

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

# Women into politics! Greater female participation in Cambodia

A best-practice handbook 2016 – 2018



This project  
is funded by the  
European Union



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A best-practice handbook 2016 – 2018

Kyle James

## PROJECT FINANCE PARTNER



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## PROJECT PARTNERS



Banteay Srei



Women's Media Centre of Cambodia

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"Women into Politics!" launches in 2016, with DW Akademie's Sabina Casagrande, EU Ambassador H.E. George Edgar and Cambodian Minister of Women's Affairs H.E. Dr. Ing Kantha Phavi.

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# Introduction

While women made up 51.2 per cent of Cambodia's population in 2016, according to the World Bank, politics in the Kingdom has traditionally been a men's affair. Women's voices in the political sphere are often as hushed as a whisper and their representation in the political halls of power has remained stubbornly low. Women face a multitude of barriers that keep them from fully participating in politics and social affairs. They range from poverty, illiteracy, discrimination, a lack of encouragement and opportunity to the absence of a specific policy on promoting and providing opportunities to women. In addition, women often lack the skills and confidence in a society that still sees them primarily as wives and mothers who take care of the home or perhaps a family business.

**“Most women lack knowledge, courage, encouragement from their family and opportunity to work in their community. We will talk to their families to open up more opportunities for the wives.**

**Men Sophy, commune council candidate and “Women into Politics!” trainee**

Young women, who often have education and experiences that were out of reach of their mothers, are still rarely welcome to participate in public life or contribute their ideas—even on the local and village level. The result is a feeling of being ignored, devalued and disenfranchised.

But women are a great untapped potential in Cambodia. That is the driving idea behind the EU-funded project “Women into Politics! Greater female participation in Cambodia”. This three-year project reached women from different regions in Cambodia and gave them the communications skills they needed to run for political office and talk to their constituents or become community leaders in their own locales. It was implemented by Germany's leading media development organization DW Akademie, local partners Banteay Srei (BtS) and the Women's Media Centre of Cambodia (WMC), and two third-party funding recipients, Cambodian Volunteers for Society (CVS) and the Youth Council of Cambodia (YCC).

The project made use of media—radio, video and, especially, social media—as well as community forums to reach young people, particularly women and first-time voters, in the run-up to communal and national elections. This gave them the knowledge they needed to make informed choices at the polls. The project disseminated information on topics with special relevance to women that emerged from local forums where community women could make their voices heard. The project's overarching goals, empowerment and greater equality for Cambodian women, were in line with the European Union's focus on gender equality and its commitment to the protection and fulfilment of human rights for women and girls.

This best-practice handbook aims to provide an overview of the project—its goals, its approach, its activities and its results. It will look at who was primarily involved in each activity field, how they contributed or benefited, and what came of the three years of project work. This handbook also examines the challenges involved in carrying out the planned activities in a political environment that saw significant changes during the project period.

Cambodian women continue to struggle to make their voices heard and their concerns addressed on the political stage and in society. This project did not break down every obstacle they face. But it did succeed in what it set out to do, that is, boosting women's active participation in Cambodia's political processes as politicians, voters and engaged citizens. It helped pave the way for further advances by this group, more than half of the nation's population, whose full participation in all aspects of society is essential for the country to realize its full potential.



## Project background and approach

The EU-funded project “Women into politics! Greater female participation in Cambodia” took a multi-pronged, multimedia, participatory approach to getting more women involved in the political process. To counteract the current underrepresentation of women in Cambodia’s decision-making mechanisms, the project aimed to empower both female politicians and young voters by giving them skills and information that would encourage greater civic participation.

### Project objective

Establishing a public dialogue and supporting participatory processes of marginalized groups, particularly women, in Cambodia through promoting an increase in the freedom of expression.

To that end, the project was designed with three specific approaches in mind.

1. **Communication**—Supporting female political candidates in communicating with their constituencies
2. **Information**—Informing and involving youth in the electoral process
3. **Media Coverage**—Improving media coverage of issues relevant to women in Cambodia

Sustainability was an important component of the project design. The project activities aimed at strengthening multipliers who could pass on skills and information to a larger cohort far into the future. The idea was for female political candidates and community leaders trained in communications and public speaking to make use of their newly learned skills and newly acquired self-confidence in many ways and in many contexts. The information aimed at young people on voting and the democratic process will be useful for many elections to come and anchor in them a sense that they should have a say, throughout their lives, in how their country is governed.



## Result one

**Women, including those running for political office and community leaders, are trained in dialogue and communication with their constituencies. They gain media-specific skills and learn about their participatory, representative role in Cambodia's political sector.**

### Approach

Female politicians and community leaders were given communication training that enabled them to better present their platforms to voters or to raise issues and encourage

public dialogue in their own communities, both face-to-face and through online tools such as social media. The activities about their role in decision-making in the country gave them new awareness of their potential contribution and their right to raise their voices. A series of in-person forums with local residents in the project's focus areas honed these female leaders' skills and confidence, and allowed them to address constituencies directly to hear about real-life concerns and learn how to respond.

## Result two

**Cambodian youth, particularly young women, actively participate in democratic debate due to a greater understanding of electoral and participatory processes.**

### Approach

Participatory media channels, including radio call-in shows, online video and social media, were used to teach young people about the Cambodian electoral system, registration requirements and the voting process. By using media

platforms popular with young people, such as Facebook, and allowing them to express their own opinions and ask questions, the project reached a wide audience. It encouraged participation in the democratic debate and passed on information about the voting process, which was especially useful for first-time voters. The process improved young people's willingness and ability to engage in their communities and to learn about and discuss their own civic roles and responsibilities in a democratic system.

