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RESEARCH REPORT

The Barriers to Women Running for Office in Local Elections

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PARTNERSHIPS FOR MUNICIPAL INNOVATION - WOMEN IN LOCAL LEADERSHIP (PMI-WILL)

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Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations.....	i
Executive Summary	ii
I. Background	1
II. Research Objectives.....	1
III. Methodology.....	1
3.1 Literature/Desk Review.....	2
3.2 Survey.....	2
3.3 Key Informant Interviews	2
3.4 Data Recording and Analysis	3
3.5 Research Ethics	3
IV. Findings.....	3
4.1 Findings from Desk Review.....	3
4.2 Findings from Primary Data	7
4.2.1 Socio-cultural Barriers.....	9
4.2.2 Personal Barriers	13
4.2.3 Legal and Institutional Barriers	18
4.2.4 Supports from Different Stakeholders to Overcome Challenges.....	24
V. Conclusion and recommendations	25
5.1 Conclusion	25
5.2 Key Recommendations.....	26
5.2.1 Political Party	27
5.2.2 National Assembly and Senate	27
5.2.3 State and Public Institutions.....	27
5.2.4 CSOs, Educational Institutions and Academies.....	28
5.2.5 National Election Committee (NEC)	29
Annex 1: ToR	30
Annex 2: Survey Questionnaires	33
Annex 3: KII Interview Protocol.....	40

List of Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LEMCC	Law on Elections of Members of Commune Council
LEMNA	Law on Elections of Members of National Assembly
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
NEC	National Election Committee
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia

Executive Summary

This is a summary of the study on “the barriers to women running for office in local elections”. The main objectives of this study are: 1) to identify the barriers to women, in particular marginalized women running for office in local elections; and 2) to provide a series of recommendations and develop an action plan on how relevant stakeholders can mitigate the barriers to women running for office in local elections. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative method includes a literature review and a survey. While the qualitative method was conducted through key informant interviews. The survey was conducted with 80 people (10 men & 70 women) who are female commune councillors, women (political activists, commune councillors, and party representatives in commune, gender experts, youth group, human rights advocate, opinion leaders, academics, CSO leaders and religious leaders in Kampot and Kampong Chhnang province. The key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with 30 respondents who are political activists & politicians, Commune Election Committee representative, party representatives in commune, NGO leaders, gender expert, academic and commune council members about the barriers/ challenges to running for office in local election

The results of the study show that women’s political participation in Cambodia is crucial and their level of political participation in general is high. However, the numbers of women in leadership position and holding offices are lower than their male counterpart. The survey’s results also show that women have low political ambition and running for office in local elections. Women were less engaged to run for office from family members, spouse/partner, friend, co-worker, community leader and party official. Their attitude toward election campaign is quite low. These causes by their concerns about their family, personal privacy and hindering professional goal. Family responsibility is one of the barriers that prevent women from running for local elections. The majority of women who participated in the study have low experience in running for election. Their level of knowledge, skills and attitude to become politicians are limited. In addition, they perceive the current electoral system is not pro-gender equality because it is really challenging for women to raise money for an election campaign than man; it is more difficult for woman to be elected to public office than man; and local elections are highly competitive. The lack of tools (manuals and guidelines) on gender equality, lack of education and political literacy amongst women about political participation especially the lack of financial resources, violence, harassment, lack of security in politics, cultural norms, stereotype about women in society, and the lack of skills among women are the barriers which pose great challenges to women for running for public office.

The level of challenge for women to get leadership position in a political party is still high. Similarly, the level of challenge for women running for office in local election is also high. There are five main challenges for women to run for office in local election namely personal barriers, financial barriers, political barriers, technical barriers and socio-cultural barriers. The personal barriers are the most difficult challenge for women to run for office in local election. The study also shows that women have limited ability to overcome all barriers. The support from women leaders to overcome challenges and violence against women is still limited. The data from the survey also shows that support from the public institution (educational institution, think tank etc.) to promote women’s equal participation in politics is also limited. The result from the survey shows the NGOs are more supportive for women’s

running for office in local elections than the public institutions. The study shows the majority of respondents strongly agree that political parties should have gender equality policy to promote women's equal participation. They also strongly agree that political parties should adapt gender quota policy as mandatory in order to promote women's running for public office in local election.

It is recommended that, firstly political parties shall engage more women to be their political candidates in local elections and adapt gender equality policy within the party and to promote women's equal participation within political parties; being part of the policy-making process, decision-maker and leadership roles, candidates, and elected representatives. The gender equality policy is an effective tool to encourage all political parties to place more women candidates on the party list by using the sandwich system from the top to bottom for ranking between women and men candidates and increase gender equality at all levels within the party. Secondly, the government should formulate policies and laws to combat discrimination and violence against women in politics. Establish an independent observation body that identifies violence against women in politics and regularly reports on the information to relevant stakeholders and the public. The government (line ministries) should provide all kinds of support such as funding, resources, and human resources to elected women and women leaders, in order to facilitate and increase the efficiency and quality of women's work, political participation and leadership. Thirdly, civil society organizations should facilitate political grooming of potential female politicians in order to raise public awareness about the importance of women's participation in politics especially women's running for local election, women's political leadership. CSOs should increase civic education and political education in Cambodia (capacity and skill development, how to enter politics, and mindset changes) in order to reshape the way Cambodian society perceives politics including the important roles of women in politics, and supporting them. CSOs need also to increase support mechanism for women politicians such as capacity development (self-confident and skill sets needed to participate in politics including developing effective campaign and lobbying strategies), empowerment and special political funding for women in politic

I. Background

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has signed a contribution agreement with Global Affairs Canada (GAC) for a six-year project entitled Partnerships for Municipal Innovation– Women in Local Leadership (PMI- WILL). PMI-WILL intends to contribute to improved quality of life for women and girls, in particular those from marginalized groups, in Benin, Cambodia, Ghana, Sri Lanka and Zambia. The project will use a two-pronged approach to achieve this goal: 1) Increasing the participation and enhancing the role of women as leaders and decision-makers in local governance, 2) Increasing the effectiveness of local governments in delivering inclusive, gender-responsive public services.

FCM will implement the project in collaboration with the National League of the Local Councils of the Kingdom of Cambodia (NLC), selected local governments/municipalities and other selected partners, including relevant Ministries, CSOs and women’s rights organizations. FCM will mobilize Canadian municipal practitioners and elected officials from FCM’s membership to provide peer-to-peer technical assistance.

Research has shown that increasing the number of women on local councils results in increased responsiveness to women’s needs and greater investment in social programs leading to poverty reduction. Sustainable Development Goals 5.5 calls for women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life. As the order of government closest to the people, municipalities need women, including those from marginalized groups, to participate equitably in decision-making as elected leaders, senior administrators and community members. The Partnerships for Municipal Innovation – Women in Local Leadership (PMI-WILL) strives to increase the capacity of women, in particular from marginalized groups, to run for local elected office. To effectively, achieve its outcome, FCM seeks to address the barriers and challenges women face as candidates in local elections, as local council members and as local government administrators.

II. Research Objectives

The main objectives of the study are:

- 1) to identify the barriers to women, in particular marginalized women running for office in local elections; and
- 2) to provide a series of recommendations and develop an action plan on how relevant stakeholders can mitigate the barriers to women running for office in local elections

III. Methodology

The study was conducted through literature review, perception survey and key informant interviews.

3.1 Literature/Desk Review

This mainly reviewed the existing documents such as reports; policies and existing projects related to governance and increasing women’s participation in local governance with a clear focus on accessing how gender-responsive the policies are in promoting women in decision- making and to identify barriers to women’s participation in local governance in Cambodia. The main objective of this review is to map the existing policy and relevant studies. This phase in part informed the development of key question for the survey and themes for the interviews with relevant stakeholders.

3.2 Survey

The survey questionnaires were drafted based on the objectives of the study. The main objective of this survey focuses on the facts and figures of the barriers to women running for office in Cambodia. This survey was conducted with 80 respondents from different sectors and locations in Cambodia. The questionnaires are available in Khmer. To achieve a high level of reliability and credibility in the results, the questionnaire and interview guide will be tested for accuracy, word choice and comprehensiveness before it is employed. The survey questionnaires are in Khmer.

Method	Number of Respondents	Location
Survey	80 people (10 men & 70 women) who are female commune councillors, women (ma political activists, commune councillors, and party representatives in commune, gender experts, youth group, human rights advocate, opinion leaders, academics, CSO leaders and religious leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 people in Kampot Province • 40 people in Kampong Chhnang province

3.3 Key Informant Interviews

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) focuses on producing a high level of narrative comment and personal perspectives of the relevant stakeholders on the topic that will be used to highlight the state of women in politics and the barriers to women running for office in Cambodia. The stakeholders include but not limit to female/male assembly members (past/present), politicians, political activists, gender experts, human rights advocate, opinion leaders, youth group, academics, CSO leaders, NEC representative, and religious leaders. The interview was conducted in Khmer.

Method	Number of Respondents	Location
Key Informant Interview (KII)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 KIIs with female political activists& politicians, CEC representative, party representatives in commune and commune council members about the barriers/ challenges to running for office in local election • 10 (5 male) KIIs with NGO leaders, gender expert and academic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 respondents in Kampong Chhnang • 10 respondents in Kampot • 10 respondents in Phnom Penh

3.4 Data Recording and Analysis

All discussions and interviews were noted, with the consent of the participants. The note taker observed the discussion and noted the responses. The data was imported to MS Excel, coded, cleaned, screened and checked for accuracy, before exporting and analysing it. Results are categorized into themes, topics and priorities.

3.5 Research Ethics

All interviewers and team members were trained about ethical issues including confidentiality and anonymity. All selected respondents were informed about the study and asked to give their consent to participate in it. To obtain valid consent, the study used an introductory statement at the start of the interview to ask permission from the interviewee and to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the study. Respondents are able to skip questions or withdraw from the study at any time. There was no identifying information of the respondent in the data used in the analysis. An ID number was used instead of the participant's name on the data sets. All completed questionnaires will be stored in a secure place during data collection, entry and analysis. Only those people responsible for data entry and analysis have access to the questionnaire and computer file. The questionnaire is logged in a safe place and the computer file was kept confidentially.

IV. Findings

4.1 Findings from Desk Review

An Overview of the State of Women's Political Participation in Cambodia

In Cambodia, women have been actively involved in politics especially in elections in recent decades. However, the opportunities for women to run for office and be elected leaders are still limited. There has been a continuous decrease in the number of women elected from the 5th legislature in 2013 to the 6th legislature in 2018. The number of female candidates is still small only 25.25%, despite the increase for the sixth legislature¹.

In this sixth legislature, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), through the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), continues to focus on human resource development, especially on women's leadership skills in the political, social and economic spheres at the national level, as well as the empowerment of women to succeed in business. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are set out as both stand alone and crosscutting of national priorities which notable examples are to be found in the Rectangular Strategies Phases 1, 2, 3 and 4 for Growth, Employment, Equity and

¹ The Challenges of Women in Leadership: Key Findings from Gender Statistics Analysis, published by the General Secretariat of the National Assembly, 2020

Efficiency which is the political platform of the government. In the Rectangular Strategy Phase IV, strengthening of gender equity and social protection is one of the main components of the four strategic rectangles.²

“The Royal Government’s strategic goal is to strengthen gender equity and social protection to enhance social-economic situation and strengthen women’s role in the society who are the backbone of the economy and society. As a result, the Royal Government has achieved some great results such as mainstreaming gender equity in policy framework and national development plan, reducing gender gap in education, vocational training and civil service; widening women entrepreneurship initiative, reducing domestic violence and sexual abuse against women and children, uplifting social morality, women dignity and Cambodian family, and improving legal service for women and children.” – Cambodian Government Rectangular Strategy Phase IV

The Existing Law and Policy to Support Women’s Political Participation

Cambodian Constitution gives equal rights, freedom and political equality to both men and women. Constitution’s Article 31 states “Every Khmer citizen shall be equal before the law, enjoying the same rights, freedom and fulfilling the same obligations regardless of race, color, sex, language, religious, belief, political tendency, birth origin, social status, wealth, or other status” (Rights and Freedom). In addition, Cambodian Constitution Article 35 stipulates that “Khmer citizens of either sex shall be given the right to participate actively in the political, economic, social and cultural life of nation” (Political equality).

