



Empowering the Disabled and Differently-Abled

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Photo taken from member of Pir-e-Herat Foundation in an exhibition

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Zardozi Opens Community Business Center for Disabled Women

While some people are born disabled, in Afghanistan, the unfortunate war have cursed many Afghan children and adults with disability. Lack of adequate support centers and institutions is even more challenging. People hold different perception about their abilities, that’s why the disabled population goes through a lot of difficulties in moving around, finding good jobs and starting a family. Some of them become a burden and disappointment to their families.

To overcome this drastic increase in disability, in Herat, Abdul Ali Barakzai established a center for disabled men and women from small money. As he himself was suffering from spinal trauma because of which his body had lost sense below his neck, he started this sincere work to facilitate a platform for those who are differently-abled. His patience, wisdom and ability to draw with teeth only made him a role-model that gave hope and courage to hundreds of other people with disability.

The center called Pir-e-Herat Charity Foundation equips different poor disabled people with artistic and employability skills such as painting, drawing, calligraphy, and playing different sports and musical instrument.

Entering the center, you will find people who thought they were no more capable of doing anything but today they write and draw incredible things with their feet, mouth and arms cut in explosions.

Calling the kids in the center as his sons and daughters, Abdul Ali has capacitated many to show their talent in educational courses, exhibitions, international programs, and drama and theatre.

To provide a wide range of services to all the disadvantaged and marginalized part of the society, Zardozi also reached out to the foundation to offer its services in tailoring and embroidery for disabled women. After establishing its Manbeh inside the foundation, Zardozi trainers also teach many other things based on students demand and urge for learning multiple skills.

Zardozi is impressed by the hard efforts and commitment of each individual who together run the foundation for enabling many more differently-abled populations. The organization’s firsthand experience with disabled women has helped us with understanding this particular category of people – putting us in prospect to facilitate more platforms for those whose abilities are undermined because of their differences.

Providing Equal Opportunity for All

Some names/photos in this story have been changed and blurred for safety reasons:



Alla Gul teaches some of his skills to other women in Manbeh

When it comes to transgender people, Afghanistan is a more difficult place to live in for Trans people than it is for women. They either migrate to western countries or subdue their real identity at home country. The moment they come out to their families and society, they are locked at homes, abandoned or ridiculed by their families and society. The Afghan laws do not protect their right to education, work and especially marriage. Homosexuality is deemed a shame and crime in Afghanistan.

On the other hand, Zardozi stands in full support of the diverse community it works with. It has given voice to the voiceless regardless of their gender differences. In this story, Alla Gul who tells his real name as something else is a transgender.

Sixteen years old Alla Gul is from Nangarhar where he lives together with his six brothers and three sisters. He came out to his family three years ago which came as a shock to his parents. It took his family long time to embrace and live with the fact.

Alla Gul is a smart and brave kid. Every little and big step has been a big fight for him. Although serving as a servant at one of the hospitals in Nangarhar, Alla Gul still does not have the courage to attend big gatherings such as wedding ceremonies, funerals, or even visiting relatives.

After becoming Zardozi’s client, he recognized that going to Manbeh was the only place where he felt safe because the women in Manbeh are very comfortable sitting in one room with him.

With a sad smile on his face, Alla Gul says, “People laugh at me and mock me. Therefore, I am staying at home all the time. Only attending the Manbeh cheers me up. This is the only place where I feel very happy and I can be who I am. I also like to play cricket with other kids, to go to Mosque for prayer and to learn Quran-e-Sharif, but I cannot. Instead, I am now learning Quran from my trainers and other women in Manbeh.”

For Alla Gul, it is easy to be surrounded by women especially when he shares the same skills with them: Tailoring and Gul Dozi.

“Zardozi staff members are very kind to me. They invite me to their events and exhibitions which is something new for me, but it is also a place where I can express myself through my skills and products. Some people respect me for my work which is a big thing for a transgender in a country like Afghanistan.”



Hiding his face from camera, Alla Gul displays his products in an exhibition held by Zardozi

He adds that there are many NGOs who work for human rights, but they have ignored the transgender people. They are neglected in every walk of life. The possibility of death is higher for this particular group of people.

"But I am thankful to Zardozi colleagues, because they accepted me for who I am and taught me important skills. You know, one of the best feelings for me has been is that when a customer praises my work and tells me how my concept is wonderful, innovative and meets their needs perfectly," he exclaimed!

Alla Gul is still very concerned about his future. He does not know what will life offer him but what he knows very well is that people will always say bad things, but he will not allow them to hold him back.

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

For more information, please contact:

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**Your donations can help us
improve the lives of women.**

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