From Kabul to Bamako
Theatre, music, art and fashion in an age-old migration tale.

Returnee stories
The other women in silk: Parvin and Fatuma discover silk farming.
Hundreds of people accepted EFI’s invitation to join the caravan From Kabul to Bamako in the Centre Bozar in Brussels on 17 June 2019. The performance closed the European Commission’s International Colloquium “Culture for the Future”.

Blending theatre, music, art and fashion, From Kabul to Bamako was directed by Clara Bauer. Music was by Said Assadi and the Ensemble Kabul, Arat Kilo, Mamani Keita and Alireza Ghorbani and texts by Atiq Rahimi, Rumi and Edoardo Galeano.

From Kabul to Bamako tells a story as old as humanity. We have always travelled, discovered. We all strive for a better future. For most of our history, there were no maps or borders. We moved in waves, carrying knowledge, culture and technology, building civilisations.

The drama played out in front of a captivated audience was one of intense hope, joy, optimism, but also danger and despair, echoing today’s travellers journeying West and North.

Costumes were designed by Zarif Design, ZAZI Vintage, Koori Baara Yiriwa-Ton and CIE CABES, and made by artisans using traditional materials and techniques. All artisans and designers are EFI partners, weaving equity and sustainability into every beautiful garment.
Resort, the ZAZI collection produced by Zarif in Afghanistan, made a big splash in fashion magazines, but how would the public react? To see, ZAZI and Zarif were among the brands showcased at the EFI pop-up shop in Brussels in mid-June, along with other social enterprises from Burkina Faso (CABES) and Haiti (DOT).

Garments, accessories and homeware sales totalled almost 30,000 euro, with Zarif the top-selling social enterprise. Not that it was a competition: some offered free samples, like social entrepreneur Zoe Lind van’t Hof’s herbal drinks made from Ariana Saffron. EFI treated clients spending over 100 euros to a sneak preview: a chocolate bar made from Afghan almonds and Ghanaian cocoa that isn’t even on the market yet. A pop-up full of surprises!
Returnees and IDPs hoping to build a career in photography moved two steps in the right direction this quarter, with two training courses in professional photography, organised by EFI and UNHCR, and delivered by international fashion photographer, Stefan Dotter, and his acclaimed Afghan colleague, Farzana Wahidy.

The training covered the history of photography globally and in Afghanistan, as well as developing creative ideas and a signature style, technical tips, techniques for composing, taking and editing stunning photos, and ethical issues like copyright.

The photos shown here were taken by Stefan Dotter during the sessions. They are an inspiration to the students who will be exhibiting their own work later this year in Kabul and London.

Social enterprises working with EFI in Afghanistan have great ideas, but many find day-to-day management challenging. Few know how to develop a rigorous business plan to guide them in making their enterprise thrive and grow.

Representatives of five EFI social enterprises and the Afghan Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock were invited to fill these knowledge gaps at a two-day course in Nairobi, Kenya. The training was led by Robin MacAndrew, international trainer, social entrepreneur and CEO of the Artisan Fashion Production Company.

Attendees explored the big questions of their operations: what they produced, why and how, before moving on to financial management and planning tools to do it better. All agreed the site visit to Artisan Fashion was an eye-opener. Trainees saw the tools explained in the classroom actually being used on a daily basis in a factory setting. Sometimes being able to see someone else’s business helps you mind your own.
Talay is one of the social enterprises in the Fine Foods sector. They work in saffron mainly, but also have a range of dried fruits, including superb almonds. With a lot of competition in international markets for almonds, Talay was keen to find a way to add value to their product.

EFI teamed up with Alliances for Action to find the answer: gourmet chocolate. They introduced Talay to Niche Cocoa, a Ghanaian bean-to-bar chocolatier and Alliances for Action partner. Together they developed a premium chocolate bar using Ghanaian cocoa from a local farmers’ union and Afghan almonds, to be produced in Ghana for export. This is a fine example of South-South trade to compete in luxury food markets in the global North, and of the synergies EFI can leverage through its extensive network.

Samples were a hit with visitors at the EFI pop-up shop in Brussels. A US retailer has also expressed interest. Talay, Niche Cocoa and EFI will now develop a retailing strategy to bring the chocolate bars to foodies worldwide and good returns for farmers in Afghanistan and Ghana.

