

SKILLING CIRCLES





Skilling Circles

The Skilling Circles of Afghanistan logo, is inspired by the jingling of the artisans' wrist jewellery, as these soul sisters work closely in a circle that has no hierarchy. Perhaps its the only piece of jewellery they have not pawned for survival in a conflict zone. For just like their heritage skills, their bangle was handed down as dowry from one generation to the next and is a reminder of a beautiful bond between a mother and daughter. While some are solid with scratches from wear and tear, others have proof of ornamentation in the form of broken bits of Afghan's world-famous yellow Scapolite, blue Lapis lazuli and red Ruby. The 3 stars inspired from the mosques and minarets that surround them stand for JRS' three-fold mission and vision for the Skilling Circles of Afghanistan; 1. The artisans stay rooted. 2. The artisans are paid fair-wage for their heritage crafts. 3. The artisans one day run the craft collective themselves.



A JRS INITIATIVE

Rooted Fair-Wage Self-Run

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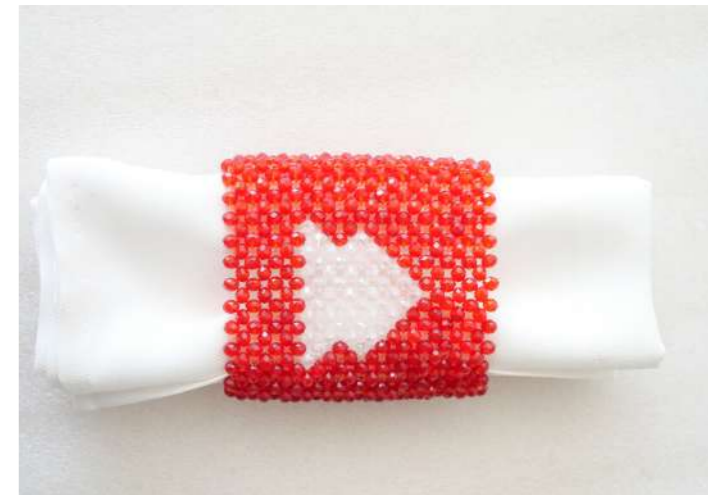
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**TOGETHER WE CAN
DO MORE!**



About...

Did you know that an Afghan woman's status within her community is often based on her heritage needlework skills? Jesuit Refugee Service's three-fold approach to the Skilling Circles was; identify, Up-skill and Empower. In our search for heritage artisans, six eclectic skills stood out: khamak or graph embroidery, smocking, bead work, ribbon embroidery, crochet, and rug-weaving. Unbeknownst to these soft-spoken cultural crafters, all these traditional skills that have been passionately passed down to them from the generation before them, seemed to have been inspired by the Islamic tessellations on the mosques that surround them. The repetitive nature of these tessellations is infinite and symbolizes a Oneness with God. Repetitive work is indeed rhythmic and relaxing.



Her happy place!

