

# Afghanistan Elections

Creating a safe, stable, normal childhood

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International

In a country ravaged by conflict over many years, Afghanistan's citizens will hold a historic election on August 20 to help determine their future. More than 40 candidates are vying to become president. Putting politics aside, the future of the children of Afghanistan is at stake – war turns everyone's lives upside down, but none more so than children. At ChildFund International we strive to create environments in Afghanistan where children can learn, play and grow. We want them to have as safe, stable and normal a childhood as possible and to grow up in communities where they can become leaders of positive, enduring change that will help bring peace and security to their country.

Children in Afghanistan currently face many issues that impact their future. Infant, children under 5 and maternal mortality rates are among the world's highest. Twenty-five percent of children die before they turn 5. Stunted growth affects more than half of all children. Much of the country's population lacks access to safe drinking water, which leads to diseases that threaten public health. Afghanistan also has a disproportionately high percent of people under the age of 20 – the average age of Afghan residents is 17.7, compared to 36.7 in the U.S. The life expectancy in Afghanistan is 44.6 years, compared to 78.1 here at home.

We are working in this country to fight these problems and to help ensure children have a brighter future. We have trained parents, community leaders and government staff to recognize and manage child protection issues; supported community-based literacy classes for children; trained teachers; provided children with recreational areas in which to play; and developed health services that include training health workers to diagnose and treat illnesses. All told, we have assisted more than half a million Afghan children and family members.

While many news reports focus on military developments, corruption and what will happen with this election, we must not forget about the children there. Childhood is a one-time opportunity. Now is time for Afghan children to get back on their feet and move in a positive direction. It is the children who will determine Afghanistan's future – a future in which we all share a stake.



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