



# Self-Reliance is Empowering

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She believed she could do it until she opened the first Beauty Parlor of her village

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## Nadira is Not Giving Up

Somewhere in a small village of Mazar-e-Sharif, a big sign board outside a not very big shop covered with glamorous pictures of women having had their hair, makeup and nails nicely done, beats much of the negative stereotypes held against beauty parlours like Ms. Nadira.

Nadira is one of Zardozi’s oldest clients. She started receiving business trainings in different sectors in 2015. But her love for makeup, making sophisticated hairstyles and doing Heena motivated her to take more lessons in this area. She saved her money to complete her only one wish- opening a big beauty salon facilitated with a lot of tools and equipments. After saving money through tailoring and loan from Zardozi, she was finally able to open her village’s first salon this year in March.

But Nadira’s initiative created some sort of concerns among the male dominated community. She was confronted by a lot of men asking her father to close her shop, because it was against the Afghan tradition and their values. However, the women were happy because now they could fix their make-up by a professional and look more beautiful when attending parties or getting done their weekly eyebrows and hands waxing.

“Very few women were coming to the parlour in the first two months, “said Nadira. “I couldn’t make a lot out of it which was disappointing. I had waited my whole life for this dream to come true but I also couldn’t give up this early.”

Although Nadira’s first two months were filled with distress and frustration, few weeks later she saw that more women felt the need to go to her place but due to family restrictions they couldn’t. Hamida who lives near to Nadira’s house says that she secretly went out to cut her hair at *Arayeshgah Zebaye Jahan*- the name of Nadira’s salon. “It takes time until people get used to accepting new things,” said Hamida. Currently, her income is greater than before but not as much as what Nadira expects it to be.

Nadira keeps trying until she makes it since there is always hope for progress she believes.

What’s interesting is that unlike many other girls who get married in their teenage years; 26-years-old Nadira is still undecided about marriage and having kids. “I want to have a good future for myself. People say nobody will marry me because a woman’s beauty goes away with age, but I don’t listen to them. I want to work hard and become independent first,” explained Nadira why she was not thinking about getting married yet. Today, Nadira is living her one and only dream. Her strong motivation keeps her going.



An outdoor view from Nadira’s Beauty Salon in Mazar-e-Sharif

### From a Door-less House to Making Eqlima’s Own Little House



Eqlima is cutting clothes for clients in CBC

Once lived a comfortable and luxurious life, Eqlima’s struggles and hardships start from windowless rooms and a door-less house. This is the story of a mother of 2 children whose husband fell sick from major injuries resulting into damaging his nervous system. Eqlima’s husband was the only provider for the family which did not last longer.

Several years ago, Eqlima took her sick husband to Pakistan in hope of curing his illness. Most of their savings were drained in his treatments and medicine but wasted without any big results. His injuries bled Eqlima’s heart as day by day they lacked the capacity to afford appropriate amount of food and clothes to wear.

“Rents went overdue. We had to evacuate the house in less than five days. My father in-law gave us an old house which did not

have windows and doors. Most nights I had to stay awake to protect my children from any possible threat,” sobbed Eqlima as she recalled this.

Eqlima’s family advised her to divorce her husband and remarry for the betterment of her and her one year old baby’s life. But she had realized one thing and that was if she could help herself that would be through working for herself so that she never has to beg to be saved. She wanted to be capable enough to stand firm against all the problems on her own because incidents such as her husband’s are inevitable.

Eqlima did not leave her husband; instead she worked on her skills of Khamak Dozi and tailoring which she had picked up from her mother. But the amount of money she could earn did not suffice for meeting all of the needs of her children and sick husband. Her in-laws had also stopped supporting her.

Sometime later, Eqlima’s neighbours informed her about Zardozi’s services but her in-laws family did not like the idea of her going to an NGO because all of the traditional families see it led by foreigners who are not Muslims and are dominated with men.

Eqlima attended business, marketing and communications training anyway. She didn’t listen to what her family was saying, because she was not dependent on them. Her hard work was slowly paying off. After some time, she became service provider to her Manbe (Community Business Centre) and began to train other women which further enhanced her skills and encouraged her to attract more customers. She earned enough to repair and furnish her house. “These rooms, kitchens and bathrooms you see is the fruitful result of my work, nobody else did it for me,” said with pride Eqlima.

She added, “I remember when I started with 300-500 AFS but now my income is around 15,000 – 20,000 Afghanis per month. My children are in a good school, my husband is getting better, and I can buy every necessary thing for my house. I also bought myself some nice jewellery.” Eqlima says that her story even inspired her sister-in law who was against her work. Now she goes to Manbeh every week and I help her with her tailoring skills. I am very grateful to Zardozi. It directed me to the right path.”

Eqlima is not the only woman who comes with difficulties as such. There are more like her but what we can do is to give them the feeling that they are not alone in this fight and with some motivation and guidance they can find their way out.

## 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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