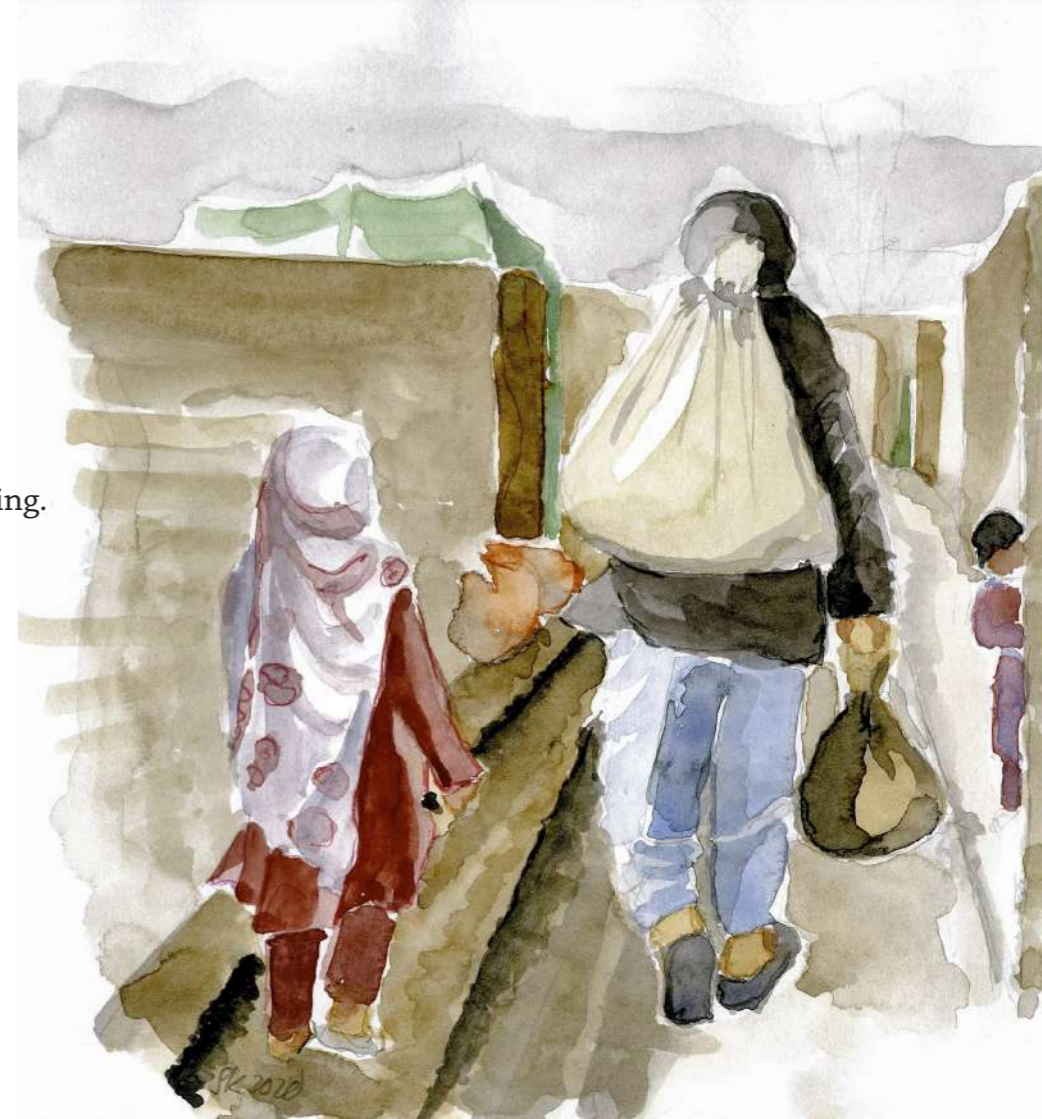


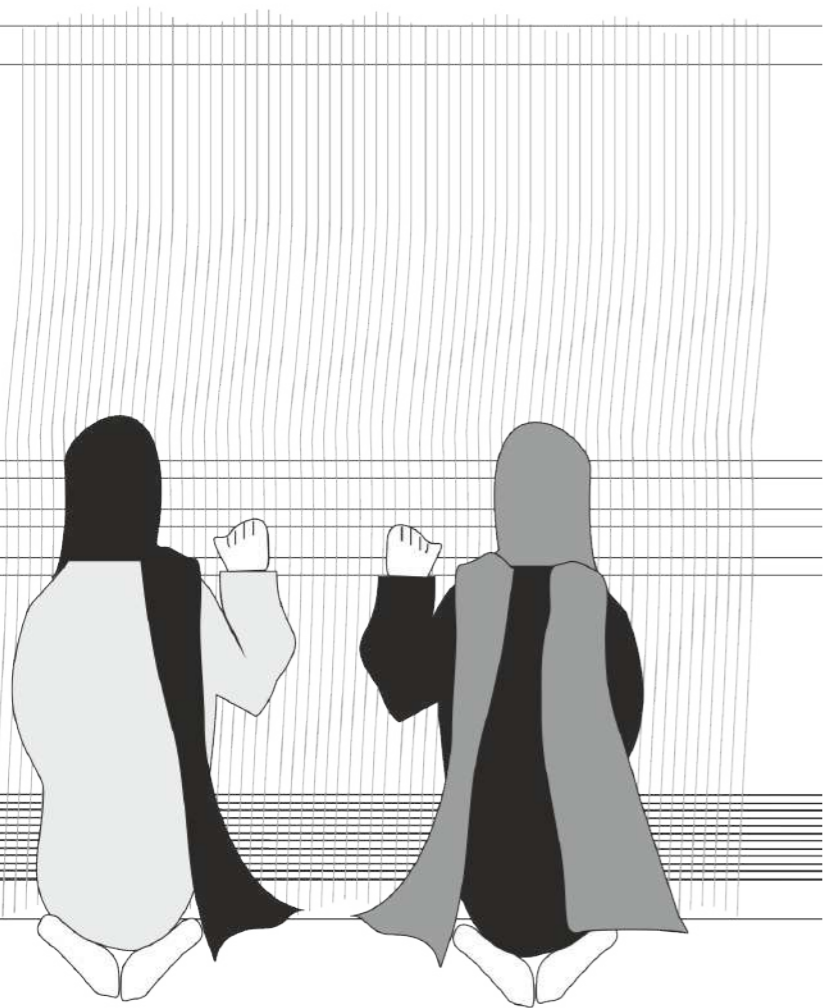


Why we do what we do

As part of our mission, Jesuit Refugee Service Afghanistan accompanies, serves, and advocates the cause of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Kabul and Herat, so that they may heal, learn, and determine their own future.

