“Enhancing Employability of Female Graduates in Information Technology (IT) Sector in Lahore”

Report of Consultative Workshop on “Opportunities and Challenges for Pakistani Women in IT Sector”

Dated: September 29, 2015

Venue: University of Management & Technology, Lahore

USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program
This project has been funded by the American People through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).
## Table of Contents

- **Executive Summary** .................................................................................................................. 3
- **Objective of Consultative Workshop:** ...................................................................................... 3
- **Proceedings** .............................................................................................................................. 3
- **Panel Discussion** ....................................................................................................................... 5
- **Findings of the consultation:** ................................................................................................... 8
- **Annexures** ............................................................................................................................... 9
- **Program Schedule** ................................................................................................................... 9
- **Pictures Gallery** ....................................................................................................................... 10
- **News Clipping** ......................................................................................................................... 13
Executive Summary

From its nascent beginnings in the late 1980s, Pakistan’s Information Technology (IT) Industry today enjoys a global share of US$ 2.8 billion, with current growth rates indicating that the industry will exceed the 11 billion USD mark within the next 05 years. The sector comprises of around 1500 companies, with most of them growing in excess of 30% each year, and provides direct employment to around 300,000 people and indirect employment to another 50-100,000. Needless to say, Pakistan’s technology scene is booming, and is poised to achieve all that in a decade which other sectors and countries can only hope to achieve in 15-20 years. These facts and figures are encouraging, what is somewhat worrying is the fact that like most other sectors in the country, this one has also become primarily male dominated. In a research carried out by Pakistan Software House Association for IT and ITES (PASHA) titled, ‘Pakistani Women in Technology’, it came forward that women account for 14% of the IT workforce, of which 37% are at the mid-career level while 13% are in Senior Management positions.

Consultative workshop was arranged at UMT to share the project design and current progress of the project with all stakeholders. It was also the objective of the workshop that the project implementation may be improved in the light of suggestions of the participants and how to overcome/reduce the challenges of the project. How to enhance the female’s employability in IT sector and how to encourage and motivate IT sector to provide space for females to join this sector and feel comfortable with work at software houses.

In this consultative workshop participants gave very useful suggestions, it was discussed that female’s employability can be enhanced with taking some important steps like; minimize the gap between supply and demand, enhance the coordination between universities/colleges and IT sector, taking steps for syllabus improvement as per market demand. During this workshop participants said that careers counseling of students is very important as many of the students don’t know about their interest in study and profession and they do not chose the right courses/field/profession, so the career counseling must be in practice and started from college level.

Objective of Consultative Workshop:
The objective of the workshop are given as under:
- To share the project design and objectives with the IT Institutes and IT Companies
- To share the opportunities and challenges that women faces in IT sector
- To identify the new IT companies/software houses for the program
- Share the progress and challenges with the stakeholders

Session # 1
Proceedings
Mr. Abid Hussain Gill Chief Executive Officer, Sanjh Preet Organization welcomed the participants and also brief the participants on the work of organization. He also discussed the project objectives, targets and scope of work and emphasized on the need to bring women forward and let them play the vital role in nation development. By sharing the study of PASHA (Pakistan Software Houses Association) he discussed in detail the need of women engagement in IT sector. He requested the stakeholders to share their experiences during the implementation of the project so that these can be part of the knowledge that the project would generate. And the findings of the project would lead us in identifying the grey areas by bridging these we can enhance the number of women in IT sector.
On behalf of the UMT management Ms. Madiha Javed formally welcomed the participants and as IT person shared her experiences how she faced difficulties while doing job in IT companies. She appreciate the efforts of Sanjh Preet and SGAFP in highlighting the very vital issue of IT sector.

After the opening remarks project design, objectives, targets and progress was shared by M. Rashid Aziz, Project Coordinator. The presentation was started with the introduction of Sanjh Preet Organization after that below areas were covered;

Project Design

This project was designed for 120 female IT graduates to link them with IT companies through a 3 months internship program.

Project target

- Placing 120 female graduates as internees in 10 IT companies; and
- Ensuring regular employment of high performers at same companies
- Facilitating creation of a gender friendly environment in 10 IT Companies

Implementation strategy

- For the implementation of the project the MoUs with software houses/ IT companies was signed
- Internees were selected through advertisement and proper set criterion
- Internees were interviewed before the placement in any software house

Project Progress

- Project launching ceremony organized in which all the relevant stakeholder participated.
- Individual and joint meetings were conducted with IT companies for the sharing of project objectives 10 software houses were selected and MoUs were signed
- 60 internees were placed in selected IT companies after scrutinized against the set criteria;
- In order to conduct the gender assessment a consultant was taken on board through a competitive process and the gender assessment is in progress;
- For the video documentary media company was finalized, the media firm will develop the video documentary of the project

Challenges of implementation

During the implementation of the project challenges faced which are as under:

