

A Village of Hope



Introduction

A crucial predicament impacting the lives of Afghans today is poverty and illiteracy. According to the report by OCHA, the poverty rate soared from 47% in 2020 to 70% in 2021 and then to 97% in 2022. This means that currently, 97% of the Afghan population lives under the poverty line as Afghanistan faces one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. This has affected nearly two generations of people who are now unemployed, and illiterate.

The rate of poverty in Afghanistan has been linked to factors such as the decline in income, a rise in food costs and inflation, drought, unemployment, and natural catastrophes. Due to the loss of economic prospects and the exodus of significant numbers of human resources, poverty and unemployment in Afghanistan have intensified since August 2021.

A staggering 95 percent of people are going hungry in Afghanistan, according to the United Nations. That percentage rises to nearly 100 percent in households headed by women, including the country's estimated **2 million widows**.

Since the Taliban toppled the Western-backed Afghan government, many of the foreign nongovernmental organizations that helped the poor and vulnerable have left the country.

In a **report** released on March 17, the World Food Program (WFP) said that almost 100 percent of female-headed households in Afghanistan are facing "insufficient food consumption" and are employing "crisis-level coping strategies." Households headed by women are the most vulnerable group among the nearly 9 million Afghans whom the WFP warns are at risk of famine-like conditions.

Proposed Objective:

Humanitarian Assistance in the form of Food, Tents, and other supplies is not a permanent solution. Once the Aid runs out these people are exactly where they left off. Some of them have become habituated to these handouts with their kids following in their footsteps.

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We at Zara Initiative have been focusing on how to use Aid money in the most efficient manner that will not leave these people in the same state once it runs out. We believe that just passing out random supplies will not solve the problem and will only add to their suffering after it runs out.

We propose building a small village that can house up to 200 families. This village will consist of small homes, schools, a mosque/community center, orphanage, sports field, and vocational training centers for men and women.

- **Housing:** Small brick homes will provide sufficient shelter for the families.
- **School:** Boys and girls will all have to attend school full time.
- **Our primary focus is job training for women who are widows and are the sole providers for their children. They will be given training in fields that they are comfortable with and can also do from home, like tailoring, weaving, farming, teaching, handicrafts and more.**
- **Basic Literacy and Vocational training:** This is the most important function of the Village. There will be separate training centers set up for men and women. Men will be trained in different fields of the skilled labor force like carpentry, welding, mechanics, construction, farming, and other job related skills relevant to their locality.
- **Mosque:** This will not only be a place of prayer for them, but will function as a spiritual retreat center where the adults will have an imam who can answer their everyday questions and teach them important social etiquettes, tolerance and how to live as a unified community.

All applicants who will be relocated to this village must be in line with all of these programs and fulfill all the conditions.

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Background

Zara Initiative is an U.S based international aid and development charity working to end illiteracy, poverty and disease in some of the poorest countries in the world.

We have built a reputable working structure, both within the country and abroad. This arrangement enables us to operate in a feasible manner in one of the most culturally, religiously, and politically sensitive environments in the world. These educational endeavors and social enterprises are managed and run by the Organization's president, who resides in Herat, Afghanistan and has been personally involved for over a decade.

Our latest project, which was the main source of inspiration for this proposal, is titled "Afghan Winter Crisis Campaign".

This campaign started just before winter set in when we saw an influx of internally displaced refugees pouring into Herat city from neighboring provinces. These people were stranded here with no food or shelter and winter was fast approaching. After careful deliberation between our team we decided to start a small pilot project that would make a positive and lasting change in their lives and possibly wean them off the Aid system.

We decided to sponsor almost 100 families for the entire winter period. A separate location was leased out and these families were relocated.

The following services are provided:

- Basic sanitation, tents, tent foams, utensils and other supplies.
- 4 different classes were set up for their kids, which they attend full time.
- Classes for adults and an area for holding prayers.
- A contract with a local wool company was set up where wool is provided to the women and they spin it into yarn. This helps them earn extra income and perfect their skills.
- Training classes for the men and youth to do welding and basic car mechanics.

This innovative project has been very well received by our partners here and abroad. We believe with the proper funding and management we can make this village into a model project not just for the country as a whole, but for other Nonprofit Organizations involved in Afghanistan as well.

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