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## Training Program in Pakistan Helps Afghan Women

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In a small building in Peshawar, Pakistan, a group of Afghan women watch a teacher show them how to use a **sewing** machine.

The training program was established last year by Mahra Basheer who saw an increasing number of women coming from neighboring Afghanistan. Since the Taliban took over in 2021, women in Afghanistan have faced growing restrictions and an economic crisis.

Basheer created the program to provide choices for women to support themselves. She teaches sewing, **digital** skills and beauty treatments. And Basheer quickly found hundreds of women wanting to join the program.

"If we get assistance, I think we will be able to train between 250 and 500 students at one time, **empowering** women who can play an important **role** in the community," Basheer said.

Officials say hundreds of thousands of Afghans have traveled to Pakistan since the Taliban took over in 2021. Even before then, 1.5 million registered refugees were in the country. This is one of the largest such populations in the world, the United Nations refugee agency says.

More than a million others are estimated to live there unregistered.

Struggling with an economic crisis of its own, Pakistan's government is increasingly worried about the number of Afghan refugees. Many Afghans have been arrested in recent months. Lawyers and officials say they do not have the correct legal documents to live in Pakistan.

Basheer said that her main aim was expanding operations for Afghan women. But she has also included some Pakistani women in the program to increase their choices in the conservative area.

The training program lasts three months. When they complete the program, the women direct their attention to earning enough money to survive. Many women begin their own businesses.

Fatima, a nineteen-year-old from Afghanistan, completed the training program. She said she wants to open a beauty **salon** in Peshawar. It is currently banned in her home country just a few hours away.

"Right now my plan is to start a salon at home. Then to work very professionally so that I can **eventually** open a very big salon for myself," she said.

I'm Gena Bennett.

*Mushtaq Ali reported this story for Reuters. Gena Bennett adapted it for VOA Learning English.*

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## Words in This Story

**sew**- *v.* make or repair clothes by hand

**digital**- *adj.* electronic technology

**empower**- *v.* to give authority or power to do something

**role**- *n.* the part that a person or something plays in an activity or operation

**salon**- *n.* a type of store for beauty products

**eventually**- *adj.* in the end