



Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia



Annual Narrative Report 2009



June 2010

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ACRONYMS

ADHOC	Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association
COMFREL	Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia
CPLG	.....	Citizen Participation in Local Governance
CPP	.....	Cambodian People’s Party
CPWP	.....	Committee to Promote Women in Politics
CSOs	.....	Civil Society Organizations
D&D	.....	Decentralization and Deconcentration
DDWG	.....	D&D Working Group
EMOs	.....	Election Monitoring Organizations
FUNCINPEC		National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperation Cambodia
H.E.	.....	His/Her Excellency
KYA	.....	Khmer Youth Association
LICADHO	.....	Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights
LPF	.....	Local Public Forum
LTOs	.....	Long Term Observers
MoI	.....	Ministry of Interior
MoWA	.....	Ministry of Women’s Affairs
MPs	.....	Members of Parliament
NA	.....	National Assembly
NDI	.....	National Democratic Institute
NEC	.....	National Election Committee
NGOs	.....	Non Governmental Organizations
NRP	.....	Norodom Ranaridh Party
PDP-Center	.....	People Development and Peace Center
PEFOC, J	.....	People Forum of Cambodia and Japan
Q&A	.....	Questions and Answers
RFA	.....	Radio Free Asia
RFI	.....	Radio France Internationale
PSD		Project to Support Democratic Development through Decentralization and Deconcentration
SRP	.....	Sam Rainsy Party
STOs	.....	Short Term Observers
TVK	.....	National Television of Kampuchea
UNDP	.....	United Nations Development Program
UNIFEM	.....	United Nations Development Fund for Women
VOA	.....	Voice of America
VOC	.....	Voice of Civil Society

FOREWORD

The Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL) serves to promote democracy and citizen participation in the spirit of building capacity for nationwide networking and cooperation with its member organizations and partners. Free and fair elections are entirely necessary for the progress of democratic development in the country. Therefore, COMFREL is dedicated to enhancing free and fair election preparation at all phases towards democratic and genuine elections within the country.

COMFREL is maintaining its best efforts and pursuing its commitments in line with its core mission of creating an informed and favorable climate for free and fair elections and a favorable post-elections period. With this in mind, COMFREL is proud once again to present the 2009 Annual Narrative Report, covering from October 01, 2008 to September 30, 2009 to the public, especially to our concerned stakeholders.

In whole, this 2009 narrative report comprises nine parts, describing the overall picture and activities of COMFREL in 2009. From one month to another, each monthly report from every section of COMFREL showed data inputs corresponding to yearly program targets with high appreciative achievement. Some impacts have been seen both at the national and grass root levels in 2009 out of COMFREL's performance. In all, increased awareness among Cambodian people and voters every year, likewise this year 2009, is our incentive to further encourage their participation, either social or political.

COMFREL would like to acknowledge the assiduous activities contributed by all staff at all levels, from commune activists and watchdogs to central office staff, including volunteers and the management of COMFREL, who were always committed through thick and thin together to bring COMFREL's mission and goals into reality. Special thank goes to COMFREL Expatriate Advisor Mr. Patrick Mosolf, who provided technical assistance in commenting on and editing this English report, and COMFREL Report Writer Mr. UN Samnang who is in charge of data and photo collection, document translation and report writing.

Finally, COMFREL wishes to extend its deep gratitude and high tribute to those who are part of COMFREL's ongoing activities and those who share support of our mission, in particular our eight donors, namely Oxfam Novib, Forum Syd, Norwegian People's Aid, Trocaire, One World Action, European Union, UNDEF and UNDP, as well as partners from within and outside Cambodia.

Phnom Penh, June 2010

KOUL Panha
Executive Director
COMFREL

I. Executive Summary

COMFREL has achieved major results in its core program titled Strengthening Citizen Participation in Decision Making and Democratic Governance through its six main programs: (1) lobbying and advocacy; (2) media and campaign; (3) building capacity for local network and citizen's participation in local governance; (4) monitoring and voter voice; (5) civic education and gender (Women Can Do It); and (6) survey on Voters, the Issuing of Form 1018 and Voter Registration (SVR). Below are some outcomes resulting from the implementation of these programs by all COMFREL staff and volunteers at the national, provincial and local grassroots levels.

Lobbying and advocacy

COMFREL has played a crucial role in strengthening the role of civil society in influencing the development of the policies and the legal framework through its core advocating activity, legal study and lobbying for comments on draft laws to be discussed and adopted by the National Assembly.

- ***Electoral Reform***

In cooperation with partners, COMFREL has had full success in the legal field with its national-level lobbying for election issues for reform. Authorities and major political parties have been receptive to discussions and consensus on electoral reform, which has improved the legal environment. In cooperation with and support of NDI, an Expert Committee on Election Reform (EC) of the civil society organizations has been established, composed of leaders, COMFREL, CDP, NICFEC, LICADHO, ADHOC, PDP-Center and NDI, to elaborate major recommendations on election reform. Changes that have been proposed include a fully independent election institution at all levels, the simplification and improvement of voter registration procedures, as well as improvement to the electoral campaign process, election dispute solution mechanism, election system and others.

Moreover, there is a consensus among election stakeholders, major political parties, civil society organizations on the solutions/recommendations for election reform focusing on the National Electoral Committee (NEC), Voter Registration and Complaint Solution/Adjudication.

- ***D&D and Sub National Council***

COMFREL activities (such as roundtables, conferences, workshops and participation in the Civil Society Working Group activities including advocacy and campaigning for better reform on Decentralization and De-concentration (D&D) and sub national council elections) also contributed to the organization of the municipal/provincial and district council elections, in which at least members from the opposition party hold positions at almost all council levels. This is an improvement over the previous system of appointing Provincial and District governments, as it is closer to a grassroots democratic process, and could lead to an improvement in implementation of decentralization and de-concentration policies. At least 12% of municipal/provincial and district councilors are women. COMFREL holds a strong commitment to advocating for universal municipal/provincial and district council elections in the upcoming mandates.

- ***Freedom of Information, Expression and Assembly***

The government has endorsed the Freedom of Information (FoI) policy by putting it in the joint indicators between the government and its donors. The UN has paid increasing attention to the reports and joint statements of Cambodian civil society with regard to serious concerns about the decline of freedom of expression and assembly in Cambodia in recent years.

- ***Political/Campaign Finance and Anti Corruption law***

During the period covered in the report, COMFREL continued advocating for the passage of the long-awaited Anti-Corruption Law. Meanwhile, Civil Society Organizations working on the anti-corruption law reformed their own internal structure so as to work more effectively and efficiently towards lobbying the government for the adoption of Anti-corruption law and FoI policy. The Government finally announced its commitment to create the long-awaited anti-corruption law, and the National Assembly eventually passed the law.

- ***Other law reform***

COMFREL has noticed that the government has changed its attitude toward focusing on priority draft law adoption and judicial system reform. The movement of the government to pass priority laws is welcome, but COMFREL notes that some laws contain problematic provisions.

- In the 4th term the government's political platform has set 48 points for reform including four of eight prioritized laws¹ with the goal, among others, of strengthening the professional court system with effective and qualified judicial services in Cambodia. In addition, the government also aims to create and pass the law on legal appointments, the statute on judges and prosecutors and amendment law on organization and development of the Supreme Council of Magistracy.
- According the Government's statement, a new law on demonstrations was needed to improve freedom of demonstration vis a vis the old law. The content of the new law raises major concerns about a) limitation on the number of demonstrators to no more than 200; b) requirement for demonstrators to use an officially identified place for demonstrations in each province; c) time limitation for conducting demonstration to working hours only (from 6am-6pm); and d) requirement for demonstrators to obtain permission from provincial authorities far away from local residents. The National Assembly passed this law without reforming the problematic clauses in early 2010.

Media and Campaign

In terms of media, COMFREL's Voter Voice is regularly providing information and debate on issues related to politics and democracy to its radio audiences. Its radio program continues to reach a large audience of people, since radio is the form of media most commonly used by Khmer people. Meanwhile, Civil Society Organizations have shown an increasing interest in COMFREL's radio program "Civil Society Voice", and have requested COMFREL to expand the number of broadcasting times and raise more topics relevant to current issues. Further, some organizations such as Youth Committee for Unity and Development, Culture and Environment Preservation Association, Community Legal Education Center and International Bridges to Justice together asked COMFREL to allocate some of its radio program time to broadcast and disseminate their respective organization's programs.

90% of COMFREL's articles and press releases on Parliamentary and Government Watch reports were regularly republished in most popular newspapers: *Rasmey Kampuchea*, *Kampuchea Thmey*, *Kob Santhepheap*, *the Cambodia Daily*, *Phnom Penh Post* and quoted by radio broadcast journalists such as VOA, RFA and RFI to reach millions of people in Cambodia. They are also posted on COMFREL's and other websites, such as RFA, Everyday.com, and Koh Santhepheap, and frequently used by a variety of stakeholders (political parties, elected officials and civil society).

COMFREL's website continued to grow and develop as an advocacy tool and source of information and commentary. A wide range of documents containing valuable information for the public, decision makers and researchers were placed in the website, including press releases,

¹ The National Assembly has adopted four prioritized laws such as the civil code, the civil procedure code, the criminal code, and the criminal procedure code

parliamentary monitoring, activity reports, audio recordings of the daily VoC radio show, and research reports. From July, 2008 until October, 2009, the website had 16,875 page views, an average of 1,125 per month.

