



Ferozan listens to her trainer intently during a workshop on computer work and content dealing

# Zardozi Quarterly

April-June, 2016

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

## Women in Technology: Zardozi Trains Women in Digital Content Dealing

Ferozan, 19, from Kabul, wanted to help her single mother support their family of eight. But unlike her mother she wasn't very good at sewing—a common, albeit useful skill that Afghan women employ to make a living. Besides Ferozan wanted to pursue a profession that would allow her continue her education.

When she first approached Zardozi, Ferozan already knew how to operate a computer, having taken extra classes at her school. So when the idea of training women in content dealing was put forth at one of the meeting, Ferozan jumped at the opportunity.

For the uninitiated, content dealing is an industry that has flourished in communities with little or no access to the internet. Usually a content vendor will find or download latest and useful digital content including music, videos, images, and upload them to the phone of a consumer for a price.

Even as the telecom industry in Afghanistan makes great progress, few outside the metro cities such as Kabul have access to a stable internet connection. And even in those cases, affordability plays an important factor in the penetration of telecommunication services among Afghans.

This gets further diluted when it reaches Afghan women, who have little or no access to the wonders of the digital age. While the men have compensated the lack of internet access with a whole industry that makes digital content available offline, women aren't privy to such services.

"During the course of our research, we found that women are not allowed to go out to acquire these from content dealers who are men," explains Rahima Paiman Marketing Manager at Zardozi. "It isn't culturally acceptable in a society like Afghanistan for a woman to step into the market to purchase digital content for their mobile phones," she elaborates.

However, Afghan women, especially the Zardozi clients, could have significant use for such a service. From accessing new garment designs, fashion ideas, to learning new beauty skills with the help of video tutorials, access to digital content could greatly help improve their small businesses.



### Business Meetings

Nisfe Jahan Business Meetings How the Zardozi business meetings are empowering the community



### Call For Fundraising

Help send Zardozi women to International trade fair in New York



### Zardozi Annual Report 2015

Zardozi had launched it's annual report 2015

“We saw a market for female computer workers to provide all this to women users. Plus, the women consumers will also be more comfortable approaching female service providers for their technological needs,” Rahima adds.

And who better to deliver such services than one another enterprising Zardozi client. “I have always been fascinated by technology,” Ferozan admits. “I know how to use a computer and I’m confident I can learn this trade faster,” she adds with excitement.

“We have started her lessons using a laptop, smartphone, hard disk, and flash drives to familiarise her with the many gadgets that she may have to use in the line of her work,” explains Rahima. Their training further delves into technicalities of digital storage, understand data quantities and creating and copying data on a memory disks. Ferozan listens intently, taking in every word, jotting notes at regular intervals.

She practices her newly acquired knowledge and then, much to her joy, she successfully transfers a folder from a desktop to flash drive. “I can’t wait to learn more and get started,” she shares, explaining how she first plans to begin the business from her home and sell content to her relatives and women in her close community.

“We will teach her how to download content, but since access to internet is limited, we will create CDs of content that we think she could market among women,” adds Rahima. “We will also help them purchase necessary equipments.” Ferozan wants to buy a laptop for her business since she will be able to use it even during the frequent power outages of Kabul.

Zardozi will provide the women they train with a loan to help start up their business and hope to have at least one female content dealer trained for every Community Business Centre they run. In the future, Zardozi also plans to help the women expand their business to include mobile fixing services.

## How the Zardozi Business Meetings are Strengthening Communities



The meetings have provided the members a platform to connect and build of a strong interdependent community within themselves

With the help of Zardozi, and a strong entrepreneurial drive, 38-year-old Najma was able to set up her own garments shop in Kabul about two months ago. She employs 15 young and old women as homeworkers and has already developed a dedicated clientele for her clothes. However, she isn’t very satisfied with the rate of success, and a little concerned about the future of her little business.

"I borrowed a loan of \$1,200 from my cousin to help pay the first six months rent for the shop," she shares with her fellow Zardozi members, over a cup of chai, at the Nisfe Jahan office in Kabul. "I don't know if I'll be able to make enough to sustain the next half of the year," she adds with a hint of worry in her voice.

Other members patiently listen to Najma's issues about sustaining her shop, pausing her only to ask relevant questions and give their suggestions. This is a common sight at Zardozi's community business meetings that are being organised with increased frequency at the local Nisfe Jahan offices.

Members choose to attend those meetings that are relevant to them or peak their interest. However, more often than not, these meetings see a packed room of eager and enterprising women. "These meetings have been extremely useful for our clients in helping them address some of their issues," says Zardozi's Marketing Manager, Nahid Sharifi. "Women at these meetings often help each other, share their own experiences, and seek advice from within the community," she explains.

