



د افغانستان د اقتصادي او حقوقي مطالعاتو موسسه  
موسسه مطالعات اقتصادي و حقوقي افغانستان  
Afghanistan Economic & Legal Studies Organization

**JUMP - JOINING UP TO MINIMIZE POVERTY**  
گامهای مشترک برای مبارزه با فقر  
له غربت سره د مبارزې لپاره گډ گامونه



**NAJIA SROOSH**

FINDING A VOICE IN BADAKHSHAN

**ENTREPRENEURS FOR PROSPERITY IN AFGHANISTAN**

کارآفرینان برای رفاه در افغانستان | په افغانستان کې د هوساینې لپاره متشبثین



# NAJIA SROOSH

## FINDING A VOICE IN BADAKHSHAN



“Badakhshan. Afghanistan”

The sound of female voices permeating the airwaves of rural Afghanistan is not as unfamiliar as it once used to be—thanks to the efforts of a recent spate of enterprising women advocating for change, in what has always been a strictly patriarchal society.



“Badakhshan. Afghanistan”

One such voice is Najia Sroosh, who runs Radio Sada-e-Banowan in the remote northern province of Badakhshan. “Afghanistan is a handsome country with an ugly mind” she boldly claims, even as her fledgling community radio station walks the tightrope of creating content that is in keeping with the conservative sensibilities of the local community, while also initiating candid discussions on controversial subjects such as honour killings, forced marriage, domestic violence and imprisonment of women for ‘moral crimes’.



“Najia Sroosh at Radio Sada-e-Banowan station”

# NAJIA SROOSH

## FINDING A VOICE IN BADAKHSHAN



“ Najia Sroosh at Radio Sada-e-Banowan office ”

Najia attributes her success to supportive parents. In fact, Radio Sada-e-Banowan was founded in 2015 by selling off a portion of ancestral land. Since then, her fight against the tyranny of history and tradition has been met with much opposition. Threats that really hit home when expensive equipment at the station were damaged in an arson attack. Again, it was the family that came to her rescue with her mother selling off jewelry to help the station back on its feet. Fortunately, her father, who served as a colonel in the army, raised his children equally; ensuring all his daughters were as well-educated as his sons. It is an irony of sorts that a supportive patriarch played such a crucial role in equipping her with the tools to rise-up against an oppressive patriarchal system. Meanwhile, her sisters work as journalists with the Voice of America (VOA).



“ Najia Sroosh at Radio Sada-e-Banowan office ”

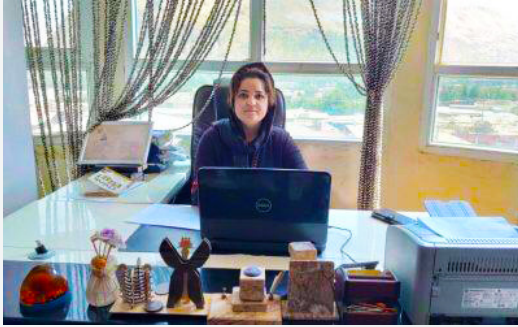


Outside her family though, things were far from perfect. “Growing up in a very traditional environment, I saw every day that the women around me were living terrible lives. This motivated me to work towards fundamentally changing the existing situation. My dream, from a very early age, was to be the voice of every Badakhshani woman,” she states. Najia took her first step towards realizing this goal while still in the 10th grade by landing a job at Radio and Television Afghanistan (RTA). An experience, she says “didn’t end well as it was not a fair place for women to work at.”



“ Najia Sroosh with her colleagues ”

In University too, being a woman led to her being constantly undermined. “The presence of groups who were affiliated to various violent extremist groups in the area made campus life very chaotic and it was really difficult for girls like me to carry on studying there” she recalls. Upon missing a month of college because of personal reasons, she remembers a professor telling her that if she wore a scarf to cover her hair, he would forgive all her missed lectures.



“ Najia Sroosh at Radio Sada-e-Banowan office ”

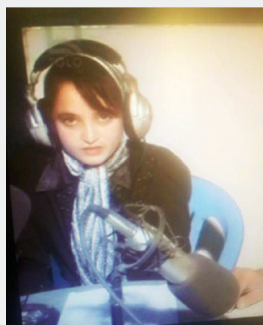


“ Najia Sroosh in Radio Sada-e-Banowan inauguration ”



“ Najia Sroosh with her colleagues ”

## FINDING A VOICE IN BADAKHSHAN



نخستین رادیو مربوط به زنان در بدخشان ۳ ساله شد

“ Najia Sroosh at Radio Sada-e-Banowan station ”

A similar theme of gender discrimination followed her throughout her formative years, steeling her resolve to one day change the rules of the game. Najia’s next stint with Ammo Radio too culminated in her and two of her female colleagues quitting over being subjected to inappropriate behavior from the men in power. “From that day onwards, I decided that I would start my own radio station. I envisioned a workplace that ensured dignity of labor, a place where everyone would feel safe and be treated equally and fairly.”

Today, Radio Sada-e-Banowan employs over 20 people and has the unique distinction of being run entirely by women - all working together as peers towards righting the wrongs that they experience in the world around them.