



# Women working for education and economy

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Our trainer shows clients how to prepare snacksx

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## Matching women to products and to markets is key to successful business

Isolation and inexperience of the outside world means that a lack of understanding of what a successful business looks like is one of the key challenges that women face when starting a business. To overcome this, at the end of each business training course Zardozi trainers take their trainee businesswomen to visit production workshops and markets relating to the products in which the women are interested.

Karima is a case in point. Thanks to her new understanding of market opportunities, when she finished her business training and completed the tour of shops and markets, she was assisted to start working for a clothing retail shop doing beadwork and assembling ready-made garments instead of tailoring clothes for her neighbours as she used to do. Her income is now more than double what it was and she has learned some hard but vital lessons about the demands of the market. She works from home so that she can fulfil her responsibilities as a housewife and mother and sometimes, particularly when there are guests or when her father-in-law is ill, she isn't able to complete her orders on time, and then she has to accept a lower payment rate from the shopkeeper

**I think helping women to understand how the garments market works builds their capacity to compete with male tailors" said Mrs. Dordana**

To give trainees the best possible experience of understanding

the markets for various products Zardozi staff and activist women regularly visit production workshops and markets researching suitable venues for trainee visits and identifying the current challenges faced by businesses in each sector

## Business and skills training that responds to changes in the market

The Afghan urban population has started to become more positive about eating out which has, in turn, encouraged many women to move into the food preparation business. Although in 2020 restrictions imposed due to COVID-19 did affect such services now that many limitations have been lifted and vaccines are becoming available, many food producers have resumed their business.

Zardozi clients are interested in a wide variety of sectors and Zardozi is ready to find the necessary training and to build capacity in whatever market women want to enter.

Recently the demand for cooking training has greatly increased since not only is there now increased demand but also, as a business, cooking requires less investment and allows women to do a lot of their work from home so that they can pursue their many family responsibilities as well as earning a living.

Clever women wanting to move into the food business are creating



**Our clients in a shop tour visiting a workshop in district 13th kabul**

markets for themselves by going around their neighbourhoods motivating a variety of people such as students in dormitories, working-mothers, shopkeepers, and the staff working late in tuition centres and private schools to buy their ready-made food. Some clients work as individuals and others as groups, delivering food daily or against longer-term orders according to customer preference. Although so far their profits are small, they are hopeful that with the spring their businesses will expand as people get out more and their own skills improve.

## Activist women in Jalalabad convince a father to send his daughters to school

**“I thought I would never be allowed to return to school as none of my arguments convinced my father”**

Mr. Aman, a father of six daughters and no sons, lives with his family in Jalalabad city. He drives a Zaranj and because his income is not sufficient to meet his family's needs his older daughters and his wife work as tailors for their neighbourhood and shopkeepers. Unfortunately, during the Covid 19 lockdown, Aman was not able to earn even a single Afghani and he was so anxious for the fate of his family that when the lockdown was eased and high schools reopened, Aman refused to allow his younger daughters to resume their studies and instead set them to work helping their mother and sisters.

Aman's wife is a Zardozi client with a brilliant skill in tailoring. She was so deeply disappointed when Aman took his daughters out of school that she approached the Zardozi activists in her community and asked them to help her.

“It took us almost 3 weeks to talk their father into letting the girls resume their studies. We listened to his concerns about his family's survival and we understood how disappointed he was that he felt he had no other choice but to put his daughters to work,” said Parwana one of the activist women.

Parwana and her colleague explained to Aman that in today's world if girls remain uneducated their future is dark. They pointed out that without education, the cycle of misfortune in his family would repeat itself again and again in coming generations. They went on to assure him that an educated girl can make a better life for her family and society as a whole.

**“We work for community development and women's rights and girls' education is at the top of our priorities,” said Parwana.**



**Mrs. Parwana the activist women in Jalalabad**

Unfortunately, despite his change of mind, Aman’s daughters are still not back at school. One of the girls said sadly, that she felt so hopeless when every morning she had to watch her classmates pass by their house on their way to school and sometimes even forgetfully knocking on their door to take her with them to school. Despite her sadness, however, she agreed with her father

“I think my father was right because he is not able to afford pens, uniforms, and books for all of us,” she said quietly.

Parwana and the others are now trying to raise funds for the education of Aman’s daughters as he has agreed that if the expenses can be covered then they should all return to school.

Due to security threats, Aman is a pseudonym to maintain his and his family’s privacy.

# 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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# Canada

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