

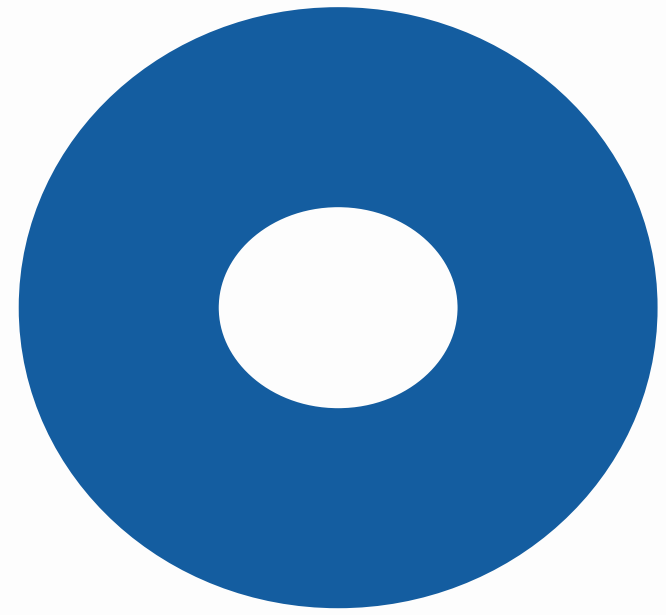
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# Empowering Women in Leadership Positions through Development Aid: Evidence from Female Councillors and Civil Servants at the Sub-National Level in Three Provinces in Cambodia

