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“Supporting Female Graduates’ Access into Information Technology (IT) Sector through Internship Programs”



January 2015- August 2016



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ACRONYMS

ASK	ASK Development (Pvt) ltd
AF	Aurat Foundation
CIMS	Central Institute of Management Sciences
ECI	Empowerment thru Creative Integration
GEP	Gender Equity Program
IT	Information Technology
IBIT	Institute of Business and Information Technology
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
PU	Punjab University
USAID	United States Agency of International Development (USAID)



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Aurat Foundation

Acknowledgment

ASK Development implemented project titled **“Supporting Female Graduates’ Access into Information Technology (IT) Sectors through Internship Programs”** under Gender Equity Program (GEP) of Aurat Foundation by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the District of Lahore.

We are pleased to acknowledge with thanks to project donor and AF team for helping us printing this report. We appreciate cooperation of Ms. Sumera Saleem, Grant Holder, and GEP-AF for her valuable guidance which enabled us to publish this report.

Faisal Shahzad Khan
Project Coordinator
ASK Development, Lahore
July 18, 2016



Executive Summary

The Information technology (IT) has emerged as a potent force in transforming social, economic, and political life in Pakistan. More and more concern is being shown about the impact of those left on the other side of the digital divide- the division between the information "haves" and "have nots" is more pronounced than ever. Most women in Pakistan remain confined to the pre-IT era that is far remote from the latest developments in the field of technology than the men whose poverty they share.

If access to and use of these technologies is directly linked to social and economic development, then it is imperative to ensure that women in Pakistan not only understand the significance of these technologies but use them. If not, they will become further marginalized from the mainstream process of social and economic development.

It is essential that gender issues be considered early in the process of the introduction of information technology in Pakistan so that gender concerns can be incorporated from the beginning and not as a corrective measure afterwards. IT can be an important tool in meeting women's basic needs and can provide the access to resources to lead women empowerment.

ASK Development was awarded sub grant for "Supporting Female Graduates' Access into Information Technology (IT) Sector through Internship Program", under grant cycle 7B of Gender Equity Program (GEP), being implemented by the support of the American People through United State Agency for International Development (USAID). The project aimed at bridging the gap between fresh IT graduates and the current job market through internship/jobs opportunities available in IT sector.

Being HR consulting and capacity building firm ASK has sufficient access to corporate sector to successfully implement the project. The fresh female IT graduates were successfully equipped with employable IT skills, knowledge on women-friendly environment and sexual harassment at workplaces and internship placement.

During the project performance period ASK Development completed tasks according to the work plan;

- recruitment of staff
- staff orientation on project deliverables
- participation in the consultative workshops by ECI for input to manuals
- organized five (5) 3 day trainings for 150 IT female Graduates from Superior University, CIMS and Global Institute of Management Science.

Project achievements are summarized below;

- Base line survey with 51 Female IT Graduates
- Grant Opening Meeting held in Punjab University which was attended by 138 Female IT Graduates along with other stakeholders
- 150 Female IT graduates trained on Specialized IT and employable skills
- Trainees were also educated Women Rights, Labor Laws, & Sexual Harassment Act & Promotion of Women Friendly Spaces.
- 198 Employers Oriented on Women Friendly Work places, labor Laws, & Sexual Harassment Act



- 120 IT graduates placed in different Institution/ Organizations.
- Developed Database of 150 Female IT Graduates.
- 120 Female IT Graduates received Stipend every month after starting their internships to till 6th months.
- 25 Female IT Graduates got employment after internship.
- 10 Female IT Graduates got employment during their internship.
- 18 Female IT Graduates started online jobs.
- 80 participants including 70 females and 10 males attended Project Closing meeting.

Followings were the challenges faced by ASK team during project in placement of IT Graduates:

- Long Recruitment procedures by Software houses for the selection of Internees.
- Dual challenges from interns as well as from software houses were faced like high expectations of IT companies and from IT graduates as they demand all internees to be highly qualified and experienced.
- Drop out of internees from Software houses.
- Lack of communication skills/ confidence of internees.
- High expectations of interns about job timings and allowance.
- Skills of the internees less compatible with software houses.
- Family influence on internees in selection of software house and work places

The course content was largely appreciated by the participants and software firms for covering important areas. A majority of the participants gave positive feedback regarding content and training methodology.

ASK hired trainers who were professionals, well-qualified and experienced in their relevant skills for IT Training program, Sexual Harassment and for employer orientation sessions.