Cambodia is also a signatory of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Accordingly, Cambodia has accepted a number of obligations to implement its provisions and secure equality of women at all levels of society. Article 2 of CEDAW addresses policy measures. The article illustrates that the state parties have the responsibility to create laws and policies in order to stop any forms of discrimination against women. Article 4 of CEDAW addresses temporary special measures. The measures aim to accelerate the equality between men and women and the temporary special measures shall not be considered as discrimination against men. Article 5 of CEDAW addresses sex role stereotyping and prejudice. The states parties shall eliminate any forms of social and cultural patterns that create the idea of inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or of the stereotyped roles for men and women. Article 7 of CEDAW addresses political and public life. Women have equal rights to participate in politics and public life hence states parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in politics and public life. Article 8 of CEDAW addresses that “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their government at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations”.

At the national level, the Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA) and Ministry of Interior took leading roles in formulating a drafted National Policy on Gender Equality based on the lesson learnt and

²Cambodian Government Rectangular Strategy Phase IV available at <https://www.mfaic.gov.kh/Home/RectangularStrategies>

experiences in implementing the key national policies, programmes, and strategies using the finding of the Cambodia Gender Assessment (CGA) of 2019. This policy provides a long-term policy framework for and further enhances the principles of gender equality in the national policies, National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP), and sectoral strategic plans in order to achieve the gender equality that aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals, aiming at “leave no one behind”, and the principles of CEDAW in the development agenda. Moreover, MoWA has continued to strengthen the implementation of the National Action Plans to Prevent all forms of Violence Against Women and girls (NAPVAW) from 2019 to 2023 and to restore social morality by paying close attention to social education for a change of mindset in order to eliminate the discrimination against women. In 2019, the Ministry of Interior also developed a Gender Equality Policy for Sub-National Democratic Development³. The main objective of this policy is to promote gender equality and empower women within the framework of implementing sub-national democratic development reform programs.

Socio-cultural Norms and Women’s Political Participation

Culturally speaking, Cambodian society is still mainly under a patriarchal system⁴. This traditional norm is embodied in Cambodian mindsets. There are also stereotypical discriminatory views that constrain the ability of women to become leaders and political position. A Cambodia Development Resource Institute study also documented that both old and young people are sceptical about women’s suitability for leadership.⁵ Within such a system, leadership roles are expected to be filled by males.

According to a COMFREL’s report⁶ in 2019, discriminatory attitudes toward women in commune councils have decreased significantly, with strong support and promotion of women from male commune councillors and village chiefs. The report showed some changes of attitudes to value women, understand gender, respect for women's rights, and good cooperation with women. However, discrimination against women in politics, especially women in some commune councils, still persists. In Cambodia, traditionally there is a gender bias that women should stay at home. There is a saying “women are not capable to move around the cooker”. This biased gender role considers women nothing more than housekeepers, reproducers and wives. Therefore, some socio-cultural norms, the lack of good quality education for women and girls, the lack of positive discrimination in a political platform, the lack of financial and political support for women in politics as well as the institutional barriers are the contributing factors to the low rate of women’s running for local elections and the violence against women in politics and preventing them from becoming political leaders. Besides gender discrimination, women also face age discrimination. According to a report by COMFREL,

³ Gender Equality Policy for Sub-National Democratic Development available at https://ncdd.gov.kh/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/NCDD_Policy_on_Promotion_of_Gender_Kh.pdf

⁴ MOWA (2009), Violence Against Women 2009 Follow up survey, Phnom Penh, Ministry of Women's Affairs

⁵ Eng Netra, A. L. (2019), Cambodia's Young and Older Generation: Views on Generational Relations and Key Social and Political Issues, Phnom Penh, Cambodia Development Resource Institute

⁶ COMFREL Political Gender Watch 2019 available at. <https://comfrel.org/political-gender-watch-2019-comfrel-official> accessed 14 April 2022

younger people, especially women, are often not elected to political leadership positions in Cambodia⁷. This report shows that the elected female officials only 8% are young women.

Related Projects to Promote Women's Political Participation and Running for Office in Local Elections

At the Ministry of Women's Affairs, there is a technical working group on women's leadership (TWG-WL) which works on women's leadership in all sectors. In the CSO sector, there is a network called "Committee to Promote Women in Politics- CPWP" which works on promoting women in political and civil engagement. The members of CPWP are GADC, COMFREL, SILAKA, YRDP, NECFEC. These NGOs have project/cross cutting program on empowering women/young women in political leadership.

In a nutshell, Cambodia continues to maintain a pronounced inequality of representation between men and women in public affairs and political life – including in political parties, being part of inclusive law-making process, as candidates, elected representatives. The main part of this issue stems from a lack of specific written policies as affirmative actions and lack of gender-responsive laws, particularly election laws for supporting and providing equal opportunities for women and men in decision-making level both public and political spheres in accord with the CEDAW which Cambodia has ratified and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) commitments Cambodia has taken on. The existence of discrimination, lack of encouragement, and political wills of the political parties with the highest potential to promote women's participation. Moreover, male leaders want to retain their political power and do not want to step down ...etc. There is a low number of elected females for the elections both Commune Council Elections 2017 and National Assembly Elections 2018, elected women parliamentarians make up only 20% and women commune councillors only 20.08% of the fourth mandate commune council 2017 including a low number of women in decision-making levels at both national and sub-national level, while the overwhelming number of male representatives. According to a report published by the Secretariat General of the National Assembly⁸ in the early 2020, here are some facts and figures about women in leadership and politics:

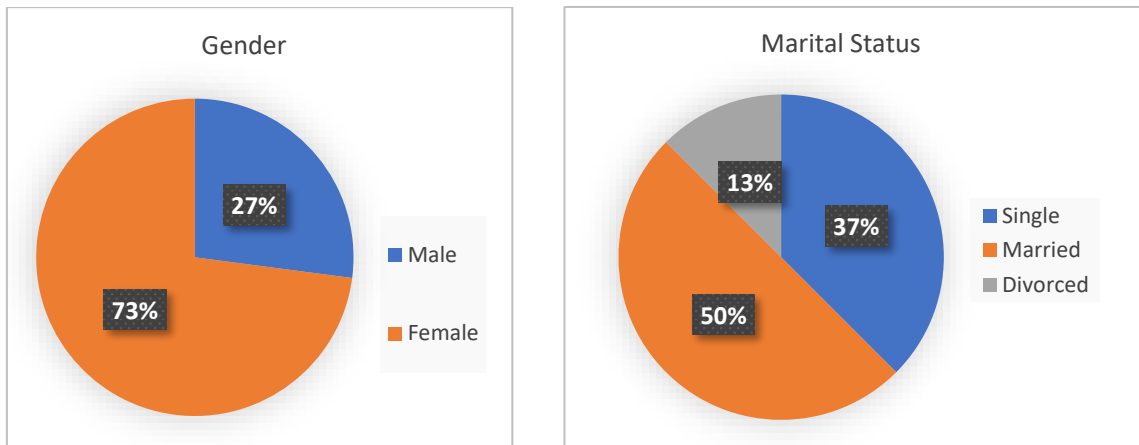
- Within two decades, women's representation at the National Assembly has increased significantly from 6 percent to 21 percent, while female senators remained stagnant at 16 percent.
- Women constitute only 15 percent of judges, 14 percent of prosecutors, 22 percent of lawyers, and 12 percent of the notary public (as of February 2020).
- Women make up about 16 percent of the government senior position from Under Secretary of State to Deputy Prime Minister (as of February 2020).
- Women make up only 4 percent of governor positions.
- Women served as the senior officer is relatively lower than men both at national and sub-national levels. Meanwhile, the majority of women served as deputy heads of office.

⁷ COMFREL (2018), The Empowerment of Women in Politics and the 6th Legislature National Assembly Elections 2018, Phnom Penh, Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia

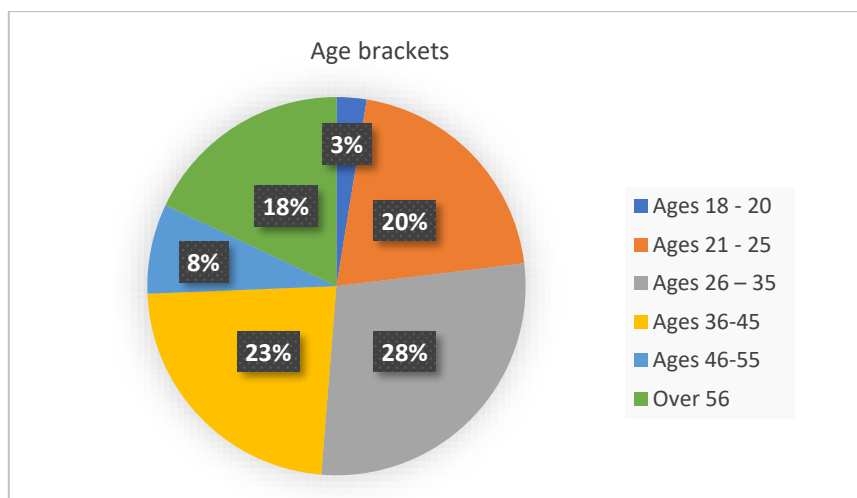
⁸ <http://nac.org.kh/Images/Women%20in%20leadership-Eng-Final.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3-zc5x1fNII7fnSKpCoOm4VqSX8v5rVoAXob7WEgdEQbBxoZTxKYv6AHA> accessed 16 April 2022

4.2 Findings from Primary Data

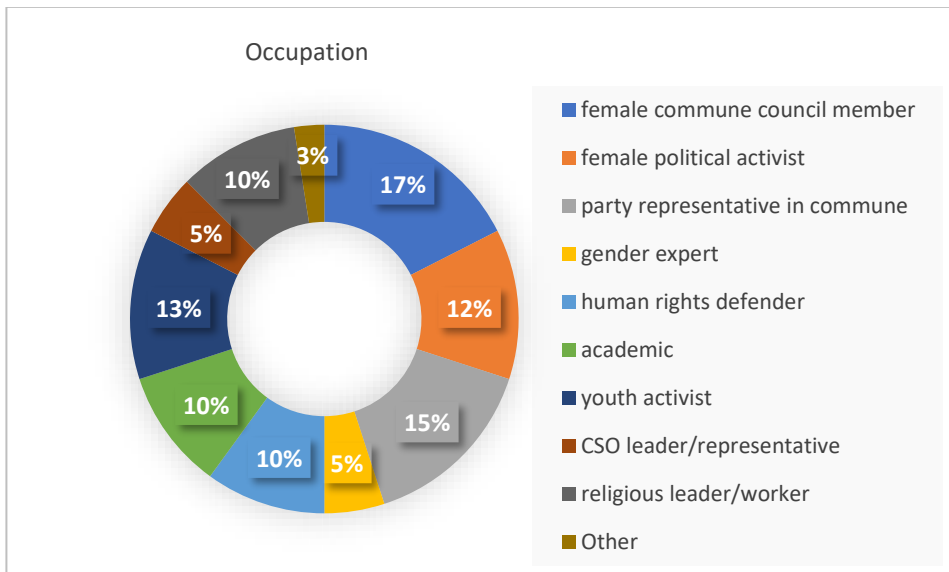
Demographics



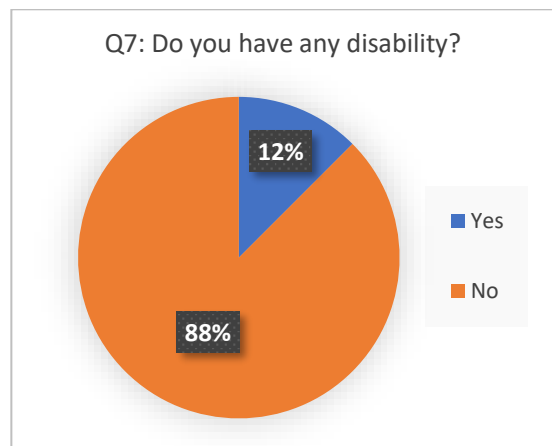
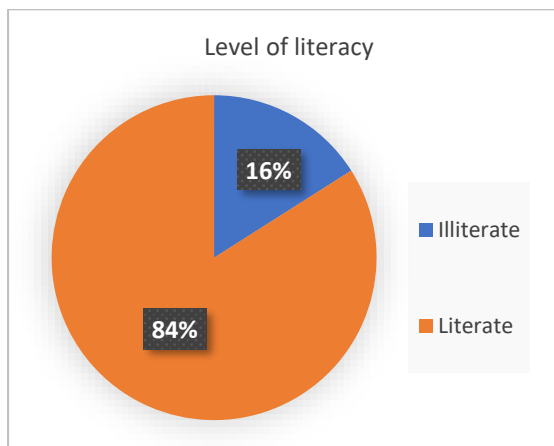
The study records 27% of respondents are male and 73% of them are female. 37% of respondents are single, 50% of them are married and 13% of respondents are divorced.



