



Zardozi Markets for Afghan Artisans



A group work about benefits of women empowerment among the men

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Gender Training- Removing Barriers

On 25 January some of Zardozi's staff members and vocational trainers gathered at a table to plan its next program, not free of troubles. Everyone was struck by the one question: how to bring both men and women into one room to be trained on gender issues. Such a gathering had never been organized before and the upcoming challenges were striking the team. Zardozi's team was not only concerned about this being a joint gathering of men and women, but also about the location of the training. As some women may be prevented from attending an office or training centre Zardozi located the training in a local house, instead of in its Manbeh (Community Business Center). The Zardozi team was working towards helping poor Afghan women in the urban and rural areas to enable them to earn an income for themselves and their families.

The initial step is to attract and educate as many men as possible because, "International development actors are now realizing that if you don't change men's attitudes towards women, then gender programs which focus on women first won't be successful, and in many cases can bring about increased dangers to women," said Christina Fink, director of international development studies at George Washington University.

As the team ensures the overall implementing plan of the gender training, we move toward our destination. A Zardozi staff member repeats the training materials with the Kadars, who were Zardozi clients for almost 10 years before securing the position of Kadar. One of the reasons why Zardozi choose Kadars to give the training is to focus on demonstrating their success and higher positions to other women in the session, to inspire and motivate them to reach their goals as confidently as the Kadars did.

Although the Kadars are nervous about their big day, they are ready to give it their best shot and arrive at a big room of a mosque in Kala e Khater where the men, community leaders, Mullah and Zardozi clients have gathered. The gathering starts well, with men and women sitting facing each other and being introduced. They cover several topics followed by group workshops, discussing the roles and responsibilities of men and women, recognizing the importance of both gender's roles and the disadvantages of gender inequality.



The room is filled with the men and women nodding their heads in agreement, realizing that these topics were of great importance. During the training, the Mullah also spoke about the prominent women in Islam including Bibi Khadija (a prosperous business woman) and Fatima (ع) who had joined in the struggle in defense of the noble mission of her father, Prophet Muhammad. The Mullah appreciated Zardozi's work and promoted the equal rights of

One of the male participants describes the outcome of the group work

women and men in Islam. In a religious country like Afghanistan, where a father complies with the verdict of his village's mullahs and publicly executes his daughter, religious scholars are very influential in local society. Therefore, to be successful in its vision, Zardozi needs the support of open-minded men, particularly the Mullahs, to support its' programs.

Shafiq, a participant of the training, said that the group activity helped him in thinking thoroughly about why the role of women is valuable. "I didn't like my sister going to the Manbeh, because I was influenced by the ideology of my friends who consider it shameful for women to go outside of the home, but the training forced me to think carefully about things that I had never bothered myself about."

In family life women are not appreciated for their home chores as men are for their work but Salma and her husband Ali, after writing about each other's chores and timing those chores in a group work were surprised by the outcome. Ali said he realized that his wife works more hours than him and her efforts are worth as much appreciation as his own but he had always failed to recognize them.



A group works on gender inequalities and the role of men and women

The Zardozi team gender training to men and women ran successfully, yet it should be noted that some participants were disapproving and critical and left. Despite this the team did not give up on the rest of the participants who showed support and warmly welcomed it. Spreading awareness about significant matters like gender equality is Zardozi's top priority to change perspectives and pave the way for its programs to run smoothly. Nothing is free of challenges in Afghanistan!

ECM- Strategic Workshop

Every year Zardozi's Kabul Main office holds a Strategic Workshop that includes Zardozi Regional Managers, Kadars and Executive Committee Members (ECMs) from the regions to gather on one platform to work on new plans for the betterment and development of their programs for Afghan women. The participants go through the process of identifying the organization's immediate objectives: formulating and monitoring specific strategies to achieve them, while supporting many women in the upcoming years. In addition, a series of essential on-the-job training sessions such as human and women rights, leadership, management, budgeting and effective communication skills are also conducted by the professional trainers at the Zardozi Kabul Main Office. This time, the Strategic workshop was held from 20th to 25th January, during which the Kabul Main Office Program team, together with Kadars, ECMs and regional managers discussed important topics, including: maintaining Nisfe Jahan's sustainability; strengthening Community Business Centers (Manbeh); managing Kadars contract with Zardozi; loan trainings; report writing; and discussing the problems which Kadars had encountered during the previous year.

