



Committee For Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia

ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT 2008



Press Conference



Training of Trainers



Media Monitoring



Voter Education Spot

February 2009

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ACRONYMS

ADHOC	Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association
BFD	Buddhist for Development
CCLSP	.....	Cambodia-Canada Legislative Support Project
CDPO	.....	Cambodian Disabled People's Organization
CEC	.....	Commune Election Commission
COMFREL	.....	Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia
COPCEL	.....	Conflict Prevention in Cambodian Elections
CPA	.....	Certified Public Accounting
CPLG	.....	Citizen Participation in Local Governance
CPP	.....	Cambodian's People Party
CPWP	.....	Committee to Promote Women in Politics
CSD	.....	Center for Social Development
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	
GAD-C	.....	Gender and Development for Cambodia
H.E.	.....	His Excellency
IFL	.....	International Foreign Language
IPD	.....	Institute for Public Democracy
IRI	.....	International Republican Institute
KID	.....	Khmer Institute for Democracy
KYA	.....	Khmer Youth Association
LICADHO	.....	Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights
LPF	.....	Local Public Forums
LTOs	.....	Long Term Observers
Mol	.....	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
NICFEC	.....	Neutral and Impartial Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia
NRP	.....	Norodom Ranaridh Party
PDP/C	.....	People Development and Peace Center
PEC	.....	Provincial Election Commission
PEFOC, J	.....	People Forum of Cambodia and Japan
PPP	.....	Phnom Penh Post
Q&A	.....	Questions and Answers
RFA	.....	Radio Free Asia
RFI	.....	Radio France Internationale
PSDD	Project to Support Democratic Development through Decentralization and Deconcentration	
SRP	.....	Sam Rainsy Pary
STOs	.....	Short Term Observers
TVK	.....	National Television of Kampuchea
UNDP	.....	United Nations Development Program
UNIFEM	.....	United Nations Development Fund for Women
USG	.....	Urban Sector Group
VIN	.....	Voter Information Notice
VOA	.....	Voice of America
VOC	.....	Voice of Civil Society
VOD	.....	Voice of Democracy
VRA	.....	Voter Registration Audit
YCC	.....	Youth Council of Cambodia
YRDP	.....	Youth Resource Development Program

FOREWORD

The Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL) serves to promote democracy and citizen participation in the spirit of building nationwide networking and cooperation with its member organizations and partners. COMFREL continues to devote great efforts to strengthening citizen's participation in decision making and democratic governance. In the preparation towards the 4th legislative election in 2008, COMFREL is maintaining its best effort in 2007 and pursuing commitment with its core mission of creating informed and favorable climate for free and fair elections.

I am proud once again to present this 2008 Annual Narrative Report of COMFREL, covering all crucial activities taking place from October 01, 2008 to September 30, 2008, to the public, especially to our concerned stakeholders. The results of the report are indebted to numerous staff, local networks, local observers, and activists who committed to serve as volunteers during the 2008 period and to carry out the activities through thick and thin together to expose COMFREL mission and goal into reality. Their work included advocacy, radio programs, public forums, trainings, publication and election monitoring. COMFREL fielded more than 10,000 local observers, covering more than 60% of all polling and vote counting stations in the July 27, 2008 National Assembly elections. COMFREL engaged in advocacy for improvements to the legal framework and conducted voter education through dissemination of printed materials and broadcasts and political forums/debates on political platforms.

I wish to extend our appreciation for the courtesy and cooperation extended to us by members of the National Assembly, commune council, the National Election Committee and other authorities. I also wish to thank media organizations, political parties and groups as well as other election stakeholders.

I wish to express our special gratitude and pay tribute to partners and donors: Oxfam Novib/Netherlands, Forum Syd/Sweden, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), Japanese Embassy/KUSANONE Fund, Trocaire/Ireland, the German Embassy, the British Embassy, the Danish Embassy/Danida (Danish Agency for International Development), the UN Development Program (UNDP)-Cambodia, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) through the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and One World Action.

In whole, this 2008 report highlights you with nine parts, descriptive of overall picture and activities implemented by all staff in every COMFREL Unit in 2008.

Upon one month to another, each monthly report from every section of COMFREL showed data inputs responding to yearly program with high appreciative outputs. Some outcomes and impacts were noticed both at national and grassroots levels. In 2008 out of COMFREL's overall performance is a good sign in terms of organizational preparation and strategic planning toward a beginning good undertaking of the 2008 National Assembly election-observing project. In all, increased awareness among Cambodian people and voters every year, likewise this year 2008, is our incentive to further encourage their participation, either social or political routine.

In sum, on behalf of COMFREL management, may I thank and appreciate those who are part of COMFREL ongoing activities and those who share support of our vision and mission from within and outside Cambodia.

Phnom Penh,

KOUL Panha
Executive Director
COMFREL

I. Executive Summary

COMFREL fulfilled its mandate to implement the core program activities related to *Promotion of Democracy through Reform and Strengthening Citizen Participation in Democratic Governance*. Additionally, successful efforts were made to carry out special projects related to the 2008 National Assembly (NA) elections for the period between 1 September 2007 and 30 October 2008, which contributed to the impact of the work.

In carrying its program, COMFREL organized and engaged with other stakeholders vigorously, in improving the environment, administration, legal frameworks and building capacity. This helped practices to become more open, transparent and accessible, whilst also increasing awareness and knowledge within its target groups as well as changing attitudes. COMFREL is placed in a crucial position as a resource and mobilization center of civil society, in creating working groups and organizing workshops and debates on draft laws and draft regulations. Such laws and regulations include amendments to the NA election laws/regulations, the Decentralization & De-concentration organic/election laws in relation to provincial and district councilors, National Budget Law and Criminal Procedure. For instance, as a result, the major non-ruling parties and election-monitoring organizations (EMOs) endorsed the election reform and legal recommendations in regarding with NEC regulation; 3 of its 14 main key recommendations were officially recognized and accepted by the National Election Committee (NEC) that included those into its revised Regulations and Procedures to ensure neutral, transparent, free and fair elections in the country.

The NEC was open to political parties and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), COMFREL providing recommendations on its draft Election Regulations and Procedures. However, legislators and the NEC did not improve crucial legal frameworks in relation to the election reform such as the system, mechanisms, procedures and regulations related to the following points: the electoral system/formula; the election complaint mechanism; campaign finance; gender quotas for electoral representatives; equal/equitable access to media; and voter registration/lists.

After holding workshops and meetings, COMFREL noted that political party agents seemed to have a better understanding, as compared with previous elections of the complaints process such as providing details on a complaint, presenting evidence, finding witnesses, respecting deadlines and working towards reconciliation. The NEC followed up the workshop recommendations and decided to produce the NEC Reminder Notification on *“Receiving and Resolving Complaints at Commune Election Commissions (CECs) during the Electoral Campaign Phase”*¹. There was a reduction in the number of rejections of complaints regarding the election process, in particular during the election campaign period. 45% of complaints (a total of 200) were still rejected (in the 2003 elections, 80% of complaints were rejected). However, the acceptance and resolution of election complaints still face constraints. NEC officials still maintain that there was “not enough evidence” to accept election complaints. The NEC still does not have in place, a professional and legitimate investigation mechanism for further inquiry with concerned parties and the collection of evidence prior to the start of a hearing.

The Organic Law and the Election Law on legalizing and legitimizing the provincial, municipal and district councils were passed and promulgated by the National Assembly (NA) and the King. The same formula and indirect electoral system are to apply for this “election” of provincial and district councils, with the party list system and the constituency consisting of members based largely on the share by parties of seats in the commune councils and the NA which suggests to use this constituency to “elect” political party then the outcome is totally predictable. The major key recommendations of our civil society groups have not been accepted and inputted for these laws. The remaining issues are the needs of direct election system, effective roles and functions on the local administration and budget. The government, nonetheless, endorsed the quota for women, which suggested there is at least 1 female deputy governor in each province, municipality, district or khan. As a result, 23 female deputy provincial governors and 169 female deputy district governors were appointed.

¹ Dated July 3, 2008

In cooperation with other civil society organizations (CSOs),² 4 half-day political party debates/forums were held from June to July 2008 in Phnom Penh, focusing mainly on 4 topics:

- 1) Land Conflict and Resettlement;
- 2) Natural Resource Management;
- 3) Anti-Corruption Law and its Enforcement; and
- 4) Three Priorities of Political Party Platforms.

These had as a main objective, provision of space for civil society and political parties (that had officially registered with the NEC) to take part in the elections, to debate and find effective platforms to tackle the above topics. Each debate/forum had 150–300 participants from 10 political parties (except the Cambodian People's Party (CPP)), as well as local residents from the provinces, students, NGO actors and donors. These activities contributed to more active political party campaign activities and better access to media for major political parties (state media and some private radio stations). The number of complaints rejected and cases of vote buying decreased. However, compared with the period before the election campaign, there was still obstruction of access to public places. Though, the CPP did not take part in the forums, the CPP still highlighted core issues raised by the debate forums by pledging to push an amendment on the Anti-Corruption Law within the first year term of the government, if the party won the election and led the 4th mandate government. Follow up the promise, as an article released by the Radio Free Asia (RFA) on 26 September 2008, Prime Minister Hun Sen said that the newly formed government led by the CPP would push adaptation of the Anti-Corruption Law after the Criminal Code. Feedback from the smaller political parties on political party debate forums conducted by COMFREL overwhelmingly claimed that COMFREL is a non-biased, independent and cooperative CSO, since all political parties, regardless of their size, were equally invited to disseminate their opinions and political platforms in the forums.