## Result three

**Media coverage of female issues is enhanced.**

### Approach

Cambodia's mainstream media does not often address issues that empower women, present female leaders as role models or feature topics of special interest to women (such as education for girls, economic opportunities for women, domestic violence). Therefore, the project sought to address

this disconnect by giving women the chance to talk about topics important to them. These subjects were addressed in public forums as well as on interactive media (Facebook, radio call-in shows), where women discussed issues infrequently taken up in male-dominated sectors or gatherings, proposed solutions, and brought an overall greater awareness about the challenges Cambodian women face as well as the successes they have enjoyed.



# Women into politics! At a glance

## Project partners

**Women's Media Centre (WMC)** is a Cambodian non-profit media organization that uses media as a path to promote gender equality, boost women's empowerment and raise gender awareness in Cambodian society.

**Banteay Srei (BtS)** is a Cambodian NGO that empowers vulnerable women to improve their political, economic and psycho-social situation through implementing community development projects, advocacy work and encouraging men's participation in addressing issues affecting women.

**DW Akademie** is Germany's leading international media development organization. DW Akademie strengthens the human right to freedom of expression. Together with its partners throughout the world, it plays a strong role in the development of free media systems, creating access to information, setting standards for education and independent journalism.

## Project finance partner

The European Union (EU) is a major partner of Cambodia since the early 1990s and one of its first grant development assistance providers. The EU is represented in third countries through its 139 Delegations, building networks and partnerships and promoting the values and interests of the EU, including the promotion of human rights and democracy, as well as inclusive and sustainable development.

## Third parties

**Cambodian Volunteers for Society (CVS)** is a non-profit NGO that aims to mobilize youth for social change, including bringing them into the mainstream of local governance and democracy.

**Youth Council of Cambodia (YCC)** is a non-partisan, non-profit organization working toward a society in which youth are active stakeholders. Its goals are to strengthen democracy, human rights, economic development, the environment, public health and gender equality in Cambodia.



### Project dates

2016–2018

### Focus regions

- Battambang
- Kampong Thom
- Phnom Penh
- Siem Reap

### Target groups

- Youth (16–30 years) in the focus regions, particularly young women and first-time voters
- Up to 150 female politicians and candidates in the focus regions
- Listeners in the coverage area of WMC’s Women’s Radio (17 provinces)



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(ដំណើរការនៃការទំនាក់ទំនង)



© DW/K. James

Staff from Banteay Srei practice speaking in front of a group.

## ACTIVITY CLUSTER 1

# Communications training and dialogue with communities



Good communications skills are essential for women to take leadership roles in the political sphere or in their own communities. But in Cambodia, girls and young women are not often taught how to speak effectively in front of groups of people or by using modern communications tools such as the Internet and social media. Many people still do not see such skills as important for women, especially in their traditional roles as wives and mothers.

### “They felt inspired by the training.” - WMC

That is why a key component of Women into Politics! was to provide communications training to female councilors from all of Cambodia’s political parties as well as to female community leaders. They received training on entering into a dialogue with their constituents, both in person through public communal forums and debate and/or through workshops and the Internet, especially social media.

Women gained new skills as well new confidence in the communications training, which they could apply to their election campaigns or to other activities benefiting their communities.



## Activities

- 1.1 “Training of Trainers” (ToT) for WMC and BtS Training communication and political awareness for female political candidates for the 2017 Commune Council elections
- 1.2 Further training of female communal councilors and/or community leaders in specific communication skills
- 1.3 Monitoring of dialogue of female communal councilors and/or community leaders with women and youth in their communities

## 2016

### Training the Trainers: Communication

The activity started with a communications skills workshop in September in Phnom Penh with six women and two men from WMC and BtS (Activity 1.1). The workshop introduced a number of essential communications skills that the eight would then teach to women in the focus areas. Workshop topics included communications strategies for women in politics, knowing your audience, engaging with the public, defining/refining your message, storytelling and media interviews.

The workshop featured the Lego Serious Play method, where the future trainers built models with Legos representing a woman wanting to enter politics or become more active in civic life. To hone their skills around active listening and entering into dialogue, workshop participants went out to learn from local residents what issues were most important to them.

### Training the Trainers: Innovative Techniques

In December, the group came together again for a five-day Train-the-Trainer workshop. They learned and practiced a variety of participatory, interactive adult training techniques they could use with the women in the target group. Topics included creating a constructive workshop atmosphere, introducing participants to each other, and using dynamic training methods to transfer knowledge. After the week, the newly minted trainers were equipped with a toolkit of methods they could use when they headed out to the field to conduct their own workshops.

## 2017

### Training female candidates: 2017 Commune Council elections

The workshops for the female political candidates focused on strengthening skills and self-confidence with regard to communications (Activity 1.2). The aim was to improve the women's listening and public-speaking abilities so that they could better make their voices heard and enter into dialogue with their constituents. Another emphasis was the effective, proactive use of media, in particular social media, as democratic platforms for communicating and promoting women's issues.

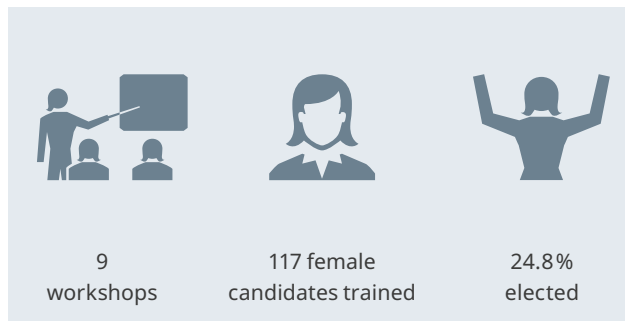
The workshops featured hands-on exercises, such as role-play interviews, brainstorming, group discussions and public speaking exercises, even Lego Serious Play. The overarching goal of the workshops was to improve the candidates' awareness of their participatory and representative role in Cambodia's political landscape, and to help them become better leaders and advocates for women's issues.