All of the Methods, Tools, Equipment and Techniques used for the training were up-to-date. Project provided training Manuals & Kit to all the trainees. The Trainers managed to make the trainees learn through their elaborate presentations on the particular topic, individual and team exercises related to the subject, one-to-one group discussions, behavior modeling and role plays, enhancing their creativity by case-studies and allotting them small projects and last but not the least Group debriefs sessions.

The project is a learning for all stakeholders in their respective areas which will definitely help us all for future initiatives for similar propose. It is learned that female graduates are motivated for their economic well-being and productive role in market if they are professionally trained and guided. Whereas, software firms are ready to welcome to accommodates females provided we address their technical and soft skills requirements.



Introduction

ASK Development was awarded the project titled as **“Supporting Female Graduates’ Access into Information Technology (IT) Sector through Internship Program”**, under Gender Equity Program of Aurat Foundation supported by USAID. The project aimed at bridging the gap between fresh IT graduates and the current job market through internship/jobs opportunities available in IT sector. The project was successfully equipped IT graduates with employable IT skills along with the knowledge on women-friendly environment and sexual harassment at workplaces.

The project purpose was to ensure that women in Pakistan enter in the information age. Although the women are not so aware of the current technology trends, it is clear that there are many opportunities to improve the lives of women and their families. On the other hand, the project was also focused on the employers in both public and private sectors to orient themselves and their companies on a women-friendly environment, sexual harassment at workplaces, gender sensitization, and laws on women protection and to introduce women-friendly initiatives in their HR policies. It was also envisioned that the placement of IT internees on the internship for six months’ duration with both the public and private’s sectors will help them finding the best job opportunities in their concerned areas.

As a sub-grantee, ASK Development had worked on the initiatives and implemented the objectives of the project **“Supporting Female Graduates’ Access into Information Technology (IT) Sector through Internship Program”** in district Lahore.

It included: defining the baseline of potential companies where internees can be placed, mapping and selection of women beneficiaries (fresh graduates) from IT departments of universities and commendations on skills on which women internees should be trained.

The grantee also developed and pre-test training modules on IT employable skills that were identified in the baseline. Based on the qualifying the pre-test, specialized and extensive training on IT skills were conducted for the trainee graduates. These training were followed by workshops on women’s rights, labor laws, Sexual Harassment Act and promotion of women-friendly spaces for both graduates and potential employers.

After these training sessions, 120 IT graduates were provided the relevant entry points into the job market through placement on the internship for the duration of six months both in public and private sector entities available in the district. It was envisioned that the internship will help the internees in getting the job opportunities in their respective placement venues.

It was also hoped that the internees will be the agents for the establishment of women-friendly environment, sexual harassment at workplaces, gender sensitization and laws on women protection in all the organizations where the internees were placed.

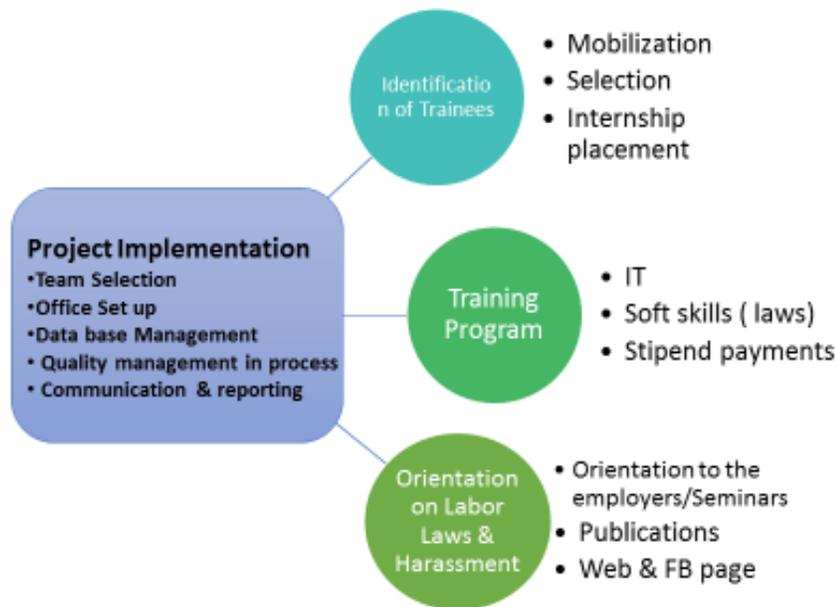


Implementation Methodology

The trainees selected for the IT Skills Training and Awareness Generating Sessions were all fresh IT graduates and all the Trainers hired for the purpose of training were well-qualified and experienced in their related skills. All of the Methods, Tools, Equipment and Techniques used for the training were up-to-date and every female was provided with her own training manual.