Building Capacity for Local Network and Citizen's Participation in Local Governance

COMFREL's training for its local networks has resulted in better monitoring of commune council performance by COMFREL's qualified local watchdogs. The local activists and local watchdogs have applied the knowledge and skills acquired to their monitoring of commune council performance. Now they are more qualified to perform their assigned duties as local watchdogs, in contrast to the past, when they did not even know what the meaning, roles and duties of a local watchdog were. Recently, they have played a significant role in local development, as they have been supported by local residents who wanted to bring commune issues to meetings and follow-up forums with commune councils.

Through COMFREL's 45 local public forums (including ten forum on Women Can Do It), local residents now are more courageous to raise their concerns, needs and commune issues to be discussed and resolved during the COMFREL-organized forums. They are bravely discussing community issues and are participating in commune council meetings. Moreover, with the high level of awareness of their rights to participate in local governance, which they have gained in COMFREL's forums, citizens are vigorously active and involved in public gatherings such as forums and meetings with NGOs. This has resulted in a noteworthy increase in citizen participation in local governance in COMFREL's target areas. Meanwhile, commune councillors now open up more space for participation and comment in their public forums. Commune councillors make more effort to solve problems as a result of this participation (e.g. an increase in the number of disputes solved). Overall, cooperation is smoother than in the past.

Monitoring and Voter Voice

In communities where COMFREL is active, local residents, including marginalised youth, women, men and minorities, are generally participating in local decision making to a far greater degree. Local residents (youth, ethnic groups and women in particular) have more chance to freely express their views, needs, problems and requests for better local development during the workshops. In the past, they had very few limited chances to participate freely and securely in such current public gatherings. Community groups join in COMFREL's voter benchmark workshops to advocate for their rights, raise their issues for appropriate solutions from the commune councillors and identify the 10 priority sectors reflecting needs in their constituency.

Moreover, some of the issues raised by voters have been resolved by Members of the Parliament. COMFREL's Voter Benchmark Workshop reports were frequently re-broadcast and republished by newspapers and channels. COMFREL notes that the new sub national councillors, provincial authorities and members of the National Assembly who participated in the workshops increased their attention to the issues addressed by the benchmarks, promising to fulfil them at the local level while pushing the government to fulfil the platform benchmarks at national level.

Civic Education and Gender (Women Can Do It)

COMFREL's Civic Education and Gender program activities have contributed to motivation and creation of more opportunities for women to build a good relationship with local authorities, political parties, involved institutions and civil society. The publication and radio program on the women's political participation and "Women Can Do It" has contributed to increased awareness among women and men. Almost 70% of Cambodian citizens support the idea of both

women and men becoming political leaders. Most respondents (88%) support the establishment of a law or policy on reserving seats for females as MPs or commune/sangkat councilors. (according to a survey on participation and democratic governance released in 2010).

Through COMFREL's trainings on Women Can Do It and Empowerment of Women in Decision Making, the network of trainees such as female commune officials, and activists from different political parties and CSOs have established a working relationship, and conduct local actions such as awareness activities on the importance of women's participation in politics and local governance, monitoring of the situation of female elected councilors and performance, and problem solving with regard to women and children's rights abuses. The presence of female elected officials at the trainings has resulted in a solution to many cases related to children and women's issues. In the past when there were so few female elected officials, children's and women's issues had been neglected and unsolved.

6. Survey on Voters, the Issuing of Form 1018 and Voter Registration (SVR)

COMFREL has found a variety of irregularities and problems faced by voters during the election period, such as irregularities in issuing Form 1018, problems with voter registration and defects in the voter list. COMFREL has also gathered recommendations to resolve the above-described irregularities from various sources in order to forward them to the NEC and electoral stakeholders for their consideration on how to improve the current system or create a new system for voter registration, the voter list and the issuance of identity forms.

II. Specific Objectives

- 1. Advocacy and Legal Study (ALS):** To increase civil society input into and influence on the development of the policies and the legal frameworks related to political reforms and democratic governance that comply with sound human rights and democratic principles.
- 2. Media and Campaign (MAC):** To intensify campaigning and gather support from the public, especially through the media, in advocating for electoral and political reforms.
- 3. Building Capacity for Local Network and Citizen's Participation in Local Governance:** To increase civic engagement with elected officials in the decision-making process and local governance.
- 4. Monitoring and Voter Voice (MVV):** To increase transparency in the performance of national elected officials and ensure fulfillment of the electoral platform.
- 5. Civic Education and Gender (CEG):** To increase awareness among women and men, improve attitudes of political parties, and enhance the capacity of female elected officials.
- 6. Staff Capacity Building and Sensitization on Gender, Youth, and HIV/Aids:** To strengthen capacity and the system of the internal organization through capacity building of staff and sensitization on gender, HIV/AIDS and youth.
- 7. Survey on Voter, the Issuing of Form 1018 and Voter Registration (SVR):** To conduct a Survey on Voters, the Issuing of Form 1018 and Voter Registration (SVR), which contributes to safeguarding the rights of Cambodian voters.

III. Completed Activities

1. Advocacy and Lobbying/Legal Study

1.1. Monitoring of Draft Regulations/Laws (MDR)

As one of the most important parts of its activities to promote democracy and governance in Cambodia, COMFREL conducts advocacy and campaign activities with relevant stakeholders to influence them to make decisions which will favor the proper functioning of the electoral system.

COMFREL has conducted advocacy in the legal field through national-level lobbying. With cooperation and support from NDI, an Expert Committee on Election Reform (EC) made up of civil society organizations has been established, composed of leaders from COMFREL, CDP, NICFEC, LICADHO, ADHOC, PDP-Center and NDI, to elaborate major recommendations on election reform. Subjects of reform include a fully independent election institution at all levels, the simplification and improvement of voter registration procedures, the voter registration process and improvement of the electoral campaign process, election dispute solutions, election system and other. Authorities so far have been receptive to discussions on laws and electoral procedures, resulting in an improved legal and electoral environment.

In addition, COMFREL Advocacy, Monitoring and Media Units participated in 79 meetings and 35 workshops and three conferences organized by CSOs to monitor, discuss and comment on some draft laws and policies below:

- Draft law on the National Budget in Year 2009;
- Draft law the National Budget Settlement Report in Year 2006;
- Draft law on Promotion and Protection of Disable People's Rights;
- Draft law on Agreement on Protocol in accord with Convention on Elimination of All Kinds of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
- Draft law on Demonstrations (Freedom of Assembly);
- Draft Law on Expropriation;
- Draft Penal Code;
- Policy on Freedom of Information;
- NEC's procedures on implementing sub national council elections
- draft NGO law; and
- ASEAN Charter

1.2. Developing Draft Recommendations (DDR)

- *Election Reform*

In cooperation with NDI, COMFREL prepared recommendations on the Law on Election of Members of the National Assembly (LEMNA), including both comments addressed directly to specific articles in the law, and specific recommendations to relevant institutions about electoral reform. The recommendations on voter registration and election system were submitted in August to the Universal Periodic Report (UPR) of the UN Human Rights Council as an informational document in parallel with the government report on rights to participation in political affairs. According to the email of the Secretariat of the UN- Human Rights Council on 01 September, 2009, "COMFREL's submission will be shared with colleagues working on the UPR for Cambodia for information purposes".

- *Decentralization and De concentration (D&D) and Sub National Council Elections*

COMFREL's Network Unit has been assigned to join and follow up the activities of working group on Partnership in Decentralization-WGPD (coordinated by the PACT, Commune Council Support Project-CCSP). COMFREL Network Unit conducted workshops, engaged in WGPD

activities and its monthly meetings which consisted of providing, sharing and updating information in relation to D&D reform and draft laws related to sub national council election and administration. Network Unit officers actively joined a series of meetings/discussions between the National Committee for D&D (NCDD), the Ministry of Interior and NGOs. COMFREL continues to advocate for a change from the indirect election system to a universal/direct election system for municipal, provincial, and district councils.

- *Freedom of Expression, Information, and Assembly*

COMFREL is a member of a coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) coordinated by the Cambodia Center for Human Rights (CCHR) to promote freedom of expression. COMFREL's media unit has been assigned to participate and follow up in the activities of the Alliance. On 13 April 2009, the Alliance for Freedom of Expression in Cambodia (AFEC) and assisted by the Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC), made a Joint Submission to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The Joint Submission, which included participation by COMFREL and 26 other member organizations, raised serious concerns about the decline of freedom of expression and assembly in Cambodia in recent years. The submission, which concluded with a number of recommendations to help increase freedom of expression and assembly in Cambodia, has been incorporated into the stakeholder report compiled by the OHCHR. Our shared efforts to submit a joint report on freedom of expression to the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Cambodia's human rights record has been deemed a success.



COMFREL's Media Coordinator (standing) making speech on freedom of expression during a forum on freedom of information on 27th October 2009

- *Political / campaign finance and anti-corruption laws*

COMFREL's Media Unit has been assigned to engage in the Coalition for Integrity and Social Accountability (CISA) by participating in four meetings to discuss the action plan and strategy, the International Anti-Corruption Day (December 09, 2008), and two workshops on the anti-corruption law. Meanwhile, COMFREL has been working to prepare advice to the Cambodian

government and other stakeholders on campaign finance, by compiling and translating laws on campaign finance from other Asian countries. These laws and cases will be used to compare to the Cambodian situation and inform the debate about such rules and regulations here.

