



Manar: A businesswoman reviving the hopes of women in Yemen

Life does not confer success easily; it rather requires effort and patience. In order to achieve it, especially since life's difficulties are many, diverse and often unforeseen, success after struggle has a pleasure that many of those who gave up at the beginning do not experience. The path to achieving one's goals is difficult and fraught with dangers and hardships. In addition to continuous work, it requires a solid will and strong determination that does not know weakness or retreat and apathy, and this is exactly what Yemeni entrepreneur Manar Al-Janahi did.

Holder of a bachelor's degree in the field of information technology from the Republic of India, she has held many different jobs and businesses. but none of which met her high aspirations and satisfied her great passion and love for the manufacture of natural medical and cosmetic products. This pushed her to seek to launch her own project and establish her small company expressing her personality, eagerness for excellence, creativity and dedication to work. The dream was great, but her will was

greater, and in order to complete some of the technical shortcomings related to that industry and its secrets, she rushed to join a number of training courses in Jordan and obtained a bachelor's degree in the field of integrative and aesthetic medicine from Egypt. In addition, she strengthened her administrative capabilities with training courses in the field of Entrepreneurship and project creation, and obtained a certified trainer's certification in the field of economic empowerment.

In 2014, in partnership with one of her friends who specializes in pharmaceutical sciences, Manar established her own project (Rozet Paradise) to extract and synthesize natural, medical, therapeutic and aesthetic products for hair and skin from safe and natural ingredients. She mobilized her savings to rent a suitable place and purchase the machines required for the project. The equipment, raw materials and intermediates came from various Yemeni governorates and from some foreign countries such as India, Pakistan and Brazil. Five workers were employed in the project as it launched,



"I have invested my experiences in marketing and project management to help young entrepreneurs"

but fate interfered. A sudden air strike by the Arab coalition aircraft on one of the neighboring sites put an end to the project. The headquarters were completely destroyed, and machines, equipment and raw materials were scattered in the area, destroying the project's capital, close to 18 million riyals, and Manar's dreams of a bright and prosperous tomorrow. This forced her to close the business.

After the project was destroyed, Manar entered a state of despair and frustration that lasted for about two months. By the third month, and with psychological support from family and friends, she got back on her feet and decided to improve her life and career. She joined a program for business owners victims of conflict (springboard) by the General Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry with the support of the German Technical Cooperation Organization GIZ. The program had a great impact on Manar's life. It directly contributed to changing her concept of life and that losing her own project is not necessarily the end of her path. She rose again, and not only devoted herself to restoring her own project, but she became a business development adviser and

has been supporting female entrepreneurs and provided them with qualitative advice in the field of marketing and project management.

Despite the destructive negative effects of the war in Yemen, which reduced job opportunities, led to laying off many workers and interrupted salaries of employees; Manar believes that men and women with strong determination did not lose hope. They took the initiative to establish their own business through investing their skills, experiences and hobbies and transforming them into pioneering projects that contribute to the employment of workers and provide an alternative source of income, as well as enhancing individuals' confidence in themselves and their abilities to overcome difficulties in a business environment full of difficulties and complexities. They took advantage of the limited support from official government agencies for male and female entrepreneurs, i.e. the exemption from taxes for two years, ease of obtaining licenses and commercial registration, obtaining advisory support and preserving intellectual property.

Now, Manar regularly provide advisory services in the field of economic empowerment,



**"Springboard has had a huge impact on my life
- it changed my understanding of life and
reshaped my vision for the world"**

investment and project coordination with many organizations.

Additionally, she has relaunched with her friend and partner the original project in the field of manufacturing natural medicinal products (Minerva Paradise) and she sells her products in the local market, with hopes to be able to export in the near future. With strong determination and continuous perseverance, she is overcoming many operational challenges. Just to cite a few: access to needed raw materials, multiple difficulties in sea and airfreight operations, internal transportation issues due to the closure of main roads, checkpoints and multiple levies, and primitive inspection methods that often damage the content of shipments. This sometimes contribute to financial losses for business owners due to the lack of appropriate storage conditions for shipments transferred between different governorates.

In addition Manar Al-Janahi highlights that the most prominent challenges facing entrepreneurs in Yemen in the instability of the local currency against foreign currencies and its continuous devaluation. This creates a blurry picture of the economic scene, in addition to its devastating effects on the standard of living of the citizen and the limited ability to purchase various goods and products.

“Within the framework of her advisory services directed to support and qualify women entrepreneurs in Yemen, she faces a problem in obtaining the necessary licenses to hold training courses, because the requirements imposed by the competent authorities are high and difficult to fulfill” Manar also says. *“In addition, they require large financial resources that may sometimes exceed the expenses of training and support provided to male and female entrepreneurs to create their own business”*.

Despite the severity of the challenges Manar faces in her work, she has a very optimistic view

“During the Covid-19 pandemic, we helped male and female entrepreneurs adapt to the situation, transition to e-marketing and provide product delivery services.”

of the future of business in Yemen. She expects that pioneering projects will flourish in the future, especially if the projects receive appropriate guidance and awareness programs. She think it is important to work on:

- Stability of exchange rates, which has a significant impact on achieving economic stability and the stimulating economic environment for establishing projects and businesses and creating various job opportunities.
- Providing public electricity service at reasonable prices suitable for male and female entrepreneurs.
- Securing energy sources from oil derivatives that are necessary for the maintenance of production operations for projects, businesses and transportation.
- Providing sources of funding, funding self-initiative programs for youth and women, supporting them in owning productive assets, and establishing business incubators.
- Respecting the rights of small business owners and not underestimating their business and the value of their products.
- International organizations and global humanitarian initiatives allocating part of their funds for start-ups

"I hope that the General Federation of Chambers of Commerce will establish a special committee to coordinate between owners of small projects and financial institutions to facilitate their access to the necessary financing for their projects."



This story was prepared by the Studies and Research Department of the General Federation of Yemeni Chambers of Commerce and Industry, with support of the International Labor Organization (ILO), with the aim of shedding light on the success stories of male and female entrepreneurs in Yemen and their resilience during the conflict in Yemen.

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