



**BROKEN  
CHALK**

Submission to the United Nations OFFICE OF THE HIGH  
COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

CALL FOR INPUT | SPECIAL PROCEDURES

ISSUED BY Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in  
Cambodia

Call for Inputs on the Situation of Women's Rights in Cambodia

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**Submitting Organization: BROKEN CHALK**

March 2024

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Submission to the United Nations OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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**Broken Chalk** is an Amsterdam-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) committed to addressing human rights violations in the education sector. It was established in October 2020. A multinational team of dedicated human rights advocates collaborates extensively on researching violations in every corner of the world.

The organisation's primary activities include removing obstacles to education, promoting peace and tranquillity in society through intercultural tolerance, preventing radicalism and polarisation, and eliminating educational opportunity gaps across different demographics.

Broken Chalk works hard in advocacy and lobbying on behalf of these educational victims, engaging with international organisations to prompt action. Additionally, the volunteers and interns working remotely worldwide at Broken Chalk prepare comprehensive reports for international organisations, stakeholders, and governments, highlighting human rights violations in education. These reports aim to draw attention to the often-overlooked aspects of human rights violations, providing stakeholders with a complete understanding and calling for the international community to act in cases where conflict halts access to education and endangers civilians' lives. This approach ensures that awareness is raised and necessary actions are taken to address these violations. Broken Chalk is genuinely international, achieving a local and global perspective in its work.

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## 1. Information on Women's Rights and their Development from a Historical Perspective

Throughout history, Cambodian women have faced systemic barriers to political engagement, stemming from cultural norms and patriarchal structures<sup>1</sup>. However, several key milestones stand out in their journey towards greater participation in decision-making processes.

One significant milestone occurred during the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979), despite its oppressive nature. The regime's forced labor policies compelled women to engage in various roles, inadvertently challenging traditional gender roles and empowering women with newfound responsibilities<sup>2</sup>.

Post-Khmer Rouge era saw gradual advancements. The Constitution of 1993 guaranteed gender equality, laying a legal foundation for women's rights<sup>3</sup>. Subsequently, the government introduced measures to increase female representation in politics<sup>4</sup>. For instance, the 2002 commune elections mandated a 25% quota for women candidates, fostering greater political inclusion<sup>5</sup>.

Education has played a pivotal role in this progression. Increased access to education has empowered Cambodian women, enabling them to challenge societal norms and pursue leadership roles. Organizations like the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center have implemented programs promoting female education and leadership training, facilitating women's entry into politics and decision-making positions<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Jacobsen, T. (2008). *Lost goddesses: The denial of female power in Cambodian history* (No. 4). Nias Press.

<sup>2</sup> So, F. (2010). *An Oral History of Cham Muslim Women in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge (KR) Regime* (Master's thesis, Ohio University).

<sup>3</sup> Ngo, F. J. (2014). Revision for Rights?: Nation-Building Through Post-War Cambodian Social Studies Textbooks, 1979–2009. In *(Re) Constructing Memory* (pp. 153-169). Brill.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Kraynanski, J. M. (2007). *Women walking silently: The emergence of Cambodian women into the public sphere* (Master's thesis, Ohio University).

<sup>6</sup> Im, S., & Oum, C. (2021). How Was the Cambodian Cash Relief Program Assist Poor Women Affected by COVID-19 Economic Crisis?. *Kyoto Working Papers on Area Studies*, 135, 1-14.

## 2. Women's Participation in Political Parties and Related Activities

In Cambodia, despite constitutional provisions ensuring gender equality, women remain underrepresented in politics. For instance, in the 2018 national election, only 20% of candidates were women, and they held less than 20% of seats in the National Assembly and Senate<sup>7</sup>.

Education emerges as a crucial factor in addressing this disparity. The Cambodian Women's Leadership Institute, established in 2009, offers training programs to enhance women's leadership skills and political knowledge<sup>8</sup>. Additionally, the Gender and Development for Cambodia organization conducts educational campaigns to raise awareness among women about their rights and the importance of political participation<sup>9</sup>.

However, progress is slow due to various barriers. Socio-cultural norms and patriarchal attitudes often discourage women from entering politics<sup>10</sup>. Limited access to education, particularly in rural areas where gender disparities in literacy rates persist, further impedes women's political engagement<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Ward, K., & Ford, M. (2022). Labour and electoral politics in Cambodia. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 52(4), 513-531.

