Government of the Netherlands Enhances Livelihood Capacity of Vulnerable Afghan Refugee Women

Tehran, 18 September 2014 – In 1981, Masoumeh’s mother and father fled to Iran from their home in Uruzgan in central Afghanistan. She was born a year later in Mashhad, and the family ultimately moved to Eslamshahr in Tehran province where she married and is now a mother of three. Her husband finds seasonal work in the agricultural sector or takes on odd jobs but the income was not enough to support the family. She was finding some work to complement her husband’s income but the family was desperately struggling to survive.

Masoumeh, one of the nearly 1 million Afghan refugees residing in Iran, now takes great pride in catering to the beauty needs of her customers through a successful hairdressing parlour she runs out of her home. UNHCR and its partner World Relief Foundation (WRF) have been providing vulnerable Afghan refugee women like Masoumeh with vocational training, business start-up courses and equipment to promote self-reliance. “Now I know each week I can bring in an income to help my family.” She has built up a steady clientele in her neighbourhood, with a mix of Iranian and Afghan customers.

As part of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), a regional multi-year strategy supporting voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration while also supporting the efforts of hosts countries to assist refugees, on 17 September the Government of Netherlands signed an agreement with UNHCR to support the training and provision of equipment to start-up business for 130 vulnerable Afghan refugee women residing in Tehran and Alborz provinces through a generous donation of 111,000 US dollars.

Like Masoumeh, these women will have the chance to develop skills to earn a living upon returning to Afghanistan when conditions have improved, while also enabling them to contribute to their family and society during their stay in Iran. They will be able to look forward to starting their home business in computers, hairdressing, beauty services, kilim and carpet tableau weaving, vegetables and fruit packaging, mushroom cultivation, tailoring (baby clothes), stone turning, jewelry making, carving, patina and façade tile painting, and saffron processing.

The Ambassador of the Netherlands Johannes Douma and UNHCR Deputy Representative Fathia Abdalla at the agreement signing for the contribution of 111,000 US dollars under the SSAR.

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