1.3. Seminars and Press Conferences (SPC)

COMFREL, NDI, and NICFEC as an expert team conducted consultations with stakeholders which consolidated the voices of nearly 150 representatives from a diverse cross section of society, and also conducted a workshop on electoral reform on August 11-12th (NDI covered the costs of consultation and workshop). International speakers from Indonesia and Thailand were invited to the seminar to share lessons learned on election reform; with participants including representatives of the major political parties (CPP, SRP, FUNCINPEC and HRP), the UNDP advisor, leaders of NGOs and government officials, totaling 36 participants. The report on the workshop and the consensus on the solutions/recommendations were prepared by NDI and distributed to all participants and other stakeholders. The main workshop objective was to build consensus on election reform focusing on National Electoral Committee (NEC), Voter Registration and Complaint Solution/Adjudication.

Additionally, COMFREL conducted a special press conference releasing the findings and recommendations on voter registration and the voter list (SVR) from the survey in July. (See below 7- special project on survey).

1.4. Other related issues

- COMFREL, in particular the Executive Director, was involved in the campaign and advocacy of the Cambodian Human Right Association (ADHOC) and Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC) and other regional groups in elaborating joint statements. On 3 March 2009, COMFREL joined with the Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC), NGO Forum on Cambodia (NGO Forum), Coalition of Cambodia Apparel Worker (CCAWDU), and the Cambodian NGO Committee on CEDAW to organize a press conference on the Provision of Recommendations on the Draft the Term of Reference (TOR) of ASEAN Human Rights Body (AHRB). This press conference provided information and a number of recommendations relating to the establishment and effective implementation of this human rights body.
- COMFREL conducted a campaign on International Democracy Day through a radio roundtable and released a statement to congratulate participants and warmly support the celebratory events taking place in Cambodia.
- COMFREL also participated in the International Human Rights Day demonstration/program with CHRAC in the end of 2008. COMFREL was one of the organizers involved in drafting the agenda, statements, and the activities as well as contributing some funding. 20 members of COMFREL's central office staff participated in the demonstration, which had the theme "We All Need Freedom and Justice".



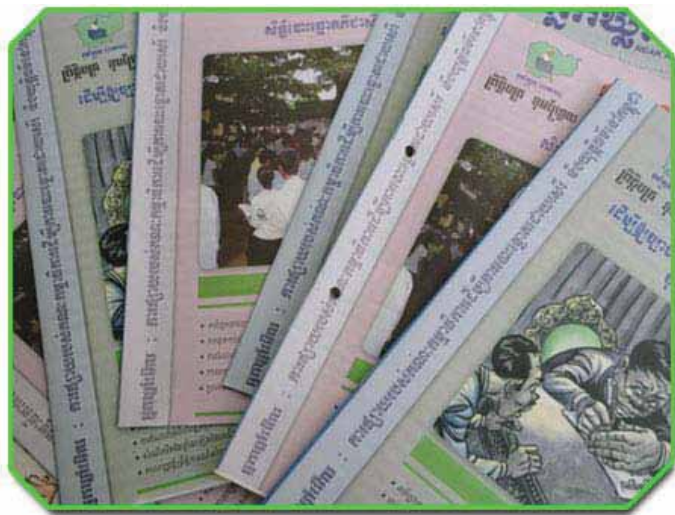
COMFREL's central staff wearing a yellow shirt on the occasion of the International Human Rights Day parade with a slogan "We All Need Freedom and Justice" on 10th December 2009

2. Media and Campaign

2.1. Neak Kloam Meul Bulletin

The *Neak Kloam Meul* Bulletin is produced by COMFREL to inform its readership about important issues related to the operation of the Cambodian government and particularly its elected organs. During 2009, COMFREL produced four volumes of the Bulletin and distributed them to a total of 19,900 persons, including COMFREL's provincial network, NGOs and International Organizations, government agencies, libraries, embassies, and local residents.

Four volumes of Neak Kloam Meul Bulletin produced this year



The table below shows various numbers of bulletin receivers.

Target groups reached by the NKM Bulletin	F (%)	M (%)	Subtotal
COMFREL's Local Network activists	30	70	11,500
NGOs/civil society	30	70	3,975
Government officials and Embassies	20	80	3,065
Others (guests, students, for filing purposes...)			1,360
Total			19,900

2.2. Articles and Publications

COMFREL has produced and released a total of 26 press releases with regard to subjects such as:



Some of COMFREL's press releases and reports printed on local Khmer and English newspapers

pre-calculation of the number of seats for each party in the provincial/town and district councilors in Khmer and English, 2nd anniversary of the International Day of Democracy and announcement on COMFREL's TV education spot, among others. These press releases disseminate important messages to the public such as empowerment of women in decision making, parliamentary watch, promoting citizen participation in commune development, commune councils and related to women's and children's issues.

2.3. Radio Broadcasting “Civil Society Voice” and Website

As one of the most important methods of disseminating information and encouraging citizen participation in public affairs, COMFREL conducts regular radio shows with guest speakers from civil society and the relevant government institutions. Listeners are encouraged to call in to express their viewpoints or to ask questions to the guest speakers.



Broadcasting activity of COMFREL’s daily Civil Society Voice program from its studio room

COMFREL’s radio program entitled “Voice of Civil Society”-VoC is broadcast live from FM105 radio station, and then relayed to other stations such as FM 90 in Phnom Penh, FM 95.5 in Siem Reap, FM 90.25 in Battambang, and FM 88.5 in Kampong Thom. The overall number of hours of live broadcast was 753, with an additional 652 hours of re-broadcast episodes. In 2009, COMFREL live broadcast and rebroadcast radio shows on FM 105 a total of 1,045 times with 1,019 callers (female 15%). Audio recordings of the radio programs were frequently posted on the COMFREL website to increase accessibility and raise public awareness.

In some cases COMFREL recorded roundtable discussions on special subjects, including five episodes about the Khmer Rouge Tribunal in response to a request from ADHOC, and three roundtable discussions on the draft Penal Code.

COMFREL’s radio programs continue to reach a large audience of people, since radio is the form of media most commonly used by Khmer people. The total audience of all five radio stations is estimated to be 6 million, of which 42% listen to COMFREL’s radio show (finding from COMFREL’s VRA survey), meaning that COMFREL reached approximately 2.5 million people through its radio shows.

In addition to the radio media, COMFREL continues to operate and update its website, which has developed to become a major source of information and knowledge. Almost all COMFREL documents, bulletins, reports, press releases, etc., are released on its website, in addition to other

more traditional forms of media. The website (along with many of the documents cited in this report) can be viewed at www.comfrel.org.

3. Building Capacity for Local Networks and Citizen’s Participation in Local Governance

3.1. Training for provincial secretaries, local activists and watchdogs

COMFREL operates an extensive local network which performs various duties as part of COMFREL’s continuing efforts to promote democracy and citizen’s participation. The network includes provincial secretaries, district contact persons, local activists and local watchdogs, present in 23 provinces and the capital.

Production of the training manual

COMFREL’s network unit finalized the training manual on Local Activist Capacity Building for training local networks (provincial secretariats, local activists and watchdogs). The main aim of producing the manual is to strengthen the capacity of COMFREL networks nationwide, enhance social development through local governance and follow up on commune council performance.

Conducting training

During the 2008-09 fiscal year, the COMFREL network unit spent considerable time and effort providing five two-day trainings with 138 COMFREL network members (38 female), on 10-11 June, 08-09 July, 04-05 August, 27-28 August, and 29-30 September at COMFREL’s head office in Phnom Penh. The main aim of the trainings is to build the capacity of its network members to conduct grassroots level advocacy, and monitoring of local council budgets. The chart below shows the total number of participants in the four trainings.

Target group	Number of participants		Sub total
	Male	Female	
Provincial secretaries	12	11	23
District contact persons	19	1	20
Local watchdogs	38	15	53
Local activists	31	11	42
Total	100	38	138

COMFREL invited its master trainers and an independent analyst to be the resource persons for coaching the participants. Methods used by the resource persons were as follows: (1) brainstorming (giving participants a topic/picture and asking them to discuss, share and define definitions/themes); (2) lecture (giving explanation/conducting presentation by showing Power Point slides); and (3) a TV spot on citizens’ rights to participate in and evaluate the commune council performance (showing TV spot then asking them to share their points of view about the TV spot’s messages).



COMFREL’s senior researcher (standing) giving lecture on centralization and de-concentration to 27 (six female) COMFREL local activists at its meeting room on 30th September 2009

Two tests (pre-test and post-test) were used to measure their knowledge of the training material before and after the training. Through the two tests, COMFREL determined that the participants are now more aware of the training subjects after completing the training, including in the subject areas of administrative management at national and sub-national levels; importance of citizens' participation in local governance and social accountability; gender equality; and techniques of interview, observation and evaluation. Based on the results of the two tests, their knowledge has increased by **14%** from **43%** measured by the pre-test to **57 %** measured by the post-test.

3.2. Follow-up meetings

COMFREL's Network Unit conducted three follow-up meetings (one two-day meeting and two one-day meetings) with 23 (11 female) provincial secretaries at COMFREL headquarters in Phnom Penh on 16-17 February, 07 July and 04 August. The follow-up meetings with the secretaries were held with the aim of getting reports on the general human rights situation in each province, hearing challenges faced by COMFREL secretaries during the implementation of their work, a reflection on local public forums in particular, as well as discussing the new action plan and requests.

