

DIGITAL CITIZEN FUND

2016 Nominet Trust 100 Winner

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2016

IT CENTRES HELP AFGHANI WOMEN GAIN KNOWLEDGE AND EDUCATION

Project URL: <http://digitalcitizenfund.org/>

Project Twitter: [@digitalcitizenf](https://twitter.com/digitalcitizenf)

- Digital Engagement
- Education
- Social Exclusion
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When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in the 1980s, Roya Mahboob was forced to flee. She wasn't able to return until 2003, when she learned English and pursued an education in computer science and business, before founding a software company that primarily employs women.

Mahboob's success is unique, as it is hard for Afghani women to study and work outside the home. 85% of Afghan's women are illiterate and many girls are prevented from attending school. To make things worse, computers are viewed with suspicion – some villagers call the computer 'Satan's Box' and a fraction of the female population are allowed to access the internet.

Undeterred, Mahboob, together with co-founder Francesco Rulli, established the Digital Citizen Fund to set up IT training centres that provide a safe environment where female teachers teach 12–18-year-olds basics in digital and financial literacy, followed by classes in coding and social media. Graduates are helped to find work, and encouraged to blog on Rulli's media platform bitLanders, where their content earns them bitcoins.

The Digital Citizen Fund has established 13 IT centres, which have provided 55,000 girls with internet access, and enabled 8,000 students to enrol in classes so far.

Nadia, a middle-school student in Herat, began studying without her father's consent, but once he saw how education benefited her, he gave her his blessing. "My father had a problem with his computer, then I went to solve his problem [and] described that it was the course that allowed me to fix it. And now he thinks it's a very good thing, and I should go," Nadia explains.

Mahboob hopes to train 5,000 more students in the next two years and to expand into rural areas. You can donate to the cause at <http://digitalcitizenfund.org>

Image courtesy of Digital Citizen Fund

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