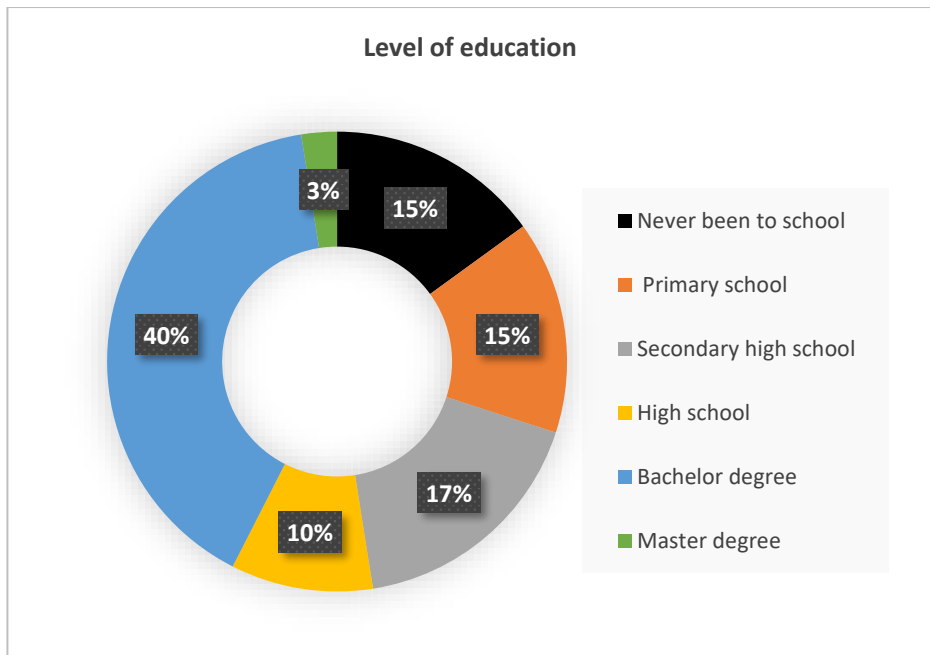
The majority of respondents in this study ages between 26 to 35 years old which records 28% of the total respondents. 23% of them ages between 36 to 45 years old. 20% of them ages between 21 to 25 years old. According to the National Policy on Youth Development (2011), youth is defined as between 15-30 years in Cambodia.



The study records the majority of the respondents are female commune council members which records 17% of the total respondents. 15% of respondents are party representative in commune, 13% of respondents are youth activists, 12% of them are female political activists.

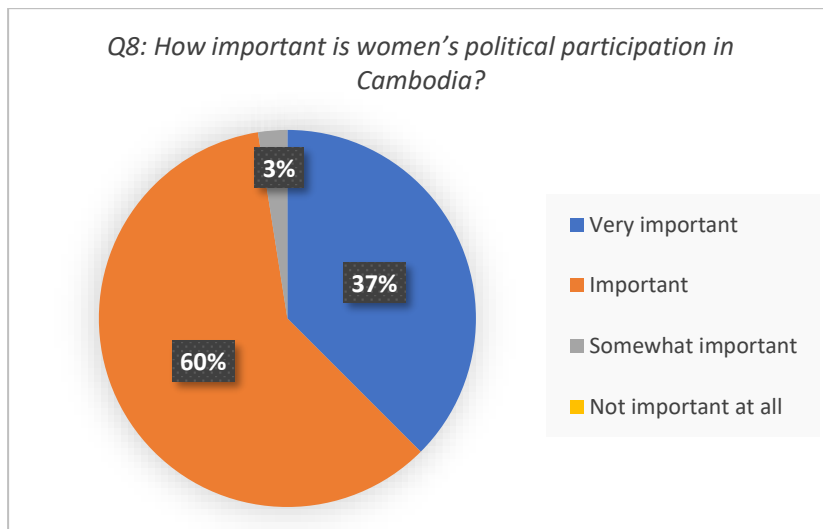


The study records 16% of respondents are illiterate. 12% of respondents have disabilities.

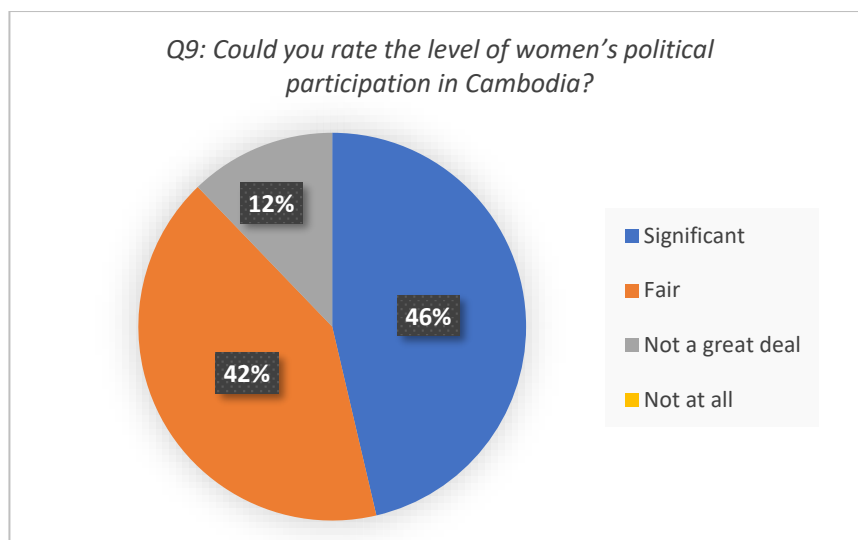


The majority of respondents obtained bachelor degrees which records 40% of the total respondents. 3% of respondents got master degrees and 17% of them finished secondary high school.

4.2.1 Socio-cultural Barriers



The result of the survey shows that 37% of respondents believe that women's political participation in Cambodia is very important and other 60% of them say that it is important.



Among the total respondents, 46% of them say the level of women's political participation in Cambodia is significant and other 42% of them say it is fair.

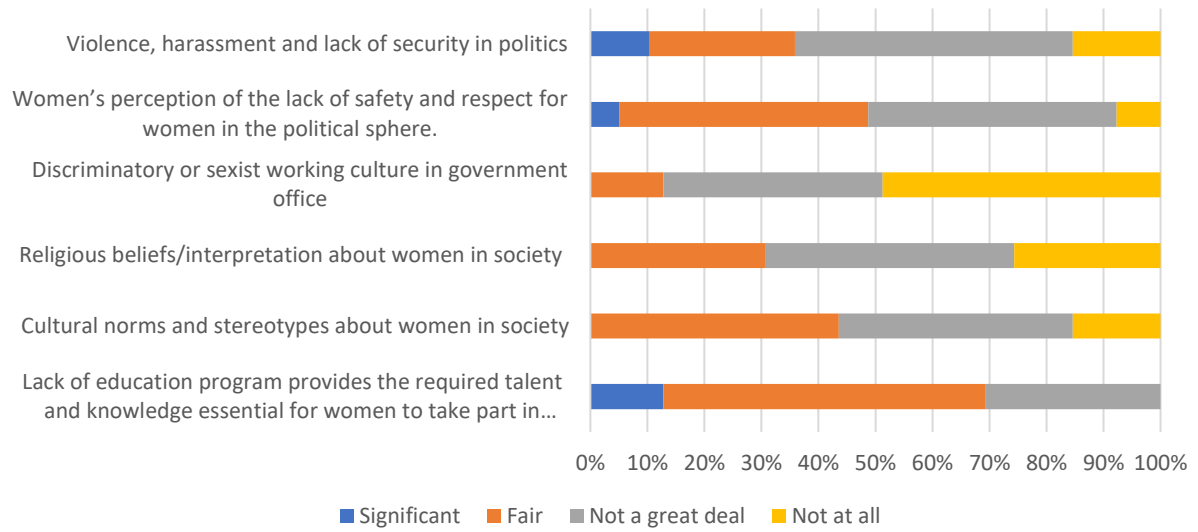
"Like other women in my community, I always go to vote on election day since 1993. That's what most women can do in terms of political participation. However, we don't know much about politics and most of leaders in my village are male."

- A female resident in Kampot

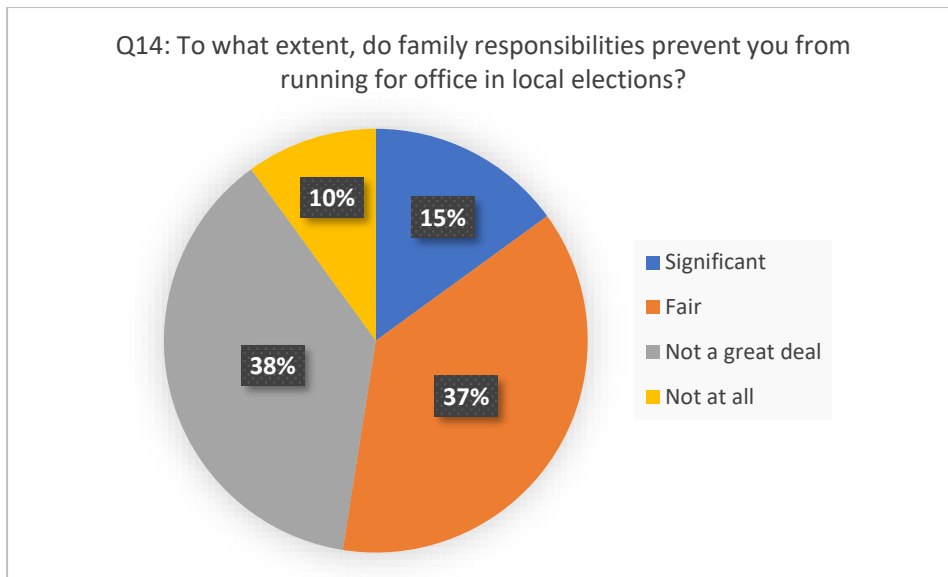
"Most Cambodian women are just ordinary party supporters. They are not political players in Cambodian politics because they have low interest in politics and the road for them to become politicians or political players is so challenging."

- A gender researcher

Q20: To what extent do the following pose challenges or obstacles for women running for office in local elections?



The study shows that around 69% of respondents think that the lack of education program provides the required talent and knowledge essential for women to take part in politics is the first main socio-cultural barriers for women to run for local elections. The lack of safety and respect for women in political sphere is the second socio-cultural barrier. The third main challenge is cultural norms and stereotype about women in society. Last but not least, violence, harassment, insecurity in politics, religious belief about women in society, and the discriminatory or sexist working culture in government office also pose great challenges to women's participation in politics.

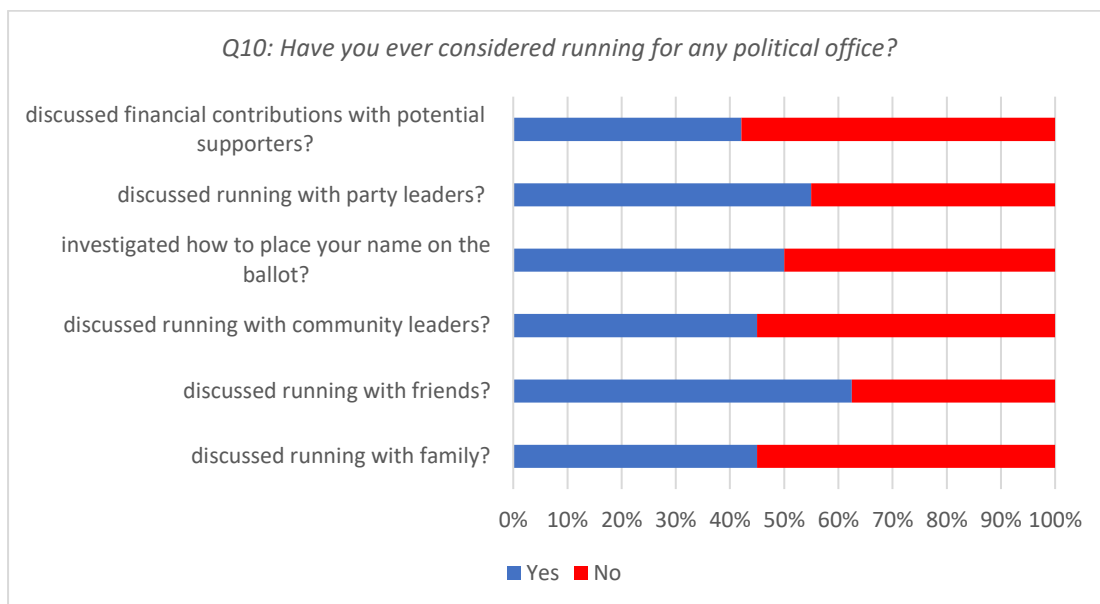


One of the challenges to women for running for office in local election is family responsibility. The study shows 15% of respondents say family responsibilities is significantly prevent them from running for local election and 37% of respondents say it moderately obstructed them from running for local elections.

