

Democracy and Decentralization in Cambodia - Capacity Buildings for Female Commune Councilors

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Decentralization

Certain rights, responsibilities and resources are transferred from the central level of government to the democratically elected commune councils. Decentralization aims to promote democracy and to improve the living conditions of the population.



Female Councilors at work, Siem Reap Province

Background Information

The Royal Government of Cambodia introduced the Decentralization Reform in 2001. It includes

- Law on Administration and Management of Communes
- Law on Elections of Commune Councils

→ February 2002: elections in 1,621 communes with 11,261 elected councilors. 8.5% of them are female.

In Focus Group Discussions with international donors, a number of female councilors reported limitations in

- Their overall capacity
- Their confidence to raise issues/assert themselves
- Balancing their multiple roles
- Some reported discrimination by male colleagues

It was obvious that special capacity buildings for female councilors were required.

Capacity Buildings

Female Councilor Forums were established and are funded by different international organizations including the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ). Each year, four two-day forums take place in one third of Cambodian provinces for female councilors only.

Objectives of Forums

- Increase confidence and leadership
- Improve work performance
- Address issues of interest to female councilors during Forums
- Increase visibility
- Form networks
- Build skills to liaise with constituents and civil society
- Improve public presentation skills

Achievements of Forums

Based on a Female Councilor Forum mid- term evaluation conducted in 2005, the following facts were found:

- 75% of 30 interviewed female councilors reported the Forums contributed to increased knowledge/capacity to perform their work
- Female Councilors reported higher confidence and capacity to:
 - Perform their roles and tasks
 - Raise own initiative on council (10% of female councilor)
 - Address women's issues
 - Present themselves in public
 - Liaise with constituents and NGOs
- All female councilors reported successfully solving at least one problem in their commune (e.g. land dispute)



Female Councilor Forum, Kampong Cham Province

Female Councilor Forum Mid- Term Evaluation

In 2005 a Forum mid- term evaluation was undertaken by GTZ. This evaluation spanned the national as well as the local level. Three provinces were chosen for research. Group Discussions and interviews with female councilors, other councilors, female councilor's families and villagers were undertaken to achieve information about the impact of the Forums.



Female Councilor and Planning Committee, Kampong Thom Province

Conclusion

- Due to the Forums, the majority of Female Councilors is capable of contributing to the development of their communes. They became role models for others and might influence more women to participate in the development and decentralization process.
- Only 12% of the interviewed Female Councilors wanted to re-stand for the 2007 Commune Council Elections before attending the Forums. After attending them, 86% of them wanted to candidate again in the upcoming elections.