The Trainers managed to make the female trainees learn through their elaborate presentations on the particular topic, individual and team exercises related to the subject, one-to-one group discussions, behavior modeling and role plays, enhance their creativity by case-studies and allotting them small projects and last but not the least Group debriefs sessions.

As a sub-grantee, it was our responsibility to keep an eye on the Individual Action Plans that was to take the regular follow up and evaluate the training outcomes. After the training sessions were completed we provided the trainees Self-analysis questionnaires. With our and the trainers combined effort the learning sessions were successful and effective.





Activities of Project Deliverables

1. Grant Opening Meeting

ASK Development conducted Grant opening Meeting on 13th April 2015 at Institute of Business and Information Technology, University of the Punjab, Quaid-e-Azam Campus, Lahore.

The objective of this event was to bring on board all the relevant stakeholders to spread the message and explore avenues for IT internee's placements/jobs in their relevant sectors.



During remarks by guests & chief guest said they encourages fresh female IT graduates to take part in economic empowerment and also shared their thoughts on Gender Equity program and was very pleased with the efforts so far. They appreciated this program and extended the support to ensure that IT graduate's women can enter the information technology age.

Total participants 149 (male 11& Female 138) attended the event.

2. Base Line Survey

It was conducted in ASK Development office on May 2015.

The survey addressed the aspects of curriculum market compatibility, needs of IT skills, capacity on other than IT skills, importance of knowing and application of women rights laws, problems of women employment, prospective areas of employment for women graduates in particular.

It has been found from the data that 97% of the employers have shown interest to spare a representative to attend the one-day orientation session on gender friendly policies, women rights and sexual harassment law act. Almost all respondents have said that they have women friendly work environment and the policies exists in their organization to support women friendly environment.

51 female IT graduates were participated in this survey.

Coordination Meetings with ECI

Two Meeting with ECI were conducted on **14th July** and **08, Sep2015** in Pak Continental hotel& at ECI office Islamabad. In meeting it was discussed, as a pretesting exercise, workshop was conducted with IT Graduates, IT Grants-partners and GEP officials. Following modules were finalized.

- Graphic Desinging-04 Days
- Mobile App-03 Days
- Web Development-03 Days



- Life skills-01 Day
 - Networking-01 Day
- i. It was decided that daily timing will be 06-08 Hrs. daily.
 - ii. As mentioned by Mr. Abbas, sub-grants partners can make additions to the final module, as per their area’s requirement, in close consultation with their specific grant holders.
 - iii. It was decided, that Modules finalization must be done by 20th September and new revised versions must be shared with all the stakeholders by 21st of September.
 - iv. Ms. Sumera, GEP shared that tentative work plan for the months of October are to be shared with Grant Holders before Eid, positively on 22nd September.
 - v. Parallel trainings can be conducted to meet the deadline of the project,
 - vi. It was decided to sign MOUs with IT Organization for the placement of students in relevant department before training of IT Graduates.
 - vii. Pre-test and finalization of contents for development IT Employable Skills module were finalized with the coordination of all stake holders’ grantee and sub grantee.



Date	Venue	No. of female	No. of Male	Total Participants
14-07-2015	Pak Continental hotel	3	9	12
08-09-2015	ECI Office Islamabad	11	5	16

3. Specialized training for trainee IT Graduate

ASK Development conducted 4 training batches in the month of November 2015 and the 5th batch was held on March 2016 respectively. These training programs conducted at Superior University, CIMS & Global Institute of Management Science’s

Specialized IT Training			
S#	Date	Venue	Total Participants (M &F)
1	07-Nov-15 to 23-Nov-15	Superior University	30
2	10-Nov-15 to 26-Nov-15	Superior University	30
3	07-Nov-15 to 23-Nov-15	CIMS	30
4	13-Nov-15 to 30-Nov-15	CIMS	30
5	04-Mar-16 to 22-Mar-16	Global Institute	35

The objective of specialized training for IT graduates was to ensure the trainees to equip with new technologies as it is supposed that women had little contact with new technologies. Awareness was created among the participants on women’s rights, labor laws and it encouraged gender equality



values. The training workshop facilitated female graduates to become a resource person and effective advocates and defenders of women’s rights and gender mainstreaming.