“Personally, I observe that family responsibility is one of the main challenges that obstruct women to catch up an opportunity like running for local election. I know some women who sacrificed their family life or got divorced because of their pursuit for a career in politics.”

- An NGO leader in women rights

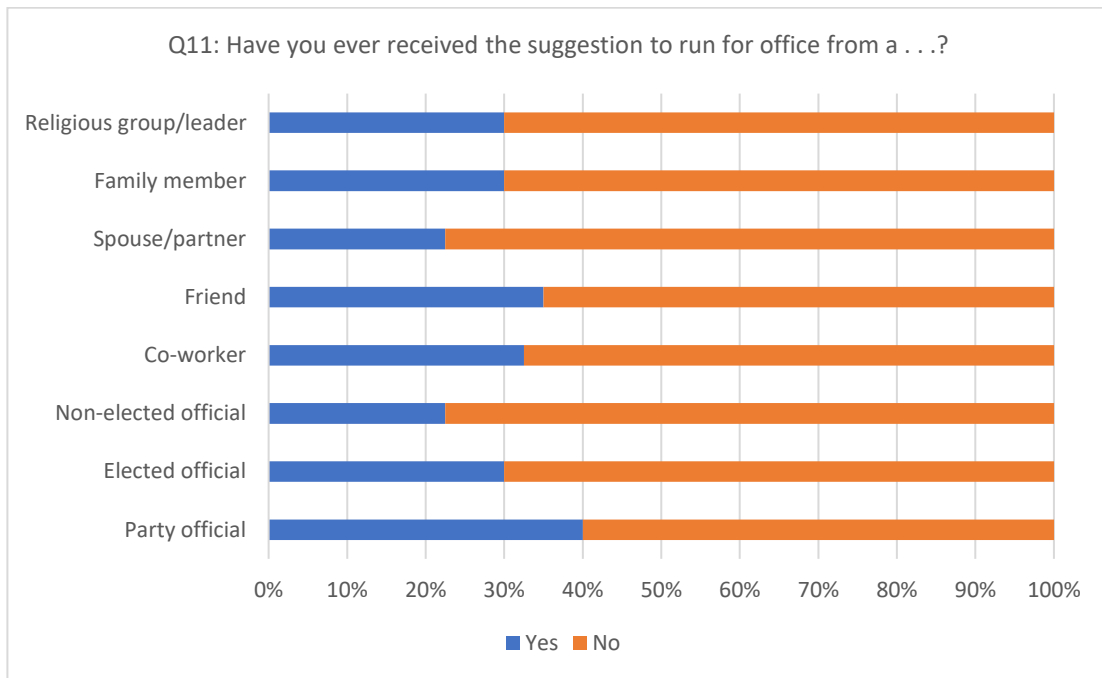
4.2.2 Personal Barriers



Regarding to the interest in politics and political ambition, the study shows the majority of women used to discuss with friends for running for political office which records more than 60% of respondents and the discussion with political party is the second option when women express their interest in politics. However, the frequency of their discussion for financial contributions with potential supporters for their political ambition and discussion with family members are the least options for women to show their political ambition to run for political office.

“Personally, I observe that most women are not interested in running for offices in local election or becoming politicians because they do not like being politicians. In addition, women do not believe in themselves that they can do it. Therefore, it is really difficult to find the right female candidates for local elections because women are not interested in running for office. As far as I know, women themselves do not give themselves a chance.”

– A male party representative in Kampong Chhnang

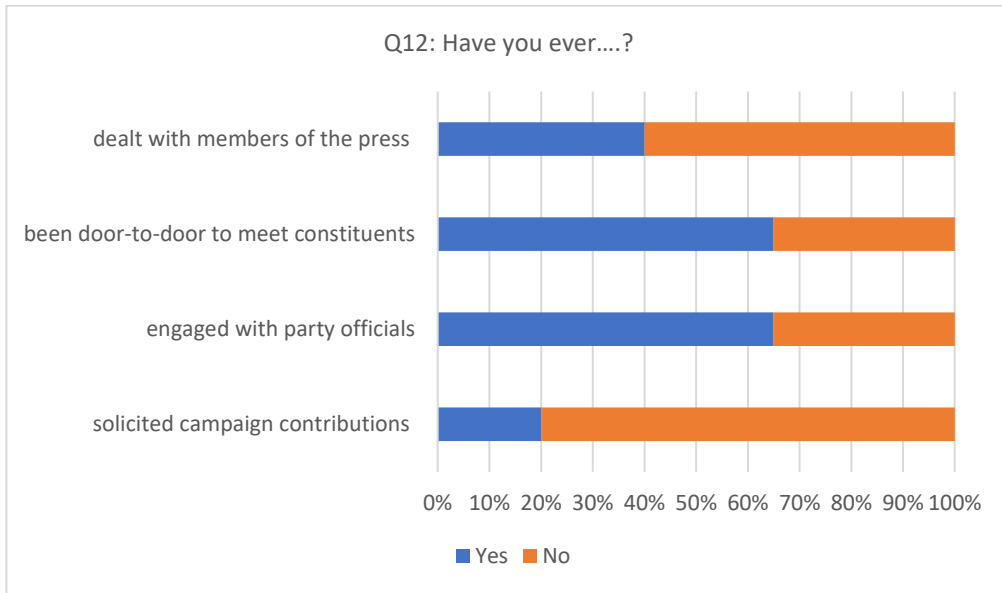


In the process of political recruitment, women are not really involved in running for office. The study shows the majority of respondents received suggestion from party official to run for political office which records only 40%. While spouse/partner is the lowest motivational factor for women to run for any political office.

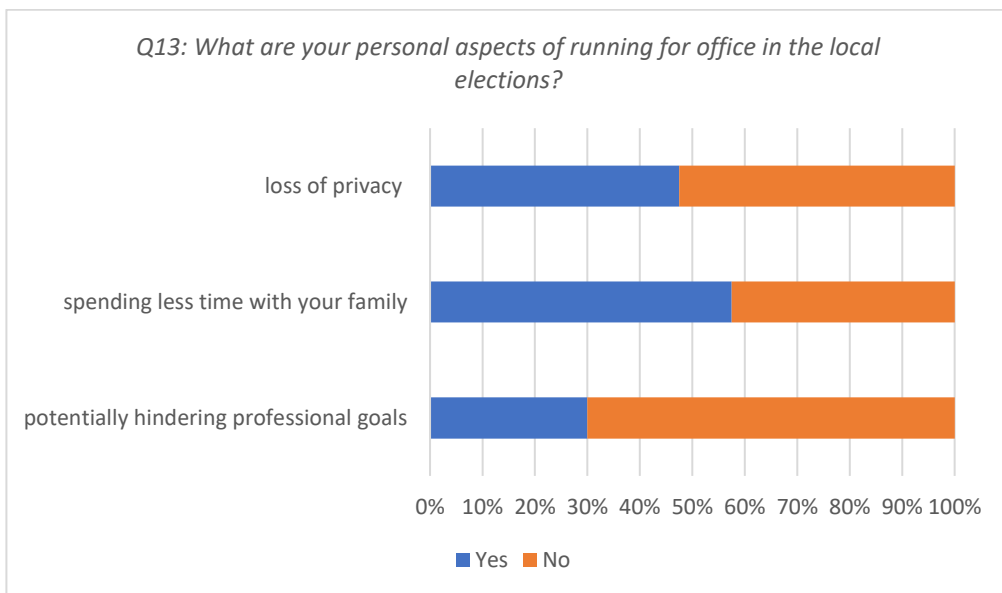
“I did not consult with my family members before I became a political activist because I knew that they would not support my decision to join politics. However, I have to overcome family pressure in my political participation.”

- A female political activist in Kampot

Attitude Toward Election Campaign



Regarding to women’s attitude to election campaign, the data from the survey records more than 60% of respondents have engaged with party officials and been door-to-door to meet constituents. However, respondents are lack of experiences in dealing with members of the press and solicited campaign contribution.



The family responsibility, the loss of privacy and professional goals are also the personal barriers for women to run for offices. The study shows that nearly 60% of respondents are concerned that running for office in the local election makes them spend less time with their family. The second personal concern is the loss of privacy. Last but not least, women are also concerned that running for local elections would potentially hinder their professional goals.

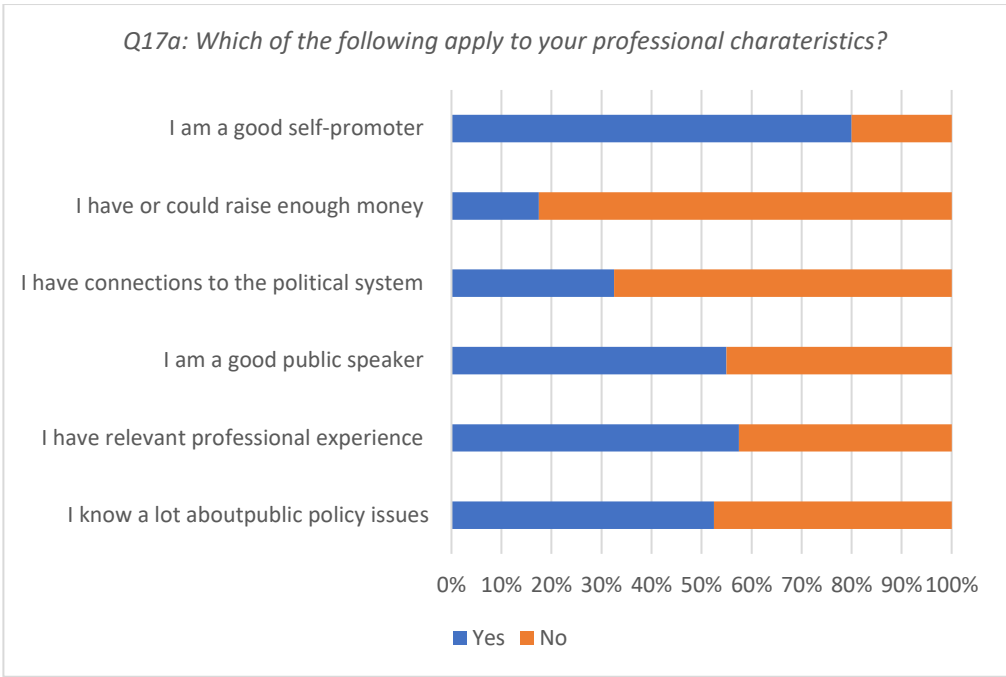
Qualifications to Run for Public Office



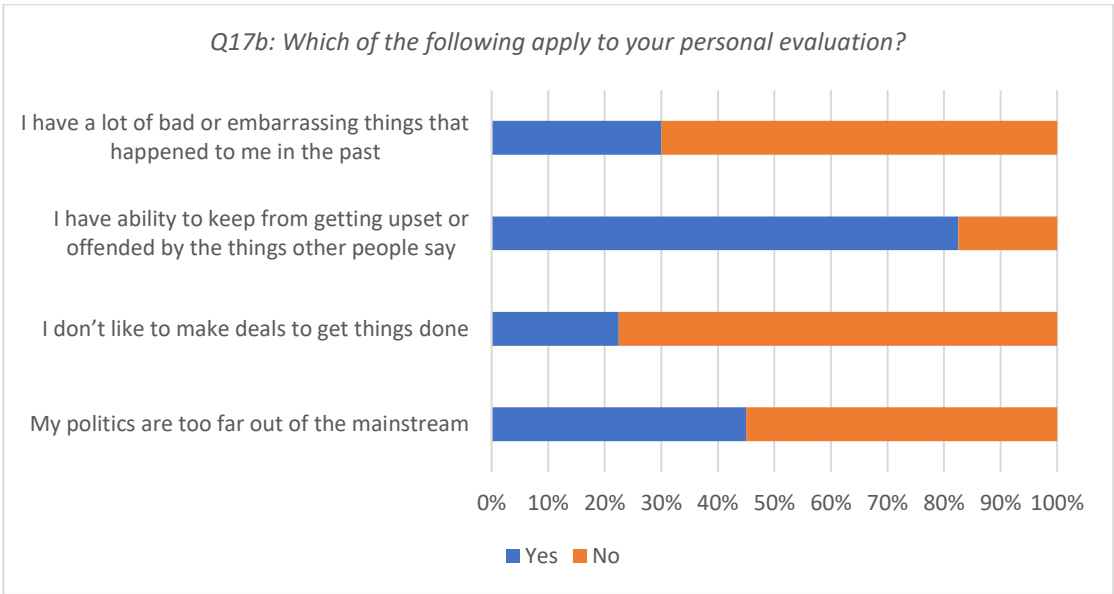
The data from the survey shows that 10% of the total respondents say they are very qualified to run for office. The majority of the respondents say they are qualified to run for local elections which records 62%.