COMFREL's work contributed to the increase of transparency and confidence of citizens and election stakeholders participating in the election process with regard to the following key result:

The report of the European Union (EU) Election Observation Mission (EOM) Cambodia 2008, said that *"COMFREL also conducted a Parallel Voter Tabulation (PVT) based on a sample of 1,319 polling stations, resulting in a positive impact on transparency of the elections"*.

According to COMFREL's assessment on the fourth mandate NA elections of 2008, there was increased knowledge and understanding of voter rights and responsibilities and democracy. Although, this did not eliminate or reduce the fear of many citizens and of some potential candidates in some localities, and at certain stages in the electoral cycle, the number of voters participating has increased, due largely to the increase in population. Nonetheless, the turnout or the percentage of voters has remarkably declined from 83% in 2003 to 75% for this election. This is a worrying sign needing more investigation to establish the extent to which this is due to voter apathy, a sense that the outcome was inevitable, or that various deterrents or impediments played a large part. An increased number of voters faced obstruction and complicated procedures during registration, voter list clean-up and during the polling period. At Polling Stations voters did understand how to mark the ballot correctly, as the resulting number of invalid ballots was less than 1.5% of the total used ballots.

The number of cases of violence, intimidation and threats had reduced compared with previous elections, but remains sufficiently high to still create a general environment of fear, which was felt more strongly in some, localities that had faced alleged negative election-related incidents. There was a decrease in the number of irregularities regarding technical administration and complaints inside the polling and counting stations (around 2,000 cases), as compared with the 2003 NA elections. In addition, a ballot paper was available for voters with visual impairment.

² NGO Forum, Cambodian Human Rights Action (CHRA), Development Partners in Action (DPA) and others

Technical election administration/performance generally complied with the electoral calendar as well as with some duties and tasks outlined in the Article 16 of the Law on Election of Members of the NA. However, there was still a lack of accountability and political commitment to ensure fair elections regarding rights of eligible voters, complaints, access to media, the issuing of Form 1018, distribution of Voter Information Notices (VINs), commune authority and campaign financing. The announcement by the NEC, the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications and the government on banning the use of text messaging (SMS) through telephone during voting was not enacted for this election, which allowed COMFREL's networks to report directly cases on serious irregularities (murder and political violence) and election results to the database system at COMFREL's headquarters.

Major political parties with seats in the National assembly (NA) increased efforts to expand the number of titular female candidates on the candidate list. The CPP had 20 female candidates, equal to 16% (increased from 14 in 2003) and the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) had 17 female candidates, equal to 14% (increased from 14 in 2003). Of the 123 NA seats, 20 female candidates were elected as 4th mandate parliamentarians. Among the 20 elected candidates, 16 were from the CPP (of 90 in total), 4 were from the SRP (out of 26 in total). Female candidates from the Human Rights Party (HRP), Funcinpec and the Norodom Ranariddh Party (NRP) did not win any seats.

There was increased attention by political parties towards youth participation in the political arena. In the 2008 election, there was endorsement from major parties, namely the CPP, the SRP, Funcinpec, the HRP and the NRP to cooperate with, and actively join COMFREL and other NGOs project activities on youth political participation. The 5 main political parties (CPP, SRP, HRP, NRP and Funcinpec) mentioned that they all have structured youth movements in their parties.³

There was an increase in the number of youth election observers for this election. In the 2008 NA elections, 5,276 observers, (67% of the total number of COMFREL observers) were under 30 years old. Youth election observers from the Neutral and Impartial Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (NICFEC) numbered 2,100, (27% of the total number of 7,612 NICFEC election observers). 551 youth election observers were from the Khmer Youth Association (KYA); 1,166 from the Youth Council of Cambodia (YCC) and 65 from Youth Resources Development Program (YRDP). Most participated voluntarily in election activities without asking for a fee and were committed to working with great physical and moral strength.

There was also a noteworthy increase of citizen participation in local governance in COMFREL's target areas. The local watchdogs could not only conduct the meetings with commune councils, but also made significant strides forward in engaging in local governance. The local watchdogs were provided space and support by local people to convey ideas and issues for meetings with commune councilors.

According to COMFREL's Impact and Evaluation conducted by Elisabeth Scheper in December 2007, it was found that among the 20 interviewed national level stakeholders⁴, (who were asked to share their own perspective on COMFREL's programs), almost everyone initially named COMFREL's daily radio talk show "*Voice of Civil Society*" (VoC), due to the fact "it approaches important issues with high news value from different angles".

COMFREL conducted a survey on the radio program. The survey result showed that COMFREL's daily VoC radio program has been reaching across the country thanks to an increasing number of listeners. Based on the survey, it was found that nearly 32% of around 8 million voters, are aware of and listen to COMFREL's radio program. Meanwhile, such radio programs also allows politicians to become more aware of voters' needs and living challenges through the callers phone-ins and their comments on daily issues and the performance of elected officials.

Almost all of COMFREL's press releases concerned with government and parliamentary watch are receiving more attention and are frequently used by a variety of stakeholders such as political

³ Based on meetings between COMFREL delegation and party members

⁴ including Ministry of Interior (MoI)/NEC, MPs, United Nations (UN) agencies and civil society leaders

parties, elected officials, civil society and media (both electronic and print media). There is a notable increase in voters' feedback on COMFREL's Parliamentary and government watch reports via the Voter Voice radio call-in show. Callers agreed with COMFREL's report findings on elected officials' performance and fulfillment of their electoral platform promises. Most callers claimed that some Members of Parliament did not take care to resolve problems in their constituency, such as had been noted by the people from the COMFREL network. Thus, voters, through this Voter Voice, have appealed to parliamentarians to take effective action in coping with local issues for the sake of voters' interest and the development of the country. Some callers asked COMFREL how to contact MPs and how to get information from them.

II. Specific Objectives

1. **Lobbying and Advocacy/Legal Study:** To increase civil society input into the development of legal frameworks related to the selection of senate members and village chiefs, and into electoral and political reforms that comply with sound democratic principles.
2. **Media and Campaign (MCN):** To intensify campaigning and gather support from the public, especially through the media, in advocating for electoral and political reforms.
3. **Local Network and Forums:** To increase civic engagement with elected officials in the decision-making process.
4. **Monitoring of Post-Election and Voter Voice:** To increase transparency in the performance of national elected officials and ensure fulfillment of the electoral platform.
5. **Civic/Voter Education and Gender:** To increase the level of people's awareness and understanding of their rights and responsibilities, especially women's political rights, with particular regard to participation in democratization and democratic governance.
6. **Special Project on National Assembly Election Activity:** To increase transparency and confidence in the national elections process while discouraging violations and irregularities.

III. Completed Activities

1. Advocacy and Lobbying/ Legal Study

In close cooperation with NEC officials and some legislators, COMFREL followed up and observed public debates and consultations on draft laws and procedures as follows: the NEC's Regulations and Procedures for the 2008 NA elections, Law on the Election of Members of the NA, the draft Organic Law and the draft on the Demonstration Law.

1.1. *The NEC's Regulations and Procedures for the 2008 NA elections*

COMFREL carried out in-depth study and discussed the NEC's Regulations and Procedures for the 2008 NA elections with election stakeholders, including EMOs and political parties. COMFREL produced and presented the recommendations on the part of the election campaign stated in the draft of the 2008 Election Regulations and Procedures. At least 14 key points were produced;

- 1) prohibition on massive transportation of voters to the polling stations;
- 2) neutrality of government officials;
- 3) vote buying;
- 4) NGOs' request to the NEC for the usage of state-run media;
- 5) determination on the price of hiring private-run media;
- 6) request duration for public campaign places;
- 7) checking and broadcasting of income and expenses of political campaigns;
- 8) party agents and election observers' rights on checking a confidential booth;
- 9) second assistants' roles on polling/counting day;
- 10) party agents and observers' rights on mobile movement inside a polling station;
- 11) too many instructions by polling officials to party agents and observers;

- 12) difference in ballot figures should be regarded as an irregularity;
- 13) NEC's investigating mechanism;
- 14) offenses that are not reconciled.

COMFREL submitted these recommendations to all NEC Commissioners, NEC's Secretary General and other election stakeholders in various political parties. COMFREL convinced NEC legal officials and commissioners on a number of points through meetings and a series of COPCEL forums.

COMFREL legal officer and the Executive Director joined 13 discussion/lobbying meetings with legal experts, and heads from EU Election Observation Mission (including one British law maker), NEC commissioners, NDI delegations (including two US house representatives), Australia law makers (some senators and house representatives) and UNDP, in regarding with these legal recommendations, analysis of development of democracy and political and election situation.