At the workshops, the women actively participated in the training, providing feedback to other trainees and showing a keen interest in the topic. WMC and BtS assessed the skills and knowledge of the participants before and after the training sessions and the evaluations showed that the candidates' capacities in public speaking and communication had risen significantly. The majority said they would use their newly acquired knowledge and skills in their political work and expressed high satisfaction with the content and training approach. BtS and WMC both reported that the women left the training with a set of concrete skills that they soon put to work.

"Trainees learned how to collect issues, explain them and respond to questions about them," said project manager Uth Sophea from WMC. "After the training, the women understood how to communicate better and could discuss issues with people."

"One success was public speaking. It gave them courage" said Nin Chenda, provincial manager for BtS in Siem Reap. "Some of them did so well they were invited to speak on a monthly radio show on topics such as domestic violence and women in politics and leadership roles. They did their research and shared the information with other women."

The activity proved successful with regard to the election results in the target provinces, especially among the larger parties. The overall average of electoral victories in the communal elections was lowered due to the general difficulties candidates from smaller parties had in winning their races. Still, the workshops provided equal opportunities to everyone involved and helped improve their advocacy and communication skills.



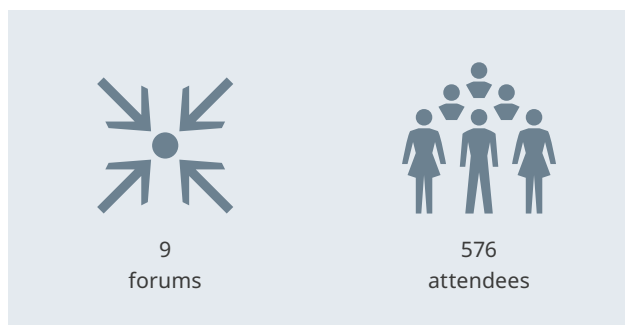
### Monitoring of dialogue: communal forums

Following on their communications training, the candidates got the opportunity to practice their new skills in a real-world environment in communal forums.

Nine forums took place in the first half of 2017 in the lead-up to the communal elections (Activity 1.4). Staff members from WMC and BtS, who had also been trained by DW Akademie, monitored the forums. The trained female candidates drew attention to issues that were relevant to women in the community, including female participation in local development, women's jobs in education, health and agriculture, and youth unemployment. The candidates learned about the challenges facing their constituents and discussed with them possible ways to address their needs.

The forums also provided an opportunity to discuss the impact that female participation in decision-making could have on the lives of women and girls and how more engagement of women at the local level could be encouraged.

Both BtS and WMC reported that the attendees at the forums were eager to ask questions and that the discussions were almost always lively. The events drew people from many walks of life, including district authorities, local women leaders and both male and female community members.



## 2018

### Refresher workshop: Train-the-Trainer

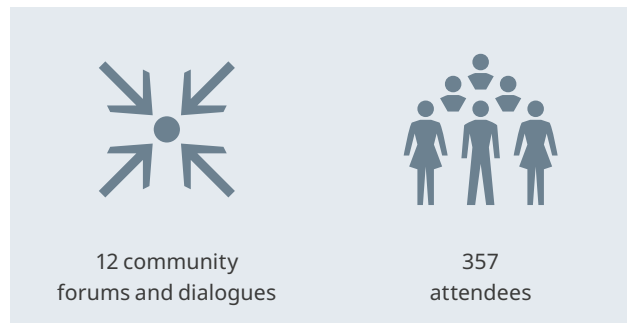
In March, DW Akademie facilitated a follow-up workshop for five female BtS staff members on training communication skills (Activity 1.1). Topics included verbal and non-verbal communication, knowing your audience, active listening, engaging with the public, storytelling and photography. The workshop emphasized practical exercises. All participants had the opportunity to train content and get feedback from the facilitators and fellow trainees.

### Follow-up training for female communal councilors and/or community leaders

In the first half of 2018, BtS continued working with female councilors and community leaders, providing opportunities for them to refine their skills, talk to constituents, and make connections with other women leaders through formal and informal networking.

BtS held a series of refresher workshops and reflection sessions with women from various political parties and women engaged in their communities. The aim was to strengthen their capacities around communication and public speaking (Activity 1.3). Many of them had taken part in a training in 2017 and several reported that they had put their knowledge to use in the meantime. This time, the women were especially interested in using their skills to open community dialogues on issues like family records, domestic violence and village development.

Sok Kim Mab, who was elected a commune councilor, told BtS that she had gained a good deal of confidence since the 2017 training and had taken the opportunity to use her new communications skills in dealing with others. In the wake of the previous training, she met and communicated with other communities or institutions and she said that those interactions were much more effective than they would have been without the training.



### Monitoring dialogue between councilors and community leaders with women and youth

BtS held a number of public forums and dialogues in the first six months of 2018 to further increase knowledge about democratic processes. The female communal councilors and community leaders facilitated these gatherings, using their communications skills in real-life settings (Activity 1.4).

Most of the facilitators expressed satisfaction with their own performance at the gatherings and with the meetings' achievements. They said the events raised awareness about democratic participation and boosted the engagement of women.







Sos Rafora speaks out as commune councilor.

