



Zardozi Works Actively to Fight COVID-19

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Client giving away free mask to a labor on the streets of Kabul

IN THIS ISSUE

Zardozi clients distributed free masks

"I knew that we are living in the danger of a bad virus which does not have any cure yet, so I distributed free masks. I tried to have my small part of contribution to the community."

Driven by strong sense of responsibility and care, Sabza, Malalai and Rohena are clients of Zardozi who works as service provider and Executive Committee Members of Zardozi's Manbeh/CBC in far districts of Kabul.

The three women are also skilled tailors in their respective areas. Each of them in their own village came up with the idea of making clean masks out of leftover clothes. They used the clothes to make masks for the people who were suffering from hunger and also could not afford the high prices of pharmacies to protect themselves against coronavirus.

Malalai who has a tailoring production workshop of baby sets and dresses says, "The pharmacies are so cruel with their skyrocketing prices." "I could not just stay home and do nothing while seeing all these people die. Therefore, I made 400 facemasks and distributed it among the labors with the help of my father."

Similarly, Sabza and Rohena, each made 100 and 350 masks from pieces of clothes that were left from other people's dresses. They distributed the masks to their neighbors and street vendors in Project Khurasan of Kabul.

"I hear that the masks may not fully stop the virus, but people are helpless, they come out, they can't die from hunger inside their houses either. The mask is just a hope that may decrease the spread of the virus, and we are doing what is in our capacity," Sabza said.

In a country like Afghanistan, where a high majority of people live below the poverty line, the coronavirus crisis has hit the country with more devastation. Thus, such stories and acts of kindness gives us hope and encourage us to do what we can as individuals.

Zardozi facilitated online counseling in quarantine



Zardozi Balkh regional manager in a meeting with MEDICA AFG

Afghan women have always been more vulnerable to depression and anxiety. They have sacrificed their mental health to domestic violence, gender inequality and social and economical problems by suffering silently. To help women alleviate their pain and speak about their problems, Zardozi with the help of organizations like MEDICA Afghanistan facilitates socio psychotherapy sessions for its clients in community business centers or Manbehs in the three provinces – Kabul, Mazar-e-sharif, and Herat.

The outbreak of coronavirus left a more profound effect on people's mental health because of unemployment, poverty and loneliness. As the lockdown calls for everyone to stay at home, the rise in violence and abuse against women is more likely to be expected. According to the estimations made by UN agency for sexual and reproductive health, "there would be 31 million cases of domestic violence worldwide if lockdowns continue for another six months."

Since most of Zardozi clients are now connected through online chat rooms, majority complains are reported about the daily struggles they have with joblessness and the associated family problems that come with it. Mahtab, a client of Zardozi says that financial issues have stressed everyone at home which sometimes results into a fight between her and her husband.

After recognizing the problem, Zardozi regional managers in Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif discussed this issue with MEDICA Afghanistan. The organization was happy to cooperate with Zardozi as part of their campaign against COVID-19 in Herat, Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif.

MEDICA Afghanistan provided contact numbers of doctors who will assist Zardozi clients with their economic and social problems as well as give health tips for free. Mahtab says that when Zardozi shared the numbers through the IMO group, she would call the doctors when she wanted to talk or take advice. "It is hard to find someone to talk to because of the fear of the virus. The doctors seem like nice people. They help me calm down when I am stressed," Mahtab says.

Clients dedicated to producing more protection clothes



Clients ensure the safety of their work

Adela, Zainab, Asma, Jamila, Samiha and Jamila are the six skilled and active women of Char Qala-e-Wazirabad district of Kabul who came together from little income families and running small businesses. They joined hands to open a tailoring production workshop in early 2019 – an initiative encouraged by Zardozi.

The women would come together in their not very big workshop and sometimes worked until late to complete customers' orders. The production workshop, thereafter, became their second home where they could also pour out their hearts and support one another mentally.

"The production workshop started off with small to big orders, it was like winning our own little lottery," Asma spoke while working on their current order lying in piles in front of her. Adela who is closer to Asma grinned at her comment, whispering "that was the first time Asma had ever made that much in a lifetime." The little giggles and atmosphere filled with trust added fun and passion to their work.

However, with the sudden and rapid spread of COVID-19, Asma and her business partners in the workshop never expected a drop in their regular high incomes. "The word was all over the place in radios and TVs in no time. Businesses stopped, it was miserable for all of us. What are we going to eat became the main concern," said Jamila.

"But we had to think about a solution to survive. We asked our business trainers at Zardozi. Their awareness program and initiatives by clients in Herat and Kabul gave us the idea of making protection kits and masks," Adela added to Jamila.

The group used this opportunity and changed the line of production to PPT kits. Zardozi introduced them to the market, and since they had built a good reputation from last year, a contract was awarded to them. The wholesaler also provided all the raw materials for the protection clothes that the clients were going to make.

Asma says that up until now they have made 550 pairs of the safety clothes which have generated 40,000 AFS. She says, "We are grateful that the business did not shut down like many did in the city. At least there is enough to eat to get us through the holy month of Ramadan."

Note: The clients wear protection clothes when they enter the workshop and sits 2 meters apart from one another. They use disinfectants everyday to destroy the possibility of any existent virus that would affect their production.

About Zardozi

ZARDOZI is a local non-government and non-profit organization aiming to provide economic and social services to around 6,000 Afghan women in four provinces such as Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad and Kapisa with its main office in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Zardozi's objective is to support and empower Afghan women living in the urban and rural areas through its business skills development programs to engage them in the market economy. To achieve this goal, Zardozi has established NisfeJahan as an independent membership-based civil society organization which also runs local Community Business Center where women gather to receive business startup loans; and technical, advisory, business and marketing skills trainings.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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