Indeed, the other women at this meeting were quick to respond to Najma's concerns with ideas to help increase her sales.

"Why don't you try new designs for different seasons," suggests 47-year-old Dordana, one of Zardozi's oldest clients. She explains how her son helped her look up newer designs on the internet and they were hugely popular among her clients.

Another member advises Najma to consider managing the shop herself, as opposed to hiring a shopkeeper to do so. "You are the best person to sell your own products. Besides, it will also help you save costs," she reasons. This idea would require Najma to move her home-based workshop into the shop, but she considers it with all seriousness.

"These meetings allow me to learn from others. I can connect and work with other members, share my problems as well as my experiences," says Najma.

Dordana adds in agreement, "It allows us to benefit from the knowledge of others. I may be older and more experienced, but there are plenty of ideas I've never heard of or considered before, which I learn of from these women."

The women usually come up with the agendas and frequency of the meeting. Zardozi helps co-ordinate the rest, although a Zardozi member does monitor the meeting. "They decide what to discuss and when to do it; we provide any support that the women might need," Sharifi shares.

Started earlier this year, these meetings have become very popular among new and old members, who insist on conducting them more frequently. Women feel comfortable discussing issues with each other than with an organisation. "The meetings have provided the members a platform to connect and build of a strong interdependent community within themselves," Sharifi adds in conclusion.

## Help Afghan Women Artisans participate in the International Trade Fair in New York City

Zardozi has launched an online crowdfunding campaign to help us send two of our extremely talented and hand-working women artisan to participate in an international trade exhibition in New York City.

The New York International Trade Fair, scheduled to be held twice in the next one year—in August 2016 and January/February 2017, and is an excellent platform for Zardozi local artisans. It is an opportunity for them to represent their art.

But most importantly, Zardozi needs to increase exports in order to give a stable income to the artisans.



New York International Trade Fair

In the last couple of years, security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated forcing Zardozi to close its shop in Kabul. Products made by Afghan and Pakistani women artisans were sold through this shop and an income was generated to help these women. This income was a major source of paying utility and medical bills and school fee for their children.

Added to this, is the high costs of Zardozi products. We ensures that women artisans earn fair wages. Zardozi product pricing includes wages, raw material costs, salaries paid to the mobile staff and administration costs of the mobile teams visiting the women at their homes. This makes the Zardozi product expensive to sell in the local markets. It is important for Zardozi marketing team to keep bringing in orders throughout the year as Zardozi mostly runs through the sales of its products. However, even the sales income is not enough to cover market research costs.

Attending international gift fairs has become a very important tool to connect to new customers and understand the international market trends.

### Here's what you will be supporting:

We need to gather an amount **\$12,230**. The break up is as below,

- Product Development and Training for **100** female artisans – **\$1,000**
- Marketing Material – **\$200**
- Boarding, travelling and lodging for **2** – **\$5790**
- Booth fee – Up to **\$5,240** per exhibition

### Why should you contribute

By buying contributing to our campaign, you will be supporting the whole project to survive with dignity.

It will give the Zardozi women a chance at understanding the dynamics of the international markets, as well as build important business networks that could be key to helping Zardozi grow.

Additionally, we will reward every contributor with a token of our appreciation. Donation of \$20, \$50, \$100, \$200, \$600 and \$5,000, will entitle you to Zardozi gift hand-made by our talented women artisans.

To support us, please visit our [crowdfunding campaign page](#) to donate.

We greatly appreciate your contributions.

## Annual Report 2015

We are pleased to launch its annual report for the year 2015, documenting progress and results of our programs conducted among the entrepreneurial Afghan women from across four provinces in Afghanistan. The report provides insight to Zardozi's work and its impact through a detailed analysis of our monthly reports, key figures, and some pertinent case studies of Zardozi clients. To read the full report, please visit [our website](#)



## About Zardozi

**ZARDOZI** is a local non-government organisation based in Afghanistan providing business services to women.

It emerged from the **DACAAR Sewing Centre Project** set up in Peshawar, Pakistan in 1984 to provide skills and employment to some of the millions of refugees who were pouring across the border into Pakistan from Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation.

Zardozi receives donor funding. Over the past three years, Oxfam Novib and DfID have been the primary funders to run programs in the city centers of Kabul, Jalalabad, Mazar, and Herat.

The program provides business support services to some of the poorest Afghan women living in urban and semi-urban areas.

Zardozi provides these women with an initial package of a broad range of business trainings together with whatever skills upgrade training is considered necessary.

Zardozi staff then work with the client to develop a product and to find the first orders; the new client is mentored by staff through up to 3 orders and then handed on to the professional association Nisfe Jahan (see website for details on the association).

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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