<sup>8</sup> Chea, P. (2021). Underrepresentation of Cambodian Women in Politics and Leadership Roles. Available at:

<https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/alfie-conferences/2021junior/presentations/4/>

<sup>9</sup> Ayako, H. (2013). Changing gendered boundaries in rural Cambodia: community-based organizations as a platform for empowerment. In *Southeast Asia and the Civil Society Gaze* (pp. 131-152). Routledge.

<sup>10</sup> Baaz, M., & Lilja, M. (2018). Women Politicians in Cambodia. *Women of Asia: Globalization, Development, and Gender Equity*, 226.

<sup>11</sup> Tuy, S. (2019). Discrimination against women in accessing higher education in Cambodia. *JSEHR*, 3, 101. Available at:

<https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/jseahr3&div=11&id=&page=>

### 3. Women's Participation in Politics and Decision-Making Positions/Processes at Regional, Commune, Town and Local Levels;

The number of women at the sub-national level has seen positive growth, as women's participation as commune chiefs and council members increased from 130 (about 8 percent) to 176 (about 11 percent)<sup>12</sup>. Moreover, at the sub-national level, two of Cambodia's 25 capital and provincial governors are women, and nearly 8 percent of them are commune chiefs<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> The Phnom Penh Post (2023). Cambodia advances women's roles, aims for 2030, 2050 goals Retrieved from: <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/cambodia-advances-women-s-roles-aims-for-2030-2050-goals/>

<sup>13</sup> Khmer Times (2022). Cambodian Women in Leadership Rising. Retrieved from <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501077786/cambodian-women-in-leadership-rising/>

#### 4. Women's Participation in Politics and Decision-Making Positions/Processes at the Ministerial, National Assembly, and Senate levels.

As per the 2004 Cambodia Gender Assessment conducted by the Asian Development Bank, in 1993, no women were serving as ministers, secretaries of state, or provincial governors<sup>14</sup>. However, after the 1998 national elections, there were two female ministers among the 27 ministers, and three secretaries of state out of a total of 54<sup>15</sup>.

In 2023, Cambodia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs employed 288 women, comprising 38.65 percent of its workforce<sup>16</sup>. However, despite this considerable female representation, men predominantly hold senior positions within the ministry. Among the 34 undersecretary and secretary of state roles, only seven are occupied by women; while out of the 33 ambassadors representing Cambodian missions abroad, just five are female<sup>17</sup>.

Currently, women hold ministerial positions in three out of 28 government ministries, accounting for 10% of ministerial roles<sup>18</sup>. Despite a decline in female representation in the National Assembly, historical milestones include a woman serving as President of the National Assembly and another leading the Cambodian Women's Parliament Caucus<sup>19</sup>. Women also hold key positions in financial and auditing institutions, including the Governor of the National Bank of Cambodia and the General Auditor of the National Audit Authority<sup>20</sup>. Furthermore, in the diplomatic sector, six women represent Cambodia as ambassadors out of 27 embassies and four Permanent Missions abroad, surpassing the global average for female participation in diplomatic affairs<sup>21</sup>.

Following a peak of 26 female members of parliament out of 123 total seats in the 2008 National Assembly election, the count of women has consistently dwindled over the past fifteen years<sup>22</sup>. This decline further intensified after the dissolution of the Cambodia National Rescue Party in 2017, with only 19 and 16 women members sworn in after the 2018 and 2023 elections, respectively<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> The Diplomat (2024). Why Cambodia Needs to Incorporate More Women Into Its Foreign Policy Process. Retrieved from: <https://thediplomat.com/2024/02/why-cambodia-needs-to-incorporate-more-women-into-its-foreign-policy-process/>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Khmer Times (2024). Cambodia's Journey to Promoting Gender Equality. Retrieved from <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501442452/cambodias-journey-to-promoting-gender-equality/>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung (2023). Reflection: 30 years of women in Cambodian politics. Retrieved from: <https://www.boell.de/en/2023/12/20/reflection-30-years-women-cambodian-politics/>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.



## 5. Women's Participation in the Judiciary and as Law Enforcers

In Cambodia, women's representation in the judiciary and law enforcement sectors remains strikingly low<sup>24</sup>. Despite constitutional guarantees of gender equality, women are significantly underrepresented in these crucial domains<sup>25</sup>. For instance, in the judiciary, women occupy only around 25% of judgeships and prosecutor positions, as reported by the Ministry of Justice in 2020<sup>26</sup>. Similarly, in law enforcement, such as the police force, women constitute less than 10% of the workforce<sup>27</sup>.