PROFILE

# Sos Rafora



## New skills, new confidence

Just a few years ago, Sos Raforñ wouldn't have dared speak in front of others. Even the thought of it sent shivers up her spine. Today, the 49-year-old sits on the commune council in Prek Preas Sdach, Battambang province, where she's in charge of women's and children's affairs.

Raforñ chalks up much of her dramatic turnaround to the training she got from Banteay Srei through the EU-funded Women into Politics! project. She was one of the female political candidates who got training in public speaking, facilitation, communications, conflict solving and presentation in 2017.

Two of the project's goals are to help women understand the impact they can have on politics and to help this underrepresented group achieve their goals of reaching elected office. Raforñ succeeded in both regards, emerging victorious from communal elections in June 2017.

**“ Before I never dared to ask a question,** she said, but added that the workshops completely changed that. **Now I have more knowledge and more courage.**

In her role as councilor, Raforñ receives complaints from community members or goes to villages to solve issues related to women, teenagers and children.

**“ Not only do I have the courage to work in the community, I also have more confidence at home. I can help my children and relatives,** she said.

While she's proud of her achievements, she's quick to add that many women don't yet have the skills and confidence she was able to acquire. They need more support, she says, and more information about issues common to women. For example, she says information on the legal issues around divorce or domestic violence would be useful, as well as very practical skills like accounting. Women want to succeed, she says, and they can if given the right help.

**“ Women have a lot of endurance compared to men,** Raforñ says. **Even if it's raining, we'll still go to work.**



## ACTIVITY CLUSTER 2

# Informing youth about democratic participation and issues relevant to women

Democracy requires an informed and engaged electorate. They need access to information on the issues and candidates and they must understand how to register to vote as well as what procedures to follow at the polling station. To support those capacities and boost involvement among a large group of Cambodians in the democratic process, this part of the project focused on providing election information to youth.

Young people are the largest and most important demographic group in the Kingdom. Almost two-thirds of the population is under the age of 30. According to the United Nations Population Fund, that means Cambodia has the youngest population in Southeast Asia. In addition to supporting democratic participation, these activities also focused on investigating the specific concerns of young women and issues relevant to them.

**“People really supported the media information campaign. Many programs got over 1,000 views and many people shared and commented on the material. - WMC**

In designing this activity, thought was put into how to best reach this group. The answer was relatively easy. Cambodia has experienced a remarkable boom in digital participation over the past five years, especially on the social media platform Facebook. While the number of active Facebook users stood at just over one million in 2013, three years later it had shot up to 3.4 million. It continues to climb. The arrival of inexpensive smartphones and affordable data plans means that getting online is easy for most, and an absolute must for the large majority of youth. Step into any café or school courtyard in Phnom Penh or the provinces, and young people will be concentrating on their phone, often scrolling down their Facebook Newsfeed.

Therefore, this activity went to where the under 30s spend a lot of their time—social media. WMC and DW Akademie developed a series of interactive informational units and distributed them primarily through the WMC multimedia portal and its Facebook Page. Their aim was to raise the general understanding of the electoral process in ways that would be appealing to youth and their current media habits (Activity 2.1).

These information units then became part of a broader media-campaign (Activity 2.2). It was aimed at youth—in particular young women and first-time voters—and included radio content on WMC’s FM frequency and video on its YouTube channel, website and Facebook page.

## Activities

- 2.1 Development of interactive informational units on the electoral process
- 2.2 Development of an information campaign for youth on electoral processes
- 2.3 Public forums, exchange workshops and/or media-based interactivity specifically aimed at youth on democratic participation and gender-relevant topics

## 2016

### Creation of interactive units on elections

From April 27–29, WMC and DW Akademie held a consultation workshop to define the subjects of the information units (Activity 2.1) about the electoral process and democratization. They identified 13 topics which were then developed into youth-appropriate media products with an interactive component (Facebook posts, radio call-in shows, short videos and slide shows).

During development, particular consideration was given to the fact that the primary target groups are youth and women living in both rural and urban settings with mixed levels of education. All information needed to be clearly presented and easily understood. It had to be packaged in ways that appeal to the age group (the units included a rap song and mini-dramas).

### The topics

1. Why vote?
2. Am I eligible to vote?
3. How do I register?
4. Am I registered?
5. Voting day information communal elections
6. Voting day information national elections
7. Where do I find information on parties’ policies?
8. It’s up to you to decide and no one else
9. Communal Ballot
10. National Ballot
11. Secret Ballot
12. Voting if you are a minority, illiterate and/or disabled
13. Getting involved

In August, the topics began to be rolled out. The first three were published over the remaining months of 2016 (Activity 2.2). Each topic was presented on at least two WMC platforms. For example, “Why vote?” was covered in a radio call-in show, presented on the WMC website and on Facebook in a selfie campaign. In addition, a video vox-pop segment was produced for the WMC YouTube channel and posted on social media. The WMC team cross-promoted the content as much as possible—on-air hosts regularly directed listeners to the station’s website, Facebook Page or YouTube channel.

The goal was to inform young people about the importance of voting and the practicalities around it. The campaign also urged youth to express themselves and talk to their peers about the democratic process in their country.

**“New Generation”**

Besides the online platforms, the WMC radio show “New Generation” was a key component of the media campaign. In 2016, the radio department produced three live shows and two radio dramas, which were broadcast on FM 102 and its relay stations in Battambang, Kampong Thom, Kampong Cham, Kratie and Svay Rieng. The shows’ producers invited representatives of women’s, youth and civil society organizations to be on-air guests and take calls from listeners. The organizations included the Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL) and the Neutral & Impartial Committee for Free and Fair Election in Cambodia (NECFEC).

