

Mentoring Afghan women from subsistence to business success

Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan

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Year Founded:

2007

Organization type:

nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector

Project Stage:

Established

Budget:

\$50,000 - \$100,000

Website:

<http://www.hihinternational.org/Where-We-Do-It/Afghanistan.aspx>



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Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

Hand in Hand Afghanistan is in the business of beating poverty.

We look at poverty differently. We see grassroots entrepreneurs full of energy and ideas. We help turn their skills and potential into jobs. They discover a way up and out of poverty.

WHAT IF - Inspiration: Write one sentence that describes a way that your project dares to ask, "WHAT IF?"

What if a woman who has never had money of her own can become a successful business owner and support herself and her family?

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

What makes and keeps women poor is that they cannot earn enough to support their families. Most of the poor find a living in the informal economy where a job is not a pay check but running a small business. But, small businesses in poor rural hamlets will never flourish unless they can reach more customers beyond their immediate neighborhood and increase the range of things they sell.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

What women need is help and advice on how to: transport their goods to bigger markets, decide which goods will sell well in those markets and how to market their goods to buyers. Hand in Hand has already provided start-up training: how to save and manage money, basic bookkeeping and micro loans where needed. What is needed now is mentoring from Hand in Hand trainers on how to scale up their businesses and secure sustainability.

Impact: How does it Work

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

Mushtary lives with her husband and three children in the province of Balkh in Afghanistan. The family used to rely on the small and irregular income her husband earned as a farmer. In 2011 she joined a Hand in Hand community group where she learned how to save and manage money as well as basic bookkeeping skills. Mushtary then decided to open a shop in her village selling clothes. Hand in Hand enabled Mushtary to scale up her business and advised her that, with no other shop in a 15km radius from her village, she should expand her shop to include household essentials such as soap, shampoo, biscuits and tea. Today Mushtary earns 3,000 Afghani (US\$ 50) per month - a big increase in the family income.

Impact: What is the impact of the work to date? Also describe the projected future impact for the coming years.

Since Hand in Hand Afghanistan was established in 2007 we have generated 3,000 enterprises and 4,500 jobs. In order to ensure the continued success of our micro-entrepreneurs and small businesses we help them scale up, find a bigger market and achieve sustainable growth which in turn benefits their families and communities.

Sustainability

Financial Sustainability Plan: What is this solution's plan to ensure financial sustainability?

We help build market oriented businesses that will outlast our direct involvement, that are able to grow over time and generate increased incomes

for years to come. Independent research has shown that this type of support does produce sustainable results - one particular program in India showed that three years on 97% of the micro-entrepreneurs supported were still in business.

Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?

We believe that we are one of only two organisations to offer a holistic program towards sustainable job creation. The Afghan Government set up the Afghan Rural Enterprise Development Program (AREDP) to encourage small businesses and providing similar skills training and education to Hand in Hand. However, because the AREDP operates mainly in urban and semi-urban areas and Hand in Hand works in remote rural parts of Afghanistan, the two programs are not in competition but complement each other.

Team

Founding Story

Hand in Hand first entered Afghanistan following a direct personal appeal from President Hamid Karzai. "During my first career, in industry, I travelled the world and saw what poverty meant for women - at the bottom of the pile but doing 80% of the work. The way to change that, I believe, is economic empowerment - no one will look down on a woman with a bank book and a shop. In my second career with Hand in Hand I realized that with over half the Afghan population under or unemployed the only way to raise living standards is job creation and here too women hold the key. Mushtary, business woman and shop owner said, "The shop means that even in bad times we can afford enough food to eat". Percy Barnevik, co-founder with Dr Kalpana Sankar

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