Journeying with the IDPs is our way of expressing our solidarity with them and our concern for their well being.





Cultural Crafters

Handmade is heart made!
Jesuits conceptualized the Skilling Circles of landlocked Afghanistan in order to bring the home-bred, multi-ethnic crafts of the past into the present!



Mission And Vision.

The aim of JRS is that the Skilling Circles of Afghanistan will eventually be self-run, by empowered “artisan-entrepreneurs,” long after JRS has moved on to the next community of heritage crafters...in a whole new country.



Artisans & *Their Art*



Afghanistan is home to multi-ethnic tribes and each tribe boasts of a heritage craft that is most exquisite and quite different from the other. What is common is the fact that this skill is the result of a bond between Mother and Daughter.



Afghan Rug *Weaving*

Heritage handwoven rugs of Afghanistan have a character of their own. From converting the initial sketch into a graph, to selecting home-bred wool, to dyeing the yarn naturally, to weaving, to washing and polishing, these skill sets have been painstakingly passed down from one generation to the next. It's only when you watch the pair of women seated at either end of a vertical loom, weaving in absolute synchronisation, that you begin to truly value the art and the artisan. As is the case with all handmade products, no two rugs will ever be the same.





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Despite weaving for years, its the Skilling Circles that taught me to draft weaving patterns, a skill that always made me dependent on others. I hope one day I will be an Afghan business woman.

RAZIA QASEMI, CARPET WEAVER, HERAT







Afghan *Khamak*

The heritage artisans of the Skilling Circles of Afghanistan continue to indulge in the simple joys of machine sewing and hand embroidering. For these women, the rhythmic movements in embroidering and sewing is a form of relaxation. After the house chores are over, the women get together in the quiet afternoons, with needles, embroidery hoops, fabrics, threads, crystal beads and ribbons. With good-natured banter, they happily craft vintage designs for the modern markets.