(Left) Mr. Koul Panha, COMFREL executive director, and Mr. Sok Sam Oeun, vice director of COMFREL Board of Directors, discussing with NEC leaders to raise some recommendations related to the election reform

1.2. Organic Law of District and Provincial Council and Decentralization and De-concentration

COMFREL conducted discussions on the draft Organic Law in regard to elections and provincial and district councils. COMFREL organized the 3rd roundtable meeting on the Organic Law at COMFREL's office, with the Civil Society Working Group on Organic Law (around 20 CSOs and individuals). During the meeting, there was discussion on finalizing commonly shared recommendations related to the electoral system, quota method and key functions of provincial/district councils.⁵

To gather input for recommendations, COMFREL sent the finalized statement and recommendations to the 123 members of the parliament. COMFREL also continued to actively participate in the CSO-government quarterly meeting at the Ministry of Interior, Department of Local Administration and attended a series of meetings of the Decentralization & De-concentration Working Group (DDWG). This Working Group, consisting of CSO participants, follows discussions on Decentralization & De-concentration and the meetings gave updated information on the organic law.

COMFREL attended the consultative workshops on key concepts of the draft law on Administration and Management of the Capital, Provinces, Municipalities, Districts and Khans conducted by the Ministry of Interior on 3-6 December 2007 in Sihanoukville.

1.3. Seminars and Press Conferences (SPC)

COMFREL Education, Network and Advocacy units jointly organized a workshop on **“Women's Empowerment for the 4th mandate Parliamentary Election”** on 28 March 2008 at the Cambodiana Hotel, Phnom Penh, with 67 (35 female) participants from government agencies, the Ministry of Women Affairs, two woman legislators, the NEC, senior woman politicians from political parties, leaders of NGOs and Media agents. The workshop focused primarily on:

⁵ which are stated in the newly adopted law on Territorial Administration of Capital, Provinces/Municipalities and Districts/Khans

- a. Encouragement and request for political parties to place female and male candidates in a sandwich system on the top candidate list for the 4th mandate parliamentary election;
- b. Increase of the number of women at the decision-making level; and
- c. Conducting a joint campaign to draw attention, encourage and motivate more women to participate in the parliamentary election

In cooperation with other NGOs, COMFREL organized 2 workshops:

- 1st workshop was held on 12-13 February to have inform more election stakeholders, director of legal department of NEC, senior leaders and politicians of 11 political parties, and lawyers and engage their concern over the recommendations on the draft of the Election Regulations and Procedures, at the Imperial Garden Hotel, Phnom Penh, with 20 participants from political parties, (CPP, Khmer Democratic Party, Funcinpec, Hang Dara Democratic Movement Party, HRP, NRP, SRP and 6 engaged NGOs and other parties (CSD, CDP, LAC, US Embassy, NICFEC and PDP center).
- 2nd workshop was held on June 5, 2008 and focused on electoral complaints. There were 29 participants in total, of whom 4 were from NRP, 2 from Funcinpec, 3 from SRP, 2 from Hang Dara Movement.
- Produced a study book on recommendations on the Election Law, particularly on the Election of Members of the NA and recommendations on election reform. 3,000 books were printed and distributed to legislators, government officials, political parties and CSOs.



COMFREL workshop on Recommendations on Draft of the Election Regulations and Procedures at the Imperial Garden Hotel on 12-13 February 2008

2. Media and Campaign

To support advocacy/lobbying campaign, COMFREL continues to produce bulletins, press releases, newspaper articles and broadcasting as the followings:

2.1. COMFREL Neak Kloam Meul Bulletin

12,000 copies of 3 volumes (No 33, 34 and 35) of COMFREL's *Neak Kloam Meul* Bulletin were published. These covered key topics such as the primary report on the pre-election period of the 4th mandate, NA elections July 2008 and included the joint statements of CSOs. COMFREL failed to produce its bulletin 32 merely because the Media Unit team was so busy organizing political debate forums for the 2008 National Assembly elections.



3 volumes of Neak Kloam Meul Bulletin produced by COMFREL in 2008

The copies of the 3 issues of the bulletin were distributed to COMFREL's local networks (provincial/municipal executive group members/secretaries, district contact persons and commune activists), government, election officials, political parties, CSOs/NGOs and Embassies.

Meanwhile, COMFREL also published and disseminated 4,000 VoC stickers to the public such as voters, radio listeners, NGOs staff, Freedom of Information Group (FOI) and COMFREL networks. Further, COMFREL Education and Gender Units jointly produced and distributed materials such as stickers, picture books, pamphlets and question and answer booklets (see section 5 below).

2.2. Press releases (PRS)

COMFREL produced **46 press statements, (including press releases, joint statements and appeals) in relation to COMFREL's advocacy issues.** The content included indigenous groups and elections, concerns over political intimidation and obstruction prior to the preparation stage of the NA elections, concerns over the arrest of a political party activist which occurred in Kampong Thom province and other press releases with relevant election issues and activities.

2.3. Newspaper article and broadcasting (NAB)

COMFREL hosted a roundtable discussion and call-in show aired live and broadcast on various radio stations⁶. There were 690 broadcasting hours and 759 hours of live airtime, with 1084 (75 female) callers/discussants, 35 (1 female) Board of Director speakers, 359 (74 female) speakers from CSOs and 91 (38 female) facilitators from COMFREL's central staff.

Weekly Watch radio program on Roles of the NA Commissions at COMFREL Studio on 19 September 2008



3. Local Networks and Forums

3.1. Training for secretaries, local contacts and activists (TSL)

COMFREL conducted 3 2-day-follow-up meetings to provincial group members/secretaries, some members of the Board of Directors and COMFREL central staff, comprising 93 (43 female) people, at COMFREL's central office. Participants had an opportunity to share quarterly activity reports and information about the political and human rights situation at national and local levels, and to discuss lessons learnt and COMFREL's work plan.

3.2. Local public forums (LPF)

COMFREL conducted 5 LPFs in 5 communes, located in Kratie, Banteay Meanchey, Svay Rieng, Kampong Chhnang and Siem Reap provinces, with 314 (111 female) participants, including 25 (2 female) commune councilors, 3 district governors, 214 (96 female) citizens, 39 (4 female) village chiefs, 7 police post officers, 6 (1 female) NGO representatives and 20 (8 female) people from COMFREL's networks. The main issues of the above-mentioned forums were focused on the following:

1. Land dispute between local authorities and villagers: In one forum it was raised that a deputy police had seized his local resident's land and kept it as a private asset;
2. Environmental sanitation services: Residents raised their major concern over the sanitation service which they felt had become much worse than before;

⁶ (FM 105 PNP, FM 102 PNP, FM 90, PNP, FM 90.25 Battambang, FM 88.5 Kampong Thom, FM 102.5 Preah Vihear and FM 98.5 Pursat)

3. Health service: Local forum participants complained about rural health services regarding mother and child consultation, birth prolonging, lack of medicine in commune health centers, health centers which are far away from their home and the high cost of health service charges;
4. Infrastructure; (no further information provided)
5. Local security and discipline services: Local residents who took part in the forums said that there were a lot of gambling, drug abuse, problems of gangsters as well as domestic violence;
6. Channel and water pipe: They complained about a lack of channels for irrigation, making it difficult for the whole community to grow crops;
7. Illegal tree logging.



(From left to right) 2 of 5 COMFREL local public forums between Commune Councilors and Local Residents held in Kampong Chhnang and Banteay Meanchey provinces on 22 and 25 September 2008 respectively

3.3. Follow-up forum

COMFREL conducted 1 follow-up forum in Ampel Pheam village, Rorlang Chork commune, Samrong Tong district of Kampong Speu province on 10 March 2008. The forum was held with 39 (12 female) participants, including 19 (9 female) citizens, 8 (1 female) people from COMFREL's networks and 12 (2 female) commune councilors. Various issues were raised in seeking solutions from commune councils such as:

- a) *Land dispute*: A commune councilor promised to coordinate between citizens and the powerful to sort out land disputes without having to resort to the court system.
- b) *Water resource*: Some small dams were built to manage and retain water for appropriate use and commune councilors said that water communities would be reinforced.
- c) *Murder cases*: For murder issues, commune councilors tried to calm down the situation and cooperated with the police to find the suspect.

3.4. Research (including monitoring of commune council performance)

With regard to the research including the monitoring of commune council performance, COMFREL have achieved the following activities:

- Organized research/monitoring team with 7 staff from COMFREL's various units.
- Prepared the report on the monitoring of *Neak Kloam Meul* bulletin for the Media Unit and Monitoring Unit.
- Finalized case study report on "Women in Politics" in Kampot and Siem Reap provinces.