155 female IT Graduates of different universities participated in training program.



4. Training Workshops on Women Rights, Labor Laws, & Sexual Harassment Act & Promotion of Women Friendly Spaces for 155 Students

ASK Development arranged training workshops in same venues on women empowerment. Different sessions on women rights, Labor laws, sexual harassment & Promotion of women friendly spaces were

S#	Date	Venue	Total Participants (M &F)
1	24-Nov-15 to 26-Nov-15	Superior University	30
2	27-Nov-15 to 29-Nov-15	Superior University	30
3	27-Nov-15 to 30-Nov-15	CIMS	30
4	24-Nov-15 to 26-Nov-15	CIMS	30
5	01-Mar-16 to 03-Mar-16	Global Institute	35

arranged by seasoned & renowned Resource persons. They shared their knowledge with the trainees to equip them with information so that the females can live as an empowered member of the society.

The workshops were organized in every batch. Training was given to 155 female IT Graduates selected from different universities at different venues and after successfully completing the training they were placed to different public and private organizations.



Sumaira Amir got an opportunity to be trained in Employable IT Skills and Sexual Harassment under the Gender Equity Program (GEP) Project. Sumaira describes her experience of this training to be very palatable and satisfactory. She said, "I believe that "Goal without a plan is just a wish" and adding this training into my plans was one of the best decisions of my life.

The best decisions of my life.



5. Workshops to orientate Employers on Women Friendly Work places, labor Laws, & Sexual Harassment Act



ASK Development arranged 7 orientation workshops on Women Friendly Work places, labor Laws, & Sexual Harassment Act for employers of different organizations (Software houses, Telecom, IT industries etc.) from November 2015 to May 2016.

ASK Development gave the presentations on sexual harassment, Woman Rights & Labor Law in all the employers meetings. The impacts of these sessions were very productive. The purpose of this workshop was to convince the employers to amend their HR policies in accordance with Gender equity and women law.

All participants shared their views how they deal such case & how they make policies on woman-friendly environment & harassment. All the stakeholders agree to amend their policies regarding women’s friendly spaces in workplaces.

Around 200 organization’s HR representatives participated in these workshops.



S#	Date	Venue	Total Participants (M &F)
1	27-Nov-2015	Park Lane	15
2	17-Dec-2015	Oasis	13
3	23- Jan-2016	Savoy	09
4	30-Jan-2016	ASK Development	07
5	11-Feb-2016	Pearl Continental	64
6	08-March-2016	Pearl Continental	20
7	24-May-2016	Royal Palm	(F: 40&M:30) 70

Stipend of 120 IT interneees

After the completion of training program, ASK development placed these trainees in different organizations for internship for six months. All the females completed their six-month internship successfully. ASK paid their stipend at the end of every month.



Grant Closing Meeting

ASK Development organized Grant closing meeting at flattie’s hotel on 13th July 2016 for successful completion of this project. All the female internees, stake holders, employers, representative from Aurat foundation and ASK Development project team in this project titled “Supporting Females IT Graduates’ Access into Information Technology through Internship Program” attend this program.



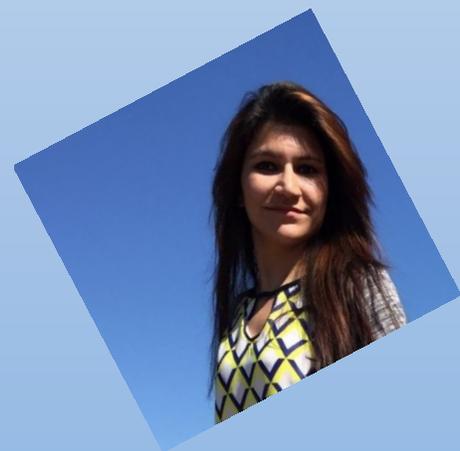
The objective of this meeting was to celebrate the successful completion and share the astonishing impact of this project in society.



The Honorable chief guest, C.E.O of ASK and others share their remarks on achieved goals and valuable impact of this project. Internees who got jobs during their internships also shared their success stories. Certificates and laptop bags distributes to all the female’s internees for their valuable contribution. Souvenir’s given to all the guests and chief guest.

80 participants including 70 females and 10 males attend this meeting.