3.3. Local Public Forums (LPF)

COMFREL recognizes the value of local level governance, and the importance of encouraging and reinforcing citizen participation in commune level governance. As a result, COMFREL in



2009 implemented numerous local public forums which involved both local citizens, and various local government figures, especially commune councilors. COMFREL facilitates interaction between the people and their elected representatives, and builds citizen confidence through the process.

COMFREL's Executive Director (standing) making a welcome remark to 23 COMFREL capital/ provincial secretaries (female 10) at the COMFREL meeting room on 07 July 2009

Forum action plan

COMFREL finalized the plan for conducting 45 local public forums within the new fiscal year 2008-2009, 35 of which are local public forums in 20 provinces while the remaining 10 are Women Can Do It forums to be held in four provinces (Takeo, Kandal, Kampong Thom, and Preah Vihear). It chiefly focused on four points: (1) arrangement of local public forums, (2) local action/follow-up meetings, (3) follow-up forums and (4) forum evaluation. The 4 points included methodology on how to conduct and proceed with the program.

Forum and local action guidelines

COMFREL updated and then finalized the guidelines used to conduct the forums, with a focus on how to conduct district and commune forums, 'Women Can Do It' forums. The guidelines also detailed local actions, which refer to follow-up forums to be launched after the public forums, and the monitoring of district and commune councils' performance.

Conducting of local public forums and selection of local watchdogs

COMFREL's Network conducted 35 local public forums on the subject of "District & Commune Councils and Citizens" in the capital and 19 other provinces, which were supported by UNDEF/UNDP, OWA, Forum Syd, NPA, Trocaire and Oxfam Novib. COMFREL's provincial coordinator or provincial secretaries have conducted research/study before the organization of the forums and conducted field checks in each selected district/commune where the local public forums were conducted later (see the table below for more detail about the forums).

No	Name of Province	Date	Number of participants		Sub total
			Male	Female	
1	Siem Reap	25/04/2009	29	31	60
		21/07/2009	32	25	57
		19/08/2009	52	23	75
2	Phnom Penh	08/07/2009	44	16	60
		16/09/2009	29	34	63
3	Koh Kong	15/07/2009	48	20	68
		22/09/2009	56	13	69
4	Kampong Chhnang	22/04/2009	40	23	63
		24/07/2009	41	16	57
		24/09/2009	37	21	58
5	Svay Rieng	13/07/2009	49	12	61
		20/08/2009	63	84	147
6	Kampong Speu	26/07/2009	36	22	58
		29/08/2009	49	8	57
7	Pailin	24/07/2009	36	27	63
		15/09/2009	45	17	62
8	Ratanakiri	22/07/2009	69	62	131
9	Kampot	27/04/2009	46	16	62
		18/07/2009	39	26	65
10	Stung Treng	28/07/2009	40	18	58
11	Preah Vihear	26/07/2009	35	25	60
12	Kampong Cham	27/04/2009	16	36	52
		19/08/2009	50	12	62
13	Battambang	19/08/2009	40	24	64
14	Kandal	20/08/2009	82	27	109
15	Prey Veng	24/06/2009	38	22	60
		20/08/2009	54	16	70
16	Pursat	24/06/2009	53	09	62
		21/08/2009	48	12	60
17	Banteay Meanchey	26/06/2009	43	21	64
		25/08/2009	49	13	62
18	Preah Sihanouk	14/09/2009	33	41	74
19	Oddar Meanchey	25/06/2009	31	27	58
20	Kratie	19/02/2009	41	15	56
		26/06/2009	33	23	56
Total			1,526	837	2,363

The table below shows the number of participants from different groups in the forums.

Target groups	Number of participants		Sub total
	Male	Female	
Municipal/provincial councilors	5	0	5
Deputy district governor	1		1
District councilors	70	9	79
Commune councilors	152	25	177
Local police	39	0	39
Village chiefs and members	159	35	194
Citizens	824	603	1,427
Youth group	160	136	296
NGOs	23	6	29
Ethnic minorities	7	4	11
COMFREL networks	86	19	105
Total	1,526	837	2,363

In tracking the issues that are of significance to the participants, COMFREL noted that 261 different cases were raised during the forums, in eight general categories:

- Infrastructure
- Public Security and Order
- Land Dispute Resolution
- Local Governance
- Women and Children's Issues
- Natural Resource Management
- Education
- Others

COMFREL notes that the issues that were raised in the forums had the following outcomes (including in some cases through follow-up activities).

No.	Opinions/local issues raised	Issues raised		Results of problem solving in forums							
				Resolved		Clarified		Promised to resolve		Unresolved	
		cases	%	cases	%	cases	%	cases	%	cases	%
1	Infrastructure	94	36%	28	10.5%	18	7%	26	9.5%	22	9%
2	Public security and order	45	17%	15	6%	10	4%	13	5%	7	3%
3	Land dispute resolution	40	15%	6	2%	7	3%	8	3%	19	7%
4	Local governance	30	12%	9	4%	13	5%	4	1.5%	4	1.5%
5	Issues of women and children	17	6.5%	3	1%	3	1%	4	1%	7	3%
6	Natural resource management	12	4.5%	4	1.5%	0	0%	2	0%	6	2.5%
7	Education	13	5%	6	2%	2	1%	3	1%	2	1%
8	Others	10	4%	3	1.5%	2	0.5%	4	2%	1	0%
Total		261	100%	74	28.5%	55	21%	64	24.5%	68	26%

Based on the table, out of 261 cases raised by the participants, 74 cases (28.5%) were resolved, 55 (21%) clarified, 64 (24.5%) promised to resolve and the other 68 cases (26%) unresolved.

From its experience thus far implementing the local public forums, COMFREL has observed several benefits, such as the following:

- The forums provided an opportunity for local people to meet their commune council and other representatives
- People are more aware of their rights and duties to participate in local governance
- Local people gained knowledge of promises and plans made by commune councilors to resolve issues and needs raised by participants
- People had a greater chance and space to raise needs and concerns
- Increased self confidence and assertiveness among citizens to participate in local governance



One of COMFREL's local public forums held in Koh Kong province's Russei Chrom commune on 15th July 2009 with a total of 68 (20 female) local residents

Selection of COMFREL local watchdogs

After the forums take place in various locales, COMFREL selects new local watchdogs in some places where the forums take place to follow up on the fulfillment of promises made by commune councilors and other government representatives during the forums. In the year 2008-09, COMFREL selected a total of 70 (19 female) local watchdogs to perform this activity.

Forums on 'Women Can Do It' or 'Empowerment of Women in Decision Making'

In cooperation with the Network Unit, the Civic Education and Gender Unit also conducted ten forums entitled 'Women Can Do It' or 'Empowerment of Women in Decision Making', in four provinces, namely Takeo, Kampong Thom, Kandal, and Preah Vihear. Overall, there were 596 (391 female) participants who attended the forums:

Target groups	Number of participants		Sub total
	Male	Female	
District Women's Affair staff	1	10	11
Commune Councilors	23	34	57
Local authorities	39	76	105
Village chiefs/members	7	21	28
Citizens	43	153	196
Political party representatives	29	42	71
Religious leaders	13	0	13
COMFREL network members	25	26	51
Youth groups	5	4	9
Private Company Staffmembers	1	0	1
CBOs	11	8	19
Students	6	15	21
Community and Children Club	4	2	6
Teachers	8	0	8
Total	205	391	596

3.4. Follow-up Dialogue and Establishment of Local Forum Groups

Establishment of Local Forum Groups

In order to follow up on the work of the Local Public Forums in more detail, COMFREL established 10 local forum groups in seven different provinces (Rattanakiri, Kampong Speu, Banteay Meanchey, Preah Vihear, Kampot, Pailin and Kampong Chhnang). Each local forum group is composed of a district contact person, a commune activist and two local watchdogs. The local forum groups will conduct actions at the local level such as observing promise fulfillment by commune councilors after the public forums conducted by COMFREL, observing commune council meetings, interviewing local people and commune councilors about local governance, and requesting their own commune councilors for any urgent meeting to resolve problems.

Follow-up forums/dialogue

The Network Unit and provincial secretaries conducted 10 follow-up forums in 9 provinces. Also, COMFREL provincial secretaries and some of the Network Unit members conducted field checks during the forum time in the communes where follow up forums were conducted. See the table below for more detail about the location, date, and number of participants.

No	Name of location	Date	Number of participants		Sub total
			Male	Female	
1	Kampong Speu	19/07/2009	34	3	37
2	Banteay Meanchey	23/07/2009	24	11	35
3	Oddar Meanchey	24/07/2009	25	10	35
4	Ratanakiri	25/07/2009	28	22	50
5	Kratie	20/08/2009	19	17	36
6	Kandal	21/08/2009	31	26	57
		22/09/2009	32	18	50
7	Kampot	27/08/2009	39	3	42

8	Svay Rieng	22/09/2009	37	3	40
9	Takeo	30/09/2009	21	16	37
Total			290	129	419

Further, the table below provides more detail about the types of participants in those forums and who they represented.