3.5. Citizen Participation in Local Governance Project (CPLG)

a. CPLG Working Group meeting

10 CPLG's partners convened on 15 January 2008 to share information of CPLG's activities in the previous trimester. The meeting also discussed the political context which reflects on CPLG's work and the policy environment, report outcomes and effectiveness of the project, identity of learning outcomes and strengths and weaknesses of the project. There was also a discussion on alternatives and the way forward for CPLG. The meeting concluded the followings:

- *CPLG's Work and Policy Environment:* There are pre-arranged political party structures from the top down to the grassroots level within political groups, youth groups, statistic screening, registration, and issues related to cleaning voter lists. In this special circumstance, the involvement of people in any groups could fall under the censorship of the authorities.
- *Outcomes and Effectiveness of Project:*
 - Local politics: Diverse political choices make authority take more care of their residents to maintain their political clientele.
 - National politics: The separation of the royalist party into smaller parties is creating political chaos.
 - Organic Law: The coming Organic Law implementation could draw the focus of donors and others from development to the commune level. The government expects that the Organic Law could be passed in mid-2008.
 - Provincial and district leaders are expected to be elected in 2009 and 2010.
- *Strength and Weakness of the CPLG project:* Strengthening networking exchange ideas and exposure visits. Its staff capability, local issues brought to be discussed and addressed, recognized and appreciated by local authorities were considered strengths; while the weakness raised concerned the report writing and system, communication and transportation means.

CPLG's partners and its project staff also attended the CPLG regional partner's meeting in Siem Reap from 20-24 January 2008.

b. Capacity building for COMFREL activists/local watchdogs on grassroots advocacy

Organized a training course on Grassroots Advocacy with 24 (9 female) participants, including district contact persons, commune activists, local watchdogs from 5 provinces, project officers from KYA in Prey Veng and staff from the People's Center for Development and Peace (PDP-center in Banteay Meanchey and Siem Reap provinces on 17-19 December 2007. The training was held in Kampong Cham province; it focused mainly on theories of advocacy, the cycle of advocacy, study tour within the community, reflection and actual activities during the training.

c. Meetings/Follow-up meeting with commune councils

- There were 6 meetings conducted between former participants of forums and commune councilors in 6 communes in Kampot, Kampong Speu, and Banteay Meanchey province. The discussions focused on electro-shock fishing, drug abuse and commune security, the budget for this construction, the commune health center, security, and illegal fishing, community forestry conservation, the poor education system, gambling, and inflation. For example the discussions and responses of commune councilors:
 - *Community forestry conservation:* Councilors reviewed the demarcation and boundary of community forestry and promised to form a patrol group.
 - *Poor education system:* The councilors asserted that the education system was actually poor, not just in rural areas, but also in the urban areas. If reform was wanted, one had to consider touching the government education policy.
 - *Gambling:* The councilors said that gambling had stopped in some cases, especially in populated areas. However, they also expressed concern over widespread gambling once again, during the coming Khmer New Year.
 - *Overall inflation in the country:* The councilor stressed that inflation had an impact on all people throughout the country and expected the government to take responsive action.

3.6. Research study on decentralization implementation and publication

- The working paper series related to *“Citizen Participation in Local Governance: Experiences from Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines”* was published by COMFREL in Khmer. 200 copies were printed and then distributed to partners and local activists, and also posted on the COMFREL website.
- Published and distributed 100 copies of the book *“Assessment of the First Term of Decentralization in Cambodia, Commune Council and Citizens’ Participation for the period of 2002-2007”*.
- Finalized the draft literature review and report on *“Assessment of Current Decentralized Commune Governance in Cambodia, Policy Practices and Future Direction”* and prepared for printing, the findings of study research on Decentralization Implementation, conducted by the COMFREL research team.
- Finalized the Khmer version of the draft report on *“Decentralization Implementation in 5 provinces: Kampong Thom, Siem Reap, Battambang, Kampong Speu and Kampong Cham”*.

4. Monitoring of Post-Election and Voter Voice

4.1. Government watch: fulfillment of political platforms and promises

COMFREL collected and compiled chronological data and information on monitoring of the political platform for the Third Mandate of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) in both English and Khmer. COMFREL also produced press releases related to the fulfillment of political platforms and promises.

4.2. Parliamentary watch: National Assembly Performance (NAP)

In the first team, 24 COMFREL network monitors continued to observe MP activities through field visits to their own and other constituencies in 24 provinces/cities. The main purposes for the missions of the MPs were: visiting, gift giving and project inaugurations, strengthening internal party networks, attending public forums organized by national and international NGOs, intervening in and helping people solve their problems, conducting group missions and accompanying leaders to hold ceremonies in the party, and attend conferences or groundbreaking inaugurations. Monitors were assigned to contact and communicate with MPs, branch offices of political parties, and MP offices in the constituencies for additional information. Afterwards, they had to complete the Mission Observation Checklist for the monthly report to COMFREL.



Monitoring of the fourth legislature of the National Assembly's first plenary session at the NA hall on 24 September 2008

In the second team, COMFREL's central office observers attended 14 NA sessions during the adoption of 24 draft laws, 1 law amendment, and 1 extraordinary session. COMFREL continued to contact NA commissions, the NA Secretary General, political parties and MPs in order to obtain information regarding the meeting process, discussion on draft laws, MP activities and other relevant data. COMFREL also continued to collect information from many other kinds of sources, such as newspapers and radio broadcasts, in order to obtain information on MP activities.

4.3. Voter voice through forums

COMFREL organized two youth voter voice forums focusing on the fulfillment of elected officials or political parties as follows:

- 1st forum on youth voter's voice on the fulfillment of elected officials or political parties, focusing on job creation and training for youth was held on 19 January at Phnom Bros hotel, Kampong Cham province. The forum was presided over by His Excellency Monh Saphan, Funcinpec MP for Kampong Cham province and His Excellency Mao Monyvann, SRP MP for Kampong Cham province. None of the invited MPs from the CPP joined the forum. Afterwards, COMFREL issued a press release on the finding of the youth forum in Kampong Cham (details of these findings are contained in the press release issued on 28 February).
- 2nd forum on fulfillment of elected officials or political parties towards job creation and training for youth was held on 12 March (delayed from the February schedule due to the late permission from the provincial authority) in Kandal province. The forum was presided over by His Excellency Khieu San, Funcinpec MP for Kandal province, and His Excellency Chan Cheng, SRP MP for Kandal province. None of the invited MPs from the CPP joined the forum. It should be noted that, the location was changed due to verbal intimidation from the local authorities.



(From left to right) 2 Youth Voter Voice Forums on Fulfillment of Elected Officials or Political Parties held at Phnom Bros hotel, Kampong Cham Province and Kandal province on 19 January and 12 March 2008 respectively

COMFREL monitoring officer took part in the National Seminar on Youth and Women's Participation in Election: Challenges and Future Methods, organized by CDRI on 05 February at the Phnom Penh Hotel.

5. Education and Gender

5.1. Printed Materials and Distribution (PMD)

In terms of civic education, COMFREL produced and distributed voter education printed materials as follows:

- Distributed 1,520 books "Empower gender": Emphasis on gender quota for elected representative/holding political position to commune councilors during two trainings, *Strengthening Women's Capacity in Leadership and Decision Making*, held on 3-5 and 7-9 December 2007 in Kampong Cham district, Kampong Cham province; this included a youth forum, CPWP activities including women taking steps forward event, local public forums, seminars, trainings, for local and international NGOs, donors, embassies, members of the national assembly, decision-makers and political parties.
- 5,000 copies of 2008 calendar , *"I Vote for the Party that Provides Opportunity and Supports Women's Roles"*;
- 5,000 copies of the picture book on *"Why We Need Women in Decision Making"*;

- 4,000 t-shirts with the slogan “I Vote for the Party that Provides Opportunity and Supports Women’s Roles” which were distributed to attendees who answered the question correctly during COMFREL’s dissemination sessions in Kampong Cham province and through CPWP member activities (trainings, forums, meetings, and other).
- Printed and distributed 30,000 voter guide question and answer booklets on “Civic Education during and after National Election 2008”, 33,125 copies of the picture books on “How to Vote for Women” and “Vote for Women to Help Our Nation”, 300,000 copies of pamphlets on “Smart Voter, Free from Fear and Vote Buying”, and 9,000 stickers on “Voting for Women, Women and Children’s Issues Are to Be addressed”. These were distributed to COMFREL’s networks nationwide (provincial executive group members, district contact persons and commune activists), voters, female voters living in four districts: Donkeo district of Takeo province, Stung Sen district of Kampong Thom province and Saang district of Kandal province and 1 of Battambang’s districts, Equal Access, students, ministries and other NGOs networks.



A variety of voter education materials published and distributed by COMFREL during this fiscal year

5.2. Radio Call-in Show (RCS)

COMFREL hosted a 60 minute radio call-in show, aired live on FM 105, FM 90, FM 90.25 and FM 88.5. There were 87 broadcasts of two programs, namely “Voter Voice” and “Women Can Do It” every Monday and Tuesday morning. The topics of the program were chiefly focused on up-to-date information on the 2008 NA elections; issues concerning youth, disabled people and women, as well as the monthly watch report on NA performance. On the radio program there was a talk-back discussion, which allowed eligible voters to phone in to the show to share ideas, experience and/or to raise questions. For “Women Can Do It”, the program mainly discussed “Women’s Empowerment for Candidates of the 4th Mandated Parliamentary Election”, “The Importance and Value of Women’s Participation in Politics”, “Women and the 2008 Election ” and “Procedures of Parliamentary Election 2008 concerning Women’s Participation”.