As for previous experiences, the data from the survey shows that women are less experienced in organizing an event for a large group, conducting significant policy research and formulation, running a business/organization or foundation, raising funds and engaging in a regular public speaking.



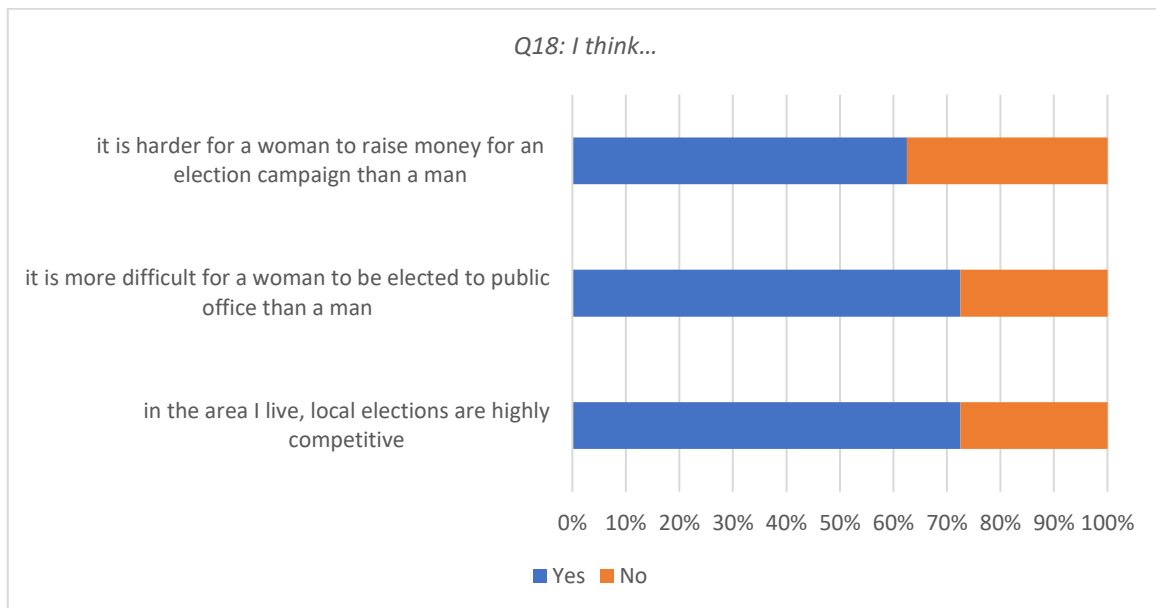
In regard to professional characteristics, the study shows that 80% of the total respondents believe that they are good self-promoters. However, they are poor in raising money.



The study shows that more than 80% of respondents think that they have ability to keep from getting upset or offended by the things other people say. However, around 45% of respondents think that their politics are not in line with the mainstream politics.

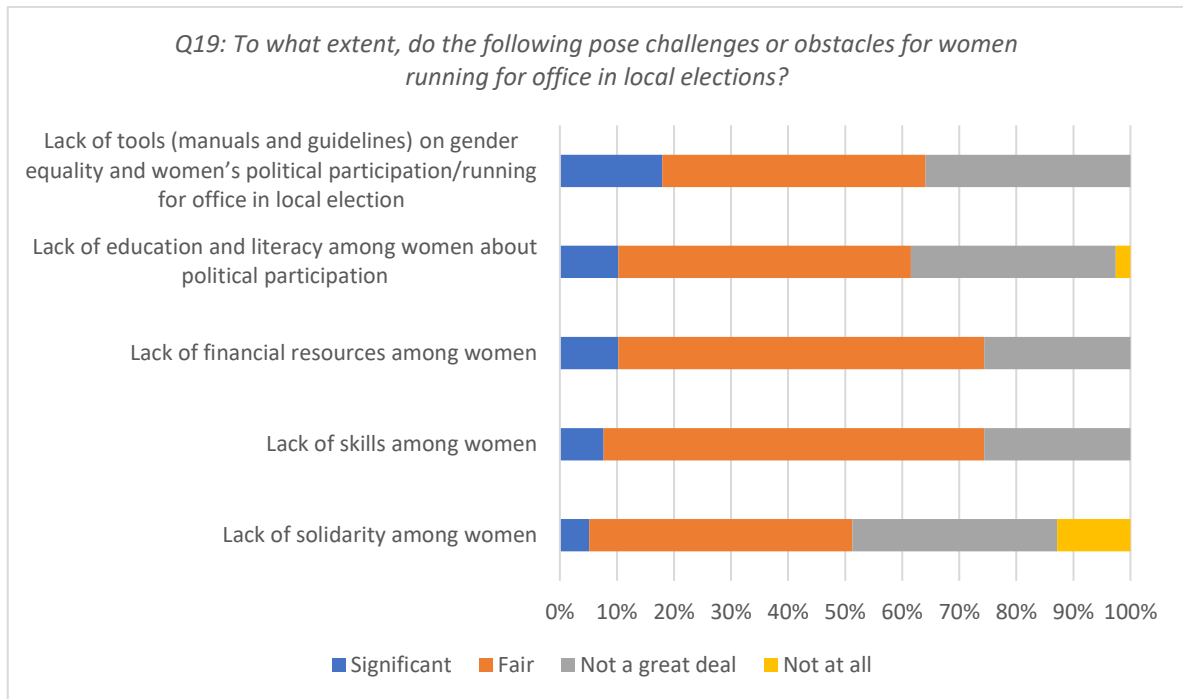
4.2.3 Legal and Institutional Barriers

Gender Differences in Perceptions of the Electoral System



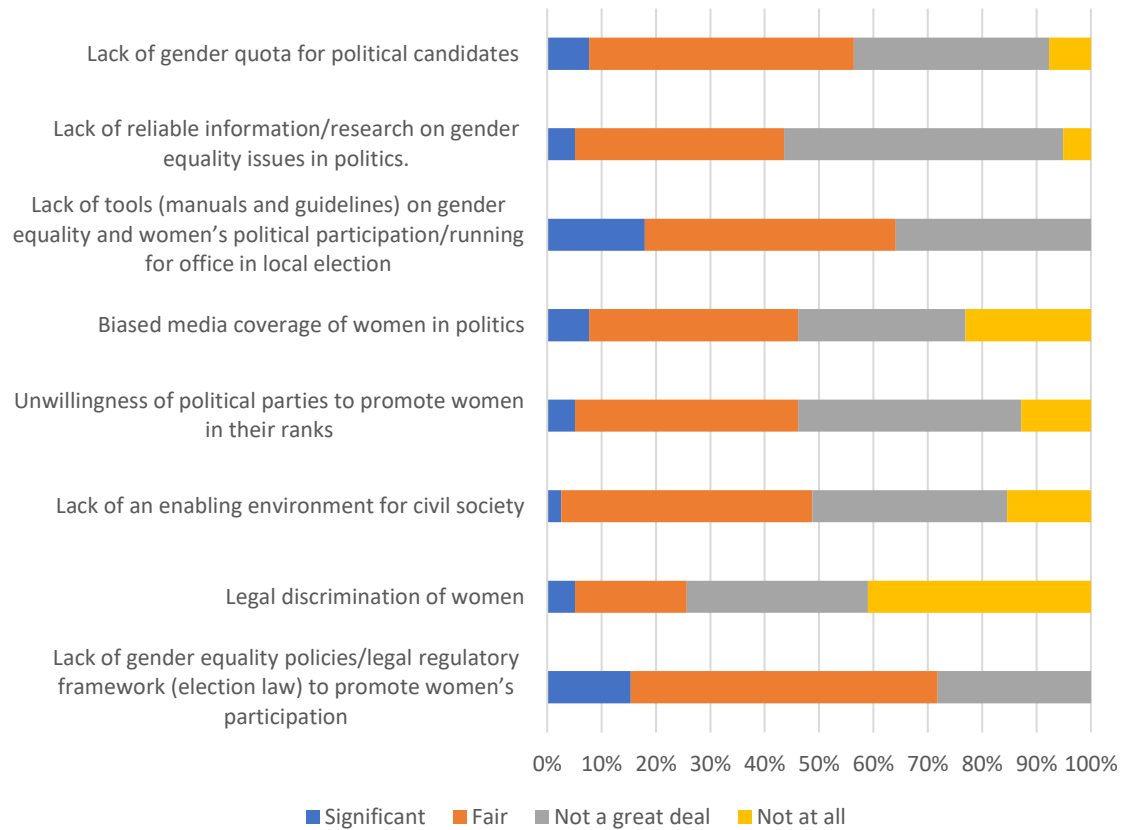
In relation to gender differences in perceptions of the electoral system, around 72% of respondents think it is more difficult for a woman to be elected to public office than man and local elections are highly competitive because the politics in Cambodia is highly dominated by men. In addition, around 62% of respondents say it is harder for women to be elected to public office than men. This means women face more challenges than men in running for office in local elections.

Resources to Encourage Office Seeking



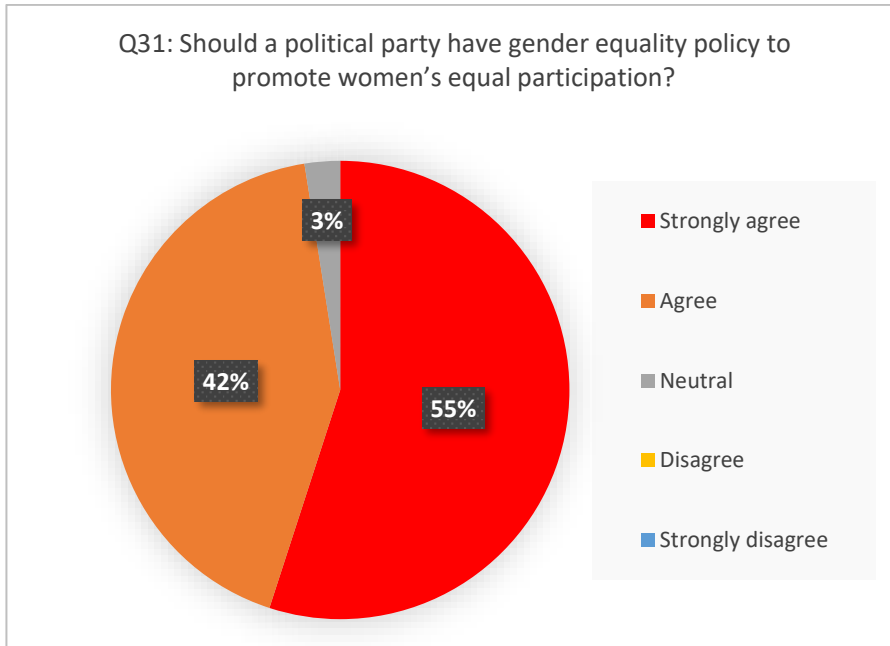
It is hard for women to allocate resources for office seeking. The study shows that the lack of skills and financial resources among women are the main challenges to women running for office in local election. Furthermore, around 65% of respondents think that the lack of tools (manuals and guidelines) on gender equality and women's political participation is also the challenge to women running for local elections.

