



The Future is
in our Hands

July, 2019

A group of women gathers around their trainer to learn about business

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How to Become a Good Businesswoman?

Many women who aspire to become businesswomen do not have sufficient information about how will they achieve that goal. They want to open their own businesses and become good businesswomen but without enough knowledge and courage to take the right steps that will walk them up the ladder, is hard.

While most of these women come with less or no education they initially have to learn the ABCs of business. Most of them find it very hard at first and are hesitant to move forward.

Zardozi has solved this situation by working closely with women to go through each phase slowly so that they don't feel helpless and alone in this journey. The women learn about theoretical concepts along with lessons from videos that illustrate real life experiences of animated women who want to do business and succeed.

The business training videos are developed from Zardozi's training modules in collaboration of the DFID-funded Afghan business support initiative Harakat. They have been effective for several years now, since it has made learning easier and more practical for the women. Amina says, "At first I didn't understand what the instructors were explaining to us. I was lost about how I can relate myself to the lessons. But ever since I saw Roya (character in the video), she practically showed us what to do."

After the business training, the marketing team walks with these women to do a shop-tour by introducing them to different markets and shopkeepers in different parts of city. Some women who demands to take order are accompanied by Zardozi staff and secures first three orders for them from a shopkeeper so that the women are familiarized with the process of contact building and contract making.

On a warm morning in Kabul, 20 women crowd together in a small room where the air of fan also does not change the fainting temperature. The women meet regularly in the same room every morning for five to six days listening carefully and enthusiastically to their trainers and video lessons that are played on a blank wall.

For Shafiq, the heat does not seem to be much bothering. "These problems are part of our daily lives. To learn, one has to go through all troubles and I don't want to miss this opportunity," said Shafiq, cleaning the sweat from her forehead.

Sitting next to Shafiqa, her close friend, Khadija said, "I always dreamt to open my own tailoring workshop, but I didn't have any idea what I should do. With start of this training I have learned a lot especially the marketing training has been very helpful. I was able to identify my customers need and it also connected me with other tailors and production workshops in the market. I will be opening my first workshop by the start of next year."

Empowering Women through Saffron Cultivation



Photo from the first day of saffron cultivation

Women everywhere are great contributors to peace. Today, they play an active role in fighting off the on-going war by cultivating saffron instead of poppy – a crop which has partially fueled the war in Afghanistan.

Saffron also well-known for Afghan red gold, has earned an exceptional place and name in the international market. One Kilogram of the saffron harvest is \$1,500 making it the most expensive crop on earth.

Therefore, the saffron business idea was introduced

by Zardozi business trainers and Kadars to women attending the Ali Abad Manbeh in Mazar-e-sharif. Lajward who suddenly thought about the empty land at her backyard agreed to use it for harvesting saffron while also bringing two of her other friends into the team. "This is a very new idea. We will examine if our first year production was good, we will buy larger land than this," said Sharifa, Lajward's business partner.

Meanwhile, Mazar-e-sharif regional office Kadars held a meeting with Director of Balkh Agriculture Department to help Nisfe-Jahan members in this sector. On 15th of July, Balkh Agriculture Department gave 60kg Saffron to the women and promised for future cooperation. With some training from Kadar, Sharifa, Lajward and Khadija started to plant saffron seeds which will give results within timeline of one year.

Shaima who trained the group in this sector said, "If successful, the business will lead a good example for other women to cover their fields with beautiful purple flowers of saffron." "It is a profitable business and many women across the country are already earning a substantial amount of money", she added.

Zardozi and Nisfe-jahan helps women to consider different kinds of business ideas so that women have more options and higher chances of succeeding at what they choose.

Most of the women in the informal business sector might be unaware of the contribution they are making to the country's economic prosperity and peace but that has been the mission all this time. More women have come to recognize the effect they have on change both on the family level and community level.

Khadija spoke in gratefulness and talked about how Zardozi became a changing point in her life. She was able to gain her power and respect at home as she currently runs all the finances and expenditure of her home.

How Strategic Workshops are Helping Women to Move Forward

On July 7 -11, 2019, Zardozi conducted a five day Strategic Workshop endeavored to take necessary actions for the effective implementation of Zardozi program. The Strategic Workshops are conducted every year where Zardozi's Regional Managers, Kadars, Executive Committee Members and other representatives of women are invited from the regional offices and gathered on one table to develop strategies, make policies and draw road maps to build the Institutional capacity of



Zardozi Program Director welcomes women to Strategic Workshop

Zardozi as well as its grass roots women organization- Nisfe Jahan. The participants go through the process of identifying the organization's immediate needs and challenges in order to develop plans for it. This also includes a review of existing plans and strategies.

In the recent workshop Kadars (community volunteers) raised some major issues that they and the women in their communities have encountered.



Homa Usmany awarding appreciation certificates

Zardozi directors in consultation with the participants came up with solutions that could adequately address the needs of women they serve. The workshop was more productive when Mazar-e-Sharif regional manager, Nasreen Sahibzada provided various insights and opinions from her visit to PEKKA- a sister organization in Indonesia. Many of the initiatives implemented by PEKKA were found to be applicable for women in Afghanistan as well.

The workshop was an effective platform for women not only to plan better strategies for their businesses but also to build their management and leadership skills.

It was also a good opportunity for the participants to establish network among themselves to learn from one another experience in the communities, considering the fact that they are representing different regions with different culture and norms.

At the end of the Strategic Workshop, the participants, Zardozi staff and regional managers were awarded appreciation certificates in recognition of their hard work and commitment to serve the most disadvantaged women who do not have as much access to resources as women in cities do. Zardozi is proud of working with a group of most dedicated and inspiring women as well as men who steadfastly stand behind them.

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 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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