Target groups	Number of participants		Sub total
	Male	Female	
District council	12	5	17
Commune council	37	5	42
Local police chief	17	0	17
Village chiefs/members	28	2	30
Citizens	143	101	244
NGOs	3		3
COMFREL networks	22	5	33
Youth groups	28	11	33
Total	290	129	419

Below are three selected successful cases which were raised by local residents, which have now been resolved by their commune councilors:

- *Infrastructure:* One case raised by residents living in Banteay village, Korloab commune, Chitborei district, Kratie province to request for one path crossing their village has been achieved by the commune councilors. The commune councilors and village authorities decided to take concrete action in response to their commune residents' request. Since the project of constructing this path was not listed in the commune budget and development plan, the commune councilors discussed with the village chief to raise funds from local residents by creating an entertaining festival program within the village. With donations from the program, the commune gathered 700,000 riel and it contributed another 300,000 riel to constructing the path. Finally, it was completely built with a total expense of 1 million riel.
- *Public security and order:* In Krang Svay commune, Chhou district and Kampot province: According to a report provided by the commune authorities, there was a huge decrease in gambling, theft, and gang activity in 2009 as compared to that in 2007 when the number of cases of gambling, theft, robberies and gang activity rose drastically. In cooperation with the commune councilors, local authorities cracked down on 80 to 90% of the gambling/betting places, even though many of these were owned by high-ranking government officials. The commune authorities, nonetheless, recognized that there were still some cases of minor theft, such as stealing hens or ducks, within the commune.
- *Land dispute resolution:* In Chitborei district of Kratie province: There was a land dispute case over the occupation of a graveyard located in Korloab village, Korloab commune. Local residents were resisting a private company, which had asked the commune for permission to occupy the land for future development. People who had been living nearby the land until then claimed that the land belongs to the state, so that all people can use it as a passage or a field where their cattle could graze grass. To reach a win-win solution for the benefit of both parties, the commune councilor intervened in the case by inviting both parties to a commune meeting where they could freely sit and talk face-to-face in the spirit of compromise, negotiation and cooperation. The meeting resulted in a mutually beneficial

solution stating that the private company could occupy a small area of the land for its development plan and local residents could use the rest as the public land.

3.5. Research

In cooperation with the COMFREL research team, the Network Unit designed two tests (pre and post tests) to survey the public forum participants' general knowledge, feelings about and expectations in joining the forum. It also designed a citizen-rating form to be used with the survey during follow-up forums. The citizen rating form was mainly designed to score the task performance of and promises fulfilled by local commune councilors.

3.6. Awards for Local Watchdogs and Local Forum Groups

COMFREL established an evaluation team to launch an award program for local watchdogs and local forum groups. The team was composed of seven members, two of whom are from the Education Unit, one is from the Media Unit, and the rest are from the Network Unit. The team developed an evaluation principle and selection criteria for awarding the top three most prominent local watchdogs for this fiscal year. The principle also outlined the procedures for using the award application form by all contestants and the timeframe of the award program implementation.

After finalizing the application form, the team sent it to all provinces/municipalities for those who wanted to apply for the award competition. Having collected 42 application forms sent by COMFREL local watchdogs and members of local forum groups from the capital and 20 other provinces, the team started to check, evaluate and select five prominent standing candidates. Then the working team members took field visits to five provinces so as to review, monitor and evaluate COMFREL network members who are considered to be the most prominent local watchdogs for the award program.

4. Monitoring and Voter Voice (MVV)

4.1. Government Watch: Fulfillment of political platforms and promises

COMFREL staff continued to collect and assemble chronological data and information on the fulfillment of the political platform for the Third and Fourth Mandates of the Royal Cambodian Government in both English and Khmer. A report was then drafted on the Royal Government's fulfillment of its political platform with precise indicators. Meanwhile, several other reports were also produced and released, including 1) a report on the implementation of the Government's Rectangular Strategy in the third mandate, 2) Parliamentary Watch report on the 3rd mandate, and 3) Government Watch report for the 3rd mandate.

Now that the National Assembly is in the 4th mandate, COMFREL began monitoring by summarizing the Royal Government's Rectangular Strategy for the 4th mandate and continued observing the Cambodian political situation.

Report on the Implementation of the Government's rectangular strategy in the third mandate published by COMFREL



4.2. Parliamentary Watch: Performance of Elected Officials and the National Assembly

Parliamentary Watch

During the entire year covered by this report, COMFREL observers attended National Assembly sessions to observe the function of the Assembly and the matters discussed. During the period covered, COMFREL staff observed 31 sessions of the NA. During one entire quarter no sessions were observed as the NA was in recess. Outside of the session, COMFREL observers also communicated with NA commissions, the NA general secretariat, political parties and MPs about the process of the meetings, discussion of draft laws, the activities of MPs and other information relevant to the NA. Additionally, the observers recorded data on MP's expression of views into COMFREL's database system.



Monitoring of a National Assembly plenary session at the NA hall in 2009

Observation of the National Assembly's Field Visits

COMFREL also observed MP activities/missions to constituencies throughout the capital and 23 provinces by deploying observers to observe the activities of each MP in each constituency. Observers are assigned to communicate and contact branch offices of political parties and MPs' offices in constituencies or directly contact with MPs. Then they have to complete the Mission Observation Checklist for monthly report to the COMFREL head office.

COMFREL has noted that 74 members (female 17, 14 of which are CPP members and the other three are SRP members) of the parliament conducted field visits to constituencies for a total of 864 times with five main reasons listed below:

- Visiting people in constituency, gift giving and project inaugurations- 501 times, equal to 58% of total field visits;
- Strengthening internal party networks- 246 times, equal to 28.5% of total field visits;
- Attending public forums organized by national and international NGOs- 43 times, equal to 5% of total field visits;
- Intervening and helping people to solve their problems- 22 times, equal to 2.5%; and
- Group missions and accompanying leaders to hold ceremonies in the party, attend a conference or inaugurate new public achievements- 52 times, equal to 6% of total field visits).

Production of Reports on Parliamentary Watch



In 2009, COMFREL staff completed the Parliamentary Watch report on the 3rd mandate of the National Assembly (2003-2008). 2,000 copies were printed and distributed to COMFREL's mailing list as well as other members of the public.

COMFREL Parliamentary Watch report on the 3rd mandate of the National Assembly (2003-2008)

Additionally, during the reporting period, COMFREL staff produced ten issues of the monthly bulletin Parliamentary Watch, which is posted on the COMFREL website and often cited by the local media. The reports highlighted major issues affecting the MPs and the parliament, including some such as: difficulty in contacting the MPs through the NA secretariat general, lifting of three MPs' immunity in the 1st year of the new mandate of the NA, controversy over reinstating the immunity of these MPs, and new measures taken to restrict debate observation at the NA session hall.



COMFREL displaying its Parliamentary Watch reports and other books to members of the parliament during the celebration of Human Rights Day at the NA hall

The reports also detail events such as field visits to constituencies during their vacation, and provide a chronology of events in relation to MPs and the NA. The Parliamentary Watch reports and bulletins reach a large audience, with each issue of the report being distributed to people on its mailing list (which totals 553 individuals) including members of the media, MPs, NGOs, government ministries, and voters. The report is frequently cited in the media, discussed on COMFREL's "Voice of Civil Society" radio program, and read by viewers of COMFREL's website.

Production of the Directory of the National Assembly

During 2009, COMFREL prepared a Directory of the NA members by gathering information and preparing personal profiles, and then conducting quality control to make sure the information is correct. The information was prepared in both Khmer and English, and the information was also stored in COMFREL's information database. The Directory was nearly finalized by the end of the fiscal year covered in this report. The Directory will be published and distributed to the public early in the fiscal year 2009-2010.

Additional NA related activities

As part of advocacy arising from its observation of the NA, COMFREL, in cooperation with other civil society organizations (Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee, Cambodian Defender Project and ADHOC), produced a joint press release on the suspension of MPs' immunity. In addition, on a separate occasion, COMFREL cooperated with other organizations to produce and release a joint statement on concern over discrimination against female MPs.

COMFREL's observation has shown that obstruction has recently occurred towards women representatives.

4.3. Voter Voice and Workshop/Forum

During the reporting period, COMFREL conducted a total of 16 Voter Benchmark workshops, with the purpose of:

- Making voters aware of the 2008 elected government's political platform and rectangular strategies;
- Empowering voters through their participation in identifying benchmarks in priority sectors necessary for their own constituency;
- Collecting the benchmark indicators in a report, making it easier for people to follow up on the government's activities in response to those indicators; and
- Using the benchmark indicators to push the Royal Government as well as elected officials to put them into effect.

COMFREL took a series of steps to implement the workshops. First, COMFREL drafted the methods and techniques to be used in the Voter Benchmark workshops in each constituency. Then COMFREL invited MPs from all political parties with seats in the NA to a specific locale to participate in the Voter Benchmark workshop, while the coordinators in 16 provinces made preparations. Government and political representatives were given an opportunity to speak at the workshops. Overall, a total of 1,410 people (512 female) participated as detailed in the table below:

No	Name of province	Date	Number of participants		Sub total
			Male	Female	
1	Kampong Speu	08/04/2009	58	30	88
2	Kampot	29/04/2009	48	22	70
3	Koh Kong	20/05/2009	64	16	80
4	Mondulkiri	27/05/2009	51	29	80
5	Svay Rieng	02/06/2009	66	14	80
6	Ratanakiri	11/06/2009	84	35	119
7	Kampong Thom	17/06/2009	40	43	83
8	Pailin	15/07/2009	63	36	99
9	Battambang	17/07/2009	67	23	90
10	Takeo	22/07/2009	51	32	83
11	Siem Reap	27/07/2009	43	39	82
12	Kampong Cham	18/08/2009	47	45	92
13	Kep	24/08/2009	40	48	88
14	Kratie	28/08/2009	46	35	81
15	Kampong Chhnang	09/09/2009	61	39	100
16	Prey Veng	15/09/2009	69	26	95
Total			898	512	1410

The workshops provided voters including youth activists, members of civil society organizations and leaders of communities more opportunities to identify, debate, and assess the major benchmarks of the political platform within their respective constituency.



