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Press Release
Survey Report on Voters List and Registration

Phnom Penh, July 30, 2009

COMFREL's survey of the voters list and registration of eligible voters¹ found that reform of voter registration and voter list updating, particularly during election year, is essential to ensure that eligible voter's rights to cast their ballot without unnecessary obstacles or difficulties is upheld.

The survey was performed in cooperation with NICFEC, People Development and Peace Center (PDP-Center) and the Khmer Youth Association (KYA) and received financial support from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the British Embassy, Forum Syd, and the NPA. The survey started in February and ran until June 2009

A sample of 8678 eligible voters nationwide were questioned with a margin of error of +/- 5% and value of 95% confidence.

Results show that around 440,000² - eligible voters (most of whom voted in the 2003 and 2007 elections) could not cast a ballot owing to obstructions; primarily an inability to find their name or the correct polling station. Results also showed that around 440,000 of registered voters used controversial Form 1018 to cast their ballot in the 2008 election. 90.7% of eligible voters received Voter Information Notice (VIN).

The audit of the 2008 voters list also found that only 63% of voters had adequate personal information recorded on the list **(name, gender and year of birth) that did not lead to a loss of the right to vote.** 18.50% of eligible voters claimed that all data, including their name, disappeared from the 2008 official voters list.

"In any case, the voter registration and voter list shall not cause obstacle or difficulty for eligible voters. A clear and accurate voter list and voter registration is an essential part of free and fair election process. The procedure for voter registration and voter list shall be effective, impartial and without discrimination". said Mr. Thun Saray, President of Comfrel's Board of Directors and President of ADHOC Human Right Association.

The survey results also highlighted the need for reform of the voter list, voter registration and voter list updating. Supporting documentation must be presented to the commune council by the voter in case of a relocation to another commune and commune would like to delete that voter name from the voter list, or by the family in the case of a voters death.

¹ Eligible voter refers to those aged 18 years and above and whose voting rights have not been revoked

² The number (440,000 voters) may be lower on the 2007 voters list (used for the 2008 election) due to lack of accuracy caused by double name and /or ghost voters)

The National Election Committee (NEC), in cooperation with commune councilors from different political parties and other local authorities, must be responsible for managing a **special** voter registration and voter list updating method specifically for the elections. The duration of special voter registration and updating should be increased to 120 days to give more time to all voters to check, update or register their name.

The survey revealed that the distribution of the VIN should be continued. However, the procedure and the physical form of the VIN should be changed. To solve major obstacles at polling stations, such as when voters have no VIN or cannot find their name and polling station, each voter should be issued a laminated VIN recording their permanent voter information. The NEC in cooperation with commune councilors from different political parties, and local authorities must be responsible for distributing the VIN to all registered voters.

Related to the use of Form 1018 to cast the ballot. The Ministry of Interior (MoI) should issue and distribute a Cambodian Identity Card to all Cambodian citizens by 2011. If the MoI is not able to achieve 100% coverage, two measures will be necessary: 1) The MoI and NEC should provide clear guidelines and publicly announce that it is permitted to use expired Cambodian ID cards as identity documents on Election Day. 2) Form 1018, or the temporary identity document, will still be necessary for voters. However, Form 1018 should change its layout and shape to become a temporary voting card. Issuance should be under the supervision and responsibility of the MoI.

“The findings and recommendations will be brought for discussion and presentation in the upcoming workshop on “election reform” on August 2009 organized by National Democratic Institute (NDI) and Cambodian Civil Society Organizations , and in national conference on “voter registration” organized by European Commission Advisor to the NEC on September 2009, and preparation for the request to amend the election law and regulation.” said Mr. SOK Sam Oeun, Vice-president of Comfrel’s Board of Directors, and Executive Director of Cambodian Defender Project (CDP).

For detailed survey report, please visit: www.comfrel.org

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