

ZOHRA'S SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

About three months ago, Shane, my assistant, handed me a message from Zohra Aziz. Zohra had called asking whether TIE could help her build a school for girls. I asked Shane to call Zohra and tell her we couldn't take on any more projects. We both began working on other things and later I decided to call Zohra myself. Big mistake, or not, depending upon your perspective. I am, however, becoming "just a guy who can't say no".

Zohra and her family left their village, Farza, when she was 10, to escape the war between the government and the mujahedeen ("freedom fighters"). In 1993 they came to Alameda, California, as refugees. Fourteen years later she graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from California State University in Hayward. Three years ago she returned to Afghanistan with her father to visit Farza. She was surrounded by young girls who were surprised to learn she could read, had graduated from college, and was working. Zohra was inspired by the girls and her father to build them a school. The boys already have a school. The school will be dedicated to Zohra's father, who passed away following their trip to Afghanistan.



Zohra holding Ehsan's daughter

Zohra bought land for the school (\$7,200), and has saved a considerable sum from her earnings to contribute to the project. She is, as she describes herself in her resume, a "self-motivated and hard-working" individual. So, for starters we have an accomplished, dedicated, passionate, young Afghan woman, from the village, who brings much more to the project than a good idea. She also

personifies the role model that young Afghan boys and girls need to experience.

The village is close enough that our program directors can oversee the construction. Nabi and I met with their project foreman, Ehsan, when we were in Afghanistan. This is another partnership project. TIE will supply the materials, and the villagers will donate their labor.

The Ministry of Education has approved the project. Therefore, the school will be accredited and the operating costs of the school, once opened, will be paid by the Afghan government. This is a significant advantage over other school projects.

Best of all, it's in a "safe area". You'll be able to visit the school. I should write "relatively" safe. In the interest of making full disclosure you should know the State Department considers the entire country unsafe.

The budget for Zohra's school: (\$75,000 for ten classrooms, playground equipment and separate bathroom).



Waiting patiently for Zohra to succeed

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