Herat, November: a six-day training course will be held on natural dyes made from plants, minerals or invertebrates. As concern grows over the effects of synthetic dyes on people and the environment, brands are looking for natural alternatives. In India, techniques have Vedic origins and natural dyeing is making a comeback.

Twenty EFI silk dyers will be trained by an Indian master dyer.

Istanbul, October: spotlight on branding with training for EFI social enterprises on creating value propositions and visual identities. Italian consultancy, Madfactory, advises luxury brands like Gucci, Ferrero, Shiseido, Barilla and D&G, and will give the value proposition training. Paris-based Visual Artist, Cécile Kojima, works with major brands in Fashion, Foods and Culture. She will help SEs to create or renew their own logos in the visual identity training.

As EFI producers learned from Robin MacAndrew in June, branding is one element of business strategy. In a follow-up to that training, producers will present their own full business plans in Dubai in November. Finally, students on the recent Professional Photography training will see their work showcased in an ITC exhibition in London in early December, linked to an EFI pop-up shop.
Much of EFI’s activity in Afghanistan revolves around silk, the very epitome of luxury and integral to Afghan cultural heritage. Women are involved in many steps of the production process, but they have a virtual monopoly in its earliest stage: rearing silkworms and harvesting silk cocoons.

RAADA, an NGO focusing on agriculture and silk farming is a key local partner for EFI in Herat. Together they are developing the silk sector, with concrete tools like silkworm boxes. 790 women earned on average 242 USD from their cocoon harvest in one season. Here we share the stories of two of them.

**FATUMA**

Fatuma was born 50 years ago in Ghorian, Herat. When the Taliban raided her village, she fled to Zenda Jan district. Her husband is ill, so her income must support their eight children, two of them disabled, and two orphaned grandchildren.

Mostly, she weaves carpets for RAADA. She has been a weaver for almost 20 years. This year she tried silk farming, using one of the EFI silkworm boxes. She produced 54kg of silk cocoons in one season, adding 254 USD to her income from carpet-weaving.

**PARVIN**

Parvin has had more than her share of misfortune. The Taliban arrested her husband, so they fled to Iran. They returned to Herat City in 2014, but less than a year later he was diagnosed with cancer and died. Having spent their life savings on medicines, Parvin was left penniless with six children.

Alone and unable to afford a house in the city, Parvin moved to Zenda Jan, working in silk when she can, and if not, making and selling candies. With her EFI silkworm box, Parvin’s luck seems to be improving: she harvested 40kg of cocoons, earning an extra 200 USD.
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**The Power of Ethical Fashion!**

Today @cipriani.efashion spoke at the 49th St. Gallen Symposium about how the EFI model is being used to regenerate the social capital of war-torn countries.

**Come with us on a journey from Kabul to Bamako!**

A show that will combine the performative nature of theatre and the artistic nature of fashion to inspire its audience to remember that all of us – no matter what colour or country of origin – have something in common: our journey as humankind started in Africa, when the world was an immense map without any borders.

All costumes for the show will be produced by EFI partner networks of marginalized artisans in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso and Mali.

17th June, @bozarbrussels Centre for Fine Arts.

**We’re excited to invite you to our first Pop-up Store in Brussels, where you’ll discover a range of products from our projects around the world: Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Mali and Haiti.**

Come and discover the @azizivintage MadeInAfghanistan collection, together with a specially-curated selection of Interior design goods, luxury textiles, jewellery and accessories produced by master artisans from our network of ateliers. June 14th, 15th and 16th at 42 Rue de Taciturne, Brussels. @zerifnyc @dot.haiti @europeaid #EU

**From Kabul to Bamako, a theatre performance at @bozarbrussels where we travelled through a world without borders. We were reminded that for most of our shared human history, there were no visas, no passports and no borders, that travelling was as natural as the tides.**

**Explaining our code of conduct is the first thing we do when we start to work with a new social enterprise. These are standard requirements that a company has to adhere to, to work with the Ethical Fashion Initiative. It’s a list that was developed with a team of experts and should be the standard for production everywhere.**
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