- Dual challenges from interns as well as from software houses were faced like high expectations of IT companies from IT graduates as they demand all internees should be highly qualified and experienced
- Skills of the internees less compatible with software houses
- Long procedures by Software houses for the selection of Internees
- Drop out of internees from Software houses
- High expectations of interns about job timings and allowance as well
- Quality of IT education provided by universities
- Lack of communication skills/ confidence of internees

Question Answer Session and suggestions

At the end of the presentation a question answer session was started. During this session some suggestion from participants were also made as given under:
• Ms Ramesha one of the internee said that the parents of internees should be sensitized and orientated about our jobs/ internships because with their approval we may work.
• Mr. Haseeb Gill CEO from Total Software said that internees selection/ registration must be enhanced and; Skill level trainings of internees should be arranged as per market requirements before the placement
• Career counseling session should be arranged in universities/ colleges for IT graduates so that their interest can be judged and enhanced.

Session # 2
Panel Discussion

The second session designed to conduct the panel discussion on “Opportunities and Challenges for Pakistani Women in IT Sector”. The panelist were the representatives from Government Department, IT Companies and Institutes, Interns and Small Grans And Ambassador Fund Program…

List of Panelist

Moderator: Pervaiz Akhtar, Director Programs, Sanjh Preet Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.#</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Ms. Fozia Viqar</td>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>The Punjab Commission on the Status of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Mr. Muhammad Usman</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>The Punjab Commission on the Status of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Dr. Sohail Zafar Cheema</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Brainoids software house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Mr. Khizer Abbas Gillani</td>
<td>Field Operation Officer – Punjab Province</td>
<td>USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program (SGAFP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Ms. Madeha Javeed</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>IT Department, University of Management and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Ms. Noor Khaira</td>
<td>Internee</td>
<td>Xnitsolution software house</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions of Panel Discussion

1) How the Internees Drop Out can be reduced from software houses?

Answer by Dr. Sohail Zafar Cheema:
In the response of this question Dr. Sohail Zafar Cheema responded and termed it a major issue that is affecting the interest of other internees and the owner of the software house consider it a big challenge that Sanjh Preet and companies must address. He suggested the following solutions of the issue as given below;
• There should be the flexible timings for females in software houses and we can manage the timings
• Environment of software house should be comfortable for females
• Guidance should be provided to internees by software houses
2) **Why only 14% female IT graduates join the IT Sector, can you share the reasons?**

Ms. Madiha responded the question as below;

- The timings of the IT companies are not compatible to female employees and secondly the female have their household responsibilities hence it’s quite difficult to manage the job in IT companies;
- Secondly the career counseling for the IT graduates must be ensured by universities so that the students would have clear road of their careers;
- Besides this there is lack of practical work in IT institutes that also results in low performance of the female IT graduates. Hence Skill based trainings/coaching must be ensured
- Parent’s counseling should be the part of study and this must be ensured by universities

3) **What are the problems for internees in software house while doing internship**

Noor Khaira who has completed the IT degree in 2015 and joined one company as internee supported by the project. She shared the following problems of females in IT sector as given below;

- Timing of software houses is a major problem for female internees
- In some cases environment of the offices is also a challenge for females
- Very important hurdle/problem is the discouraging attitude from male employees, as their attitude is not supporting but depressing.
- In some cases male staff members do not guide properly and feel jealousy when a female performs well;
- And female also has to do domestic chores Responsibilities at home

4) **What is the Role of Commission that aspect also compels the women to quit the IT companies**

**Views by Ms. Fozia Viqar;**

Ms. Fozia Viqar, Chairperson the Commission on the Status of Women briefly introduced the mandate of the commission as statutory body to ensure the implementation of the policies and programs of the Punjab Government on promoting gender equality. She share the main objectives of the commission are as under;

- Empowerment of women
- Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women

She said that it’s very important to mainstream the females in every sector of life and also appreciated the idea on which Sanjh Preet is working. She counted the reasons of female less employability in IT sector;

1. There is a gap between supply and demand, the universities are not providing the demand based education. She said that this gap should be minimized by mutual understanding of universities and IT sector.
2. To reduce the timing issues there should be a flexibility by software houses for females regarding work at home.
3. It’s also important for all of us to change the mind set about females that they are not working well
4. Female should be vigilant about their role, tasks and rights as well
5. Ms. Fozia also said that harassment at workplace is also an issue so it’s the responsibility of all members to reduce these issues
6. The career counseling at college/university level should be ensured
7. The courses should be selected as per market demand by students
8. The women also must raise for their rights and should leave dependency on others, when we(women) would be doing our decision, the issues would automatically be reversed;
9. There is strong need to change the mindset, the women needs to realize their rights as no one can come to resolve their issues.

5) What are the main hurdles in female’s empowerment and what is the role of USAID in this regard?