I am Humera Aslam; I recently completed my master’s Degree from Superior University. When my study was about to be completed I was worried like other students how I am going to get a good job, after visiting couple of software houses I found it’s not easy to get a job. Some software houses were hardly entertaining internship which was not paid. Then one day I was contacted from my university and I found out about USAID, they were offering training of 15 days after that they were making sure that females can get good job in different fields and they were also Offering paid internship, That was all I was looking for that time without any due I availed that option .USAID paid me for one month when I was working as an intern Then one job lead to another I got an offer from another software house now I am working as an SEO and I am very happy and I am really very grateful to USAID who helped me chased my dream.



Activities of ACHIEVEMENTS

Deliverables	Activities	Outcomes
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Grant Opening Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing Agenda and session Plan • Preparing Presentation • Invitation to relevant stakeholders • Logistics arrangement • Organization and Management of grant opening meeting • Press Release 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speakers and participants appreciated the event and were very pleased with this project. • They appreciated the efforts to provide access of fresh IT graduates into Information Technology Sector through internship program
Base Line Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing the survey tool • Sampling • Logistics • Conducting survey • Identification of women internees to be trained • Preparation of survey report 	<p>According to data, it is evident that both employers and proposed IT graduates believes following employable IT Skills are most important to be trained on to get a job in IT Sector;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Concepts of IT & Its customization for market needs 2. MS office Skills 3. Web & Software Skills
Development of Training Manuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination with ECI for preparation of the manual • Travel for meetings with ECI • Provide substantial support to ECI in preparing Training Manual 	<p>Participated in the consultative workshops by ECI and input has been provided on the basis of survey findings</p>
Development & Pre Testing of Training Modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pre-testing exercise on the basis of baseline survey to develop training module for the IT employable skills • Refining & Selection of content for training module of IT skills in coordination with ECI 	<p>After getting baseline result training module and content were discussed and arranged in meeting with ECI. Content of module for both IT skills and also for soft skills were selected with the coordination of stake holders</p>
Specialized Trainings for Trainee IT Graduates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of agenda and session plan • Development of presentations with the help of pre-testing exercise • Logistics • 5 specialized trainings for 120 IT graduates (each training for 3 weeks) • Preparing the report 	<p>Tentative schedule was shared and approved by Grant holder. Modules, presentations were finalized. 5 batches have been completed successfully</p>
Training Workshops on Women Rights, Labor Laws, & Sexual Harassment Act & Promotion of Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing agenda and session plan • Identification of participants • Preparing presentations • Logistics • 5 specialized trainings for 120 IT graduates (each training for 3 days) • Preparing report 	<p>5 workshops have been conducted for 5 batches each and delivered comprehensively</p>



Friendly Spaces for 120 Students.		
Workshops to orientate Employers on Women Friendly Work places, labor Laws, & Sexual Harassment Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda preparation • Identification of participants • Development of session Plan and Preparation of presentations • Logistic arrangement for workshops • Organization of training 7 workshops • Preparing workshops reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 workshops have been successfully completed with different organizations C.E. O's, Head of departments and HR Managers. • It was discussed that all the organizations agrees change their departmental policies according to labor laws
Placement of trainees		100% of trainees were placed during internship period in different organizations/ Software Houses
Development of Database	Database designing and development Updating throughout the project for keeping the record of 120 IT interneers and their employment status	Database updated on quarter basis and completed successfully till 5 th quarter
Stipend for IT Interneers	Payment of Rs. 6000 (per person per month) stipend to 120 IT interneers for 6 months	Stipend was issued at the end of every month after starting their internships to till 6 th month to each female
Marketing and Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generating ideas of brochures, leaflets and generating email linkages. • Involving the stakeholders for this particular activity • Engagement of employers through multiple initiatives for the placement of the interneers • Approval and printing • Dissemination of brochures and leaflets 	Marketing & Branding of all activities has been completed according to need
One Grant Closing Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda Development • Invitation to relevant stakeholders • Logistics arrangement • Organizing of grant closing meeting • Preparing event report • Press release 	Agenda was prepare by ASK and approved by AF. Invitation send to all stake holders Meeting was successfully accomplished