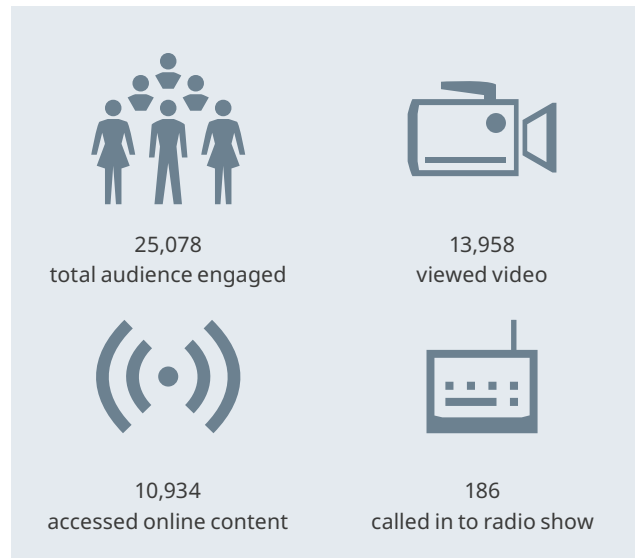
**“The multimedia aspect worked very well. It was very appealing to young people. - WMC**

The live shows were streamed on Facebook. They were also edited into 25-minute programs for rebroadcast and posted through WMC’s website, where audiences could listen at any time.

In 2016, a total of 186 listeners called in to the programs and shared their experiences and perspectives with the guest speakers on issues like election procedures, the new voter registration system, the right to vote and related topics.

**Media Campaign Statistics 2016**

The Facebook component of the media campaign was especially successful. The information units got 5,938 likes, 3,337 shares, and 69 comments on Facebook.



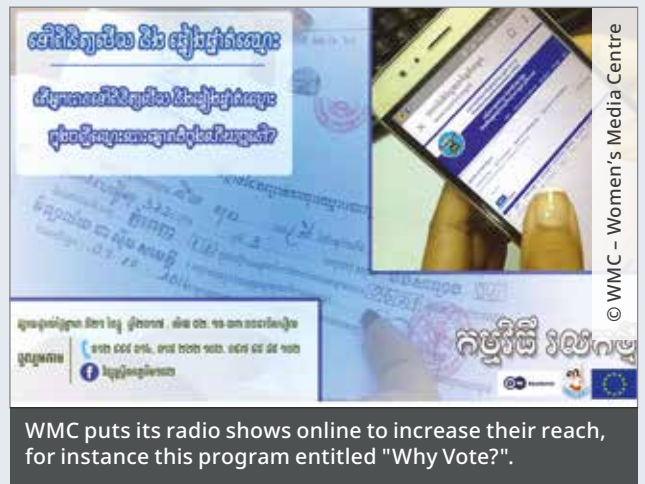




WMC's Facebook selfie campaign proves popular.



Men are also featured in the social media campaign. This post alone reached more 15,000 people.



## 2017

The positive effects of the information campaign on social media spilled over into the year 2017. On Facebook and YouTube, it continued to engage an audience of 40,187 people.

### Information campaign in run-up to communal elections

In the first part of 2017, the roll-out of the media campaign for the commune elections (Activity 2.2) continued on all media channels (WMC radio, the WMC website, Facebook Page and YouTube channel). Content on nine of the election information units (IUs) was produced and disseminated in the five months leading up to the elections which were held on June 4.

### Website /social media and video

Social media again proved itself an effective way to reach young Cambodians, helped in part by the innovative ways WMC presented the election information on its Facebook Page. In the first five months of the year, WMC posted seven information units, including a rap song produced and recorded by WMC that got over 5,400 views. Other presentation methods included the creation of infographics, selfie campaigns from the public, animations and an edited video of a round-table discussion that received 4,900 likes and had more than 100 comments. Video continued to be an effective way to reach youth. WMC broadcast three videos covering the importance of elections, voting rights/eligibility, and the new voter registration system. In total, 2,176 people watched the videos on the WMC YouTube channel. The videos were also shared through both Facebook and the WMC website.

### “The New Wave”

In addition to online, radio continued to play a key role. The WMC program “The New Wave” featured shows on registration, the voting day procedures for the communal elections and information about party policies. The shows aired on WMC FM102 and its five provincial relay stations, as well as on Facebook Live. The 13 broadcasts included five call-in shows, one round-table discussion, six interviews and one vox-pop. Audiences could submit questions and comments on-air. The live shows were later edited into 25-minute programs for rebroadcast and posted on WMC’s website.

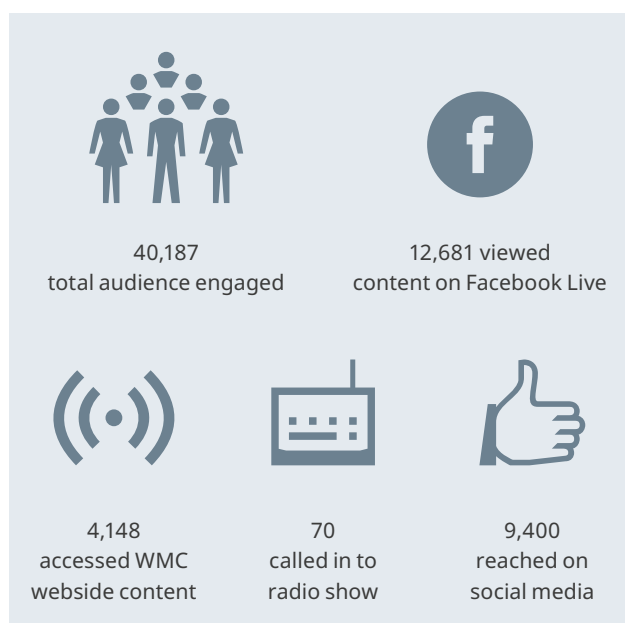
### Preparation for national elections 2018