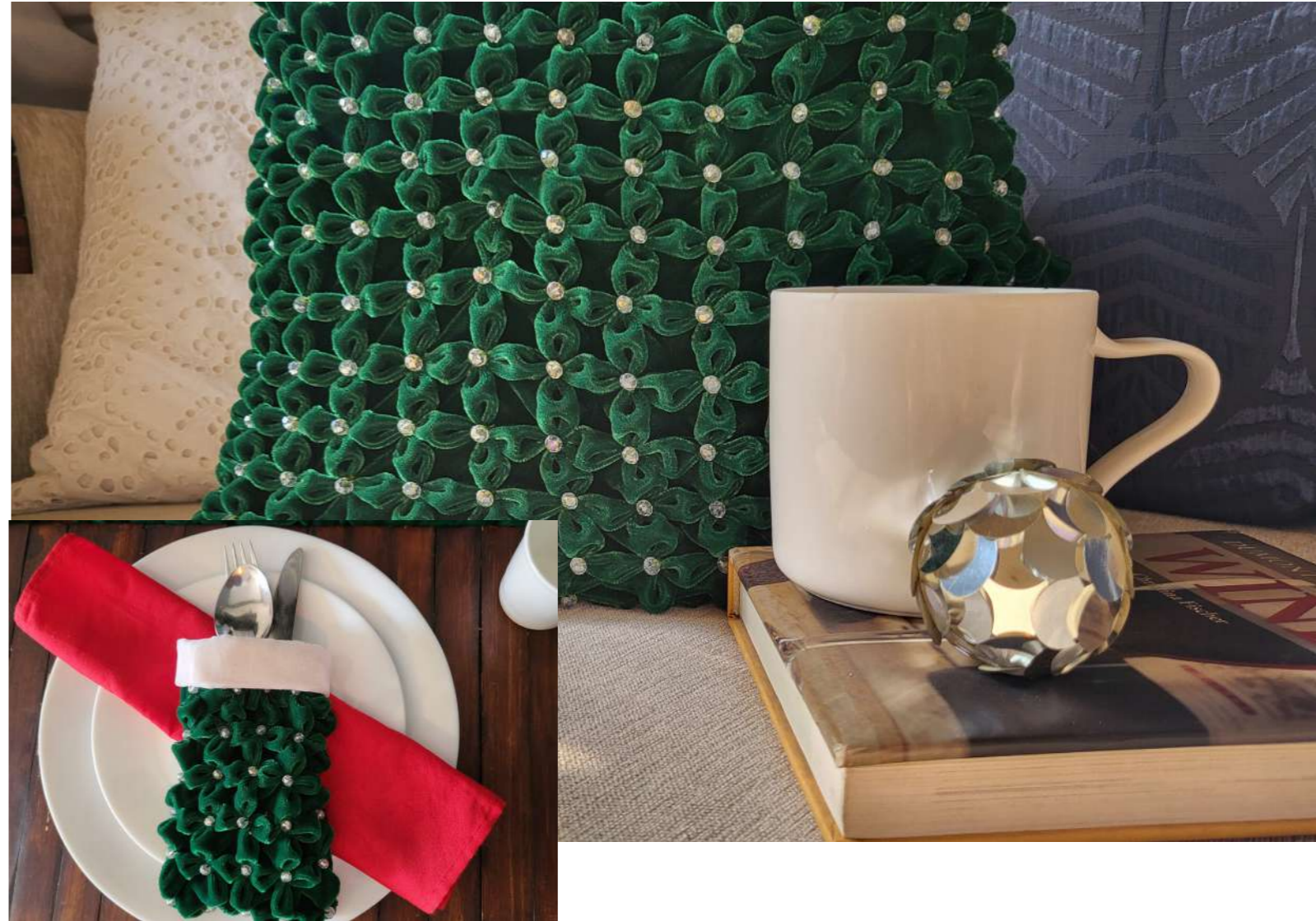






When I joined the tailoring class, I felt a flicker of hope. Learning to sew was like discovering a part of myself I never knew existed. Tailoring gave me not just skills, but the confidence to dream again.

Zakira, Skilling Circles





Afghan *Crochet*

The heritage artisans of the Skilling Circles of Afghanistan continue to therapeutically crochet; interlocking loops of yarn that are hand-dyed. Unlike other artisans, Afghan crochet artisans have learnt from generations before them to use a unique and long hook that's almost like a knitting needle. They pick up a whole row of stitches and meticulously work the stitches off the hook...