The Zardozi team spent 5 days of workshops preparing for a productive year that was going to change many lives for the better. At the end of the intense workshops, Zardozi appreciated and celebrated successful Kadars and ECM's, who are the mending the bridge between Zardozi and Nisfe Jahan in implementing its programs. Mr. Husain Ali Mohen, from the Ministry of Women's Affairs, who had also joined us at the event, acknowledged the organization's services and praised the courage of the Kadars and ECMs, for stepping outside of their homes to tackle the economic problems facing Afghan women.

Ms. Nargis, who is a Kadar from the Jalalabad province, was pleased with the instructions and guidance from the Zardozi team. She said "this workshop is a great opportunity for Kadars to share their plans. We learn from each other and can easily find solutions to the problems we have encountered in previous years." She also added that the workshop was the only platform where she could join a larger network and meet different women with different experiences at Zardozi.

Seeking to understand her responsibilities better, Ms. Hamida, who is the representative of Zardozi's clients in Herat, said "we are not in a position to understand everything on our own, therefore we need guidance and this workshop is an empowering platform to learn about making effective decisions and to build our capacity to serve our Afghan sisters better."



Mr. Husain Ali Mohen awarding appreciation certificate to Zardozi Kadar

Zahra on mission to change the fate of her life



Zahra shows us the cows that she bought with the loan

Like many poor families 27-year-old Zahra belonged to a family where her dream of seeking an education was shattered due to the bad economic situation. Zahra was involved in child labor when she was 9 years old. When asked about her childhood, Zahra had to travel back into her memories again and tell us about the bitter days, while drying her tears with the long red scarf wrapped around her.

When she was a child, Zahra had to take care of her sick mother by carrying the burden of heavy work in a factory, where she could barely earn enough for a meal. She said, "I had dreams of living a prosperous life like other people, but poverty was taking me to a darker future. Life was not easy at the factory, especially for a girl. I was harassed and still have back pains from carrying heavy things" continued Zahra.

For Zahra, life didn't take a different direction even after marriage. Her husband was a home servant whose earnings did not cover their expenses. As she reached the end of her story Zahra said with a slight smile on her face says that God finally heard her voice when she found out about the Zardozi Manbeh in the area. Zahra has now been a client of Zardozi for 3 years. Zahra's trainers say that they saw special capabilities in Zahra and all they had to do was explore them. After attending a variety of training sessions Zahra decided to open a dairy farming business which was both difficult and exciting. Zahra was finally becoming an important person and ready to run her own business.

Zardozi supported Zahra with loans with which she bought cows. Since she still lacked proper knowledge about raising cattle for milk production, she thanked her husband for helping her a lot to maintain a steady supply of milk.

"I am very happy that my children do not have to bear a similar ugly childhood like mine. It is their time to play and study, and all my efforts are to ensure a better life for them. I want them to become good doctors and engineers," said Zahra with hopeful eyes.

Zahra concluded, "Zardozi helped me to gain professional skills in managing my business. I learned from other women and Kadars in the Manbeh and use those skills to improve my own business."

Best employee award

Zardozi pays great tribute toward its hard-working employees without whom the organization would not be able to extend its services to poor Afghan women in the farthest villages across the country. On 10 January 2017, Zardozi celebrated and recognized Mr. Nariman Yousufi's services and commitment to Zardozi as an Admin Accountant in Zardozi's Mazar Regional Office. Mr. Nariman has been working with Zardozi for more than two years now, and has proved to be an excellent team player, hard worker and an efficient problem solver. He has not only limited his tasks to his scope of work only but has also helped and worked as a team with different departments' employees.

Mr. Yousufi says that the organization is his second home and he will not turn away from whatever it takes to support the great cause and objective of Zardozi.

We admire and thank Nariman Yousufi and we wish him continuous success in his work and future endeavors. Zardozi is also grateful to all its dedicated employees who have been working for more than 10 years and continue to perform their social responsibilities while standing firm during the financial crisis of Zardozi - a time when the organization could not pay for some of its employees and had to terminate their employment. Zardozi is a strong family, flourishing every day.



Mr. Nariman receiving appreciation certificate from Executive Director and Regional Manager

About Zardozi

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 Nisfe Jahan 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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