In preparation for the national elections in 2018, WMC, with support from DW Akademie, reexamined its series of information units planned in 2016. Because of changes in the political landscape, it was necessary to adjust some content. The topic “Getting Involved” was replaced with a video clip “Ready to Vote”, which focused on informing citizens to prepare for the

upcoming national elections. Production began in the fall and roll-out began later in the year

The WMC online team posted four information units on Facebook that had been adapted for the national vote. Two of them had close to 4,000 and 5,000 views each. In December the radio team broadcast a call-in show “Why Vote” and a show featuring a reporter interviewing people at registration offices.

### Media campaign statistics 2017



### Public forums, exchange workshops and/or media-based interactivity specifically aimed at youth on democratic participation and gender-relevant topics

Similar to the community forums with female political candidates and community leaders, the project organized forums for youth in the first half of 2017 in Kampong Thom, Battambang and Siem Reap and brought together almost 800 people (Activity 2.3).

The goal was to foster a better understanding of the importance of democratic and electoral processes. The forums offered community members and youth a platform for political discussion with members of the National Election Committee, district authorities, local civil society groups and political representatives, including the female candidates trained in the lead-up to the commune council elections. The candidates practiced their skills and engaged in political discussion with local community members.



Video dramas presented voting information in a way that appealed to young Cambodians.

## 2018

### Public forums, exchange workshops and/or media-based interactivity for youth

BtS held two forums in April and May focusing on democratic participation and gender-related issues. Focus points during the gatherings were voting procedures, women's rights to participate in elections and women who are taking leadership roles in processes around democratic development. (Activity 2.3)

The young people present got information on voting, were able to interact directly with candidates and voice their concerns to those present, which included the National Election Committee and civil-society groups. Of the 202 people at the events, 30 said they had never voted, but said they were committed to participating in the upcoming election.





Women's issues are brought to the airwaves.

### ACTIVITY CLUSTER 3

# Media coverage of democratic participation and gender-relevant topics





Members of the dissemination network gather for its initial meeting.

While women make up more than half of Cambodia's population, their concerns have not been well covered in the national media. When women's topics are taken up by media outlets, most of which are based in the capital, they often do not reflect the real-life concerns of women in the provinces.

The activities in this section sought to alleviate that information scarcity by disseminating topics related to democratic participation and women's issues to a broader audience. They aimed to bring to the fore those issues with real relevance to women from many walks of life—urban and rural, middle-income and poor. This was accomplished by listening to the women and youth in the countryside at forums and exchange workshops organized as part of this project. Issues the participating women raised were then taken up by WMC and became topics the broadcaster reported on and discussed both on the air and online. In addition to those channels, emphasis was placed of spreading this information through the partners' channels and networks of civil society organizations, including youth group networks and other stakeholders.

## Activities

- 3.1 Regular reporting on dialogue and issues arising in public forums and/or exchange workshops
- 3.2 Establishing a dissemination network
- 3.3 Regular exchange of reporting through network
- 3.4 Publishing a best-practice booklet

## 2016

### Establishing a dissemination network

A dissemination network was launched in May 2016 (Activity 3.2), which included stakeholders from the government as well as civil society. WMC provided elements of the media campaign to the network which were part of the Activity 2.2.

However, there were difficulties in developing an effective information-sharing process. Less material was shared though the network than hoped. Communication within the network was intensified in the second and third project years with the aim of improving the situation.

## 2017

### Reporting on women's issues

To draw attention to issues relevant to women and improve the role of women in Cambodian society, WMC reporters accompanied project staff to forums and trainings. They wanted to get a sense of women's concerns and development in the project's target areas (Activity 3.1). The reporters recorded discussions, interviewed facilitators and participants, and noted down issues that were of concern to those present.

Back at the radio station, they produced audio and video, wrote online articles or planned discussions for live shows based on what they had seen and heard. The results were then distributed through WMC radio or its online and social media platforms.

In addition to the radio program on the election information campaign under Activity 2.2, the program "The New Wave" also ran broadcasts focusing on these issues. The show provided a platform where the Cambodian public, officials, the private sector, civil society groups and community leaders talked about the key issues of rural women.

1. How to develop SME for women so they do not have to emigrate
2. Women's rights/independence
3. Public sanitation, especially in areas where women work and live
4. Barriers women face in participating in politics
5. Access to schools and education
6. Pre-natal health
7. Domestic violence
8. Women affected by gambling
9. Lack of technical knowledge for women who farm and raise livestock
10. Working women and responsibilities in the home
11. Migration and women
12. Age discrimination regarding women in the political sector

Additional activity-related media products in 2017:

- 3 video packages
- 3 multimedia stories
- 6 news articles
- 1 digital slideshow
- 1 one video clip
- 2 audio news spots

### Regular exchange of reporting through network

While BtS did regularly participate in meetings the provincial election committee in early 2017 and shared what they learned, broader, efficient implementation of this activity continued to pose a challenge. All parties expressed a desire to engage the stakeholders in a more fruitful exchange in 2018 (Activity 3.3).



© WMC – Women’s Media Centre

WMC’s radio call-in shows address a wide range of issues relevant to women.

