



## PRESS STATEMENT

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### **Audit Recommends Priority on Unregistered Voters**

According to a reliable audit of the Cambodian Voters Registration List, 88.8% of eligible voters are registered. However, 11.2% are still unregistered which confirms the National Election Commission's (NEC) own estimation of 682,000 eligible voters who need to be registered. NEC intends to clean-up and update the voters list starting on September 15 and ending on October 20, 2007. "Based on our findings, registering eligible voters is far more important than the clean-up of the list. It should be NEC's absolute priority over the next month", recommended Dr. Hang Puthea, Executive Director of NICFEC. "If NEC deletes voters' names from the list, it would be prudent to provide concrete evidence that the voter record is invalid."

The Voter Registration Audit or VRA is a systematic and scientific evaluation of the quality of the voters list and was conducted on August 10-14, 2007 by NICFEC and COMFREL, Cambodia's leading election observation organizations, with the technical assistance of the Center for Advanced Studies (CAS) and US-based National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI). Volunteer observers were deployed to 380 Communes across Cambodia to interview 3,796 eligible voters. Both communes and eligible voters were selected using statistical methods. The margin of error was  $\pm 3.5\%$  with a level of confidence of 95%.

The VRA is a two-way test. In a "List-to-People Test", observers statistically select names from the current voters list and make contact with the voter to check the accuracy of the information. In a "People-to-List Test", eligible voters are chosen randomly from the community and their registration information is checked against the current voters list.

From the List-to-People Test, more than three quarters of the list (77.3%) of voters are valid. Up to 10.5% belong to voters who may have temporarily or permanently relocated. But overall from both tests, the voters list is 86.2% accurate for voter names, and 88.1% accurate for addresses. "I urge caution in the clean-up of the list given the accuracy rate and since it seems a significant proportion of voters permanently or temporarily reside outside their communes and may or may not return to vote." said Jerome Cheung, NDI Country Director. "Even if these voters are double registered, greater stress on the use of indelible ink on voters' fingers and checking of voters photo ID should reduce the possibility of fraud."

The results also show that 76.5% of voters used National ID cards to register. Among young voters under 19 years old, only 56.5% used National ID. "National ID cards have photos that can verify the true identify of a voter. Therefore, the complete distribution of national ID cards would not only facilitate registration, it would also greatly reduce irregularities," added Mar Sophal, the COMFREL Monitoring Program Coordinator.

Men are more likely to be unregistered than women by a margin of 3:2. In addition, young voters of less than 19 years are 12% less likely to be registered than voters of other ages. A voter registration drive can be more effective if it targets young voters and male voters.

The most popular main source of information about registration was the village chief (43.8%) with broadcast media a close second (34.9%). Political parties, civil society and media can play a more effective role to provide voter information by working closely with village chiefs and using broadcast media.

**Neutral and Impartial Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (NICFEC)** is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization established in 1998 which works to strengthen democracy in Cambodia. NICFEC has monitored two national elections and two commune elections in Cambodia. NICFEC deployed both short-term and long-term observers to observe the 2007 Commune Council Election.

**Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL)** is an independent, non-partisan domestic monitoring organization first established for the May 1993 UNTAC elections. COMFREL has worked in close collaboration with the international organisations throughout Cambodia in order to monitor the electoral process, before, during and after election day. COMFREL monitored the 1998, 2002, 2003 and 2007 elections by deploying short-term and long-term observers.

**Center for Advanced Study (CAS)** was founded in 1996 as an independent, non-political Cambodian institution devoted to research, education and public debate on issues affecting the development of the Cambodian society. CAS has conducted research for different national and international organizations on various subjects including health care (such as HIV/AIDS), civil society, voter awareness, conflict resolution, legal and judicial awareness, gender issues, and trafficking of women and children.

**National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)** is an international non-profit and non-partisan organization working to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide. NDI has successfully pioneered the VRA technique around the world. NDI is supported by generous assistance of the United States Agency for International Development.

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