COMFREL Radio Call-in Show, namely Women Can Do It, on Women’s Participation in Politics broadcast from COMFREL studio on 08 July 2008

5.3 TV/Radio spot (TRS)

COMFREL produced TV/radio spots as follows:

- Produced an 11-minute TV/radio educational spot on “Voting for Women to Help Our Nation”, which was aired on two TV channels, CTV 9 and APSARA TV from every Monday to Saturday for 38 times. It was also shown at the women’s public forum in Kampong Cham province and AMARA activity in Battambang province. This spot was also broadcast on FM 105 Mhz, FM90 Mhz, FM90.25, FM 88.5 Mhz on 10 occasions. It was about how to vote for women and the importance of female leaders. It attracted a lot of viewers at that time.

- Broadcast a spot on “*Importance of Women in Standing for Parliamentary Candidates*” and “*How to Vote for Women*” to female commune councilors who had attended the training in Strengthening Women’s Capacity in Leadership and Decision Making on 3-5 and 7-9 December 2007 in Kampong Cham province.

5.4. Empowerment of women in decision making and political participation: Training and forum

- On 23-25 May 2008, COMFREL, one of the CPWP members, conducted a 3-day training on “*Capacity Building of Local Women’s Networks*” to female political party activists of the four political parties (CPP, SRP, FUNCINPEC, and NRP), with 25 female participants in Kampong Siem district, Kampong Cham province. The participants set up COMFREL’s network in order to disseminate voter education in their commune and to attend some activities such women’s public forums, meeting and other.
- COMFREL organized two 3-day trainings on “*Capacity Building of Women in Leadership and Decision-making*” to commune councilors from 2 political parties (CPP and SRP), with 57 participants on 3-5 and 7-9 December 2007. Afterwards, COMFREL followed up on the meeting at commune level, organized by commune councilors who had attended the trainings 6 times (3 times for each meeting), from 29-31 December 2007 and 3-5 January 2008 in Kampong Cham province. There were 152 (62 female) participants from 31 communes.
- COMFREL organized 4 public forums on “*Promoting Women Brings our Family Harmony*” (1 day forum and 3 night forums), with 6,930 (3,690 female) participants. The forums were located in Roang commune, Kosroka commune, Ampil commune, Krola commune, Kean Chrey commune in Kampong Siem district of Kampong Cham province. Key topics raised in the forums were as follows:
 - People’s awareness of the benefits of equal participation and representation of women and men at national level.
 - People’s promotion and support of equal representation of women and men at the decision-making level.

In addition, COMFREL showed a spot on “*Vote for Women to Help Our Nation*” and other spots. After the show, COMFREL raised questions to the participants related to the topics, giving awards to those who answered questions correctly.



3-day training in Capacity Building of Women in Leadership and Decision Making on 3 December 2007 in Kampong Cham province

6. Special Project on National Assembly Election Activity

6.1. Election monitoring

For the 2008 NA elections, COMFREL fully trained and deployed 270 long-term observers operating at district and provincial levels. They covered the full range of electoral observation activities, looking at: cleaning up voter lists; voter registration and updating; voter registration audit; candidate registration; election campaign; political climate at local level; supervision of cooling-off period; polling day/counting and tracking complaints, as well as monitoring the general election climate and helping collate and coordinate reports (regular reports and any special incident reports).

COMFREL successfully deployed around 11,000 observers across the country on polling day of the fourth NA elections. Approximately 8,700 persons (1 per polling station) were assigned to observe the situation outside the relevant polling location (pagodas or schoolyards). They detected and looked carefully for any irregularities and helped voters who were having difficulty finding their name on the voter list or who were not allowed to vote, from 7:30 until 11:00. After that, observers continued their observation inside the polling station until the vote-counting process was concluded.



COMFREL Media officer and a short-term observer observing the process of the July 27, 2008 National Assembly Elections in Phnom Penh

To take part in verifying the election results and understanding the pattern of election regularities, COMFREL specially trained and coached 1,319 observers, on the technique related to the Parallel Voter Tabulation/Quick Count-PVT. They closely observed the situation in 1,319 randomly selected polling stations and rapidly sent the election results and the serious irregularities to COMFREL headquarters. In addition, COMFREL facilitated the participation of 1,419 national and foreign mobile observers in the electoral observation. Moreover, COMFREL had approximately 260 special observers to monitor youth and women's participation in politics, in order to record the number of youth and women taking part in the elections and their point of view regarding election participation

a. Material development

COMFREL core team finalized the SMS training manual, LTOs and STOs manual (manual on election campaign, polling and counting day and checklist for observation of the NA elections 2008). COMFREL developed Parallel Voter Tabulation (PVT) questionnaires and a guideline for the Quick count. The core team also produced training curriculum and methodology, for training LTOs, STOs, NGOs observers, and PVT observers. The T-shirt and stickers were produced and distributed to observers.

b. Training and Deployment of Observers- Long and Short Term Observers

b-1. Training for COMFREL's Master Trainers

45 master trainers, including 21 women, from 24 provinces/municipalities, attended a 2-day-training course. The training course was held on 2-3 July 2008 at West Line School, Phnom Penh. It was presided over by a panel of 9 speakers as follows:

- 2 speakers from the NEC who presented some procedures for the electoral campaign and polling/counting day; complaints; and consolidation of temporary electoral results;
- 1 speaker, an European Union (EU) representative, who presented on the deployment of EU observers;
- 6 COMFREL speakers who presented on skills and methodology to train long/short term observers, skills of observers and reports



Master Training Course on Skills and Methodologies for Training Long/Short Term Observers was conducted on 2 July 2008 at West Line School in Phnom Penh.

b-2. Training for COMFREL's District Trainers

COMFREL short-term observer was deployed to observe irregularities inside the polling station in Phnom Penh on the July 27, 2008 National Elections



COMFREL volunteer observers were doing the data entry on election results at COMFREL headquarters in Phnom Penh in the early evening of polling/counting day.

reduce the amount of management activities of election observers. Most important such its roles include the release of election results to the public and the verification of official election results from the National Election Committee.

After generating the total sample size of 1,319 stations, we used the Stratified Sampling Method to obtain the sample stations in each constituency. COMFREL specially trained and coached 1,319 observers on the technique related to the PVT/Quick Count. The trained observers closely observed the situation in 1,319 randomly selected polling stations and quickly sent election results and reports of serious irregularities to COMFREL headquarters.

After gathering the election results from all observers at target polling stations, the COMFREL database officer started to incorporate the data into COMFREL database system and produced a draft report on PVT election result.

Data collection, data entry and the release of results were carried out on time and as planned by a total of 1,600 people, including 1,319 PVT observers at polling/counting stations, 221 PVT supervisors at district level (district contact persons and their assistants), some provincial level networks and around 60 staff members and volunteers at COMFREL headquarters. Preliminary results were released consecutively, starting from midnight of polling/counting day (July 27, 2008), through the July 28 press conference and July 29, as shown in the charts, press releases and tables. The results (released on July 28) collected from 1,170 of our 1,319 targeted random counting stations only, with a margin of error of 3.6%.

d- Audit of voter list

COMFREL and other partners: National Democratic Institute (NDI), NIFEC and CAS used all efforts to conduct the 2nd (B) Voter Registration Audit (VRA) plan through conducting training course on the 2nd (B) VRA implementation to COMFREL networks; selection of 64 observers from COMFREL networks to implement the 2nd (B) Voter List Audit task and spot checks in some communes of Kampng Chhang province and Phnom Penh municipality to directly supervise the 2nd (B) VRA task implementation in those communes. When all data gathered by the observers were sent to the COMFREL headquarters in Phnom Penh, the data was then checked and cleaned again by COMFREL central staff to ensure its accuracy before being submitted to the Center for Advance Study (CAS) for the data entry and analysis. Meanwhile, COMFREL central staff diligently participated in a series of meetings with National Democratic Institute (NDI), NIFEC, CAS and UNDP representative to discuss the reporting system, data cleaning and the 2nd (B) VRA progress activities..

e- Media monitoring

COMFREL media monitoring produced the manual for media monitoring, and training methodology and developed a database program for media monitoring. COMFREL conducted training on Media monitoring for 10 media-monitoring volunteers. COMFREL monitored media stations such as TVK, CTN (TV) and Radio station FM 95MHz, FM 102MHz, FM 105 MHz, AM 918, Radio France International (RFI), Radio Free Asia (RFA) and Voice of America (VOA). The findings on the media monitoring were incorporated into the database. Three reports on the findings of the media monitoring were released.



COMFREL Media Monitoring volunteer was scrutinizing and taking note of Cambodian Prime Minister's speech via TVK on the day prior to the election campaign of the July 27, 2008 National Assembly elections.

f-. Follow up complaints

COMFREL contacted the NEC's Legal Service Department to follow up on complaint reports from Provincial Electoral Committees (PEC) and Commune Electoral Committees (CECs) in all provinces/municipalities, and observe the hearings such as.