One of COMFREL's voter benchmark workshops held in Rattanakiri province on 11th June 2009 with a total of 119 (35 female) local residents

After each workshop, a short report detailing the benchmarks and the commitments made by government/political representatives was produced and released by COMFREL. For each report, COMFREL forwarded 10 priority sectors set by the workshop participants to MPs and the government. The most common prioritized sectors in each constituency include adoption of the anti-corruption law, technical agricultural trainings, social land concessions, salary raises and judicial system reform. In most cases the parliamentarians responded by showing support and promising to address them by forwarding the priorities to the government.

5. Civic Education and Gender (CEG)

5.1. Radio Call-in Show (RCS)

The COMFREL Media Unit cooperated with the Civic Education and Gender Unit to host 24 episodes of the 60 minute radio call-in show, "Woman Can Do It" aired live on FM 105, FM 90, FM 90.25 and FM 88.5 as well as relayed to other radio stations in Battambang and Kampong Thom provinces. The program chiefly focuses on issues concerning women, such as women in leadership, women's qualifications in social affairs and politics, the role of women in decision-making and promoting more women to take part in the country's development. Meanwhile, there is a talk-back discussion which allows callers, both men and women, to make a phone call to share opinions, experiences and/or to raise questions to the guest speakers. For the program, two outside facilitators were usually invited to conduct the programs, with a long list of facilitators, from Cambodian NGOs, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and UNIFEM. There were 107 callers, of which 38 (35.5%) were women, who shared their point of view on the "Women Can Do It" radio program.

5.2. TV/Radio Spots (TRS)

The Education and Gender Unit finalized a TV educational spot lasting 16 minutes and 45 seconds on citizen's participation, commune councils and women's and children's issues. The TV educational spot encourages local people to find issues faced by Cambodian women and

children in their community, then forward them to commune councilors to work out solutions for their better protection.

The TV spot illustrates how local people can pursue this process. Thus it serves the dual purpose of encouraging local people to access their commune councils, while illustrating some of the



COMFREL's Educational Spot on Citizen's Participation, Commune Councils and Women's And Children's Issues broadcast on two TV channels: TV9 and Apsara TV a total of eight times

problems faced by women and children in Cambodia. The TV spot has been broadcast on two TV channels a total of eight times: TV9 three times, and Apsara TV channel five times. It's also been broadcast five times through COMFREL's radio program "Women Can Do It".

5.3. Printed Material and Distribution (PMD)

- COMFREL's Education and Gender Unit printed 6,000 calendars with the slogan "Female Leaders Have to Take Charge of Women and Children's Issues! Or Empower Women to Lawfully Fulfill Their Responsible Tasks" to spread this message.
- The Education and Gender Unit published and distributed 300 copies of an analytical report on "Women's Participation in Politics and 2008 National Assembly Elections".
- The Unit produced 15,000 copies of the book "73 Questions and Answers: Advisory Materials to Strengthen Citizen's Knowledge on Participation and Democratic Governance"
- The Unit produced 15,000 copies of the picture book entitled "Citizens' Participation, Commune Council and Children and Women's Issues"
- The Unit produced 9,000 stickers, which says "Making laws with the inclusion of female leaders will bring harmony and prosperity- this is the meaning of democracy".



Education materials produced by COMFREL's Education Unit



COMFREL's Education materials directly distributed to local residents living in five provinces, namely Kampong Cham, Takeo, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Thom and Preah Vihear.

All educational materials were distributed to 37,300 direct beneficiaries (23,872 female = 64%) including COMFREL's network, stakeholder NGOs, women trainees (district/commune councilors, political party activists; CPP, SRP, FUNCINPEC, HRP and NRP, women's affairs officers, local police, teachers, CBOs), citizens (local residents), and institutions involved in government. Meanwhile, picture books and stickers COMFREL has distributed in only five provinces- Kampong Cham, Kampong Chhnang, Takeo, Kampong Thom, and Preah Vihear.

5.4. Training on ‘Women Can Do It’ and ‘Empowerment of Women in Decision Making’

The Civic Education and Gender Unit conducted 10 trainings on the subject of ‘Women Can Do It’ and “Empowerment of Women in Decision Making” in five provinces: Takeo, Kampong Thom, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Cham and Preah Vihear, with a total of 300 female participants attended the training in total, as shown in the table below.

No	Name of province	Date	Number of female participants
1	Takeo	16-18/07/2009	30
2		16-18/10/2009	30
3	Kampong Chhnang	21-23/08/2009	30
4		03-05/10/2009	30
5	Kampong Cham	28-30/08/2009	30
6		17-19/10/2009	30
7	Kampong Thom	26-28/06/2009	30
8		13-15/11/2009	30
9	Preah Vihear	06-08/06/2009	30
10		20-22/11/2009	30
Total			300

The table below shows the total number of female participants in the 10 trainings.

Target groups	Number of participants
	Female
Public servants	67
COMFREL activists	25
NGOs	6
Commune Councilors	35
District Councilors	8
Political party activists	53
Political party members	21
Commune chiefs	2
Deputy village chiefs	34
Village members	45
Deputy district governor	2
Students	2
Total	300

The training had three main objectives:

1. To strengthen women's capacity in leadership skills, political affairs and advocacy in order to build women's confidence to take part in decision-making processes in politics and public affairs;
2. To motivate women and create more opportunities for them to build good relationships with local authorities, political parties, key institutions and civil society; and
3. To support networking among women from the national level to the local grassroots level.

The training discussed five points related to gender and leadership:

- management and leadership
- democracy and women's participation
- debate and discussion techniques
- supervising techniques and dispute resolution, and
- advocacy and campaigning.



Training in "Women Can Do It" held in Preah Vihear province on 07th June 2010 with a total of 30 female participants

Conducting 'Women Can Do It' Forums

In cooperation with the Network Unit, the Education and Gender Unit, also conducted five forums on 'Women Can Do It' or 'Empowerment of Women in Decision Making' (as shown in above section of Forum 3.3).

6. Staff Capacity Building and Sensitization on Gender, Youth, and HIV/AIDS

(See section V)

7. Special Project: Survey on Voters, the Issuing of Form 1018 and Voter Registration (SVR)

After the completion of the 2008 National Election, COMFREL sought to create reliable information about the difficulties voters faced during registration and voting for the election, as well as the use of Form 1018 (by which a voter without any form of ID can vote if receiving authentication of their identity by other local citizens).

7.1. Stakeholders' support

Before conducting the official nationwide survey, COMFREL, in cooperation with the survey working group of its organization partners, conducted a series of meetings on COMFREL's survey initiative with commissioners of the NEC, a secretary of state for the MoI as well as leaders of political parties (CPP, HRP, SRP, NRP and FUNCINPEC). The purpose of the meetings was to seek their endorsement of the survey project. As a result, 86% of all stakeholders (6 out of 7) strongly supported the survey, looking forward to seeing a better system of issuing identity Form 1018, voter registration and official voter list creation. With the solid support, the MoI issued an official letter to facilitate the collaboration between the interviewers and local authorities. Further, their various views on the survey were taken into account and included in the survey methodology and activity plan.



COMFREL's delegation having a meeting with MoI representatives to discuss the possibility of conducting a survey on Voter, the Issuing of Form 1018 And Voter Registration at the MoI headquarters on 15th January 2009

7.2. Methodology development

The methodology and activity plan were developed by an expert consultant and the core survey team. Survey questionnaires were developed through consultation with experts from the People's Forum on Cambodia, Japan (PEFOC-J) and Electoral Reform International Services (ERIS), and with stakeholders including the NEC, major political parties (Cambodian People's Party – CPP, Sam Rainsy Party – SRP, Norodom Ranariddh Party – NRP and Funcinpec) and the Ministry of Interior (MoI).

Stratified sampling was used to identify polling stations in communes and districts nationwide. Systematic sampling was used to select voters in each family to be interviewed. In each family, a random statistical system was used to interview family members.

7.3. Training and data collection



COMFREL's Monitoring officer (standing) providing a two-day training course on How to Interview Local Residents and Code of Interview Conduct to 10 survey observers in Rattanakiri on 22 February 2009

15 master trainers and core team members from COMFREL, NICFEC, KYA and PDP were instructed and coached by specialists and COMFREL's officers. All master trainers were assigned to conduct another nine 2-day training courses for interviewers from all 24 provinces. 321 participants/observers, 22% women, attended the trainings from February to April 2009. All 321 interviewers were deployed from

March to May 2009, and then conducted interviews with 8,678 respondents. Table 1 shows the number of interviewees by gender and age.

24 provincial supervisors and 8 master trainers were assigned to conduct 22 field visits to spot check the teams and assist the local supervisor of the interview team during interviews.



COMFREL's Monitoring Officer (putting his right hand up) showing a technique on how to select households for the survey interview to 44 field interviewers in Siem Reap province on 4th April 2009

7.4. Data processing and report producing including recommendations

8,678 completed forms were scanned, examined, scrutinized and clarified by the core team/master trainers. Data were passed on to the data entry team. In March to May 2009, data from 99.8% of the completed forms were entered by 10 typists into the database and analyzed by the expert.

