
31. Socheata Vong, Project Management Specialist, Democracy and Governance, USAID Cambodia
32. Adam Schumacher, Deputy Director of the Office of East Asia Affairs, Asia Bureau, USAID
33. Patrick Mosolf, USAID Cambodia
34. Kimberly Lucas, PhD, Director Office of Food Security and Environment, USAID
35. Joe Mahoney, Assistant Regional Security Officer, USAID

Focus Group Discussions and Regional Interviews

1. Youth Group members, IRI and YCC, Phnom Penh
2. Youth Groups, IRI and Youth Council of Cambodia (YCC)
3. IFES Trainees, Kompong Cham and Kompong Tom
4. Director of Provincial Election Committee, Kompon Thom
5. Former Deputy Governor, Kompong Cham and Kompong Thom
6. District Councilor, Kompong Thom, Baray District
7. Commune Councillors, Kompong Cham and Kompong Thom
8. Prey Long Community, Women Saving Group, Kompong Thom