- 9 July 2008: Followed up on a hearing of the defamation case brought by Mr. Hor Namhong against Mr. Sam Rainsy at the Phnom Penh Municipal Court.
- 16, 23, 28 and 29 July 2008: Observed two hearings for resolving 16 cases related to political campaign activities between SRP and CPP, as well as irregularities on cooling and polling days at the NEC premises.
- 24 July 2008: Observed a hearing of a SRP complaint on the tearing of a SRP poster at the Cambodian Constitutional Council.
- 30 July 2008: Observed a public gathering by the SRP to protest against electoral misconduct at the SRP headquarters in Phnom Penh.
- 26, 27 and 28 August 2008: Attended a public hearing on the Resolution of Complaints brought by the SRP and HRP against the preliminary vote result at the Constitutional Council.

g. Press conferences and report launching workshop

g-1 Press conferences

- 2 July 2008: In close cooperation with NICFEC and Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC), COMFREL launched a press conference on the *5th Preliminary Monitoring Report on the Atmosphere of the 2008 Election Campaign-Period* at the Sunway Hotel. National and international journalists, members of civil society organizations, Cambodia-based embassies, and electoral stakeholders joined the press conference. The conference focused mainly on disseminating findings of electoral irregularities, the general situation during the campaign period as well as political violence in terms of murder of political party activists, verbal and non-verbal intimidation upon local grassroots party members.
- 17 July 2008: In close cooperation with NICFEC and CHRAC, COMFREL launched a press conference on *"Civil Society Coalition Calls for an End of Political Violence during Electoral Campaign Period"* at the Sunway Hotel, with such participants as national and international journalists, members of civil society organizations, representatives of Cambodia-based embassies, and electoral stakeholders. The conference was primarily about the joint concerns of the civil society coalition over political violence upon political party activists during the campaign period as well as an urgent request for non-violent activities by all political parties against one another during the campaign phase prior to the polling/counting day.
- 25 July 2008: In close cooperation with NICFEC, CHRAC, COMFREL organized another press conference on *"Pre-Election Assessment"* at the COMFREL central office, which was joined by 60 participants from national and international NGOs, journalists, representatives

of some Cambodia-based embassies, and reporters of election-concerned institutions. On that day, the Civil Society Coalition, including COMFREL as a member, issued a joint statement on *“Atmosphere prior to the 2008 Election of Members of the National Assembly”*, appraising the atmosphere prior to the elections as tense and insecure caused by political violence and threats. There were many questions related to the election situation prior to the polling/counting day by national and international journalists who covered this joint statement into their daily editions.

- 27 July 2008 (polling/counting day): In cooperation with PEFOC, J, COMFREL issued a press briefing on *“Polling/Counting Day”*, around 18:00 at the COMFREL central office, with 50 participants from national and internal NGOs, journalists, representatives of some Cambodia-based embassies, and reporters of election-concerned institutions. The press briefing mainly described preliminary findings on electoral irregularities occurring nationwide on cooling and polling/counting days found by COMFREL in all 24 provinces/municipalities. The press briefing attracted a lot of media attention with many questions from the national and local journalists related to the irregularities. The briefing was covered in their daily print editions, as well as broadcast.
- 28 July 2008: In close cooperation with international observer groups, namely ANFREL and PEFOC, J, COMFREL launched a press conference on *“Preliminary and Partial Voting/Counting Report and PVT Result”* at the COMFREL central office. There were 60 participants from national and international NGOs, journalists, representatives of some Cambodia-based embassies, and reporters of election-concerned institutions.



Press conference on Preliminary and Partial Voting/Counting Report and PVT Results at COMFREL central office on 28 July 2008

g-2 Reporting

COMFREL produced the important reports:

- Report on Media Monitoring October 2007 - January 2008;
- Preliminary report on the Pre-2008 Election Environment;
- Preliminary report on Candidate and Political Parties Registration for 2008 NA Elections;
- Report on the Preliminary Findings and Conclusion on Cooling and Polling/Counting Days;
- Report on the Complaint Resolution Process Regarding the Preliminary Vote Result;
- Draft Final Assessment and Report on the 2008 National Assembly Elections

6.2. Strengthening Youth Political Participation and Monitoring of Youth Political Participation

At the beginning of the project (in January and February 2008), COMFREL's delegation met with the 5 main political parties' youth leaders, including the CPP, the SRP, Funcinpec, the HRP and the NRP. This was to discuss cooperation in conducting training courses to involve Cambodian youth in politics as well as feedback and fruitful recommendations from political parties on the election process and COMFREL's task.

COMFREL delegation hosted a meeting with Funcinpec youth leaders to discuss cooperation in conducting training courses in bid to involve Cambodian youth in politics.



6.2.1. Training

COMFREL produced its training manual for youth political party agents and election observers. The contents were:

1. Understanding democracy and basic principles of human rights and importance of youth's roles in participating in democracy and elections;
2. Youth leadership and advocacy with political parties;
3. Voter education (electoral mechanism awareness): civic (youth) power in decision making;
4. Understanding the electoral process and mechanisms: regulations and procedures of election law and election observation skills.

The manual was used as a tool for training youth activists. COMFREL conducted 10 trainings for 291 trainees from the CPP, Funcinpec, SRP, HRP, NRP and COMFREL's local networks.

6.2.2. Radio program

COMFREL's weekly radio program (Saturday morning from 7:30 to 8:30), "*Tov Reu Min Tov*" (Go or Not), began on 2 February 2008, focusing on strengthening youth political participation. The program involved a live call-in show, aired on VoC (FM105) with cooperation from KYA and YRDP. The COMFREL studio shared their views and discussed youth involvement in politics. 108 callers (including only 8 female callers) joined in the discussion by telephone.

A recorded focus group workshop and roundtable discussions on research findings were also broadcast. The call-in show and roundtable discussions discussed topics surrounding youth participation in politics and democracy and priority youth issues. COMFREL invited one or two resource persons per show to share their views with callers. For the focus group workshop, COMFREL produced four recordings, each of 1-hour duration.

6.2.3. Publication

In May 2008, COMFREL printed 300 copies of its training manual for distribution to trainees during training courses. 9,000 stickers were printed with the message "*Youth is a bamboo shoot that grows up to be bamboo; youth should be clever in voting for their future*". This also had COMFREL's logo, COMFREL's contact phone, fax numbers, email address and its website. The 291 selected target beneficiaries were given 30 stickers each and were asked to post and distribute them and other voter education materials in their communities, schools, public offices and people's houses.

COMFREL also produced 300 t-shirts saying "*Youth Observer*" on them, with a picture of a hand putting a ballot paper in a ballot box. The t-shirts were distributed to youth observers participating in the training courses to wear during the training courses and observation periods, such as the VIN distribution, the election campaign period and cooling and polling/counting days.

6.2.4. Network follow-up meetings

After the training, participants were encouraged to build a network and keep in touch through meetings to share information, experience and lessons learnt and to discuss politics and the elections. They were able to join and be involved in election activities such as election monitoring and voter education.

5 1-day meetings for selected former trainees were held in 2 provinces (1 meeting in each province had 20 selected former trainees).

The follow-up meetings started with a welcome and introduction. Participants were then divided into two groups in order to discuss two main topics. The first was about what they had been taught and the second about what they had done after they were trained during the various stages of the electoral process (VIN distribution, the electoral campaign, cooling and polling/counting days and

the ongoing situation), difficulties/obstacles, success stories, lessons learnt, requests, recommendations, etc. Group representatives and individuals were invited to present on what they had discussed and answered questions.

2 meetings were conducted during the election campaign period and the other 3 after election day. The purpose of the pre-election meetings was to review the understanding of trainees and follow up what they had done and preparation for election day observation. The purpose of the post election meetings was to review what they had done, what problems they faced and lessons learnt.

6.2.5. Survey and Focus Group Workshop

200 trained youth observers who are part of COMFREL's networks were asked not only to observe the situation of election campaign, cooling and polling/counting days, but also to interview four people: 2 who had voted and another 2 who had not voted (by checking the indelible ink on their finger). A total of 437 respondents (205 women – 47%) were interviewed on the evening of polling day and the day after the elections. Among the 437 interviewees, the observers interviewed 250 young voters who had cast their ballot and 157 voters who did not vote.

The reasons for voting: among the young voters, they wanted to elect new favorable representatives to develop the country; or felt they had the right to vote; or wanted to choose a party which would serve the people's interests; or felt that the elections would be free and fair; or to fulfill their obligations as a good citizen; etc.

After the elections, COMFREL conducted 2 workshops for young voters to debate, discuss and voice their concerns. It was also to comment on speakers and identify key priority agenda items and indicators in the political platform regarding youth concerns. Such concerns included job creation, natural resource management for future generations, education/training and other promised political reforms. COMFREL invited guest speakers to participate, such as leaders of youth associations, elected members of the NA and commune councilors. Participants were given a chance to listen to speakers' presentations on relevant subjects. Group discussion was held, as well as a question-and-answer session. Each workshop invited around 60 youth voters (50% women) from the target groups.