Answer by Khizer Abbas Gillani

Mr. Khizer Abbas Gillani Field Operation Officer – Punjab Province USAID Small Grants and Ambassador’s Fund Program (SGAFP) said that USAID is working in Pakistan from many years. USAID is providing the trainings to females in different sectors to enhance the skills, opportunities for females. From these trainings female can get better opportunities. He said that USAID provided the skill based trainings to 94,000 females from different programs.

In relation to the hurdles for female’s empowerment in Pakistan he said that there are some major problems and hurdles for female like;

- The government departments are not supporting to females as per the need
- Parents attitude should be changed towards girls education as they think that the girls education is not important
- The law about female empowerment must be implemented and this is the responsibility of executives to ensure the implementation of law

Concluding Remarks

Mr. Muhammad Usman, Secretary, The Punjab Commission on the Status of Women, concluded the events by urging all the concerned to play their roles in empowering the women as without their participation society can make progress also Pakistan emphasized on the IT companies to provide more space for the women so that the taboo related to women in IT sector can be removed. At the end he also distributed the souvenir among the panelist of the program.
Findings of the consultation:

- 2-3 days Career counselling sessions for students especially for female students must be ensured by colleges/ universities;
- As there are certain IT companies shared that there are vacant position with them but we are not finding suitable candidates to fill these. Hence it’s evident that there is much space for employability of women is available that IT Institutes by improving their quality of IT education can bridge this gap;
- Taboos from software houses and female employees side need to break as female can perform more better as assumed to;
- The degree awarding institutes need to provide the market competitors degree courses and need to work on career counseling as current internship program is witness of low quality of the degree programs
- Students must be provided guidance regarding the selection of subjects/ courses
- Universities should offer up to date and market oriented courses
- Time flexibility should be provided to females by Software houses
- There is need to initiate the parents counseling before joining any sector particularly IT sector
- Attitude of male staff member should be encouraging for female employees
- The working environment of software houses need to make conducive like there should be day care centers, separate rooms/washrooms and transport may be arranged for female employees
- Replicate and enhance the scale of the project to other cities
Annexures

Program Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Session#1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 am to 11:05 am</td>
<td>Tilawat-e-Quraan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:05 am to 11:12 am</td>
<td>Welcome Remarks Abid Hussain Gill CEO Sanjh Preet Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:20 am to 11:50 am</td>
<td>Project Brief &amp; Question Answers Pervaiz Akhtar Director Program/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:50 am to 12:05</td>
<td>Conclusion Pervaiz Akhtar Director Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:05 am to 12:20 am</td>
<td>Guest Speakers from UMT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:20 am to 12:35 pm</td>
<td>Tea Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Session#2</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:35 pm to 01:05 pm</td>
<td>Panel Discussion Panelists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01:05 pm to 01:15 pm</td>
<td>Speech by representative of SGAFP Khizer Abbas Gillani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01:15 pm to 01:30 pm</td>
<td>Speech of Chief Guest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01:30 pm</td>
<td>Lunch and Closing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Opening Remarks by Ms. Madeha Javeed from UMT

Date: - 29<sup>th</sup>Sep, 2015 (Tuesday) Time: - 11:00 am to 01:30 pm
Pictures Gallery

Welcome Remarks by Mr. Abid Hussain Gill CEO Sanjh Preet Organization

Opening Remarks by Ms. Madeha Javed from UMT

Project Presentation by Mr. Muhammad Rashid Aziz Project Coordinator
Panelists: Dr. Sohail Zafar Cheema, Mr. Khizer Abbas Gilani, Ms. Fozia Viqar, Mr. Muhamman Usman, Ms. Madeha Javed, Ms. Noor Khaira

Moderator: Pervaiz Akhtar
Director Program
Opportunities and challenges for Pakistani women in IT sector

Sanjh Preet Organisation has organized a consultation workshop at UMT. This workshop was basically organized for the female IT graduates with the provision of internship to enhance the employability of women in IT sectors. Currently the situation of employability of women in IT sector is only 14%. Sanjh Preet Organisation is working with the collaboration of USAID under Small Grant Ambassador Programme (SGAFP) to enhance the employability for women in IT sector. This consultative workshop was attended by Abid Ehsan Gilli (CEO Sanjh Preet Organisation), M. Rashid Aza Project coordinator, Fervaiz Akhtar Director Program Sanjh Preet, Chairperson Punjab Commission Ms. Faiza Yapa, Sobill Zafar Cheema (CEO Brainoids software house), Mr. Khizar Abbas Gillani from SGAAP (USAID) and a large number of attendees.

Opportunities for women in IT sector

LAHORE (PB): Sanjh Preet Organisation has organised a consultation workshop at UMT. This workshop was basically organized for the female IT graduates with the provision of internship to enhance the employability of women in IT sector. Currently the situation of employability of women in IT sector is only 14%. Sanjh Preet Organisation is working with the collaboration of USAID under Small Grant Ambassador Programme (SGAFP) to enhance the employability for women in IT sector.
“Opportunities and Challenges for Pakistani Women in IT Sector”