COMFREL's Monitoring Data Entry Group doing data entry at the COMFREL central office on 15th May 2009



COMFREL's IT/survey officers, core team members and the expert prepared the findings and recommendations in early June. From mid to the end of June the draft survey findings and recommendations were discussed among the Core Team, COMFREL's board members, COMFREL's partners and donors through four meetings. The draft findings and recommendations were presented to and discussed with the NEC (a commissioner and general secretary) and the MoI (deputy general secretary) through a meeting at their office. The NEC paid positive attention to some of the findings, and provided more information related to the findings and comments on the recommendations. Some donors provided the feedback that recommendations need to be more specific and relevant.

7.5. Final report presenting

After this discussion of the findings, COMFREL ultimately produced the final survey report along with recommendations. 300 copies of the Khmer and English version of the final report and recommendations were produced and distributed. Then COMFREL, in partnership with NICFEC, KYA and PDP-Center, held a press conference entitled “Survey Report on Voter Lists and Registration” on 30 July 2009. It was presided over by five members of the COMFREL board of directors at Sunway Hotel with a total of 70 participants (female 16).



A conference to unveil the survey findings report along with recommendations on Voters, the Issuing of Form 1018 and Voter Registration held by COMFREL 30th July 2009

The conference aimed to reveal the survey findings along with the related recommendations on the voter lists and voter registration to all political parties, CSOs as well as national and international journalists. The conference centered on presenting the survey methodology, survey findings and recommendations. In the conference’s proceedings, COMFREL received some recommendations from the participants which can be summarized as follows:

- The Royal Government of Cambodia should amend the existing electoral law according to the survey findings noted by the CSOs.
- The NEC should have a separate budget to cover the expenses of the development of voter lists and voting cards with voter’s photo following the example of Bangladesh.
- When the NEC deletes voters’ names from the NEC’s official voter lists using form 1025, they should keep the voter’s names and the form permanently for people to check for their names.
- They should be permitted to cast the ballot when they have enough identity documents including Cambodian National ID card and other identification documents to confirm their eligibility to exercise their voting right. Doing so can help voters to restore their right to vote although they were previously disenfranchised.
- The NEC should focus on vote buying, eligible voters whose workplace is far away from their original residence, discrimination against non-ruling aligned residents, gift giving, and the appropriate legal punishments for these infractions.

After the conference, the summary of COMFREL survey findings was disseminated to tens of thousands of Cambodian people across the country through a variety of national broadcasting networks such as Kampuchea Thmey, Daum Ampil newspaper, the Phnom Penh Post, the Cambodia Daily, Radio Free Asia, Radio French International, Voice of Democracy (VOD), FM

IV- International Trainings, Seminars, and Missions

Throughout the year, COMFREL management and officers were invited to join both regional and international events and gatherings, excluding those held domestically. The following is a description of the overseas missions:

- The Executive Director was invited by the People's Forum on Cambodia, Japan (PEFOC,J) to participate as a speaker in a symposium on "Lessons Learned from the Cambodian Peace Building Experience" at Tokyo University in Japan on 7-8 February 2009. During the visit in Tokyo, PEFOC-J arranged for COMFREL's Executive Director to meet high ranking officials of the First South-East Asia Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Taking the opportunity of the meetings and symposium, the Director raised the concerns about the NGO law, democratic space for expression and 2008 elections issues, suggesting that the Japanese government and NGOs pay more attention to these issues.
- The Executive Director attended the conference on Emerging Leaders on 27 – 30 September 2009 in Singapore which brought together approximately two dozen participants to discuss the relationship between the ASEAN and the US.
- The executive director and other two COMFREL officers participated in training for domestic electoral observers. The Network for Enhanced Electoral and Democratic Support (NEEDS) hosted the training event financed by the European Union. The event was being co-organized by the Centre for Electoral Reform (CENTRO) and the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL). The training took place in Bangkok from 14 – 17 July 2009. The event combined excellent training and networking opportunities for peer working in the field of domestic election observation all around Asia. Sessions covered observation methodologies, media outreach, international and regional commitments and working effectively with electoral management bodies, among others. The COMFREL Executive Director was tapped as one trainer among four by the NEEDS/EU to train participants in this event. At least two trainees (male and female participants) in each country (20 participants) were invited from election monitoring organizations in Pakistan, the Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia and Bangladesh.
- From 26 January to 14 February 2009: A Forum and Network officer participated in an International Training Program ITP 2009 on Human Rights, Peace and Security in Uppsalar city, Sweden, which was supported by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency SIDA. The training strengthened his knowledge in regards to consolidation of consistent methods for Election Observation Missions (EOMs) in line with international and regional standards of democratic elections, capacity in providing training on election observation, and establishment of good relationship among the election management bodies.
- From 13 to 19 July, 2009, a Local Public Forum Officer and a Monitoring Officer made an international mission to participate in a five-day training on domestic electoral observation in Bangkok, Thailand.
- From 01 to 12 July, 2009, a COMFREL Monitoring Officer had an international mission with the Asian Network For Free Elections (ANFREL) to observe the presidential elections in Indonesia. According to the findings of the election observation, there were some problems seen on the polling day, such as the loss of names of eligible voters in the voter list and a lack of office supplies at the polling stations.
- From 20 July to 25 August 2009, two COMFREL Officers from the Media and Civic Education and Gender Units were asked to be involved in an international mission of the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) to observe the presidential and provincial

council elections in Afghanistan. Beyond the fulfillment of the mission tasks, the officers have brought some lessons from Afghanistan elections such as a political financial policy requiring all registered parties and candidates to frequently submit their financial reports to the Independent Election Commission (IEC).

V. Staff Development and Training

In 2009, COMFREL supported the staff capacity development program for its own staff, both at central office and provinces. Significant such programs taking place from January 2009 to December 2009 has resulted in some effects and impacts as described below:

Upgraded knowledge and skill for staffs and officers on management of finance, English language communication, training of trainers and communication for central staff

A Financial Officer has upgraded her financial management skills and competency in controlling the financial transactions within the organization and filling all finance-related documents after completing the advance financial management course at CamEd, Phnom Penh. COMFREL, so far, has no problems regarding with financial issues mainly because of its competent financial officers like the present one.

COMFREL's Monitoring Coordinator has strengthened his management skills on problem solving and decision making after he was trained at the American Academic Associates institution with a management course. Through the training, he was able to apply his knowledge gained in the workplace, resulting in the improvement of the project/program management, and better leadership within the Monitoring Unit as a whole.

At the same time, moreover, COMFREL's Administrative Unit Head has also improved her interpersonal skills in English communication with the public. Through the observation of her routine task performance by other staff members, it is not an exaggeration at all to highly appreciate her remarkable improvement in terms of English report writing within the organization and with outsiders.

Two Assistants from Network and Monitoring Units were sent to study TOT on methodologies. This training was supported by Forum Syd. After the training, their skills as trainers for observers and activists were improved. They are able to assist in developing the curriculum for training local network observers.

Five COMFREL staff members (Report Writer, Legal Officer, Media Assistant and two



Three COMFREL staff members (fourth, sixth and seventh counted from the left) receiving a certificate on News, Press Releases and Article Writing at the Club of Cambodian Journalist on 24th December 2008

Monitoring Unit Assistants) were sent to study a news course at the Club of Cambodian Journalists. The course focused on many aspects regarding how to write different types of hot news, press releases, articles for bulletins and different approaches to getting information sources. Further, it also highlighted some additional points such as relations between communication officers and journalists and the public; challenges and solutions of communication in writing press releases and speeches; presentation skills in seminars/meetings; the art of

writing successful case studies; writing reports from meetings and seminars; and the process of writing advocacy strategies and action plans. Now they all are able to write press statements, short reports and articles for the organization.

Upgraded skills for the staff on using or developing computer software programs including network design, engineering and security, adobe illustrator

A Report Writer, an IT Assistant and a Monitoring Unit Assistant enrolled in the computer graphic design course and basic SPSS at two computer specialist schools: Information Technology Management Specialist School and Baktouk Computer Center. As a result of the course, the Report Officer and the IT Assistant gained some knowledge in designing report covers, improving photo quality and innovation of producing COMFREL's annual photo album containing numerous photos from its five internal units. Meanwhile, the Monitoring Assistant also improved his capacity in formulating the basics of VB, updating data, and writing database code for COMFREL database system.

Improve knowledge and skills on English language, computer and administration for the provincial secretaries

17 provincial secretaries (female seven) have improved their English knowledge throughout this year as their English studies have been supported by COMFREL, which also received firm financial aid from Forum Syd and other core donors. As a result, they are now able to use English for daily communication in the workplace, write monthly reports in English and send them to COMFREL head office more frequently. Finally, a female secretary in Svay Rieng province was also sent to study a basic course of accounting principles in her own province. Now, she is able to prepare the financial statement at her workplace and know a lot about the process of the account cycle.

10 (three female) provincial secretaries were sent to study computer courses, particularly advanced MS Word, Excel, internet and email in their respective home province. Each provincial secretary freely selected the institution which might provide better quality in education for their learning through the consultation with central office in Phnom Penh. After the training, improvements were seen in terms of using MS Word, Excel, internet and email. At least 70% of these secretaries are now able to use email and internet for the purpose of interpersonal communications and monthly report sending to COMFREL head office.