6.3. “Women Can Do It” and Monitoring of Women’s Political Participation

In June 2008, 10 master trainers from COMFREL education and gender program coordinators, education officer, and some selected female provincial secretaries of COMFREL participated in the training of trainers (TOT) on “*Women Can Do It*”, organized and trained by NPA and two specialist trainers of Norwegian Labor Party at the Cambodiana Hotel.

16 July 2008: COMFREL launched a political party debate forum on “*Measures against Trafficking of Women and Children*”, with 121 (60 female) participants, including representatives from 10 political parties, youth (both male and female students), disabled people, donors and other NGO staff. The initiative of this meeting was to give a chance to civil society organizations and contesting political parties (that had already registered with the NEC) to debate and learn about the respective political platforms on resolving the issue of the trafficking of women and children in Cambodia.

August 2008: In a close cooperation with AMARA (Cambodian Women's Network for Development), COMFREL held a meeting on the compilation of training book, “*Women's Capacity-Strengthening Program in Public Affairs, Politics and Program of Women Can Do It*” with 8 (7 female) participants at the COMFREL head office. The main purpose of compiling such a book was to keep documents for trainees who had attended the training to review and use the book for further trainings in their respective community or organization.

25-27 September 2008: COMFREL launched training on *“Women Can Do It”* and *“Empowerment of Women in Decision Making”* in Kroepeuha village, Prek Rosey commune, Takmao district of Kandal province with 30 female participants. The training was concluded with 4 key points:

1. Women Can Do It;
2. Strengthening women’s capacity on leadership skills, political affairs, and advocacy in order to encourage women to actively take part in the decision-making process in public affairs and the political sector;
3. Motivating and paving the way for women to build good relationships with local authorities, political parties, relevant institutions and CSOs; and
4. Supporting and rallying women’s networks at national and district levels.

Printed materials and distribution were as follows:

- 3,125 copies (an extra 125) of the picture book *“Vote for Women to Help Our Nation”*; 3,125 were delivered.
- 9,000 copies of a sticker saying *“Vote for Women, Women’s and Children’s Issues Are to Be Addressed”*; 8,990 were delivered.

The printed materials were distributed to 12,115 direct beneficiaries (women voters) in Donkeo district, Takeo province; Stung Sen district, Kampong Thom province; Saang district, Kandal province; and Battambang province. This included the general public/constituent residents through COMFREL and AMARA networks, through face-to-face delivery. It was anticipated that the 12,115 direct beneficiaries would echo the information and awareness to another 36,345 females in their household and neighbors in the villages.

There were 8 broadcasts of *“Women Can Do It”* on COMFREL’s VoC. The show duration of 60 minutes was in the morning, every Tuesday of the first and second weeks of the month through the radio phone-in show. A phone-in show was aired live on FM 105 MHz, FM 90 MHz, FM 88.5 MHz and FM 90.25 MHz.

7. Other activities

From October 2007 through to September 2008, in addition to COMFREL joined and involved with other civil society organizations to carry out activities:

- COMFREL executive director and media program coordinator joined with other more than 40 civil society organizations which presented a petition bearing more than one million thumbprints and signatures collected from people in 19 towns and provinces across Cambodia to the National Assembly (NA) on May 16 to pressure the government to speed up its endorsement of the anti-corruption law. The civil society delegation met the chairman of NA human right and investigation commissions.
- COMFREL’s legal officer and Media Unit officers actively joined a series of meetings of the working groups of Freedom of Information that took discussions on perspective on Freedom of Information shared by Human Rights working group into consideration by drafting the policy on Rights to Access Information.
- A successful activity of the 59th Anniversary of the Human Rights Day through a large meeting and parade around Wat Phnom in Phnom Penh. Although the Phnom Penh authority did not allow the parade, COMFREL’s executive director and other leaders of human rights organizations jointly advocated for freedom of assembly during the Human Rights Day through conducting the peaceful and large parade. The executive director jointly attended a lobby meeting with deputy governor of Phnom Penh and followed up the media campaign through a radio debate on importance of freedom of assembly and pushed for the approval of the Ministry of Interior and Phnom Penh authority.
- COMFREL Network officers participated in 6 Working Group of Partnership and Decentralization (WGPD) meetings on various key issues such as Commune Committee for Women and Children; Decentralization and local Democracy; Discussion on Council Budget; Youth Participation in Decentralization Process; Options for WGPD Involvement in

Decentralization and De concentration (D&D) Policy Process, Review of Organic Law on provincial and district council and Preparation of organizing the National Forum on D&D. The senior program coordinator and network unit officers also joined two management committee meetings of Commune Council Support project (CCSP) to Support the projects of CCSP in regarding with Decentralization and De concentration.

- COMFREL monitoring officer had a special mission in cooperation Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC) to Ratanakiri province to negotiate and lobby provincial

of Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL), in Thailand from 07 to 26 December 2007. COMFREL media officer and a member of COMFREL board join ANFREL's mission to observe the regional election in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in the Philippine from 31 July to 15 August 2008.

- COMFREL executive director was invited by the Asia Foundation and the People's Forum of Japan (Cambodia) (PEFOC-J) to join a seminar on Elections in Cambodia, held in Japan from 9-11 January 2008. As a speaker, the Executive Director shared an analysis of the development of democracy in Cambodia and provided information on the pre-election 2008 situation and recommendations. Participants of the seminar included Cambodian Embassy officials (including the Ambassador), Cambodia National Electoral Commission, Japanese government agents, journalists and CSOs.
- The CPLG Officer was sent to attend an International Training Program (TIP) on Human Rights, Peace and Security supported by SIDA in Uppsala, Sweden from February 11 to 29, 2008. As a matter of fact, the program was divided into two phases; first phase started from 11 to 28 Feb in Sweden, and the latter started from 1 to 13 September in Siem Reap, Cambodia. The training program focused on Human Security for Sustainable Development, Human Rights and Rights-Based Approach, Transitional Justice and International Criminal Law, Conflict Resolution, Project-Program Management and Budget Monitoring. In each session, an individual was provided with conceptualization to analyze rights-based approach and conflict from a right- based perspective. The participants had to introduce a project

on the reflections of the independent consultant, significant inputs into staff were made: participants now understand how to define leadership and how to find out who leaders are, can identify qualities and characteristics of leaders and practice using their knowledge on leadership skills in conflict resolution.

3. Improved knowledge and skills in English, financial management and accounting

- Two managers were sent to study English. They improved in terms of writing letters and English communication. They also improved in terms of writing progress reports in English.
- One financial manager was sent to study financial management at CamEd. After the training, she had improved her skills in financial management and strengthening the organization's financial system.
- One provincial secretary (female) was sent to study administration/accounting in Takeo province.
- 10 provincial secretaries (5 female), were sent to study a short course in general English at provincial level. After the training, they were able to speak and write a little bit more in English and communicate with foreign observers. At least 20% are able to write English and communicate with one another via email.

VI. Reflection, Monitoring and Evaluation

During this reporting period, COMFREL have completed some main activities regarding reflection, monitoring and evaluation as the followings:

- Cooperation with a consultant to conduct an external evaluation on results and impacts of COMFREL's program for master plan 2004-2007 from November to December 2007. The final report was produced and distributed to the Board of Directors and donors.
- Conducted field visits to monitor the training course on "*Youth political participation*", the training on "*Women's Participation in Politics*", the training for COMFREL observers (long-term observers – LTOs and short-term observers – STOS), and training on the VRA.
- Cooperated with the Education Unit to monitor the trainings on women's participation in the 2008 election in 3 provinces: Kampong Thom, Takeo and Kandal.

Meanwhile, COMFREL launched a staff retreat on 11-12 December 2007 at World Vision premise with 28 (16 female) participants, including 16 central staff, 4 members of the Board of Directors and 8 COMFREL provincial coordinators and secretaries. This staff retreat discussed 3 main issues: (1) COMFREL's strengths and weaknesses; (2) findings of the COMFREL Octagon Assessment workshop and (3) COMFREL future strategies.

COMFREL provincial coordinators discussing COMFREL's strengths and weakness during a staff retreat's group discussion at World Vision premise on 11 December 2007



In addition, COMFREL also launched a reflection meeting on the NA elections 2008 on 9 September 2008 at World Vision premise. 75 participants (Board of Directors, central office, and provincial executive group members) participated in the reflection. The reflection tried to find out the strengths, weakness, experience, and the strategies in preparation for the implementation of election activities between 2008 and 2012. The reflection discussed the following:

1. Review/selection of volunteer observers – election 2008;
2. Training for volunteer observers;
3. Deployment of observers;
4. Review strategies to strengthen the network and cooperation among CSOs for future elections.