Deliverable



Deliverable No.	Activity	Date / Week	Venue	Beneficiaries(Male & Female) Direct	Total
2.1	Grant Opening Meeting	April 13, 2015	Punjab University	Male : 11 & Female: 138	149
2.2	Base Line Survey	May, 2015	ASK Development	Female: 120	120
2.3	Coordination Meeting with ECI	September 08, 2015 July 14, 2015	PC Hotel ECI Office, Islamabad	Male: 05 & Female: 11 Male: 09 & Female: 05	30
2.5	Specialized Trainings for Trainee IT Graduates	1. November 7, 2015 to November 23, 2015 2. November 10, 2015 to November 26, 2015 3. November 13, 2015 to November 26, 2015 4. November 13, 2015 to November 30, 2015 5. March 4, 2015 to March 23, 2015	1. Superior University 2. CIMS 3. Global College	Male : 00 & Female 150	150
2.6	Training Workshops on Women Rights, Labor Laws, & Sexual Harassment Act & Promotion of Women Friendly Spaces for 120 Students.	1. November 24, 2015 to November 26, 2015 2. November 27, 2015 to November 29, 2015 3. November 27, 2015 to November 30, 2015 4. November 24, 2015 to November 26, 2015 5. March 01, 2016 to March 03, 2016	1. Superior University 2. CIMS 3. Global College	Male : 00 & Female 150	150
2.7	Workshops to orientate	1. November 27, 2015	1. Park Lane, Hotel 2. OASIS	Male 104 & Female 94	198



	Employers on Women Friendly Work places, labor Laws, & Sexual Harassment Act	2. December 17, 2015 3. January 23, 2016 4. January 30, 2016 5. February 11, 2016 6. March 08, 2016 7. May 05, 2016	3. SAVOYA Hot 4. ASK Development 5. Pearl Continental 6. Pearl Continental 7. Royal Palm		
2.9	Stipend of 120 IT internees	December 2015 to July 2015	ASK Development	Female 120	120
2.12	Grant Closing Meeting	July 13, 2016	Flattie's Hotel	Female 68, Male 10	78

IEC Material Details

Sr #	IEC material	Total Quantity (Printed)	Total Disseminated (mention # and list of receivers)
1	Handbook on 01 day training on networking	170	For Females IT Graduate & Trainers
2	Handbook on 01 day training on soft skills	170	For Females IT Graduate & Trainers
3	Handbook on 03 day training on android development	170	For Females IT Graduate & Trainers
4	Handbook on 03 day training on word press	170	For Females IT Graduate & Trainers
5	Handbook on 03 day training on web development	170	For Females IT Graduate & Trainers
6	Handbook on 04 day training on graphic designing	170	For Females IT Graduate & Trainers
7	Handbook on 01 day orientation of employers on gender, sexual harassment, labor laws and women empowerment	170	For Females IT Graduate & Trainers
8	Handbook on 03 day training on gender, sexual harassment, labor laws and women empowerment	170	For Females IT Graduate & Trainers

