



Zardozi Markets for Afghan Artisans



Monisa is drying nine kinds of fruits in the new machine her group bought

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Increasing new sectors: The dry fruits business

Zardozi is bolstering women's inclusion in Afghanistan's economy. It is working to ensure that progress made by Afghan women over the past several years advances by helping women work in different formal and informal business sectors.

In Mazar-e-Sharif, a group of women from Zardozi are making an important contribution to the dry fruits economy of the country but their path is not free from challenges and hurdles to be successful. Dry fruits are an important and challenging business for Afghan women. Many of these women are using traditional methods of drying fruits which is in open-air and sun. This has resulted into poor quality and less production which has portrayed a bad image of Afghan women's dried fruits business both domestically and internationally.

Monisa who is part of the dry fruit start up group says that her family dried the fruits in open air which would become unhygienic due to grit, dirt and insects such as flies. *"Zardozi introduced us to new technology and machineries which uses healthier and time consuming techniques to have large income in relatively low-cost,"* added Monisa.

After observing Monisa and her group members' success with the new dry fruits machinery, many other women were also encouraged to work in this sector and demanded Zardozi's cooperation in acquiring the new technology. Currently Zardozi works with three dry fruit start up groups in Mazar-e-Sharif to guide them on the usage of the machinery. These groups dry meat and fruits and medicine plants from their gardens and cultivations. The dried product has found a good market in the bazaar and national exhibitions as several wholesale buyers have approached the groups with small and big contracts.

Shakila before buying the machineries spoke about her uncertainties regarding starting this business because her old dry fruit business had not attracted good market. *"I was still worried about the new machineries and how they will work out, because I saw big loss in the old business using traditional techniques, but this currently technologically oriented business surprised me with the outcome,"* exclaimed Shakila.

While talking about the groups' successes, Kamila told us about her group's future ambitions:

"Women can do a lot if they are given the right tools. These are the initial small deals that will make our way to international market. We are hoping to export these fruits to neighbor countries as well which will take a very hard work, passion and hiring of more women to achieve the goal."

No more tent schools



Students rush out of their classes as the school hour end

Forty-one percent of schools in Afghanistan does not have buildings and for most children it means studying under tents, other unprotected structures or in 'open-air'. Similarly in a far district of Heart named 'Say Polak', children attend classes in tents or mosques which do not have enough space for all the children of the district especially when it makes it least possible for girls to get an education.

To contribute to this cause, Zardozi Kadars took the initiative to knock on people's doors and to encourage the families to permit their daughters to go to school and informed them about female teachers availability for their girls since many families are more likely to send their daughters to schools where men are not present. As a result, with the coordination of the community elders, the Kadars signed a petition by the local people and sent it to the Education Department of Heart.

After 7 months of struggles and hurdles, Say Polak has now a school consisting of six classes and 150 male and female students attending the school in different hours of the day. However, this building structure may not suffice the need of 5,000 houses living in the area but it is a small and fundamental step towards development.

One of the Kadars tells us about the difficulties they faced and says, "It is not easy to collect a whole consensus over building a school since most people prioritize other things more than education. It took us months to spread general awareness and convince people to allow a certain part of their land for school building because government can't make a school unless the people coordinate."

Spozhmi who is a resident of the district and also teaches at the school expressed her gratitude to the Kadars: "This is a great step towards development of this country. We are happy we have the Kadars who have always gathered people to promote a good cause which is not always easy especially building a school."

Kadars initiative to open literacy courses



Women practicing their lessons in a group work while reading it to one another

Zardozi works closely with Afghan women to enable them play significant roles in the economy and leadership of Afghanistan as well as engage them in civic activities to build their communities shoulder by shoulder with men.

Today we have the Zardozi Kadars as the empowered women who play vital leadership roles in their societies and work closely with community members to meet their needs and demands.

The Kadars have recently coordinated a literacy course of two classes for the female category of Char Kala-e-Wazir Abad and two classes in another district called Qala-e-Khatir. This demand was initially made by the local women who started to seek for reading and writing skills. Since the Kadar has been active in connecting the people with government for infrastructure purposes, therefore most of the society members see Kadars as bridge between the locals and government for processing their demands.

The Kadars have managed to hire trainers and arrange learning materials through Afghanistan's Literacy Department. These classes have been facilitated in a local house of the trainees in order to make a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere for women who would otherwise not be allowed by their family members to attend literacy courses in other places than a family house.

Ms. Fatima, who has been working as volunteer member (Kadar) for 5 years with Zardozi talks about the importance of women empowerment through education. "Zardozi prospered my life when I had nothing. During these five years I have learned a lot from my trainers who also gave me the courage to work among a male dominated society. Today I am equipping tens of other women with the weapon of education that will lead to their social and economical independence."

Our Exhibitions

Afghanistan Expo Center hosts women business owners from Zardozi at its First Women Power Expo where hundreds of other female entrepreneurs are also joining this exhibition.



Zardozi clients preparing for showcasing their products at the Afghanistan Expo Center Exhibition



Afghani clothes made and presented by women entrepreneur

Who are Kadars?

Kadars are Zardozi's volunteer members who perform as communication bridge between Zardozi and Nisfe-Jahan's offices by getting involved in the implementation of Zardozi's programs, services and activities in the four regions. Zardozi provide several capacity building trainings including business administration to the Kadars in order to prepare them to become the building blocks of their societies and help community members particularly women to engage in civic activities.

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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