COMFREL reflection meeting on the National Assembly election on 9 September 2008 at World Vision premise

VII. Major Problems Encountered

- Access to information to and from NA, Members of Parliament/NA (MPs) and the NA Secretaries is more difficult than before. The NA has been moved to a new larger, luxurious compound, which has more space including personal rooms for MP and a NA Expert Commission meeting room. However, COMFREL observers still could not gain permission to observe any meeting of the NA Expert Commission. COMFREL merely received information relating to the meetings and discussion on draft laws from some MPs. The NA Secretary now requires organizations to address reports/documents to each MP separately, which increases the costs for COMFREL and time consume and others wanting to share information with the parliamentarians. Further, COMFREL's NA observers have faced more difficulties in recording speeches of parliamentarians, observing irregularities during the NA sessions as well as producing reports on the NA. This has been since the NA has enforced its new internal regulations, which prohibit all NGOs observers from bringing mobile phones, tape recorders and cameras into the NA hall. However, 1 of COMFREL's NA observers can record the speeches through TV in the NA press room.
- COMFREL was affected by the soaring prices of foods, commodities and gasoline due to inflation. This had an impact on COMFREL's expenditure plans, in particular transportation costs in carrying out the 2008 election activities.
- The procedure for provision of observer accreditation cards continues to be difficult, taking an unnecessarily long time. The NEC has not accepted suggestions to ease its bureaucracy. This problem did not bode well for the many short-term observers (over 10,000 from COMFREL alone), who needed a card to be present on polling day. Provision of personal information for the election observation registration at the NEC was inadequate due to incomplete information provided regarding date of birth and the observed place where observers were deployed to. There was a delay in sending short-term observers' names from provinces/municipalities and the NEC was also 7 days late in checking and transmitting the request for the observation card to its superior for final checks and approval. It would be better if the NEC only needed to accredit the name of the election-monitoring organization itself, particularly when such organizations must spend a great deal of money and time to send observer cards from Phnom Penh to observers deployed nationwide. It would be quicker if the Provincial Election Committees (PECs) were instead delegated powers to deal with the list for observer applicants.
- The NEC rejected COMFREL's proposal to accredit observers with rights and roles to help voters, on the basis that this would provoke disorder at polling stations and interfere with election preparation.⁷ In previous elections, many voters have had difficulties finding their

⁷ According to NEC's response letter No. 724/08 dated July 9, 2008.

name on the voting list – in some cases, names had been removed. In addition, there were many irregularities related to illegal deletion of voter names and voters not receiving their VIN. Therefore, COMFREL assigned its observers to assist the second assistant of polling station officials, in order to be able to help voters find their polling station and name.

Note: When helping voters, observers should abide by the codes of conduct. There are different codes of conduct for NGO observers, political party agents, village chiefs or local authorities and therefore, COMFREL believes that the NGO observers could have played a more direct role in support of voters without interference.

- A decrease in donor interest for supporting the election-monitoring project created a challenge for COMFREL in sustaining its local networks nationwide. Nonetheless, a month ahead of polling day, donors as well as Cambodian-based foreign embassies provided some funding support to COMFREL to implement its core project on observation of the NA election process, particularly on polling/counting days. However, the planned selection of observers did not proceed smoothly since the selection had to be conducted several times due to the budget constraints and cash flows. Additionally, some observers abandoned their assigned role as the election was approaching. This caused COMFREL to struggle with implementing the project, especially in selecting new observers to replace the ones who had quit just before the election.

VIII. Lessons Learnt and Future

- The future of decentralization in Cambodia hinges on developments in the formulation of the Organic Law on Decentralization & De-concentration. COMFREL's pioneering efforts in bringing this issue into the public debate was a catalyst for diverse civil society groups to be engaged in political reform. COMFREL will continue advocating for direct elections by the public and allowing individuals to stand for the election, not just party-approved lists.
- There is a need to institutionalize the participatory accountability mechanism introduced by COMFREL, in order to 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.
- Using a "context-specific change strategy" has proven effective. COMFREL has been able to complement its fearless advocacy stance with the right strategies to put their messages across in a constructive way.
- COMFREL successfully followed its election monitoring plan. Although it is necessary to have donor funds and technical support; COMFREL as an election-monitoring organization, must have clear ownership, strong commitment and confidence in local practical experience, along with new technical practices. For example, COMFREL was able to carry out its work plan of voter parallel vote tabulation/quick count-PVT, efficiently and successfully, in spite of lack of funds and technical support for this activity.
- The election observation needs to be consistent, systematic, comprehensive and accurate gathering of information concerning the laws, processes and institutions related to the conduct of elections and other factors concerning the overall electoral environment. The impartial and professional analysis of such information and the drawing of conclusions about the character of electoral processes are based on the standards of free and faire elections, as well on views of election stakeholders, political parties and voters. For instance, in the 2008 elections, COMFREL's mission conducted a voter survey to understand voter views (information on campaign, the reasons to vote, performance of the election commission, security during election day, fee and fair election process).
- Monitoring the severe election violence and fraud are free of risk and harassment from the political parties, local authorities, security forces or local power elite. It is important that observers are made aware of the hazards and are given proper training in security precautions and effective communication through telephone, SMS, e-mail. There must be constant (regular basic) contact between the core team, provincial secretariats, and the district contact persons including observers.
- COMFREL needs to follow up on election recommendations and advocate for changes during the election period. In cooperation with partners and member organizations, COMFREL is to set priorities and overall objectives to accomplish its future election plan.

- i- Survey on Voters, the Issuing of Form 1018 and Voter Registration (SVR) from January to April 2009. The survey is critical to ensuring that election stakeholders, political parties, donors and the NEC will be able to understand the extent to which voters were not able to cast their ballots and about the issuing of Form 1018 for each province/municipality on polling day. The survey will be able to provide recommendations for either improving the current system or creating a new system, for voter registration, voter list creation and the issuing of identity forms. Beyond the survey, the project is able to audit the 2008 final voter list.
- ii- Advocating for Promoting Election Reform Policies and input on Election Legal Frameworks: January 2009 - December 2010: In cooperation with stakeholders and in consultation with the public, COMFREL will conduct advocacy/lobbying through a series of meetings and workshops/seminars to identify root causes of the problem, discuss legal frameworks/experiences and develop recommendations. The recommendations will contribute to better legal frameworks and policies related to election reforms (commune council election and national assembly elections), including election system/formula, voter registration, women's quota as electoral representatives, election complaints mechanism, political/campaign finance and access to media.
- iii- Build capacity of local observers (political party agents may be included) on election monitoring/PVT and complaints skills, including knowledge of election laws and democracy for future elections in Cambodia by 2011.

IX. Summary of Financial Statement

Below is the summary of COMFREL financial statement for the period from October 01, 2007 to September 30, 2008.

No.	ITEMS	AMOUNT	%
A	RECEIPTS		
A.1	OPENING BALANCE	USD 69,609.96	9.63
A.2	FUND RECEIVED		
1	OXFAM NOVIB	USD 90,000.00	14
2	FORUM SYD	USD 162,200.00	25
3	NPA	USD 105,000.00	16
4	TROCAIRE	USD 59,888.43	9
5	OXFAM HONG KONG	USD 3,000.00	0.46
6	OWA	USD 10,393.22	2
7	NDI	USD 41,903.00	6
8	JAPAN EMBASSY	USD 63,050.00	10
9	BRITISH EMBASSY	USD 24,000.00	4
10	ROYAL DANISH EMBASSY	USD 20,000.00	3
11	GERMANY EMBASSY	USD 34,863.00	5
12	UNDP	USD 14,940.23	2
13	UNIFEM	USD 2,667.00	0.40
14	CPWP	USD 27,275.99	4
	TOTAL FUND RECEIVED	USD 659,180.87	91.20
A.3	RETURN FUND	(USD 6,591.96)	(0.91)
A.4	BANK INTEREST	USD 607.72	0.08
	TOTAL RECEIPTS	USD 722,806.59	100
B	DISBURSEMENTS		
1	CORE ADMINISTRATION		
2	CORE PROGRAMME		
2.1	LOBBY AND ADVOCACY	USD 28,407.40	4
2.2	MEDIA CAMPAIGN	USD 56,675.37	9
2.3	LOCAL NETWORK	USD 82,844.13	13
2.4	MONITORING	USD 42,104.68	7
2.5	EDUCATION	USD 120,688.47	19
2.6	EQUIPMENT AND FURNITURE	USD 2,010.00	0.32
2.7	QUALITY ASSURANCE	USD 23,277.37	4
2.8	CONTINGENCY	USD 910.55	0.14
2.9	SPECIAL PROJECT RELATE TO MONITORING OF ELECTION	USD 277,350.89	44
	TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	USD 709,678.86	100
C	FUND BALANCE	USD 13,127.73	

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ទូរស័ព្ទ: ៨៥៥-២៣ ៨៨៤ ១៥០ / ៨៥៥-១២ ៩៤២ ០១៩

ទូរសារ: ៨៥៥-២៣ ៨៨៣ ៧៥០ / ៨៥៥-២៣ ៨៨៥ ៧៤៥

#138, Street 122, Teuk laak, 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 comfreladmin@online.com.kh

Website: www.comfrel.org