Without adequate representation, the perspectives and experiences of women are often sidelined, resulting in policies and practices that may not effectively address gender-specific issues<sup>28</sup>. For instance, in cases of domestic violence or sexual assault, having more female judges and law enforcement officers could lead to greater empathy and understanding towards survivors, potentially improving access to justice and support services<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Lilja, M. (2016). *Resisting gendered norms: civil society, the juridical and political space in Cambodia*. Routledge.

<sup>25</sup> Lilja, M. (2016). *Resisting gendered norms: civil society, the juridical and political space in Cambodia*. Routledge.

<sup>26</sup> Mattes, D., Ngouv, M. S., & Kum, S. (2020). Women in the Law: Policy-oriented data collection and recommendations to establish female leaders in the Cambodian legal sector. *Compendium Report*, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Shah, N. A. (2018). *Judicial Resource Book on Violence Against Women for Asia: Combating Violence Against Women and Girls for Cambodia, India, Pakistan and Thailand*. Commonwealth Secretariat.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.



## 6. Women's Participation in Activities to Promote and Protect Human Rights

In Cambodia, women's involvement in activities promoting and protecting human rights is notable, with numerous grassroots initiatives led by women making significant impacts. One such example is the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC), which has been at the forefront of advocating for women's rights and combating gender-based violence since its establishment in 1997<sup>30</sup>. CWCC provides shelter, legal aid, and counseling services to survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse, while also conducting outreach programs to raise awareness about women's rights in local communities<sup>31</sup>.

Another concrete example is the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR), which actively engages women in human rights advocacy and activism<sup>32</sup>. CCHR's Women's Rights Program focuses on empowering women through legal education, training workshops, and grassroots campaigns<sup>33</sup>.

Education plays a crucial role in empowering women to participate effectively in these activities. For example, the Human Rights Education Project in Cambodia conducts workshops and training sessions specifically targeting women, providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in human rights advocacy<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> Weaner, J. (2008). The Cambodian Women's Crisis Center: safety, shelter, training... and then. *McMaster School For Advancing Humanity*, 7, 7. Available at: <https://copyright.defiance.edu/mcmaster/documents/journal-2008-16-womens-crisis-center.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> Im, S., & Oum, C. (2021). How Was the Cambodian Cash Relief Program Assist Poor Women Affected by COVID-19 Economic Crisis?. *Kyoto Working Papers on Area Studies*, 135, 1-14.

<sup>32</sup> THLANG, M. K. (2021). THE PROTECTION OF RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN CAMBODIA. Available at: [https://e-research.siam.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/MAPD-2021-IS-The-Protection-of-Rights-to-Freedom-of-Expression-in-Cambodia\\_.pdf](https://e-research.siam.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/MAPD-2021-IS-The-Protection-of-Rights-to-Freedom-of-Expression-in-Cambodia_.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> Heilmann, D. (2019). Cambodia: Implementation of International Human Rights and Human Rights Decisions in Cambodia. *Judging International Human Rights: Courts of General Jurisdiction as Human Rights Courts*, 423-437.

<sup>34</sup> Lassinharju, H. (2018). Education and Learning Opportunities in Rural Areas: Supporting Quality Education in Cambodia. Available at: <https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/156545>

## 7. Women's Participation, in Labour Force, Entrepreneurship and Business Leadership

Cambodia ranks 41st out of 146 countries for women's ownership or management of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), indicating a relatively high rate of female participation in entrepreneurship compared to other nations<sup>35</sup>.

The government actively promotes gender equality through various initiatives, such as the Rectangular Strategy Phase IV and the Pentagonal Strategy Phase I, which aim to expand vocational education, address gender disparities in social protection, and foster inclusion in digital transformation efforts<sup>36</sup>.

Nearly half (approximately 47.1%) of Cambodia's total labor force consists of women, demonstrating their significant presence in the workforce<sup>37</sup>. Out of the female labor force, approximately 38.3% work in agriculture, 37.5% in services, and 24.3% in industry, illustrating the distribution of women across different sectors<sup>38</sup>. Despite their substantial presence in the labor force, less than 1% of employed women hold managerial positions, reflecting a gender disparity in leadership roles<sup>39</sup>.