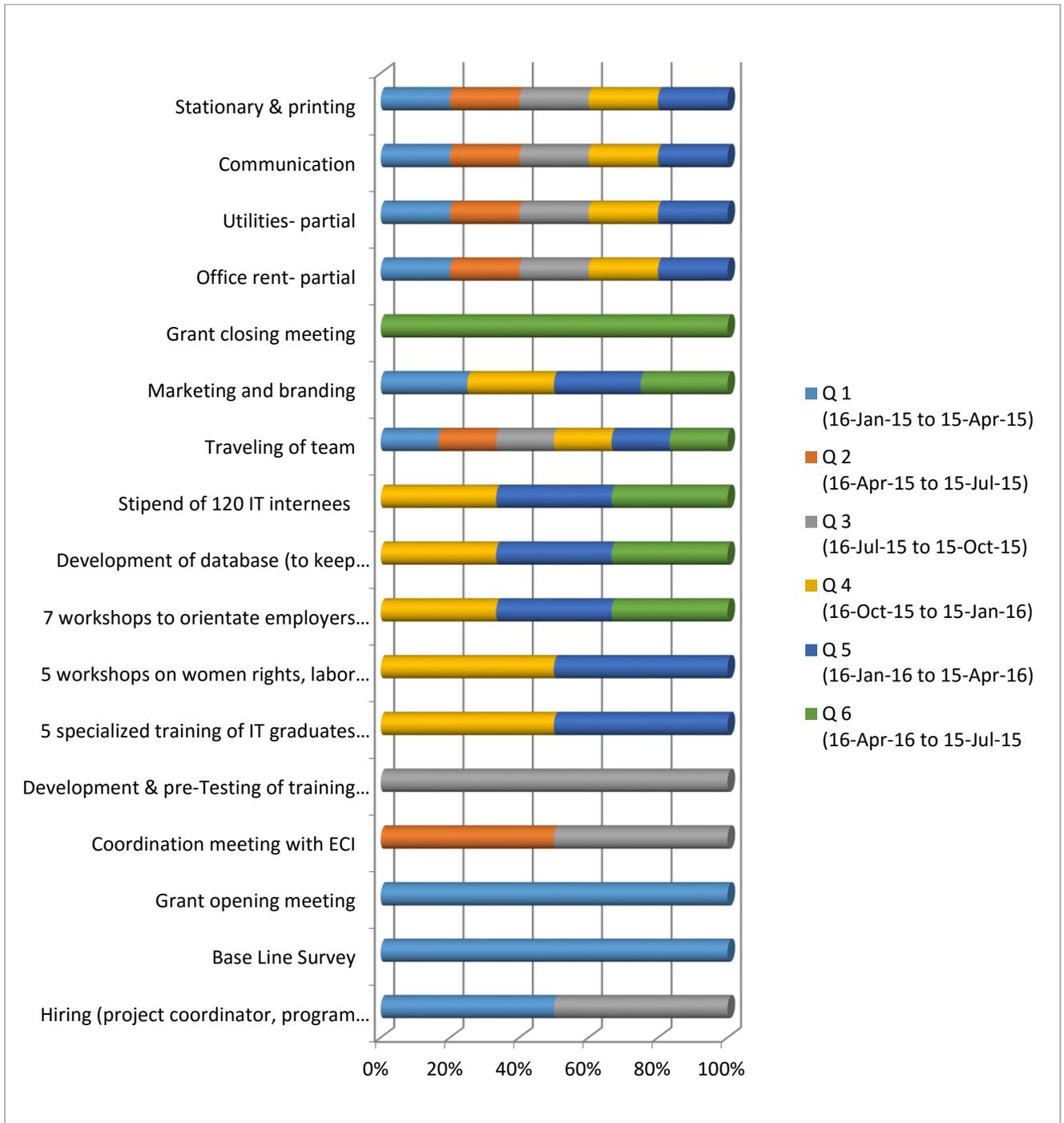


Quarter wise analysis

Activity	Q 1 (16-Jan-15 to 15-Apr-15)	Q 2 (16-Apr-15 to 15-Jul-15)	Q 3 (16-Jul-15 to 15-Oct-15)	Q 4 (16-Oct-15 to 15-Jan-16)	Q 5 (16-Jan-16 to 15-Apr-16)	Q 6 (16-Apr-16 to 15-Jul-15)	Status
Hiring (project coordinator, program officer, A&F officer)							Completed
Base Line Survey							Completed
Grant opening meeting							Completed
Coordination meeting with ECI							Completed
Development & pre-Testing of training module on IT employable skills							Completed
5 specialized training of IT graduates (each training consisting of 30 participants for 3 weeks)							Completed
5 workshops on women rights, labor laws, sexual harassment & promotion of women friendly workplaces for duration of 3 days							Completed
7 workshops to orientate employers on women friendly workplaces, labor laws & sexual harassment act							Completed
Development of database (to keep track of the internee's and their employment status)							Completed
Stipend of 120 IT internees							Completed
Traveling of team							Completed
Marketing and branding							Completed
Grant closing meeting							Completed
Office rent- partial							Completed
Utilities- partial							Completed
Communication							Completed
Stationary & printing							Completed



Graphical Demonstration of Quarter wise Activities





Financial Overview

Sr. #	Description	Amount Allocated	Amount consumed	Remaining
1.0	Personnel Cost			
1.1	Staff Salaries	1,575,000	1,575,000	-
2.0	Program Cost	7,010,000	5,980,514	1,029,486

These are the employers list that has collaboration with us for placing the trainees as interns in their organization for the period of six (6) months:

Placement of Internees

Sr#	Employer Name	Organization	No. of internees
1	Mr.Iftikhar Anjum	Central Institute of Management sciences (CIMS)	29
2	Mr.UmerGhouri	Mind works systems	20
3	Ms. SaminaGulzar	Folk Market	16
4	Mr. Sheraz Cheema	Concept Bux	6
5	Ms. Fariha	Ashtex Solutions	1
6	M. Akhter	Asser Soft	1
7	Mr. Sher Dil	Global Institute of computer Science	30
8	Mr. Farooq A. Randhawa	HRCE Pvt Ltd	1
9	Mr. Amir	IT Solutions	2
10	Ms. Amina	SA Developers	10
11	Ms. Madiha	Softronix	2
12	Mr. Umer	Vision Plus	2