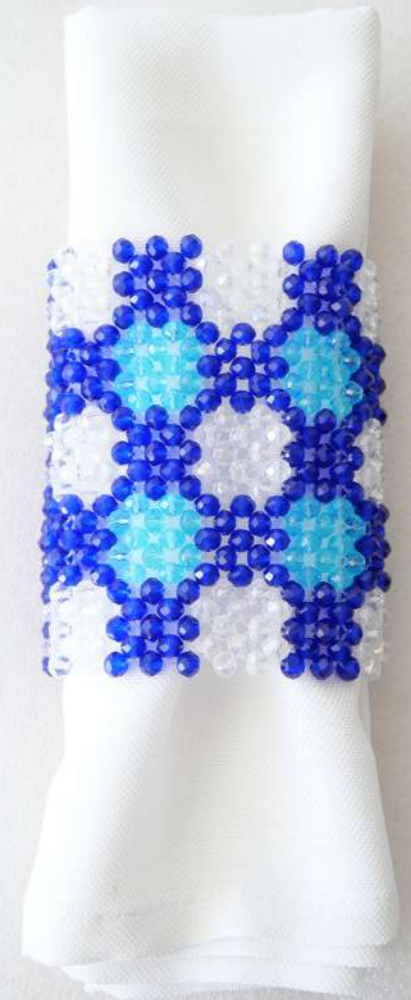


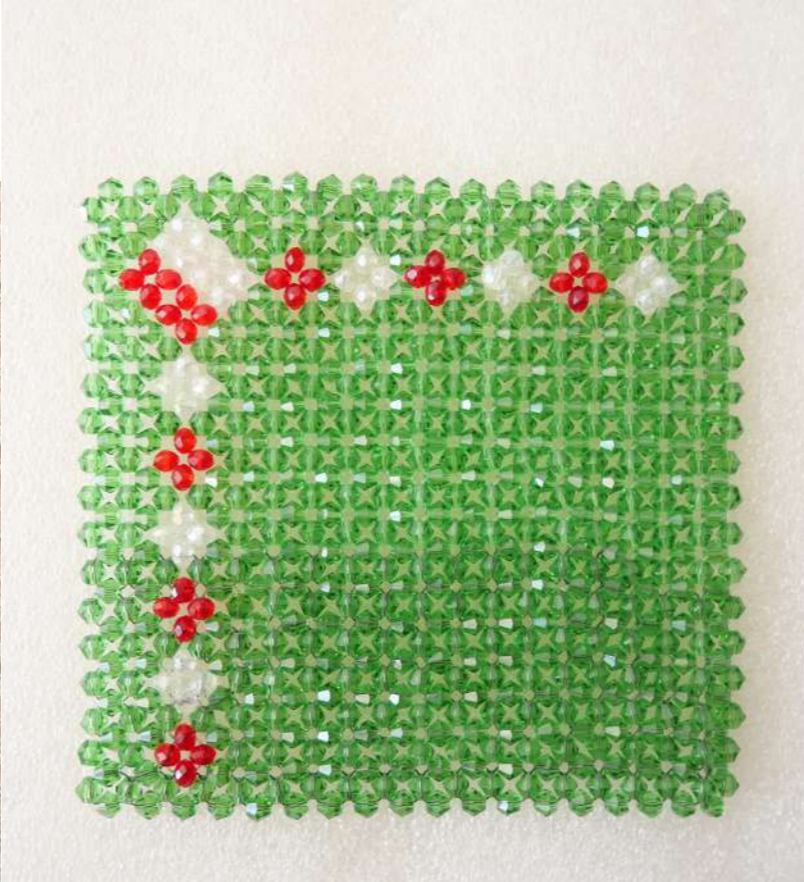


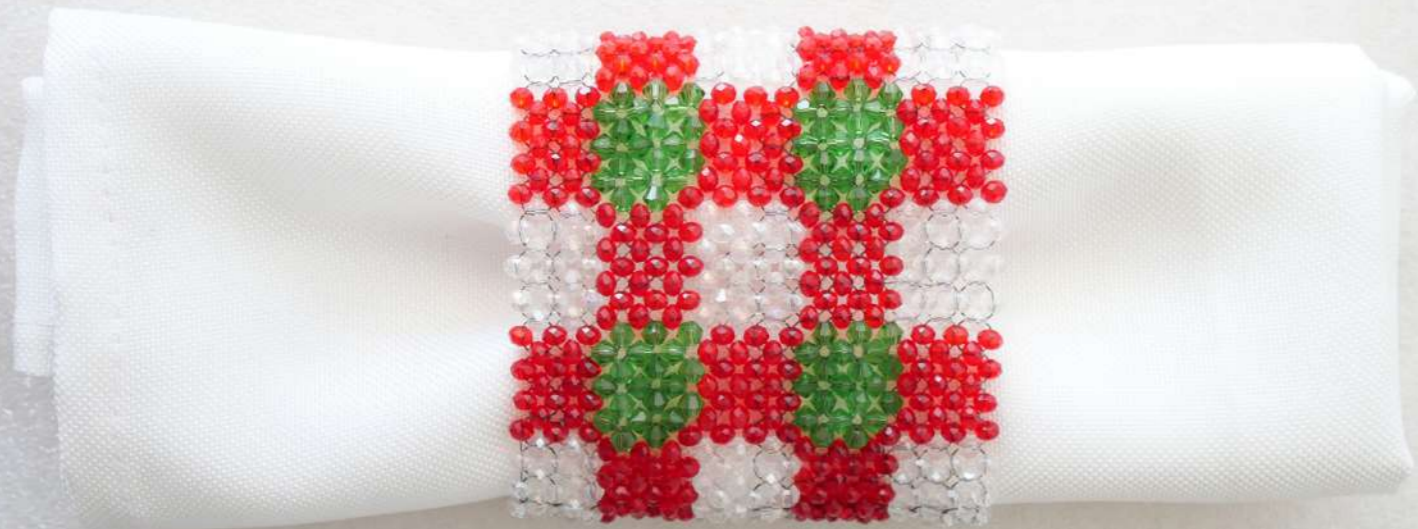


Afghan *beadwork*

Afghan artisans are known for their heavily beaded bodices on traditional clothing. These heritage artisans were only too eager to transfer their skills on modern home accessories for the world market. Stringing beads, one at a time, they work in pairs, each trusting their soul sister to adhere to design and deadline. The Skilling Circles of Afghanistan has no hierarchy. Each artisan: a mother, daughter, sister or wife has found her happy place in this fair trade initiative. It is indeed a conscious collective of cultural craftswomen.







Our products are handcrafted, one piece at a time. Therefore, no two products will ever be the same. Culturally crafted in a conflict zone where markets and materials are subject to unforeseen fluctuations, the minor variations must not be considered as product flaws, but rather a characteristics of an artisan's handwork as well as their perseverance to craft, despite it all.

[Contact us](#)

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◆ Rooted ◆ Fair-Wage ◆ Self-Run