Women-owned micro and small businesses make up 60% of all enterprises in Cambodia, highlighting the critical role of female entrepreneurs in the country's economy<sup>40</sup>. The number of women working as unpaid family workers is almost twice the number of men in the same employment status, indicating disparities in unpaid labor within households<sup>41</sup>. Women-owned micro and small businesses face challenges in accessing resources and services due to regulatory hurdles, traditional gender roles, and societal expectations, underscoring the barriers faced by female entrepreneurs despite their significant contribution to the economy<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> The Phnom Penh Post (2023). Cambodia advances women's roles, aims for 2030, 2050 goals Retrieved from: <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/cambodia-advances-women-s-roles-aims-for-2030-2050-goals>

<sup>36</sup> Open Development Cambodia (2023). Women in Development. Retrieved from: <https://opendevelopmentcambodia.net/topics/women-in-development/#:~:text=The%20three%20main%20economic%20sectors,agriculture%2C%20service%2C%20and%20industry.&text=As%20of%202021%2C%20about%2038.3,24.3%25%20in%20the%20industry%20sector/>

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Care Cambodia (2024). Women's Day Highlight, Unleashing Her Potential: Empowering Women Entrepreneurs in Cambodia. Retrieved from: <https://www.care-cambodia.org/unleashing-her-potential-empowering-women-entrepreneurs-in-cambodia/>

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

## 8. Measures Undertaken to Increase the Participation by Women and Women's Organizations in the Design of Laws, Policies, and Implementation Practices, aimed at Promoting their Participation in Politics and at ending Discrimination and Violence Against Women and Girls

In Cambodia, several measures have been undertaken to increase the participation of women and women's organizations in the design of laws, policies, and implementation practices aimed at promoting their participation in politics and ending discrimination and violence against women and girls<sup>43</sup>. One such measure is the establishment of gender-sensitive legal frameworks and policies that prioritize women's rights and address gender-based discrimination<sup>44</sup>. For example, the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims, enacted in 2005, provides legal protections for survivors of domestic violence and mandates the establishment of shelters and support services<sup>45</sup>. Additionally, Cambodia's National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women (NAPVAW) outlines specific strategies and interventions to address various forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking<sup>46</sup>.

Furthermore, efforts have been made to enhance women's participation in decision-making processes at various levels of governance. For instance, the government has implemented measures to increase the representation of women in elected bodies, such as the National Assembly and local councils<sup>47</sup>. Quotas for women in political representation have been introduced, aiming to ensure a minimum level of female participation in legislative bodies<sup>48</sup>.

Moreover, capacity-building initiatives are being undertaken to strengthen the leadership and advocacy skills of women and women's organizations<sup>49</sup>. Training programs, workshops, and mentoring opportunities are provided to equip women with the knowledge, confidence, and resources to actively engage in political advocacy and policy development<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> Keomuda, V. A. N. L. Y. (2020). *Women Empowerment in Cambodia: An Analysis on Economic and Political Participation of Women under Neary Rattanak IV Strategic Plan (2014-2018)*(Doctoral dissertation, ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF PHNOM PENH).

<sup>44</sup> Mattes, D., Ngouv, M. S., & Kum, S. (2020). Women in the Law: Policy-oriented data collection and recommendations to establish female leaders in the Cambodian legal sector. *Compendium Report*, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Brickell, K. (2016). Gendered violence and rule of/by law in Cambodia. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 6(2), 182-185. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2043820616655017>

<sup>46</sup> Sovann, R. (2019). Good practices for eliminating violence against women in Cambodia. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 25(2), 295-307.

<sup>47</sup> Joshi, S. (2022). Gendered repertoires of contention: women's resistance, authoritarian state formation, and land grabbing in Cambodia. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 24(2), 198-220.

<sup>48</sup> Keomuda, V. A. N. L. Y. (2020). *Women Empowerment in Cambodia: An Analysis on Economic and Political Participation of Women under Neary Rattanak IV Strategic Plan (2014-2018)*(Doctoral dissertation, ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF PHNOM PENH).

<sup>49</sup> YAMEEN, A., KAMAL, N., & SAMDANI, H. (2020). Road to Women Empowerment in Cambodia; A Leadership and Education approach.

