

Serving the People: Raising the Voices of Cambodian Women



December 2008



MP Mu Sochua walking the campaign trail in summer 2008

Having led my local team to a small victory by bringing in an extra 10,000 votes for my party in less than ten months in 2007, I took the lead in Kampot, one of the 24 provinces in Cambodia, in mid-2008. The back-to-back electoral campaign finally earned me a seat in Parliament in July 2008. As I take time to reflect back on the paths taken on the campaign trail and the promises made during the door-to-door visits to 482 villages, I can only now take a deep breath and look forward to the next five years in my new role as lawmaker and elected representative of the people. None of this could have happened without your continued support for democracy and for a better Cambodia.



MP Mu Sochua discussing issues during door-to-door visits

My team and I have been working tirelessly to address injustice caused by greed, disrespect for the rule of law, a culture of impunity and corruption that is seriously affecting the lives of the poor. Every year 4,000 Cambodian women die of childbirth. Only 25% of our women deliver their babies at health centers with the assistance of trained midwives, and only 17% of our people have access to clean water. For almost 30 years, the ruling party has told the people to beg for services, while we say to the people that they do not have to beg and that **THEY CAN** make change by going to the polls.

Forced evictions by soldiers are daily occurrences that terrorize citizens and leave them homeless and destitute. Those evicted most often are female-headed households, which are the most vulnerable to physical attacks and threats or other intimidation



MP Mu Sochua visits a paralyzed woman denied quality health services



Candles burn brightly for the Sam Rainsy Party and the Cambodian people

tactics. Villagers are now organizing and speaking up, even if they face detention. Women are most vocal.

The economic crisis is affecting our construction workers, farmers and garment factory workers, the majority of whom are young rural women. In the meantime, the government increases the budget for defense and national security. As a lawmaker, I argue against these policies and call for more funds for the social sector and **access to quality services**. As a woman and as a member of the opposition, it is a huge challenge to be vocal knowing that every move I make is recorded and reported.

In the next five years, I hope to bring more young women into politics and to empower the voices of Cambodian women, vital voices, as well as being a part of a grassroots force to make real change. Many grassroots women's movements have inspired me and made me believe that **WE CAN**.

In closing, I wish to sincerely thank you for believing in me and for being there to make the fight a bit easier.

My real present for Christmas is the joy of being with my three daughters in Kenya. They have all grown to be young women, defining their own beliefs in justice and feminism.

I send you my very best wishes, and may 2009 bring you and your loved ones sweet success, good health and great joy.

In solidarity and peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mu Sochua".

Mu Sochua

Member of Parliament