## 2018

### Reporting on women’s issues

“The New Wave” continued in 2018, airing six shows on the topics of women in business, women’s health, women’s need for better sanitation, skills for women working in agriculture, safe migration, and women’s role and participation in decision-making processes (Activity 3.1).

To reach an even larger audience, these programs were also live-streamed on the popular WMC Facebook Page, which let listeners easily leave comments or ask questions. The programs were also edited down to 25 minutes and posted on the WMC website. As a result of the multi-platform approach, the radio programs reached even bigger audiences, including 8,568 people from Facebook Live.

Additional activity-related media products that WMC published in 2018 included three video clips on women’s issues in the communities, online news articles about women’s engagement and on the benefits from the project and social media infographics on the following topics:

- Women in public decision-making
- Violence against women
- Safe migration for women

### Regular exchange of reporting through network

BtS regularly exchanged information through the network, including photos on its Facebook Page, activities during International Women’s Day and presentations made to NGO networks and other partners (Activity 3.3).

The network was expanded to include umbrella organizations such as the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC) and NGO Forum. The recipients of financial support to third parties, Cambodian Volunteers for Society (CVS) and the Youth Council of Cambodia (YCC), were also added to the network.





© YCC - Youth Council of Cambodia

Youth group YCC received third-party support in the province.

# Financial support to third parties

2016

In October 2016, DW Akademie called for proposals from grassroots, youth-focused civil society organizations in the focus provinces Kampong Thom, Battambang and Siem Reap. Groups were invited to present innovative strategies for informing and engaging young female voters in the electoral process through public forums. They also supported information campaigns and media coverage focusing on issues relevant to women.

The call was posted on the DW Akademie—Asia Facebook Page. In addition, DW Akademie’s Phnom Penh-based project manager contacted several NGOs to draw their attention to the opportunity. In the end, only three organizations applied. This may have been due to the clear stipulations of the call, which required applicants to fulfil very specific selection criteria and hand in a detailed action plan.

Two organizations were selected: Cambodian Volunteers for Society (CVS) for Battambang and the Youth Council of Cambodia (YCC) for Kampong Thom and Siem Reap. They implemented their activities in the second and third years of the project.

“I’m looking forward to working with youths from different parties, participating in country development together and building democracy in Cambodia.

Ben Makara, YCC youth network leader



© CVS – Cambodian Volunteers for Society

Young women leaders at a CVS workshop.



## 2017

In 2017, YCC conducted a door-to-door campaign in Kampong Thom and Siem Reap provinces. The aim was to inform Cambodians about the upcoming communal elections and encourage first-time voters to participate. Thirty youth leaders visited over 820 households, gave them election information and learned about the issues important to them. The youth leaders found that more than half of the people they spoke to were unaware of the date of the communal vote.

In addition, a half-day public forum was organized by network leaders for first-time voters and citizens. It explained the democratic process and raised awareness of the importance of participating in elections. YCC welcomed 250 participants and distributed 800 voting information posters at the event.

CVS carried out the activity “Cambodian Young Women on Elections” in Battambang province. It organized public forums for youth and supported information campaigns and media coverage of issues relevant to women. This was aimed at encouraging young women to raise their voices and participate in the democratic process.

CVS also organized trainings for female youth leaders on electoral procedures and for youth to become election observers, reaching over 90 young people. The group also distributed 440 voting information posters and ran an online video campaign on social media. After the June communal elections, CVS brought together the young election observers to share their experiences.

## 2018

CVS started off 2018 by holding Train-the-Trainer workshops for young women from various villages in Battambang province. These new trainers then went out and trained other young village women on democratic participation and voting.

CVS also published a leaflet and poster outlining the electoral process for the upcoming national elections. In June, it used those publications as part of the kick-off for its public awareness campaign, which also had a strong social media focus. As in 2017, CVS also held a training workshop for young women to become election observers.

YCC had a busy year as well, preparing with its youth networks for the March launch of its 2018 door-to-door campaign to encourage participation in the national vote. The youth NGO also organizing a public forum focusing on voter education and then later in the year produced a video clip on lessons learned from the national election.



YCC youth conduct a door-to-door campaign.

**“Youth, especially young women, properly trained and supported, can serve as powerful agents for sustainable social change. - CVS**

## យើងជាយុវជននៅចុះឈ្មោះបោះឆ្នោត និងបោះឆ្នោតដើម្បីអនាគតយើង!

### ដើម្បីចុះឈ្មោះបោះឆ្នោតបានយើងត្រូវបំពេញលក្ខខណ្ឌអ្វីខ្លះ?

 គ្រួសារសញ្ជាតិខ្មែរ

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- ✘ ប្រជាពលរដ្ឋខ្មែរដែលបានបញ្ជាក់ឈ្មោះបោះឆ្នោត ឬទីសំណាក់តូចលើ សញ្ជាតិគ្រួសារចុះឆ្នោតនៅតាមប្រទេសដទៃស្រុកសញ្ជាតិខ្មែរចុះឆ្នោត។ តាមលក្ខណៈក្នុងបញ្ជីបោះឆ្នោតឆ្នាំ២០១៧ ពីព្រឹត្តិការណ៍បោះឆ្នោតលើសកម្មភាព ដើម្បីបោះឆ្នោតឆ្នាំ២០១៧ បោះឆ្នោតបោះឆ្នោតឆ្នាំ២០១៧ បោះឆ្នោតបោះឆ្នោតឆ្នាំ២០១៧ បោះឆ្នោតបោះឆ្នោតឆ្នាំ២០១៧ បោះឆ្នោតបោះឆ្នោតឆ្នាំ២០១៧

**សូមពិនិត្យឈ្មោះ និងទិដ្ឋភាពយោបល់អ្នកក្នុងបញ្ជីបោះឆ្នោតដំបូងចាប់ពីថ្ងៃទី១៩ ដល់ថ្ងៃទី២៩ តុលា ២០១៧ នៅសាលារៀន/សញ្ជាតិដើមអ្នកចុះឈ្មោះ**



ស្រីចម្រើន



គាំទ្រដោយ



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A CVS poster outlines commune election procedures.



