

SKILL AND STRUGGLE

Women entrepreneurship in GBC is relatively a new phenomenon. Owing to cultural ethos of society, women are hesitant to venture out of the boundary wall. Any act that brings women into the market place tended to be disapproved by the society. However, time has brought lot of changes in the outlook along with opportunities and challenges in modern time. These challenges cannot be tackled with traditional repertoire of skills available at home. In order to meet modern demands, it is imperative to acquire skills and adopt professions which yield benefits through business. This is an inspiring case of a woman who despite being hailing from a conservative background shows how women can acquire new skills and become a useful member of the society and economy by contributing to overall well being of the family.

Shahzadi is a permanent resident of Denin in Chitral and runs her own business of frame making. Her household consists of 6 members with 3 children - two boys and one girl including her husband and mother in law. All her children study in local government school. Her husband is a daily waged labor as well as Imam Masjid/mosque. He was the only bread winner of her family. His single earning hand was not enough to feed all the members of the family.

Two years back she was a very frustrated due to financial problems. Her husband was the only bread winner for the family and she wanted to support him, but she was unable to do anything as she had neither proper education nor any skill. In order to learn a skill, Shahzadi joined a sewing center named Shinjal Sewing Centre. She was initially trained in frame making and sewing ladies cloths, but she could not make different designs of frames. Also, she wanted to run her own frame making business, but did not have a platform to launch.

Then she came to know about a new project known as Enhancing Employability and Leadership among Youth (EELY). Under the community based Youth Entrepreneurship Program of EELY, training on entrepreneurship would be imparted to those who were interested in becoming entrepreneurs and would enhance personal entrepreneurial competencies of young men and women in identifying potential business opportunities at community level. So she decided to take such a training to polish her entrepreneurial skills. She showed her interest and AKRSP facilitated her well in all respects. In March 2012, Shahzadi participated in a frame making training organized by Employability and Market Development section of AKRSP.

Shahzadi was given entrepreneurial training and provided necessary material and tools regarding frame making business like wood, hardboard, inch tap and slides, etc. In the beginning she faced social pressure as she was criticized by conservative people because her husband is Imam Masjid. In addition, majority of the people in her locality does not approve women working in public space. However, she had support of her husband and family. It

boosted her confidence and further strengthened her resolve. Initially she also faced a problem in finding a space for her business. That is why she selected her guest room for this purpose.

Shahzadi started her business in March 2012. In Chitral there is a great demand for frames to capture the moments on different occasion. Owing to this demand in market she succeeded to attract large number of customers and sold her products on regular basis. Shahzadi is now in a position to save money. The increase in profit and saving became possible because of the skill she acquired. Now Shahzadi is planning to open a frame making training centre in her own area and wants to make more women trained in this field. She says,

“My husband had to ask for loan from acquaints to meet our financial needs many times, and many times I had thought to start a frame making business, but I was untrained and resource-less. Now by the grace of God and AKRSP’s training and support I am capable of running my own business as a trained frame maker. “