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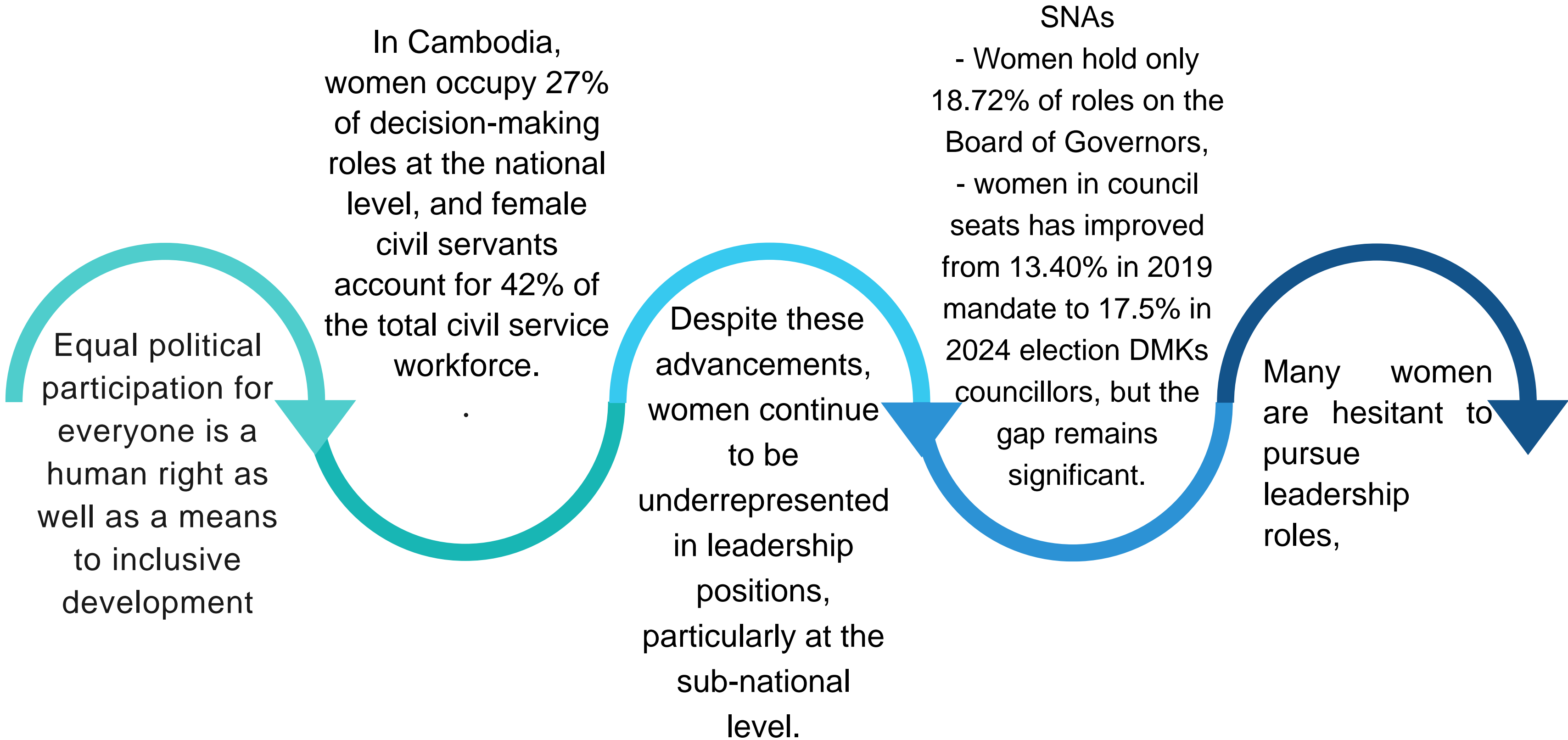
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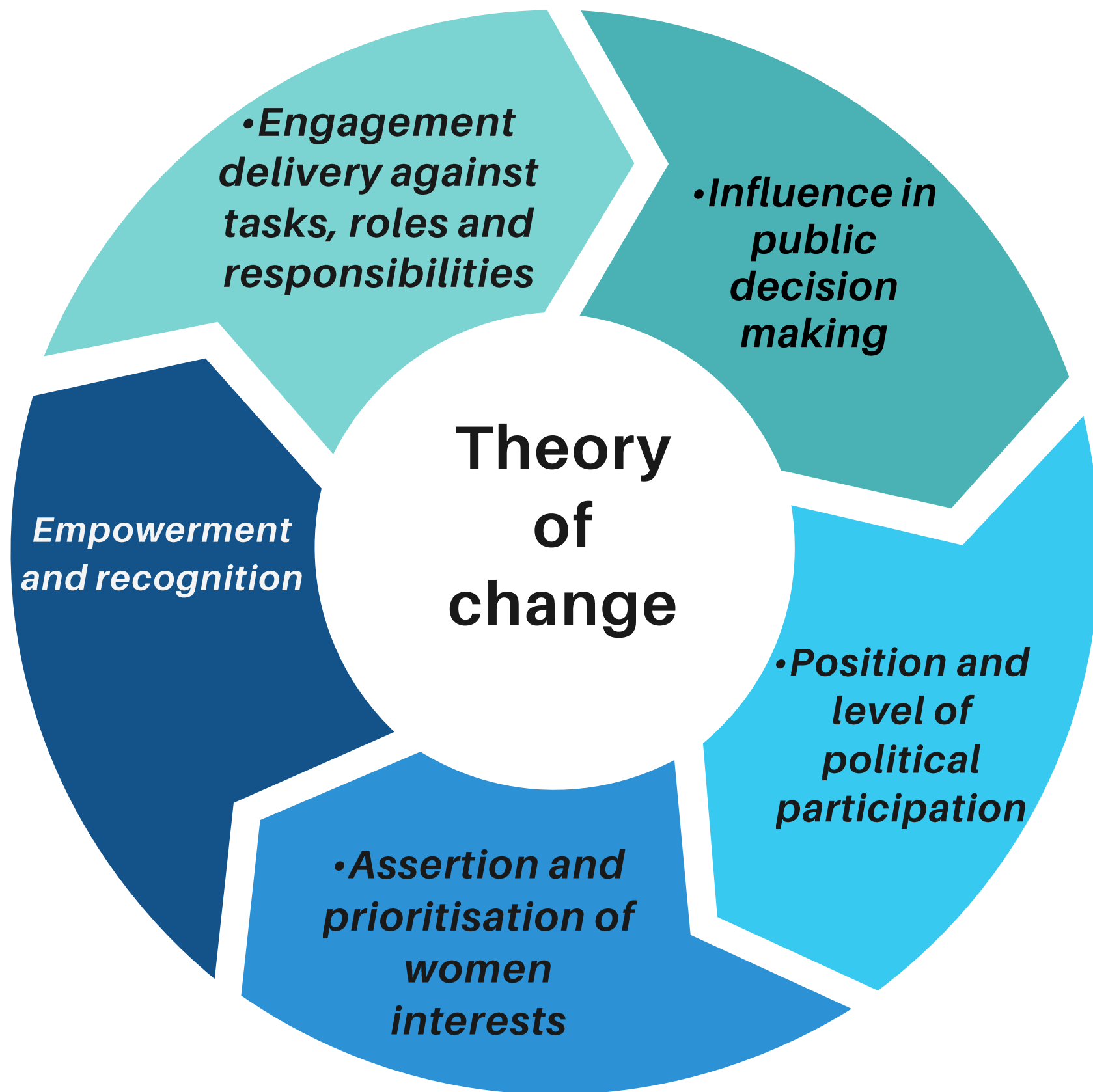
# Introduction