Active listening skills help women better communicate with women in their communities.

## Project achievements



“Women into Politics! Greater female participation in Cambodia” was an ambitious undertaking that had set high goals for itself. Now, at the project’s end, the partners involved have every reason to be proud of what they have accomplished. Of course, everything did not go perfectly, but very few projects of this scope are carried out without encountering a few bumps along the way. However, stepping back and looking at the big picture, it’s easy to see that this project has largely fulfilled its aims and had a concrete, positive impact on Cambodian women. These effects will very likely resonate far beyond the end of its three-year run.

The potential long-term impact is especially notable. The project focused on giving women skills and knowledge that can also be used in other contexts in the future. For example, as Nin Chenda from Banteay Srei said regarding the women politicians she trained: “They have more courage now. They can work at other places after getting trained by us, even if they don’t get elected.” Members of both her organization’s staff and WMC got valuable training in teaching methodology, skills they can use to train for other projects on other subjects. “Women into Politics!” laid a strong foundation that can be built upon in many ways.

The public forums and exchange workshops gave women a place to express themselves. Conservative, traditional norms in Cambodian society mean that women, especially young wom-

en, are seldom included in community planning or governance activities, or asked to share their ideas. Yet this project allowed women to be heard outside the home, and to ask questions and give their perspectives directly to those closer to the country’s power structures. The project presented community women a rare opportunity to express their hopes, fears and needs. Interest from their side was strong.

**“Not only do I have the courage to work in the community, I also have more courage at home. – Sos Rafor, commune councilor elected in 2017, Battambang**

The voter information component provided crucial election information before the 2017 and 2018 ballots and reached a broad swath of the young population. The success of the media campaign illustrated the keen interest Cambodian youth have in their country’s democratic development as well as the enormous importance Facebook has for this age cohort in accessing and spreading information.

Tens of thousands of young people tuned in to the radio and signed on to digital platforms to learn about and discuss critical topics such as voting eligibility, registering to vote, party poli-



Shooting video for a youth-targeted online campaign on voting.

© CVS – Cambodian Volunteers for Society

**PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS**

cies, or making one's own voting decisions. They shared this information with their Facebook friends, commented and asked questions online, and called during the live radio shows to express their own opinions. Forums brought young people face to face with election officials and NGOs. Their questions were answered by experts and they could discuss political issues with their peers. This is the kind of information on the democratic process that will serve these citizens for a lifetime and make for a general electorate that is better able to make important decisions about their country's future.

Issues of relevance to women in the countryside were taken up by the Women's Media Centre and spread to an audience around the country and beyond. At the provincial forums and exchange workshops, WMC staff listened to what women were saying, learned about their daily challenges and sat down to talk with them one on one. These women's concerns became the topics of radio programs, videos and online articles, where experts discussed possible solutions. Women who are rarely heard suddenly had a voice in a national conversation.

Provincial youth groups activated their networks and conducted door-to-door campaigns to talk to citizens and provided them with voting information. Their forums and information campaigns targeted motivated young people, especially first-

time voters. They trained young women in the provinces on the democratic process who then trained others, and held workshops for members to become election observers.

"I think the project was successful in terms of outcomes," said Uth Sophea from WMC. "The project increased young people's knowledge about and involvement in the political process. And women candidates and leaders learned how to talk with their constituents and solve issues."

The project's goal was to support women by strengthening their participation in Cambodian society, to make them aware that they play a role in their country's development and to help them believe in themselves. To that end, the project clearly met its aims.

"The women we trained and the young women at the forums were changed," said Chim Bun Chenda, provincial manager for BtS in Battambang. "They understood their rights, some got elected to public office and they all understood the impact they could have in Cambodia."



Female candidates and community leaders learn innovative ways to address issues through 'Lego Serious Play'.

© BtS - Banteay Srei

# Challenges and lessons learned

While “Women into politics!” should be considered a success by the measurable indicators as well as the sense of empowerment expressed by those it reached, there were a number of challenges.

- Relationships between the project partners and government officials on both the national and sub-national level were generally good. Plans for some activities, such as forums, also had to be changed to ensure they could be held without objections from government officials.
- The dissemination network was not as coordinated or effective as originally hoped. There were several reasons for this, including: different priorities of the partners, difficulties in coordination, and scheduling regular meetings of the network.
- Staff turnover at WMC made project continuity more difficult.
- Staff shortages also made it difficult for WMC to respond to the large number of comments and questions on the election information posts on social media.
- It was sometimes difficult to find suitable female candidates and community leaders for training. Many women in the provinces have limited education. They often have only very basic general knowledge levels and no experience in communications or public speaking.
- Some women are illiterate, which led to low self-confidence and worry about speaking out. Their needs should be taken into consideration, such as the use of less text-based material in workshops.
- While many women in Cambodia want to participate in public life and help their communities, they need more support and encouragement. The cultural mindset is still a problem. Traditional views of women’s roles in society are still entrenched – men make the decisions and hold the power.
- Programs helping men recognize the potential of women and how they can contribute to the country’s development are needed. Such programs should focus on how men and women can work together and on changing old perceptions.
- The participatory training methodology, which included games and laughter, was very effective with the target groups. It should be used for future activities.

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