



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: WOMEN AND VOTING**

### **Do Afghan women have the same rights to vote as men?**

Yes, the Afghan Constitution guarantees equal opportunities for men and women to vote. This upholds the right of all eligible Afghan citizens – both women and men – to vote and to be elected (Article 22).

Afghanistan's Ministry of Haj has released *akhutwa*, encouraging both men and women to take part in the 2014 Presidential and Provincial Council Elections; and this *khutwa* was shared by Mullahs, with a view to engage men to support women's participation. The IEC also encourages communities – including religious leaders and civil society groups – to support the participation of women in the electoral process.

### **Why is it important for women to vote?**

In Afghanistan, women are legally entitled to vote. In fact, female voters are critical to elections. According to the Afghan Constitution, elections are the vehicle through which the general public is consulted and participates in establishing leadership that best represents the citizens of Afghanistan. Since approximately half of Afghanistan's citizens are women, it follows that they should be equally represented in polling centers and, ultimately, in government. When women exercise their right to vote, they can support leaders who will take into consideration their particular interests and concerns.

Moreover, voting is a way to support the peaceful transition of power, and affect political change in a way that is not violent. All Afghans are encouraged to express their opinions peacefully – through dialogue, discussion, debate and ultimately through voting.

### **Can a woman's father, husband, brother or other family member vote on her behalf?**

Proxy voting is not allowed in Afghanistan. Every voter must cast his or her own ballot. This protects the right of every Afghan – including every Afghan woman – to vote. It also ensures that each ballot reflects the choice of the voter, and not the choice of the person who casts the ballot for them.

### **Is a woman's vote equal to a man's vote?**

There is no difference in the value of a man's vote or a woman's vote. Every vote is equal and is counted only once.

### **How does a woman decide who she should vote for?**

Voters should examine the political platforms of candidates and support the candidate whose vision and approach to governance most closely resembles their own opinions. In addition, the Afghan Constitution affords voters the right to gather together, express their opinions and hold peaceful demonstrations. By considering their options and exchanging ideas with others, both men and women can gain valuable insights that will inform their choices.



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### **Can a woman vote differently than her family?**

In Afghanistan, women have the right to vote for whomever they choose. A secret vote is fundamental to democratic elections; and every voter casts his or her ballot in a private polling booth where ballots are not visible to others.

### **What measures are taken to facilitate women voters?**

The IEC acknowledges the importance of female participation and considers the particular needs of women, at each stage in the electoral process.

Public outreach, civic and voter education activities are conducted throughout all provinces and engage civil society – including community and religious leaders – to support and encourage the participation of women in elections. Direct (person-to-person) outreach is particularly important as a means of communication with illiterate populations. In addition, messages, specifically designed to engage female voters, are disseminated through IEC television and radio public service announcements, nationwide mobile theatre performances, brochures, leaflets, fact sheets, sample and mock ballots, billboards, posters and signs.

Voter Registration Centers are equipped with separate stations for men and women, and women are not required to display photos on their voter identification cards.

Polling centers also provide separate polling stations for men and women. On Election Day, female voters will be facilitated by female polling staff, and the security of stations will be overseen by female searchers.