Impact of Training

The purpose of the training, which was to improve the knowledge, attitude and skill of trainees, was successfully achieved. As our mission was to provide the platform to the female IT graduates to enter the job market through the internship program, we trained the trainees on the perspective that they can play the important role in attaining the organization's objectives where they will work as an intern and our mission is fruitfully accomplished. Training was an intended effort with proper planning to smooth the progress of trainees learning of competencies that are related to her job and they did it quite well. Through this training project, we were able to make many organizations realize that this training is more like an investment of the organization. This Training has played a vital role in bridging the gap that exists between knowledge and skills required for the job and trainees own caliber. It was merely through the efforts of this project that the females became the part of a systematic course of training in which essential professional knowledge related to their field and need was conveyed, skills were developed and attitudes were adjusted to the work situation as well as the environment.

Fariya*, 22, got an opportunity to be trained in Employable IT Skills and Sexual Harassment under the Gender Equity Program (GEP) Project "Supporting female graduate's access into Information Technology (IT) sectors through internship programs" after she had completed her Bachelors in Engineering in August 2015. She avails the opportunity because it was the best chance for her to overcome her disappointment caused by the current job market.



Fariya describes her experience of this training to be very palatable and satisfactory. She said, "I believe that "Goal without a plan is just a wish" and adding this training into my plans was one of the best decisions of my life. I can affirm that this training integrally equipped IT graduates not only with employable IT skills but along with the comprehensive knowledge of a women-friendly environment, sexual harassment at workplaces, gender sensitization and laws on women protection by Professional Trainers. It was indeed an appreciable step because it provided many women graduates to start a respectable career as well as guide them how to create an opportunity for themselves".

During training, Fariya learnt all the contents of training that were Graphic designing, Web development with the help of word press, Android Development, Networking & Troubleshooting, Soft Skills efficiently. She was confident that she also has an adequate knowledge of women rights and labor laws after the coaching. The project implementer as per the project objectives searched for many suitable organizations and was able to conduct an interview for an internship for her at one the top organizations in the city. Based on her prior education, confidence and her eagerness to learn, she was offered paid internship at the company.

Fariya is now successfully working in a business consultancy firm for 4 months. She practiced all the skills she learnt in the training and also managed to start the part-time work on her own along with the internship. She is focused and striving more and more every passing day to achieve her career goals. According to her: "Every person just needs to work hard and focus on creating the opportunities for him remembering that future can be better than present and you have the power to do so".



Conclusion

Project Challenges and mitigation strategies:

Followings were the challenges faced by ASK Development after completing the project and final placement of IT Graduates:

- i. Long Recruitment procedures by Software houses for the selection of Internees
- ii. 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 to be highly qualified and experienced
- iii. Drop out of internees from Software houses
- iv. Lack of communication skills/ confidence of internees
- v. High expectations of interns about job timings and allowance as well
- vi. Skills of the internees less compatible with software houses

The socio-economic empowerment of women is also reflected in the development program of the country. There is an emerging need to improve women status which should start with economic empowerment. Empowerment is a concept that is of equal importance to both men and women. It is idea of sharing power, of truly giving it away. Empowerment is the process through which individual gain efficiency, defined as the degree to which an individual perceives that they control their environment. The empowerment of women involves four interrelated and mutually reinforcing components:

- (1) Collective awareness and capacity building and skill development,
- (2) Participation and greater control,
- (3) Decision making power and
- (4) Action to bring about gender equality

Way forward/ sustainability: New issues have to be addressed to effect social and economic progress of our nation. The most important one is women's empowerment through self-help groups. USAID have undoubtedly begun to make a significant contribution in poverty alleviation and empowerment of poor, especially women in rural areas of our country. Women's contributions are vital and their empowerment would hasten the pace of social development. Investing in women's capabilities and empowering them to



achieve their choices and opportunities is the definite way to contribute to the economic growth and the overall development.

Lesson learnt: Gender equality is central theme to realizing Millennium development goals. Gender equality will not only empower woman to overcome poverty but also their children, families, communities and countries. Thus, gender equality produces a double dividend benefits to both women and children. However, elimination gender discrimination and empowering women will require enhancing women's influence in the key decisions that save their lives. Women themselves are the most important catalyst for change. However, Gender equality leading to increased work opportunities, enhanced capacity for livelihood development, labor rights to women, enhanced social protection and overall increasing voice can enable women to participate equally in productive employment.