

# ENTERPRISE FACILITATION GIVES BIRTH TO EMBROIDERY BABY

By **SARAH SCROOPE**

Every Monday afternoon a group of Hazara women from Afghanistan meet in Auburn, Sydney, to design and embroider baby shoes. What started out as a casual sewing group is now on its way to becoming a well-functioning, financially sound and creative business venture known as Embroidery Baby. These women are an example of what Enterprise Facilitation© can achieve and an inspiration to other local refugees wanting to start their own business.

Zenia Davis, a teacher in the Adult Migrant English Program, brought these women together as a social sewing group. She initiated the group as a way for the women to practise their English, make friends and reconnect with their Hazara culture while trying to cope with the trauma of their refugee experience. The women did not come together with the idea of mass producing baby booties for the Australian market, but as their confidence increased so did their creativity.

During these weekly get-togethers the women told Zenia of their desire to use their talents and sell their handicraft to earn a small income.

This was a foreign concept to the Hazara women and they were faced with the challenge of not knowing where to begin.

Zenia contacted STARTTS and explained that while the women's knowledge of and commitment to their product was genuine, they needed financial and business management assistance to turn their idea into a business. STARTTS Enterprise Facilitator Felix Ryan was eager and able to assist. Felix worked with Zenia and the women to help them develop their business idea, to be clear about what their product was, who they were aiming to market their product to and how they were going to manage their finances. None of this was easy for the women who come from a background with a radically different business culture and where it is unusual for women to run a business.

At the core of the Enterprise Facilitation program is the belief that it is possible to transform a person's passion into a sustainable project. Enterprise Facilitation differs from other forms of business mentoring in two significant ways. Firstly it offers a simple but effective management-coaching approach that encourages entrepreneurs to form competent management teams before they invest their life savings or seek finance. Secondly, Enterprise Facilitation brings together the best and brightest leaders in the community to pool their knowledge and networks to enable the entrepreneur to find the right people to help them build their business team and plan.

By becoming part of the Enterprise Facilitation program at STARTTS the Hazara women have access to the Resource Board. Its members have knowledge and skills in useful areas such as graphic design, taxation, accounting, law and finance or they may have access to networks of a wide range of people who can help provide advice and support. Through this network of people the Hazara women have found help with marketing, meeting strategies and attendance and a variety of practical issues. Skills and advice are provided pro bono in some cases, at discounted rates on occasion and sometimes at full rates.

As a result of this support and mentoring, the women have started to develop a business plan, management structure, and are registering as a business entity. They are in the process of setting up a website with pictures of their products, a very unfamiliar yet effective medium for them to market themselves.

Through the sewing group the women, who had not met before arriving in Australia, have been brought together in a space where they can express their individuality, support each other during their resettlement experience and hopefully one day earn an income independent from their



husbands. Embroidery Baby is a link to Afghanistan, a reminder of their traditions and a symbol of home. Yet it also represents their new life in Australia.

As the women swap colour-matching ideas and cut more patterns they discuss what they would like to do with their business and with their profits. Some have recently received their learner's driving licence and would like to save money to buy a car - the first one for the family. Upon realising that none of them are actually able to drive, they agree to start saving for driving lessons first.

To contact Embroidery Baby and/or place an order, please email:  
**[embroiderybaby@gmail.com](mailto:embroiderybaby@gmail.com)**

### THE ENTERPRISE FACILITATION® MODEL

Enterprise Facilitation is a model of community development that promotes economic growth within the community by supporting local entrepreneurs. This people-centred approach to development is the brainchild of Dr. Ernest Sirolli of the Sirolli Institute, an international not-for-profit organisation that has helped numerous communities gain financial independence.

Dr Sirolli is passionate about nurturing the talents, skills and passion of community members and has worked with people all over the world to create sustainable and profitable grassroots businesses. He believes that would-be entrepreneurs need three key competencies; a product, marketing skills and financial management skills. In his experience it is rare to find one person with all three skills so Dr Sirolli draws on the expertise within the community to fill these knowledge/skill gaps.

Enterprise Facilitation can be applied to any community or individual. STARTTS believes that it is particularly relevant to their clients as many refugees are extremely keen to work and are passionate about their business ideas and starting their own business. However, re-settling in an unfamiliar environment presents challenges that can lead to poor business planning and decision making. Enterprise Facilitation contributes to reducing these risks by linking people to networks of support. ●