Q21: To what extent do the following pose challenges or obstacles for women running for office in local elections?

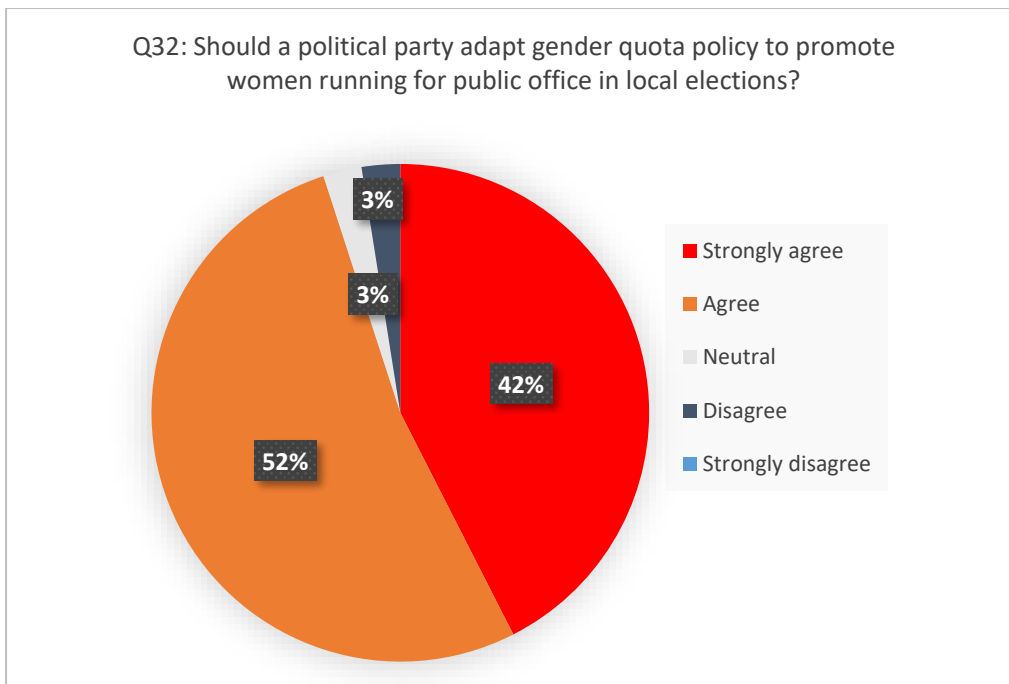


The lack of gender equality policies/legal framework for political parties to promote women's participation in politics and the lack of tools (manuals and guidelines) on gender equity and women's running for office stood out as the two main challenges pose to women's running for local election. In addition, the lack of reliable information on gender issue in politics, lack of gender quota for political candidates, and unwillingness of political parties to promote women in their ranks are also challenges to women's running for office.

The Necessity of Having Gender Equality Policy and Quota Policy

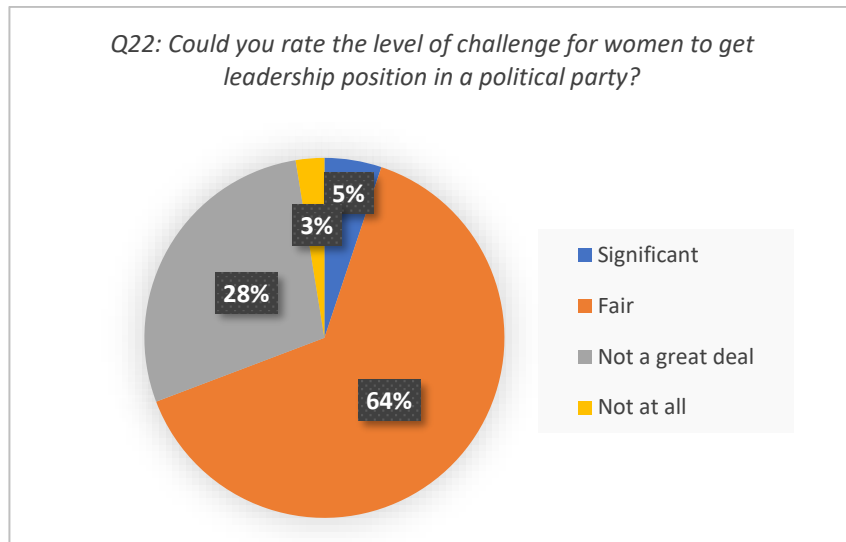


The data analysis shows 55% of respondents strongly agree and 42% of them agree that political parties should have gender equality policy to promote women's equal participation.

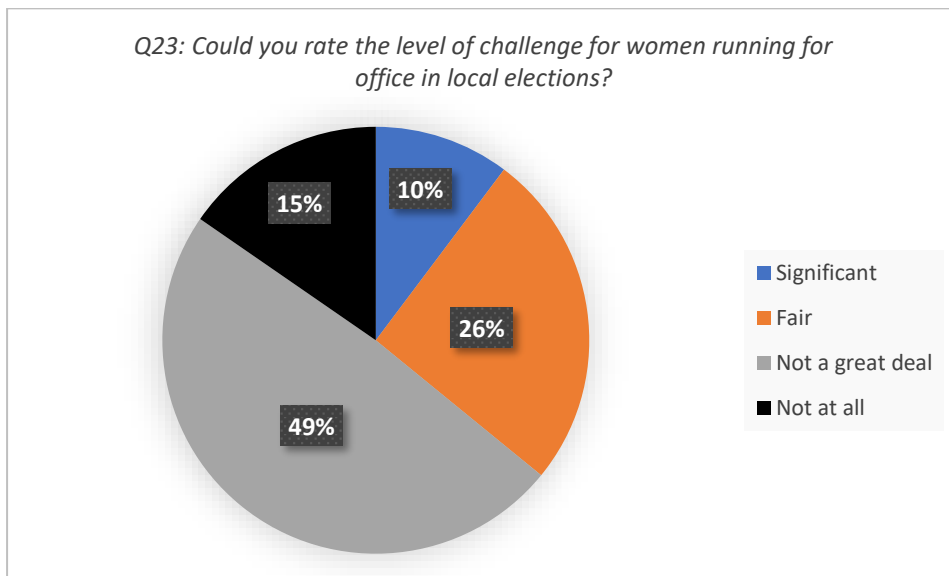


The gender quota policy is crucial to support women's participation in politics. The result of the survey shows 42% of respondents strongly agree and 52% of them agree that political parties should adapt gender quota policy to promote women's running for public office in local election.

Challenges to Leadership Position

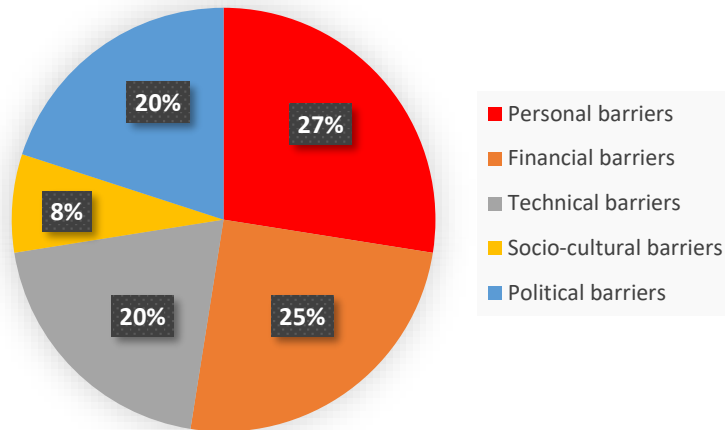


The data from the survey shows that 5% of the respondents say the level of challenge for women to get leadership position in a political party is very high and 64% of them say it is fairly high.



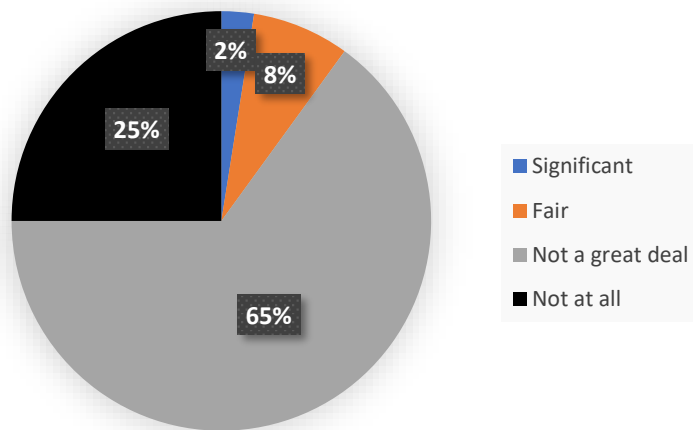
The data from the survey also shows 10% of respondents say the level of challenge for women running for office in local election is very high, and 26% of them say it is fairly high.

Q26: Which one is the most difficult challenge for women to run for office in local elections?



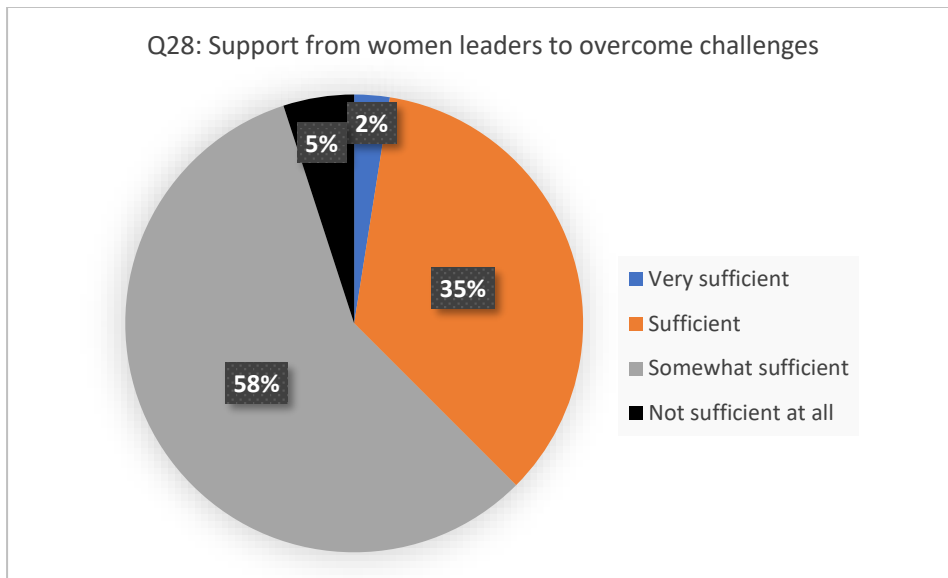
Among the main challenges, personal barriers are the most difficult challenge for women to run for office in local elections. Financial barriers are the second most challenged factors and political barriers are the third obstacles.

Q27: To what extent can women overcome all the personal, financial, technical, socio-cultural, institutional, political barriers?

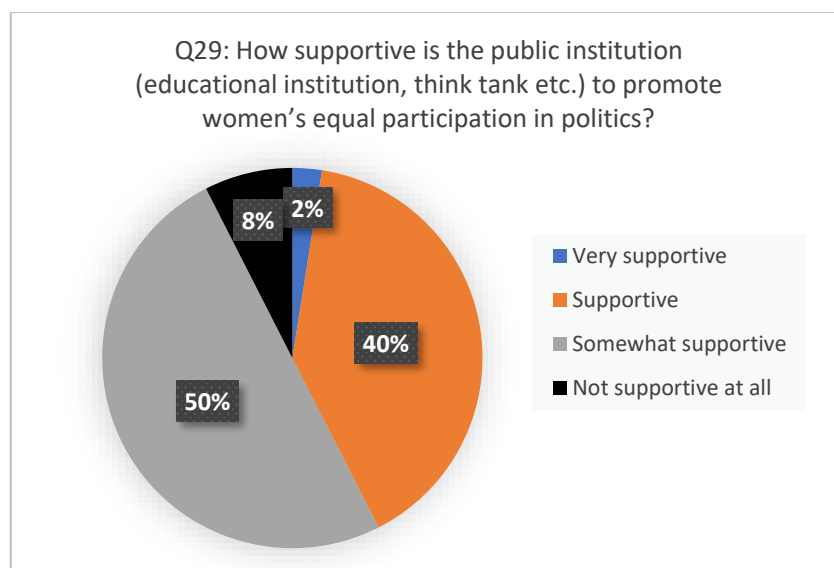


The data from the survey shows that only 2% of respondents could highly overcome all the main barriers, 8% could fairly overcome the barriers. However, more than 65% of respondents could hardly overcome the challenges to women's running for local election.

