

# National Election Committee

Phnom Penh, September 15, 2006

## **SUBJECT: NEC ANSWER TO OPEN LETTER FROM ANFREL**

From the Secretary General of the NEC

Dear Sir, Madam,

The National Election Committee would like to thank Anfrel for its open letter to NEC about voter information notice dated September 14, 2006.

The NEC is glad to hear that your organization welcomes the new initiative taken by the NEC to strengthen voter information and facilitate voter registration: the distribution of voter information notice.

The NEC is also very pleased to receive your constructive recommendations with the goal of improving this new activity. As a new initiative, the distribution of voter information notice can be considered as a quantitative success. As of today, 76% of the registered voters have received their notice. And we know that at least 10% of the remaining can not be delivered because people have moved away, deceased or are not reachable for various reasons.

We therefore anticipate a smoother and easier voter list revision process, from October 1st to October 20th. We understand that it is difficult to accurately assess complex election procedures, especially from outside Cambodia. For this reason, the NEC is always eager to provide information to its partners, as one can not rely on hearsay, rumors or sources that may not be neutral and impartial.

As you acknowledge in your letter, Cambodia's situation today doesn't allow the use of postal services to reach all voters. To handle this mammoth task, in such a short time and at lowest cost, the NEC used the network of village or commune chiefs. The NEC acknowledged that some village chiefs were misinformed about their work and performed poorly. However the NEC has taken strong corrective action through a notification that is being disseminated throughout the country. (See below) Since the complete voter list has been put available to all political parties in the country, we invited political parties and NGOs to assist the NEC in that process. We encouraged political parties to make sure that their own partisans receive the notice and, if needed, correct it. We also asked the election-related non-government organizations to participate to this outreach activity on which they are considered as experts.

Unfortunately, this appeal received no positive answer from the political parties and the NGOs. We were even more surprised by the absence of positive answer that political parties and election observation groups alike maintain networks of dozens of thousands of agents throughout the country. The NGOs' networks in particular are well functioning for voter information activities and election observation during the registration and polling process. The participation of those networks would have been extremely precious.

Under those circumstances, it is therefore our understanding that the parties and the NGOs unfortunately didn't find useful to activate their networks during the voter information notice distribution. It is our hope that the political parties and the NGOs will be more incline to collaborate with the NEC for the next distribution of voter information notices.

The NEC and all those involved in the Cambodian democratic process learn from each election. And it is thanks to constructive recommendations and contributions from all stakeholders that elections reach international standards. It is in that spirit that we would like to thank Anfrel again for its participation, hoping that stakeholders will be sensitized to its recommendations.

Tep Nytha