**This study investigates the role of development aid in empowering women in leadership positions at the sub-national level, focusing on female councilors and civil servants across three provinces in Cambodia.**

**Objectives  
&  
Scope**

**To assess the effectiveness of the aid programs in enhancing women's leadership skills and to identify the mechanisms that contribute to their empowerment.**



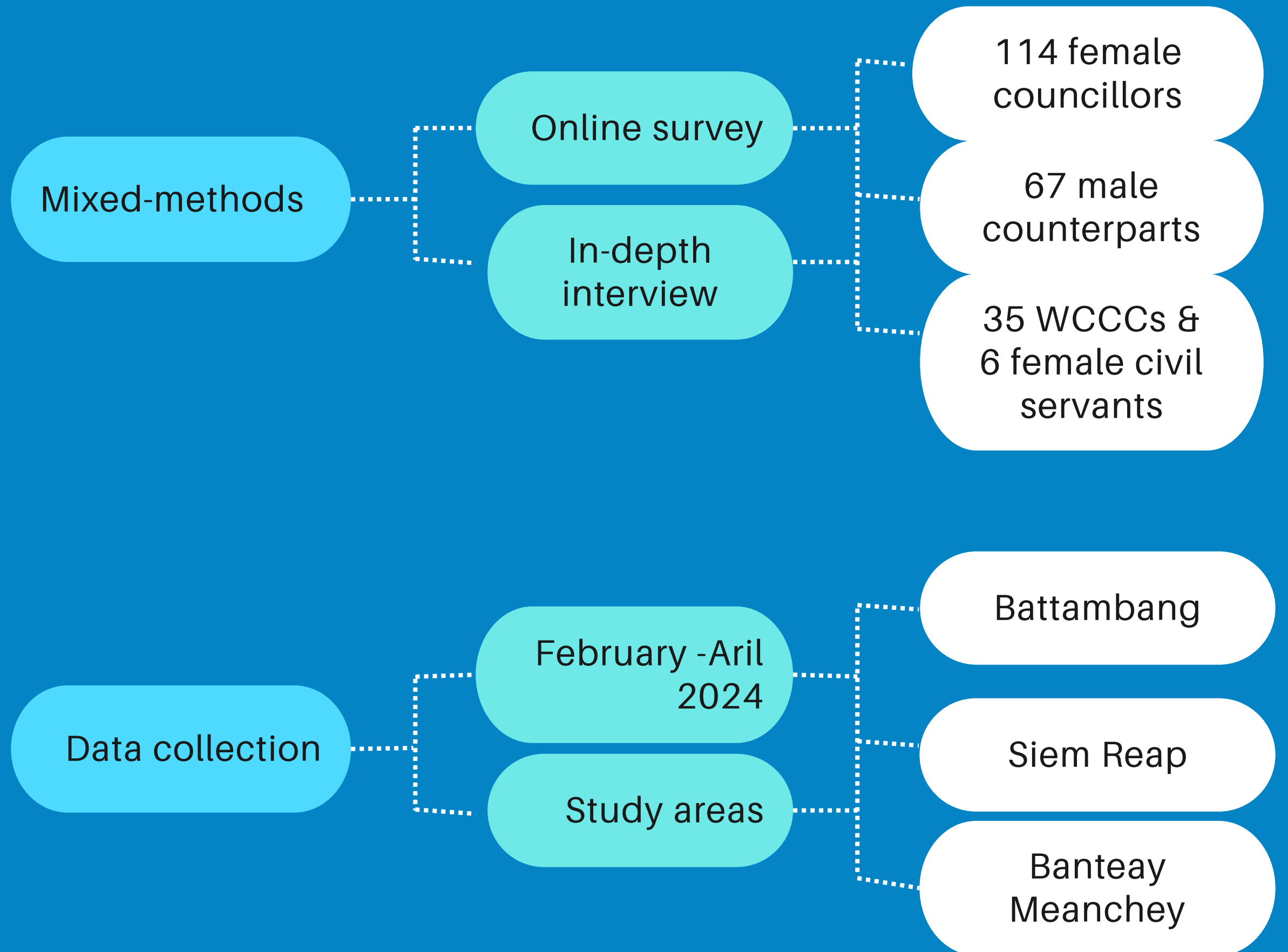
Women's influence in exercising political functions includes:

- 1) the ability to assert oneself in negotiations; or
- 2) the ability to shape development planning and the realization of respective targets; or
- 3) the ability to influence decisions on public budget allocation and spending; or
- 4) the ability to influence the design and adoption of public policies and legislation, and to be recognized in the execution of assigned oversight functions; or
- 5) the ability to shape positions and decision-making within political parties.