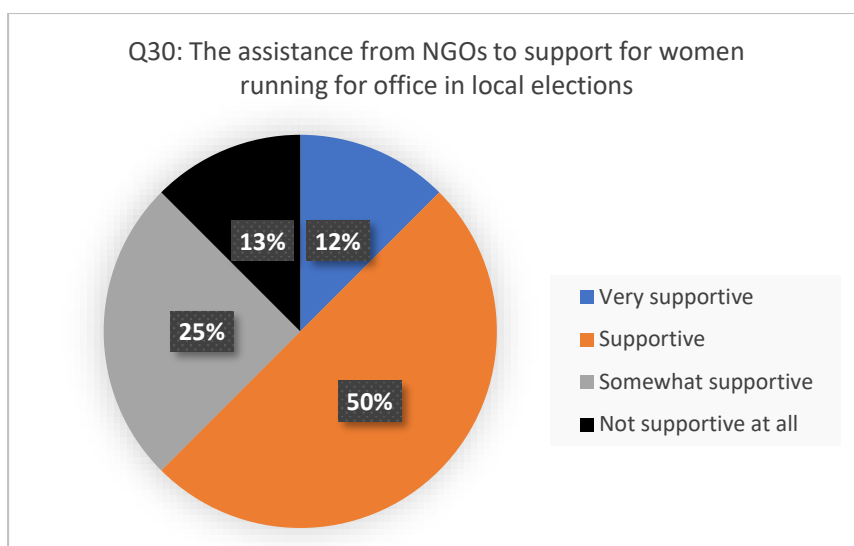
4.2.4 Supports from Different Stakeholders to Overcome Challenges



The support from women leaders to overcome challenges and violence against women is still limited. The data from the survey shows that only 35% of respondents say the support is sufficient and 58% of respondents say it is somewhat sufficient.



The data from the survey also shows that support from the public institution (educational institution, think tank etc.) to promote women's equal participation in politics is also limited in which 40% of respondents say the public institution is supportive and 50% of them say it is somewhat supportive.



The result from the survey shows the NGOs are more supportive for women’s running for office in local elections than the public institutions. The survey records 12% of respondents say NGOs are very supportive and 50% of them say NGOs are supportive.

“I joined a few capacity building trainings for women organized by some NGOs. The trainings are informative and helpful. I wish other women would have chances join such trainings. However, I am aware that the NGO’s support is limited which depends on the funding from overseas; therefore, it is hard to request more trainings. Since politics is not widely taught and discussed in schools, NGOs platform is the only available channel to raise the public awareness about the importance of women participation in politics and their roles are political leaders.”
 - A commune council member in Kompong Chhnang

V. Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

It can be concluded that Cambodian women remain to face many barriers that prevent them from running for local election. The main challenges are personal barriers, financial barriers, political barriers, technical barriers and socio-cultural barriers. The personal barriers, financial barriers and political barriers are the most challenging obstacles respectively.

Although women’s political rights and participation are fully guaranteed by the Cambodian Constitution and the international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), representation and meaningful participation of Cambodian women in politics and political leadership remain low compared to their male counterparts at all levels. Gender discriminatory, autocratic, patriarchal and elitist mindsets still prevail within the family, community, political parties, law enforcing agencies and the public sphere in Cambodia.

The results of the study show that women’s political participation in Cambodia is crucial and their level of political participation in general is high. However, the numbers of women in leadership position

and holding offices are lower than their male counterpart. The survey also shows that women have low political ambition and running for office in local elections. Women were less engaged to run for office from family members, spouse/partner, friend, co-worker, community leader and party official. Their attitude toward election campaign is quite low. These causes by their concerns about their family, personal privacy and hindering professional goal. Family responsibility is one of the barriers that prevent women from running for local elections. The majority of women who participated in the study have low experience in running for election. Their level of knowledge, skills and attitude to become politicians are limited. In addition, they perceive the current electoral system and political culture is not pro-gender equality because it poses great challenges for women to raise money for an election campaign than man; it is more difficult for woman to be elected to public office than man; and local elections are highly competitive. The lack of tools (manuals and guidelines) on gender equality, lack of education and political literacy amongst women about political participation especially the lack of financial resources, violence, harassment, lack of security in politics, cultural norms and stereotype about women in society, lack of skills among women are the barriers also great pose challenges to women for running for public office.

The level of challenge for women to get leadership position in a political party is still high. Similarly, the level of challenge for women running for office in local election is also high. There are five main challenges for women to run for office in local election namely personal barriers, financial barriers, political barriers, technical barriers and socio-cultural barriers. The personal barriers are the most difficult challenge for women to run for office in local election. The study also shows that women have limited ability to overcome all barriers. The support from women leaders to overcome challenges and violence against women is still limited. The data from the survey also shows that support from the public institution (educational institution, think tank etc.) to promote women's equal participation in politics is also limited. The result from the survey shows the NGOs are more supportive for women's running for office in local elections than the public institutions.

Cambodian women and men have been fully and equally guaranteed by the Cambodian constitution on their political participation and interests. However, the promise and obligation as enshrined in the Constitution have not been fulfilled. In addition, there are lack of enabling political environment, gender equality policies, election laws and operational measurements to promote and support the status of women's political participation in Cambodia. The gaps of gender-responsive policies and election laws, operational measurements, and investments have strengthened the inequality of women's representation and participation. Therefore, Cambodia needs gender quota policy, gender equality policy in the party and gender-responsive election laws and the implementations to empower and enable women to claim their rights and grasp equal opportunities as candidates and the political leaders.

5.2 Key Recommendations

To promote women's participation in politics and assist women overcome barriers for them to running for local election, the following measures should be taken:

5.2.1 Political Party

- Increase the outreach with potential female political candidates
- Enable the inclusion of more women party members in the local committee, central, selection committees, and parliamentary committees.
- Enact pro-gender policy to promote women's political participation including running for local election.
- Recognize the need to create a safe and enabling secure political environment within a party for women.
- Enact policy and regulation to fight discrimination and violence against women in a party.
- Adapt gender equality policy within the party and to promote women's equal participation within political parties; being part of the policy-making process, decision-maker and leadership roles, candidates, and elected representatives. The gender equality policy is an effective tool to encourage all political parties to place more women candidates on the party list by using the sandwich system from the top to bottom for ranking between women and men candidates and increase gender equality at all levels within the party.
- Increase resources to support women's engagement in local elections.
- Provide capacity building on ICT for civic and political participation for women.

5.2.2 National Assembly and Senate

Law makers should formulate gender-responsive election laws in both LEMNA and LEMCC as affirmative action to promote gender equality and provide opportunities for women's equal participation in politics and its well implemented. The affirmative action is an effective solution to encourage all political parties to place more female candidates on the party list. The political parties should be encouraged to implement reforms to the legal framework by amending electoral laws. The law can be improved establishing criteria to the political party's candidate registration procedure requiring the use of a sandwich system from the top to bottom for ranking on the political party candidate list. There should also be an amendment to the Law on Elections of Members of National Assembly (LEMNA) *Chapter 4, new Article 37 "the list of candidates in each constituency has to use sandwich system from top to bottom between women candidates and men candidates."* And the Law on Elections of Members of Commune Council (LEMCC) *Chapter 7, new Article 49 "candidate lists of each political party must alternate female candidates and male candidates from the top to bottom ranking."*

5.2.3 State and Public Institutions

- Fulfil the obligation as stated in the Constitution that men and women are equal (Art.31).
- facilitate the effective implementation of the Neary Rattanak V (2019-2023), the Ministry of Women's Affairs' (MoWA) five-year gender mainstreaming policy and a new national policy on gender equality (2020-2030).
- Accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on Gender Equality.
- Support achieving the National Strategic Development Strategy (NSDP) key goals to increase women's decision-making power

- Formulate policies and laws to combat discrimination and violence against women in politics. Establish an independent observation body that identifies violence against women in politics and regularly reports on the information to relevant stakeholders and the public.
- Provide supports such as funding, resources, and human resources to elected women and women leaders, in order to facilitate and increase the efficiency and quality of women's work, political participation and leadership.
- Strengthen the respect for women's political rights and ensure the exercise of these rights by making it easier for women to exercise their rights to political participation, especially in the political activities of women politicians from the opposition party and other parties to provide more opportunities for them to involve in politics and decision-making in line with the CEDAW Convention and Cambodia's Sustainable Development Goals (CSDG).
- The government shall reconsider and pay more attention to the women politicians in all parties who have an active voice or are about to enter politics by encouraging, protecting, providing equal opportunities to them and ensuring their full participation in politics.
- The Ministry of Interior and relevant authorities shall ensure that all Commune/Sangkat Councillors, especially women, have full access to their roles, duties and powers in accordance with the Law on Commune/Sangkat Administration and CEDAW.
- Take immediate measures to address the traditional stereotypes of women, and implement a nationwide campaign to change people's discriminatory views towards women's political participation including running for offices in local election.

5.2.4 CSOs, Educational Institutions and Academies

- Increase civic education and political education in Cambodia (capacity and skill development, how to enter politics, and mindset changes) in order to reshape the way Cambodian society perceives politics including the important roles of women in politics, and supporting them.
- Increase support mechanism for women politicians such as capacity development (self-confident and skill sets needed to participate in politics including developing effective campaign and lobbying strategies), empowerment and special political funding for women in politics.
- Continue accelerating the elimination of gender disparity at the public and household level.
- Increase academic research, debate, and discussions on women's participation in politics especially women's running for local election, women's political leadership.
- Facilitate political grooming of potential female politicians in order to raise public awareness about the importance of women's participation in politics especially women's running for local election, women's political leadership.
- Utilise both the social media and mass media to campaign on women's rights with emphasis on the importance of women's political participation and leadership role.
- Provide capacity building on family planning so that women can manage her time and task for political engagement.
- Provide training on related laws and financial support to elected female commune council members so that they can performance their job well and support other women who are interested in becoming politicians.

5.2.5 National Election Committee (NEC)

- Formulate gender-responsive election/NEC's procedure and regulation for increasing gender equality.
- Raise the public awareness about the equal opportunities for women candidates running for the elections and the importance of their political participation.
- The election/NEC's procedure and regulation can improve the gender equality by establishing criteria to the political party's candidate registration procedure requiring the use of a sandwich system from the top to bottom for ranking between female candidates and male candidates in the political party candidate list.

Annex 1: ToR

Terms of reference: Research to identify barriers to women running for office in local elections

Background:

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has signed a contribution agreement with Global Affairs Canada (GAC) for a six-year project entitled Partnerships for Municipal Innovation – Women in Local Leadership (PMI- WILL). PMI-WILL intends to contribute to improved quality of life for women and girls, in particular those from marginalized groups, in Benin, Cambodia, Ghana, Sri Lanka and Zambia. The project will use a two-pronged approach to achieve this goal:

1. Increasing the participation and enhancing the role of women as leaders and decision-makers in local governance
2. Increasing the effectiveness of local governments in delivering inclusive, gender-responsive public services

FCM will implement the project in collaboration with the National League of the Local Councils of the Kingdom of Cambodia (NLC), selected local governments/municipalities and other selected partners, including relevant Ministries, CSOs and women’s rights organizations. FCM will mobilize Canadian municipal practitioners and elected officials from FCM’s membership to provide peer-to-peer technical assistance.

Research has shown that increasing the number of women on local councils results in increased responsiveness to women’s needs and greater investment in social programs leading to poverty reduction. SDG 5.5 calls for women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life. As the order of government closest to the people, municipalities need women, including those from marginalized groups, to participate equitably in decision-making as elected leaders, senior administrators and community members. The Partnerships for Municipal Innovation – Women in Local Leadership (PMI-WILL) strives to increase the capacity of women, in particular from marginalized groups, to run for local elected office. To effectively, achieve its outcome, FCM seeks to address the barriers and challenges women face as candidates in local elections, as local council members and as local government administrators.

Major Purpose:

Under the general direction of the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Specialist and the National League of the Local Councils of the Kingdom of Cambodia (NLC), the consultant will identify barriers to women running for office in local elections in Cambodia and submit a report with findings, recommendations and baseline data. Using existing studies and data gathered during the country context assessment, the consultant will verify data, and prepare a report with recommendations and an action plan.