*International Review of Management and Business Research*, 9(3). Available at: [https://d1wqtxs1xzle7.cloudfront.net/89432622/1602065202-libre.pdf?1660074506=&response-content-](https://d1wqtxs1xzle7.cloudfront.net/89432622/1602065202-libre.pdf?1660074506=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DRoad_to_Women_Empowerment_in_Cambodia_A.pdf&Expires=1710686197&Signature=ZEaeVJlr8NVJ5vK0w5xTkqGB5ABRWOTkvrIXqUysTigrh7bRFP7FskZ32WkWyGe4N-b-gHd5Kjvn~UvB9HgrKqp6klR8Bt-DXFk4JN7vPMCqgX7i8Dqb6iu3pQhO3PAJ4U2Y-uTRqoLETMaLj2NKTZ3KkIHmWvclNCupfR9rzJjzZFwu8SxuisJd111QAYE5opzETIlylDJAmlK~IsBfa5WqanwXqirRisUtHAyIWh7mOciNwcy02~qowijpOoWhSuxv9ABIT5RTIA6KNOZifRHOHRtm-jMeqOCi-Q08xbLUfVuLUcDAAWJmLcsIxEt3cb0A~vrlhWz1~aZ5J7g_&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA)

[disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DRoad\\_to\\_Women\\_Empowerment\\_in\\_Cambodia\\_A.pdf&Expires=1710686197&Signature=ZEaeVJlr8NVJ5vK0w5xTkqGB5ABRWOTkvrIXqUysTigrh7bRFP7FskZ32WkWyGe4N-b-gHd5Kjvn~UvB9HgrKqp6klR8Bt-DXFk4JN7vPMCqgX7i8Dqb6iu3pQhO3PAJ4U2Y-uTRqoLETMaLj2NKTZ3KkIHmWvclNCupfR9rzJjzZFwu8SxuisJd111QAYE5opzETIlylDJAmlK~IsBfa5WqanwXqirRisUtHAyIWh7mOciNwcy02~qowijpOoWhSuxv9ABIT5RTIA6KNOZifRHOHRtm-jMeqOCi-Q08xbLUfVuLUcDAAWJmLcsIxEt3cb0A~vrlhWz1~aZ5J7g\\_&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA](https://d1wqtxs1xzle7.cloudfront.net/89432622/1602065202-libre.pdf?1660074506=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DRoad_to_Women_Empowerment_in_Cambodia_A.pdf&Expires=1710686197&Signature=ZEaeVJlr8NVJ5vK0w5xTkqGB5ABRWOTkvrIXqUysTigrh7bRFP7FskZ32WkWyGe4N-b-gHd5Kjvn~UvB9HgrKqp6klR8Bt-DXFk4JN7vPMCqgX7i8Dqb6iu3pQhO3PAJ4U2Y-uTRqoLETMaLj2NKTZ3KkIHmWvclNCupfR9rzJjzZFwu8SxuisJd111QAYE5opzETIlylDJAmlK~IsBfa5WqanwXqirRisUtHAyIWh7mOciNwcy02~qowijpOoWhSuxv9ABIT5RTIA6KNOZifRHOHRtm-jMeqOCi-Q08xbLUfVuLUcDAAWJmLcsIxEt3cb0A~vrlhWz1~aZ5J7g_&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA)

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

## 9. Data Including Disaggregated Data and Trends, Analysis, and Examples of Good Practices that have been Adopted by State and Non-State actors to Promote Women's Participation in Politics and Identification of Key Challenges

**Cambodia's Gender Parity Ranking:** According to the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Report 2023, Cambodia was ranked 92nd out of 146 countries in terms of gender parity, which represented a decline from 2016 (112th place) and 2022 (98th place)<sup>51</sup>. The report evaluates gender equality based on four components: economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. Cambodia has made significant progress in reducing the gender gap in educational attainment (score of 0.98) and health survival (score of 0.97), but disparities persist in economic participation (score of 0.71) and women's political involvement (score of 0.11), where women are disproportionately unequal compared to men globally<sup>52</sup>.

**Leadership Commitments:** The Prime Minister directly chairs CNCW's annual review, where progress on gender equality is assessed against government commitments outlined in national plans and strategies<sup>53</sup>. Notably, former Prime Minister Hun Sen announced a policy in 2009 to increase women's leadership positions across ministries and sub-national levels, which has resulted in a noticeable increase in women holding key leadership roles, such as Secretary of State and Under Secretary of State, over the past two decades<sup>54</sup>.