# Methodology

## Unit of analysis

- Unit of Measure: Number of female councillors having a positive perception.
- Parameter of positive perception: Female councillors rate 3 or higher on their perceived influence in decision-making processes



# **Key findings & discussion**

# Background of the intervention programme: Foster Inclusive Leadership: Capacity Building for Gender Equality and Social Equity in Governance

## Strengthening Female Councillors







## Promoting Gender Equality, Social Equity and Inclusion in Leadership at Sub-National



## Women Leadership Programme





Perception on  
engagement in  
tasks, roles, and  
responsibilities  
(N=114)

No.	Engagement in tasks, roles, and responsibilities	Baseline %	Endline %
1	Citizen Feedback	71	 87
2	Commune & Sangkat administrations	83	 86
3	DM council meetings	70	70
4	BOGs	59	 83
5	NGOs	66	63
	<b>Average</b>	<b>70</b>	 <b>78</b>


## Female councillors' influence on decision-making on key tasks

No.	Perceived influence in decision making	Baseline %	Endline %
1	DM-Funded Project	54	↑ 66
2	Social Projects	46	↑ 65
3	Conflict Resolution	48	↑ 52
4	Contractors	37	↑ 45
5	Contracted Staff	40	↑ 43
	Average	45	↑ 54

## Perception on their participation in party politics

No.	Participation in party politics	Baseline %	Endline %
1	Candidacy Political Party	80	 66
2	Party Ranking	51	 65
	Average	66	66

**Positive perception on their influence in exercising their political functions.**

No.	Positive perception on their influence in exercising their roles	Baseline %	Endline %
1	Engagement in tasks, roles and responsibilities	70	78
2	Influence in council decision-making	45	54
3	Level of political participation	66	66
	Average	60	 66

## Female councillors' obstacles

ACTIVITIES		OWN CAPACITY		COLLEGIAL SUPPORT		RESOURCES	
		In %					
		Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline
<sup>1</sup>	Citizen feedback	38	15	16	45	47	40
<sup>2</sup>	Commune and Sangkat Administration	21	19	14	39	64	42
<sup>3</sup>	Council Meeting	45	15	14	41	41	44
<sup>4</sup>	(Deputy) Governor	30	19	19	41	52	41
<sup>5</sup>	NGOs	30	27	22	32	48	41
<b>Average</b>		<b>29</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>39.6</b>	<b>50.4</b>	<b>41.6</b>

*... Cambodian women are always modest and reserved in rating themselves as a part of the Cambodian cultures. „I do not want to rate myself; I'd rather reserve this for other people to rate my influence and my performance.” - WCCC 12,*



• A chair of WCCC in one district in Battambang, who has received technical supports from development partners's programmes, demonstrates great abilities (build strong network, trust, and communication) to mobilise resources from within the political party and various partner organisations in the areas.

*“public speaking is very important. I practice public speaking during meetings. When there is a problem in a meeting, I use my public speaking skills to solve the problem.” The training taught me another skill “I learned how to control myself and not to be angry with myself through self-control.” I wishes to transfer the knowledge, skills, and experience to other female staff to that they do not face similar problems in life. Phan Sopheap, Deputy Governor of Bavel District.*

## Conclusion

➤ progress in female councillors and female civil servants' perceptions of their engagement and influence in decision-making roles

➤ greater self-confidence in public speaking

This underscores the critical role of development aid interventions such as capacity building, training, and coaching in empowering female councillors and enhancing their participation in governance. These initiatives have contributed significantly to improving self-confidence, fostering stronger working relationships, and increasing influence in decision-making processes at the district and municipal levels.

By addressing internal barriers like knowledge gaps and external challenges such as institutional discrimination, these interventions have enabled female councillors to play more active roles in budgeting, project oversight, and political representation.

However, the persistence of challenges highlights the need for sustained support through targeted capacity-building programs, mentorship, and structural reforms to ensure lasting impact and greater inclusion of women in leadership and decision-making processes.

## Recommendations

**Comprehensive Training Programs:** Provide capacity-building initiatives focusing on laws, governance practices, budgeting, and project management to enhance female councillors' and civil servants' effectiveness.

**Standardized Induction and Mentorship:** Implement induction training for new female councillors and refresher workshops for returning members, complemented by mentorship programs pairing senior and younger councillors.

**Supportive Policy Frameworks:** Advocate for gender-sensitive policies in councils and parties, including gender quotas and inclusive planning and budgeting practices.

**Recognition and Advocacy:** Promote female leaders' visibility through participation in public events, recognition of achievements, and community engagement to inspire confidence and support.

**Institutional Support Systems:** Develop government-owned training modules based on successful NGO practices and establish mechanisms like anonymous corruption reporting to foster a fair and supportive environment.