Scope of Work

A. A research report on barriers to women's participation in local government

- Review existing literature/ research to identify barriers to women's participation in local governance in Cambodia
- Review data collected during context assessment and stakeholders' engagement
- Interview key stakeholders such as female/male assembly members (past/present) as well as opinion leaders
 - Validate data collected with key stakeholders such as women's networks, WROs, political parties, traditional and religious leaders, and key allies, including men
- Review existing laws/ policies/programs in Cambodia that relate to governance and increasing women's participation in local governance with a clear focus on assessing how gender-responsive the policies are in promoting women in decision- making from the points of:
 - Formulation
 - Adoption of policy
 - Implementation (pros and cons)
 - Monitoring and evaluation
- Write a research paper on key findings and recommendations from the research that will inform selected initiatives delivered to encourage the engagement of women and girls in local government in Cambodia and the development of action plans.

B. Action Plan

- Provide TA to NLC, key stakeholders and partners to develop action plans by identifying priority actions to increase women's participation in local governance.

C. Identify relevant knowledge products

- Identify past (within the last 5 -10 years) and present projects, initiatives or programs with a focus to increase the participation of women and marginalized persons as elected officials in local governance in Cambodia
- Make a list of partners and stakeholders working in the area of local governance
- Review PMI-WILL project documents and identify synergies with past and present projects
- Review existing tools, knowledge products that has been developed case studies, research papers, project reports, training manuals, good practice articles and success stories in print, electronic and video formats from previous projects and programs implemented in country.

Deliverables

No.	Deliverable	Level of effort	Deadline
1	Approach to work and methodology for undertaking the research and a work plan	1 day	Within 1 week of starting contract
2	Conducting research and submitting A research report on barriers to women's participation in local government as elected officers inclusive of knowledge sharing tools and potential stakeholders working or worked in area of local governance	26 days	Within 6 weeks of starting contract
3	Validation workshop	3 days	Within 7 weeks of starting contract
4	Multi-stakeholder engagement to develop action plan	5 days	Within 8 weeks of starting the contract

Management parameters

The following parameters should be considered in the applicant's proposal:

- Duration: The assignment duration is from January 2022 to February 2022.
- Location: The assignment will be conducted in some provinces of Cambodia
- Level of effort: 35 days
- Management: The consultant will report to the NLC and PMI-WILL team within FCM.

Knowledge, Education and Experience

- Master's Degree in gender studies and/or social/humanitarian studies
- 5 years' experience in conducting research and publishing research papers/reports in the areas of women's political leadership, gender equality, governance and elections
- Understanding of the local government sector in Cambodia highly desirable
- Excellent written and oral communications skills, in English and Khmer

Application process

Please submit a costed proposal (no more than 2 pages) indicating the level of effort, methodology, a work plan, daily rate and list of people who would work on the assignment (if you are team) with their CVs. Please note that the costs for the validation workshop and consultation to develop an action plan will be covered by the project and need not be costed.

Deadline for applications is 07th January 2022

Annex 2: Survey Questionnaires

Introduction

Thank you for participating in the survey on “The Barriers to Women Running for Office in Local Elections”. The main objectives of this study are to identify the barriers to women running for office in local elections and provide a series of recommendations and develop an action plan on how relevant stakeholders can mitigate the barriers to women running for office in local elections in Cambodia.

Please note that your responses will be kept confidential and your name will not be used in the study report. You can skip any questions that you are uncomfortable with. In addition, you can refuse to answer at any point. Before we begin, please keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers. The survey should take your time approximately 10-20 minutes.

Demographics

1. What is your gender?
 - Women
 - Man
 - Other

2. What is your marital status?
 - Single
 - Married
 - Separated
 - Divorced
 - Other

3. Can you please indicate which age group you fall under?
 - Ages 18 - 20
 - Ages 21 - 25
 - Ages 26 – 35
 - Ages 36-45
 - Over 45

4. Which is your occupation?
 - Female commune council member
 - Women political activist
 - Female commune council member
 - Party representatives in commune
 - Gender experts
 - Human rights defender
 - Academics
 - CSO leaders/representative

Religious leader/worker

Other

5. What is your level of literacy

Illiterate

Literate

6. What is your level of education?

Never been to school

Primary school

Secondary high school

High school

Bachelor degree

Master degree

Ph.D.

7. Do you have any disability?

Yes

No

Perspectives on Women's Political Participation

8. How important is women's political participation in Cambodia?

Highest

High

Medium

Low

Lowest

9. Could you rate the level of women's political participation in Cambodia?

Highest

High

Medium

Low

Lowest

Women's Interest in Politics and Political Ambition

10. Have you ever considered running for any political office?

Have you ever	Yes	No
discussed running with family?		
discussed running with friends?		

discussed running with community leaders?		
investigated how to place your name on the ballot?		
discussed running with party leaders?		
discussed financial contributions with potential supporters?		

Electoral Gatekeepers and Political Recruitment

11. Have you ever received the suggestion to run for office from a . . . ?

Political actors	Yes	No
Party official		
Elected official		
Non-elected official		
Non-political actors		
Co-worker		
Friend		
Spouse/partner		
Family member		
Religious group/leader		

Attitude Toward Election Campaign

12. Have you ever....?

	Yes	No
solicited campaign contributions		
dealt with party officials		
been door-to-door to meet constituents		
dealt with members of the press		

13. What are your personal aspects of running for office in the local elections?

	Yes	No
potentially hindering professional goals		
spending less time with your family		
loss of privacy		

Potential candidate family structure and responsibilities

14. To what extent, do family responsibilities prevent you from running for office in local elections?

- Highest
- High
- Medium
- Low
- Lowest

Qualifications to Run for Public Office

15. How qualified are you to run for public office?

- Very qualified
- Qualified
- Somewhat qualified
- Not qualified at all

16. Do you have any experience in..... for election?

	Yes	No
conducting significant policy research and formulation		
running a business, organization, or foundation		
soliciting funds		
organizing an event for a large group		
engaging in regular public speaking		

17. In thinking about your qualifications to run for office, which of the following apply to you?

Professional Characteristics	Yes	No
I know a lot about public policy issues		
I have relevant professional experience		
I am a good public speaker		
I have connections to the political system		
I have or could raise enough money		
I am a good self-promoter		
Personal Evaluations		
My politics are too far out of the mainstream		
I don't like to make deals to get things done		
I don't have thick enough skin		
I have a lot of bad or embarrassing things that happened to me in the past		

Gender Differences in Perceptions of the Electoral System

18. I think...

	Yes	No
in the area I live, local elections are highly competitive.		
it is more difficult for a woman to be elected to public office than a man.		
it is harder for a woman to raise money for an election campaign than a man.		

Resources to Encourage Office Seeking

19. To what extent do the following pose challenges or obstacles for women running for office in local elections? (Please tick the most applicable response for each challenge)

	Significant	Fair	Not a great deal	Not at all
Lack of solidarity among women				
Lack of skills among women				
Lack of financial resources among women				
Lack of education and literacy among women about political participation				
Lack of tools (manuals and guidelines) on gender equality and women's political participation/running for office in local election				

Institutional Barriers

20. To what extent do the following pose challenges or obstacles for women running for office in local elections? (Please tick the most applicable response for each challenge)

	Significant	Fair	Not a great deal	Not at all
Lack of gender equality policies/legal regulatory framework (election law) to promote women's participation				
Legal discrimination of women				
Lack of an enabling environment for civil society				
Unwillingness of political parties to promote women in their ranks				
Biased media coverage of women in politics				

Lack of tools (manuals and guidelines) on gender equality and women's political participation/running for office in local election				
Lack of reliable information/research on gender equality issues in politics.				
Lack of gender quota for political candidates				

Socio-Cultural Barriers

21. To what extent do the following pose challenges or obstacles for women running for office in local elections? (Please tick the most applicable response for each challenge)

	Significant	Fair	Not a great deal	Not at all
Lack of education program provides the required talent and knowledge essential for women to take part in politics				
Cultural norms and stereotypes about women in society				
Religious beliefs/interpretation about women in society				
Discriminatory or sexist working culture in government office				
Women's perception of the lack of safety and respect for women in the political sphere.				
Violence, harassment and lack of security in politics				

22. Could you rate the level of challenge for women to get leadership position in a political party?

- Υ Highest
- Υ High
- Υ Medium
- Υ Low
- Υ Lowest

23. Could you rate the level of challenge for women running for office in local elections?

- Υ Highest
- Υ High
- Υ Medium
- Υ Low
- Υ Lowest

24. To what extent can women overcome all the personal, financial, technical, socio-cultural, institutional, political barriers?

- Υ Easiest
- Υ Easy
- Υ Medium
- Υ Difficult
- Υ Most difficult

25. Amongst the following barriers, which one is the most difficult challenge for women to run for office in local elections?
- Personal barriers
 - Financial barriers
 - Technical barriers
 - Socio-cultural barriers
 - Institutional barriers
 - Political barriers
26. Do women receive sufficient support from women leaders to overcome challenge and violence against them?
- Least sufficient
 - Less sufficient
 - Sufficient
 - More sufficient
 - Most sufficient
27. How supportive is the public institution (educational institution, think tank etc.) to promote women's equal participation in politics?
- Least supportive
 - Less supportive
 - Supportive
 - More supportive
 - Most supportive
28. How supportive is the NGOs in your areas to support for women running for office in local elections?
- Least supportive
 - Less supportive
 - Supportive
 - More supportive
 - Most supportive
29. Should a political party have gender equality policy to promote women's equal participation?
- Yes
 - No
 - Maybe
30. Should a political party adapt gender quota policy to promote women running for public office in local elections?
- Yes
 - No
 - Maybe
31. Do you have anything to add?

Annex 3: KII Interview Protocol

Informed Consent

Thank you for agreeing to meet with us. My name is [insert full name]. I am here to collect data for a study on “The Barriers to Women Running for Office in Local Elections”. The main objectives of this study are to identify the barriers to women running for office in local elections and provide a series of recommendations and develop an action plan on how relevant stakeholders can mitigate the barriers to women running for office in local elections in Cambodia. Please note that your responses will be kept confidential and your name will not be used in the study report. You can skip any questions that you are uncomfortable with. Do you agree to participate in this interview? IF ‘YES’, CONTINUE THE INTERVIEW. For notetaking purposes, would you mind if we recorded our conversation?

1. What is your impression about women’s participation in politics especially local elections in Cambodia?
2. Do you think it is important for women to contest elections? Why or why not?
3. Are there any barriers prevent women from running for office in local elections? If yes, what are they?
4. In ranking the barriers, which you consider as the major obstacle to women’s participation and why?
5. What are their [women] strategies to overcome these barriers?
6. In your opinion, which strategies should civil society apply to effectively promote meaningful political participation of women and increase representation in Cambodia?
7. Which strategies should be implemented by key actors to combat social-cultural barriers to meaningful political participation of women and increase representation? And why?
8. In your opinion which strategies should women leaders apply to effectively promote meaningful political participation of women and increase representation in Cambodia? And why?
9. Which tools (e.g., manuals and guidelines) and resources (e.g., technical and financial resources) would be helpful to support your work and efforts to promote women’s meaningful political participation and contesting in elections?
10. Which strategies should political parties apply to effectively promote meaningful political participation of women, increase representation and encourage women to contest in local elections?
11. Should a political party have gender equality policy to promote women’s equal participation? Why or why not?
12. In your opinion, should a political party in Cambodia adapt gender quota policy to promote women running for public office in local elections? Why or why not?
13. Do you have anything to add?

Demographics

1. What is your gender?

- Women
- Man
- Other

2. What is your marital status?

- Single
- Married
- Separated
- Divorced
- Other

3. Can you please indicate which age group you fall under?

- Ages 18 - 20
- Ages 21 - 25
- Ages 26 – 35
- Ages 36-45
- Over 45

4. Which is your occupation?

- Female commune council member
- Women political activist
- Female commune council member
- Party representatives in commune
- Gender experts
- Human rights defender
- Academics
- CSO leaders/representative
- Religious leader/worker
- Other

5. What is your level of education?

- Illiteracy
- Literacy
- Primary school
- Secondary high school
- High school
- Bachelor degree
- Master degree
- Ph.D.

6. Do you have any disability?

Yes

No