



Zardozi Markets for Afghan Artisans



Breshna decorating her customer's dress with rhinestones

IN THIS ISSUE

Breshna managed to be both a successful housewife and a working mother

In countries like Afghanistan, women are supposed to stay at home; to take care of her children; and to run by the strict rules of their families which suppress their freedom. However, 18 years old Breshna, after being empowered by Zardozi, took a very different look at her life.

Breshna was born in a big family where her father's decisions were influenced by her aunts and uncles that lived with them. She was able to finish her school but unfortunately was not allowed to continue her education even though she had passed the university entry exam, Kankor. Breshna said that, "my aunt had told my father that it is shameful for a big girl to go out of home; the village people will dishonor us, it is time for her to get married."

Breshna continued, "I became very depressed sitting at home while hearing of my school friends going to universities and living up to their dreams. After some months, I heard that some people from an organization are facilitating trainings in different sectors near our home. I was very happy and convinced my parents to let me learn tailoring."

Breshna's father registered her name at Zardozi but people never stopped slandering and questioning their family's dignity for working in organization. Breshna faced this problem particularly because of working in organization. The word and place "organization" has unhappy connotation among conservative Afghans as they have the general perception of women should not be working at offices especially when they know the organizations consists of both men and women working together. Therefore, Zardozi have built business centers in homes which makes it easy for women like Breshna to access advice and technical support as it is both near to their homes and there are fewer cultural hurdles involved in visiting a family home instead of an office.

Breshna who is now a mother of two children said that not only the society was against her work but her in laws too. She said, "My in laws complained I am a bad mother leaving my children and home alone, but Zardozi taught me what is best for me." She continued with a smile, "Now through my earnings, I am preparing the best opportunities for my children."

I pay their tuition fees; make sure their school supplies are complete and I confirm that they are not disappointed if their clothes are not good than others. I want my children to be healthy and for that I and my husband earn enough to arrange better food.” Zardozi observed that after Breshna’s success, her mother in law also gradually started to support her.

Breshna’s perspective on life did not only change due to the tailoring and business trainings she received but the gender equality, civil society, vision, human & women rights workshops which enhanced her understanding of life.

Breshna tells us that, “women have realized that the trend of being a housewife is now changing with the change and need of the time. The prices are going up in bazar and my husband alone cannot meet all the needs of the family, therefore I have to support my husband financially.

When we asked how she has proven to be successful in managing both home tasks and work, she answered, “I feel very strong and active when I balance both work and home. After I prepare my kids in the morning, my husband rides them to kindergarten as well as brings them back home. Until I am away, my mother in-law takes care of my children. It is not just that, my spouse help me with household chores too. He is like a best friend and all families can similarly balance out their lives if there is a friendly and understanding environment between husband and wife.”

Educated Mothers are Healthy & Wealthy Mothers



Zardozi clients describing the midwifery lessons' pictures to one another under the trainers' guidance

Zardozi training department evaluates every month to find out what does its clients need beside trainings related to business. We have realized that many of our clients' struggle with even the basic level of self-respect and self-worth. They are unaware of their rights and how well they deserve to be treated. Therefore, to help women build up themselves, to be healthy which will lead to efficient economic achievement for women, Zardozi conducts different kinds of trainings that include Gender equality training, human and women rights, how to recognize and tackle problems, how to set goals and work toward achieving them, as well as how to advocate for their rights and needs.

This time Operation Mercy Afghanistan in partnership with Zardozi, provided health and midwifery trainings in order to educate women on how to give first aid before reaching hospital, and to prevent certain diseases during pregnancy that can otherwise harm both the child and mother.

There is a relation between health awareness and economic growth. This means the need for this training is essential because in Afghanistan many women give birth at homes rather than going to the clinic which is either due to lack of hospitals in the remote areas or the strict traditions of Afghan society. Men who are the primary decision makers at home, do not allow their women to be treated at hospitals, because they don't want their women to be seen by male doctors. Therefore, since women do not have the knowledge of facilitating home birth, it leads to dangers and to more disease for the pregnant women; As result, the family comes under much financial burdens and crises as they have to spend more and more on medicines and

treatments. Therefore, in order to decrease the health risk and economic disadvantages, health trainings are fundamental to the empowerment of women to help raise their family's standard of living.

"Informed women are smart women. They don't get sick quickly and are more productive in the society." said Dordana, one of Zardozi's client. Next to Dordana, another client and participant of the training voiced, "If a person is sick, she will not be able to serve the community and earn; instead she will be a burden on the family."

26 women took oral tests and successfully graduated from the first midwifery and birth skills training session. Despite the fact that these women could not read and write, they had learned a lot through pictures and illustrations. The training had positively influenced the women as they told their stories about how they saved lives at the neighborhood and transferred what they had learned to other women.

Marzia after passing the oral exam said that, "The training was a great learning experience. Now I know how to keep my children healthy and how often I have to vaccinate them in order to reduce the risk of sicknesses and medical expenditures."

The midwifery training instructors from Mercy Operation Afghanistan thanked Zardozi for allowing the training to take place in Nisef-e-Jahan and in helping women have access to health awareness programs. MOA also gifted several informative books to the women so that they can benefit from it at the absence of the trainings. Zardozi clients asked for more health education to raise the standards of their lives and to positively influence society.



Ms. Dordana receiving her certificate on the completion of midwifery and birth skills training session

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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Zardozi's programme of Economic and Social Empowerment for Afghan Women is undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada provided through Global Affairs Canada

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