To promote gender equality and encourage women's participation in decision-making processes, the government has developed the Neary Rattanak V, a five-year strategic plan (2019-2023) for gender equality and the empowerment of women in Cambodia<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> Khmer Times (2024). Cambodia's Journey to Promoting Gender Equality. Retrieved from <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501442452/cambodias-journey-to-promoting-gender-equality/>

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Open Development Cambodia (2023). Women in Development. Retrieved from: <https://opendevelopmentcambodia.net/topics/women-in-development/#:~:text=The%20three%20main%20economic%20sectors.agriculture%2C%20service%2C%20and%20industry.&text=As%20of%202021%2C%20about%2038.3,24.3%25%20in%20the%20industry%20sector/>.

## 10. What are the Main Obstacles that Hamper Women's Participation in Public and Political Life and what Measures/Good Practices are in Place to Tackle such Obstacles;

Gender stereotypes entrenched in society confine women to traditional roles, undermining their suitability for leadership positions in politics<sup>56</sup>. For instance, a study by the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center found that women are often discouraged from seeking leadership positions due to cultural beliefs that perceive them as less capable than men in decision-making roles<sup>57</sup>.

Moreover, limited access to education, particularly in rural areas, deprives women of essential knowledge and skills needed for effective political engagement<sup>58</sup>. According to UNESCO, the literacy rate among Cambodian women in rural areas is significantly lower than that of men, restricting their ability to participate in political processes<sup>59</sup>.

Cultural norms that prioritize women's roles within the household further marginalize them from public spheres<sup>60</sup>. Discrimination and harassment, including instances like Mu Sochua, a prominent female politician, facing verbal abuse and threats of violence, create a hostile environment for women in politics, discouraging their active involvement<sup>61</sup>.

Additionally, women often lack access to financial resources and influential networks, hindering their ability to campaign effectively and secure funding for political initiatives<sup>62</sup>. Despite constitutional guarantees of gender equality, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions, holding only 20% of seats in the National Assembly<sup>63</sup>.

<sup>56</sup> Bunry, R., & Walker, K. (2022). Cambodian women and girls: Challenges to and opportunities for their participation in higher education. In *Education in Cambodia: From Year Zero towards international standards* (pp. 275-292). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Lay, S. (2022). CAMBODIAN WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES. *CRITICAL ISSUES IN CAMBODIAN EDUCATION*, 60.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ciorciari, J. D. (2020). Cambodia in 2019. *Asian Survey*, 60(1), 125-131. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48711559>

<sup>62</sup> Gironde, C., Reysoo, F., Torrico Ramirez, A., & Suon, S. (2021). No cash, no food. Gendered reorganization of livelihoods and food security in Cambodia. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 48(7), 1485-1506.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

**11. Recommendations as to how women's participation in politics, related decision-making positions/processes, in the judiciary, as law enforcers and as promoters and protectors of human rights, can be enhanced, especially to ensure more space for women's rights and to counter the violence and discrimination against women and girls.**

In line with the recommendations made in the Statement on Women's Rights in Cambodia for the Pre-Session of the UPR Working Group:

**Electoral Reforms:** Implement the sandwich system in election laws by 2026, ensuring equal representation of women and men candidates with women placed at the top of half of the lists and comprising 50% of all candidates<sup>64</sup>.

**Gender Quotas in Government:** Mandate quotas of 50% women in top ministry positions by 2025, including ministers and deputy ministers, across every ministry through relevant law and policy amendments<sup>65</sup>.

**Support for Local Commune Governments:** Allocate 20% of annual development budgets by local commune governments to support gender equality initiatives at the grassroots level, focusing on the administration and activities of the Commune Committees for Women and Children<sup>66</sup>.

**Entrepreneurship Support:** Comprehensive support mechanisms for women entrepreneurs, including mentorship programs, training access, social protection, and financial literacy.



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<sup>64</sup> UPR Info (2024). Statement on Women's Rights in Cambodia for the Pre-Session of the UPR Working Group; Retrieved from [https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.upr-info.org%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fcountry-document%2F2024-02%2FGenderandDevelopmentforCambodia\\_statement.pdf&psig=AOvVaw2kh8LaBNhCCFQFr2HaWQ9X&ust=1711541134350000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CAcOrpoMahcKEwiA9oDn8ZGFAXUAAAAAH0AAAAAQBA](https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.upr-info.org%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fcountry-document%2F2024-02%2FGenderandDevelopmentforCambodia_statement.pdf&psig=AOvVaw2kh8LaBNhCCFQFr2HaWQ9X&ust=1711541134350000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CAcOrpoMahcKEwiA9oDn8ZGFAXUAAAAAH0AAAAAQBA)

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

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