Improved knowledge of administrative laws on municipal, provincial and district council and HIV/AIDS and gender mainstreaming

23 provincial secretaries were sent to study laws on the administration of municipal, provincial and district councils, and also subjects relevant to local governance such as D&D, local people's participation and other content related to COMFREL activities. In addition, with the support of Forum Syd and Oxfam Novib, the 23 provincial secretaries and two Officers in the central office were sent to study on the subject of administrative laws on municipal, provincial and district councils, HIV/AIDS and gender mainstreaming. After the training, the provincial secretaries were able to transfer this knowledge to local observers of COMFREL's network and local people in the province.

VI- Reflection, Monitoring and Evaluation

1. Reflection

From 07 to 10 January 2009: COMFREL organized a staff retreat in Stung Treng province with 26 participants (female 9) such as the Executive Director, three members of the COMFREL board of directors, 8 provincial secretaries, and COMFREL central office staff. There were four main objectives of this event: revealing the organization results, strengths, and weaknesses through the octagon workshop; exchanging work environment; relaxing from the whole year program implementation and increasing tight cooperation among staff (COMFREL central staff, capital/provincial secretaries and volunteers). COMFREL used an octagon methodology to gather some points regarding strengths, weaknesses and recommendations.



COMFREL's Staff Retreat meeting held in Stung Treng province on 7th January 2009 with 26 participants (female 9), including three members of COMFREL Board of Directors

2. Assessment of Director's performance and staff appraisal team

A COMFREL appraisal team consisting of four members conducted an assessment of central staff's performance in year 2008. The assessment concentrated on the following: staff's job description and responsibilities, initiatives innovated by individuals, roles and function, norms and morality, commitment and skills. At the end of the assessment, only three among 22 (8 female) central staff were accredited brilliantly for their individual outstanding performance in 2008 with the top three highest scores ranging 91.50, 90.5 and 88.5 respectively.

In addition, COMFREL also conducted a survey on the performance of the COMFREL Executive Director, with two main objectives: (1) to gather comments from all COMFREL staff members on the Director's performance to achieve better performance at the highest level and (2) understand COMFREL staff's perspective on the process of the staff appraisal team to enhance the quality of the evaluation and appraisal team. 45 (16 female) respondents, including COMFREL's board of directors, COMFREL's executive committee, its headquarters staff members and some selected volunteers, were asked to fill in the survey form.

3. Field visits to monitor public forums and ‘Women Can Do It’ trainings

Monitoring of public forums

In June and July, 2009 A Researcher and a Monitoring officer made three field visits to monitor and evaluate three different local public forums held in Pursat, Stung Treng and Prey Veng provinces. The two staff members cited strengths, weaknesses and recommendations, which were fed back into improving the public forums.

Monitoring of Women Can Do It trainings

In July and October 2009, two of COMFREL’s gender officers conducted a Monitoring and Evaluation mission to observe and assess the training course on “Empowerment of Women in Decision Making” in Takeo province’s Treng district. In October and November 2009 the Civic Education and Gender Coordinator of COMFREL conducted a monitoring and evaluation mission in Kampong Cham and Kampong Thom provinces.

Through the monitoring, COMFREL noticed that the participants are more aware of how to perform their duties, and their rights to express their view in public and make their own decisions. Strengths, weaknesses and recommendations to improve were also communicated back to the Civic Education and Gender Unit to enable them to improve the training further.

VII. Problems Encountered

- COMFREL’s advocacy for better Decentralization and De-concentration and council elections did not accomplish its objective since the procedure used in the municipal, provincial, and district council elections led to proportions in those councils which are similar to those in the communes. Thus the election results were easily predicted, and these elections could be described as politically motivated since it was not a universal and direct election, revealing more about political power than political will to give power to Khmer citizens.
- COMFREL is in the process of translating documents related to experiences and case studies on political finance and campaign finance regulations from other countries. However, COMFREL has not yet been able to launch a workshop on Political Finance and to conduct an in-depth legal study on some existing laws and election reform due to its staff turnover (particularly the departure of a COMFREL legal officer).
- Constraints include that it is often difficult for COMFREL among others to get permission to hold some activities in a free and secured advocacy environment. Although there is no basis for the obstruction in these cases, overlapping responsibilities and confused power means that no authorities want to take responsibility for decisions that might come back to haunt them. Some local authorities (especially those in Rattanakiri and Mondulakiri provinces) require COMFREL to receive approval from the provincial authorities for the proposed number of public forums COMFREL wishes to conduct each year. COMFREL thinks this requirement is against the legal procedure for conducting public forums using public places since an organization is legally only required to inform local authorities and the involved institution about the time and location of the forum, not ask their permission.
- COMFREL faced difficulty in collecting data of MPs’ field visits in some constituencies such as Kampong Speu and Kampong Cham. This is because Parliamentary Offices in those provinces do not work and some members of the parliament do not go to the provincial parliamentary office during their field visits. Hence, some field visits by MPs were not recorded.
- The National Assembly Secretariat caused difficulties for COMFREL to contact MPs through its administration office. This means that when COMFREL submits any documents or letter to MPs through the NA’s admin office, the letters sometime do not

reach the MPs or sometime are very late. According to the NA Administrator's explanation, every document/letter send to MPs must be checked and approved by NA Secretary. Hence, it delays and produces obstacles for COMFREL to submit any recommendation/document or letter to MPs.

- COMFREL faced difficulty in inviting some of the CPP's MPs to attend workshops. Some CPP MPs require COMFREL to seek approval or ask permission from their party leader. However, COMFREL notes that some CPP MPs also attend COMFREL workshop without requiring COMFREL to seek permission from their party leader.
- For the survey research, there was not complete freedom to collect information. To conduct the survey an organization needs a letter issued by the Ministry of Interior (MoI) informing local authorities about the survey activities. If there is no such letter, data collection can be not carried out freely in the villages and data collectors face obstacles from local authorities. In some provinces and communes, even though those involved showed the letter, interviews were not allowed by the village chief without permission from district and provincial authorities.

VIII. Lessons Learnt and Experience

- To ensure all COMFREL provincial secretaries send their monthly report on the general political situation and total of field visits to constituencies by MPs to COMFREL headquarters, COMFREL's Media Monitoring Unit members have to directly contact and follow up on the report with them frequently. This leads to more responsibilities of the secretaries.
- There is a need to institutionalize the participatory accountability mechanism introduced by COMFREL, in order for it to be absorbed into political practice. An example of this would be for the follow-up meetings with commune councilors to be integrated in community activities to ensure sustainability.
- A good selection process for the local watchdogs following pre-determined selection criteria resulted in the selection of qualified local activists who were easily trained to strengthen their capacity and knowledge of sub-national administrative governance, decentralization, gender, and methods to conduct interviews, observations and evaluation of the performance of commune councils.
- COMFREL will reconsider its pre-test and post-test by adjusting some parts of it in order to fit with participants' knowledge.
- The best way to send documents/letters to MPs is through the NA's expert commissions and the MP's political parties. The alternative way is to contact MPs directly via phone call or personal appointment.
- The short amount of time provided for recruiting data collection team/interviewers resulted in a shortfall in capacity to conduct field interviews, due to their limited knowledge, level of maturity, and little relevant experience, insufficient time for interview and communication difficulties. Training participants (field data collection team/interviewers) should be selected within the training area.
- For the survey, questions in the questionnaires should be grouped into sections more clearly in accordance with chronological electoral events to avoid confusion. Further, preparation of training materials and documents to be used during the trainings should be done at least one week before the training starts. Training documents (interview forms in particular) should be made sufficient for all participants so that they can perform certain practical activities, for example role playing, that reflect what they have just learned.

IX. Summary of Financial Statement

COMFREL's Financial Report in the period of October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009

No	Items	Amount (US\$)	%
	Opening Balance	13,127.73	2
1	Funds Received		
1.1	Oxfam Novib	257,286.28	36
1.2	Forum Syd	99,838.00	14
1.3	Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)	68,328.00	10
1.4	Trocaire	29,400.00	4
1.5	One World Action (OWA)	20,166.00	3
1.6	European Union (EU)	73,384.16	10
1.7	United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)	98,397.75	14
1.8	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	47,940.00	7
1.9	British Embassy	19,311.55	3
1.10	Committee to Promote Women in Politics (CPWP)	1,109.76	0.2
	Total Funds Received	715,161.50	98
	Interest	792.59	0.1
	Returned Fund	(2,079.62)	0.3
	Total Funds Received	727,002.20	100
2	Disbursements		
2.1	Core Administration	72,087.37	13
2.2	Lobbying and Advocacy	17,991.07	3
2.3	Media and Campaign	72,199.94	13
2.4	Building Capacity for Local Network and Citizen's Participation in Local Governance	122,745.40	22
2.5	Monitoring and Voter Voice	66,425.53	12
2.6	Civic Education and Gender	75,160.63	13
2.7	Staff Capacity Building	7,686.84	1
2.8	Equipment and Furniture	36,770.00	7
2.9	Contingency	1,717.67	0.3
2.10	Quality Assurance (Finance & Activity evaluation)	12,958.20	2
2.11	Special Project on Survey on Voters, the Issuing Form 1018 and Voter Registration (SVR): January 15 to June 30, 2009	75,939.84	14
	Total Disbursements	561,682.49	100
	Funds at ending of September 2009	165,319.71	

COMFREL

#138, Street 122, Teuk Laak I, Toul Kork, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Tel: 855-23-884-150/12-942-019 Fax: 855-23-883-750/23-885-745

E-mail: comfrel@online.com.kh or comfrel@comfrel.org

Website: www.comfrel.org



COMFREL's local activists receive a certificate on grassroots advocacy

COMFREL's activities supported by

