



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: WOMEN AS CANDIDATES**

### **Can women be elected as President or as Provincial Council members?**

According to Afghanistan's Electoral Law, any person – man or woman – is eligible for election as President, provided that he or she is an Afghan citizen; aged 40 years or over; has not been convicted of a crime against humanity, felony or deprived of his or her civil rights by a court; and has not already served as President for two terms (Article 13). Although no women are running for the position of President in 2014, two women are running as Vice-Presidential candidates.

The Afghan Constitution asserts that the electoral system should be used as a means through which to attain general and fair representation for all Afghan people, proportionate to the population of every province (Article 83).

Any person may be elected to Provincial Council, provided that he or she is an Afghan citizen and an eligible voter, is aged 25 years or over, and has a certificate of 12<sup>th</sup> grade school graduation (Article 15). Whereas 25% of Provincial Council seats were previously reserved for women, under 2013 legislation, 20% of the 458 Provincial Council seats are now reserved for women (Article 30). This means that, depending on the population of a province, 9 – 33 seats are reserved for women – as a minimum. Seats are first awarded to the winning female candidates. Then, the remaining seats are awarded to the candidates winning the most votes, regardless of their gender. Of the 2713 candidates running for Provincial Council seats, 308 are female.

### **How can women campaign, given their particular constraints?**

Afghan women often face gender-specific challenges, including cultural constraints and security related issues, which impede their ability to campaign and to benefit from the opportunities to which they are entitled. In 2013, as a way to offset these challenges, the IEC introduced several measures to better support Provincial Council candidates and to address the socio-economic challenges that might otherwise discourage the participation of female candidates. These measures include:

- Reimbursement of deposits, for those who do not win
- Financial support for the production of campaign posters (of both male and female candidates)
- Training for both male and female candidates

Afghan citizens are critical in affecting positive cultural change and the IEC encourages civil society – including community and religious leaders – to encourage and facilitate the participation of women in elections.