



Zardozi- The Hope of Thousands of Women

August, 2019

Kadars meeting with one of organizations to sign MoU for future cooperation

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Giving women their long lost identity

Zardozi works with women who come from rural, poor and uneducated families. They are unfamiliar with the world outside the windows of their mud houses. Wrong traditions and family restrictions have confined and cut their wings to thrive in their lives. They are unable to say no to all kinds of verbal and physical violence. The moment they have raised their voices, their tongues and ears are cut and their bodies are burned and buried.

Government alone is not capable of protecting women especially reaching out to those who live far away from urban areas. To fill the vacuum, Zardozi's objective for many years has been to target these areas and boost women's confidence and potential in there so that they can thoroughly find their own ways to approach and address a problem in their family and community.

For instance, when most of these women want to refer to government offices to have their problems solved, they are not pleasantly welcomed unless they are slightly educated, well spoken, appropriately dressed and most importantly confident. Therefore equipping them with the right skills and giving them that identity is our job and so far an achievement. Women have powerfully demonstrated their capabilities to solve their problems independently.

Recently in Jalalabad, the women who used to be nobody and insignificant part of their families and society had Jalalabad Governor, Shah Mahmood Miakhail to listen to them and to facilitate education, health care, electricity and other needs for their community. These women who also go by the name of Kadars brought together their community Malak or elders and discussed the community problems with Governor Miakhail.

The meeting was as a result of several days of phone calls, knocking doors and convincing both villagers and the Governor for switching their attention to women's suffering and preventing it from escalating.

It was impressive and a moment of proud for the Governor when he saw Afghan women with little education but strong commitment to uplift themselves and advocate for their avowed rights to be free and independent.

In Herat and Kabul, the women's representatives arranged meetings and signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with several private hospitals' heads that will subsequently provide affordable health care to Zardozi women. This includes discount, and free of charge medical care in exceptional cases.

Zahra who is one of Zardozi's clients suffered from years of untreated severe Kidney pain. Due to financial problems, Zahra could not afford a good treatment until the Kadars introduced her to one of the hospitals in Herat. The hospital agreed to treat her illness for free. Zahra said, "I am so grateful. My illness had made me less productive but now that I take the medicine I can focus on my work and life."



Kadars and community elders discussing their problems with Jalalabad Governor

Married at the age of 13, Samia raises her four children alone



Samia during work at her beauty parlor in Herat

Afghan women are hunted by child and forced marriages. Twenty-three years old Samia was also not able to escape this cruel destiny which put her in despair and agony. Like many parents who sold their daughters for money, Samia's father too gave her in marriage to a shopkeeper who had lent a lot of money to her father.

In a failed attempt to get out of his debt, Samia was forced to get engaged at the age of 13.

"I grew up hating my father and all men. A 13 years old child didn't deserve this; nobody does," she sobbed.

Samia has gone through some of the most painful days of her life. One of it was giving birth to her first child when she was only 14 years old. After a while, her husband started to behave differently. He would not go to home all day and night and upon arrival, he would beat her and the children. Samia realized that he spends most of his time sitting with drug addicts and smoking Hashish. "I was informed by my family that he slept under ruined bridges and in destructed buildings," said Samia. She explained that despite all her efforts to save his life and to do his treatment through the money she borrowed from the neighbors, he could not be cured.

"The next worse thing was that it was not only my husband who became a drug addict but he also dragged my brother into this disaster. None of them have any clue about what we suffer every day."

Left alone with 4 children, Samia had to take care of everything. She and her 9 year old son begun to earn little money from working at people's houses as servants while her son would collect cans and bottles from garbage to sell.

Samia was introduced to Zardozi by family support center of a hospital in Herat. Her trainers described her as a woman of strong will when she first came to Zardozi office. After regularly attending the trainings, Samia learned about different stories of women who had confronted their fears, challenged their families and defeated the wrong traditions as they established their mini businesses. Looking up to all these women, she urged to open her own beauty parlor.

Zardozi enrolled Samia as trainee at one of the beauty salons next to her home. When she was finally ready to start her own business, she lacked the necessary equipment and materials. Therefore, Zardozi clients cooperated with Samia as each woman donated their makeup kits and beauty products until she was able to make good money and open a shop outside her home.

Samia acknowledged, “Zardozi became my new family. The women in Manbeh were like sisters to me and I can never thank them enough for always supporting me and lifting me up. Here are many women like me who have good lives and all of this would not be possible without Zardozi.”

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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