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**“Opportunities and Challenges  
for Pakistani Women in IT Sector”**

“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).



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## 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.



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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:



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- 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 Grants And Ambassador Fund Program...

#### List of Panelist

**Moderator:** Pervaiz Akhtar, Director Programs, Sanjh Preet Organization

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

#### 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



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**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 its 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





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5. Ms. Fozia also said that harassment at work place 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.



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## 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 findings suitable candidates to fill these. Hence its 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





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## Annexures

### Program Schedule

### Program Schedule

**“Enhancing Employability of Women Graduates in Information Technology (IT) Sector”**

#### Time

#### Description

#### Session#1

11:00 am to 11:05 am	Tilawat-e-Quraan	Internee
11:05 am to 11:12 am	Welcome Remarks	Abid Hussain Gill CEO Sanjh Preet Organization
Opening Remarks by <b>Ms. Madeha Javeed from UMT</b>		
	UMI	
11:20 am to 11:50 am	Project Brief & Question Answers	Pervaiz Akhtar Director Program/ M. Rashid Aziz Project Coordinator
11:50 am to 12:05	Conclusion	Pervaiz Akhtar Director Program
12:05 am to 12:20 am	Guest Speakers from UMT	
12:20 am to 12:35 pm	Tea Break	

#### Session#2

12:35 pm to 01:05 pm	Panel Discussion	Panelists
01:05 pm to 01:15 pm	Speech by representative of SGAFP	Khizer Abbas Gillani
01:15 pm to 01:30 pm	Speech of Chief Guest	
01:30 pm	Lunch and Closing	

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



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## Pictures Gallery



Welcome Remarks by **Mr. Abid Hussain Gill** CEO Sanj Preet Organization



Opening Remarks by **Ms. Madeha Javed** from UMT



Project Presentation by **Mr. Muhammad Rashid Aziz** Project Coordinator



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**Question Answer Session**





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## "Opportunities and Challenges for Pakistani Women in IT Sector"



**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







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## News Clipping



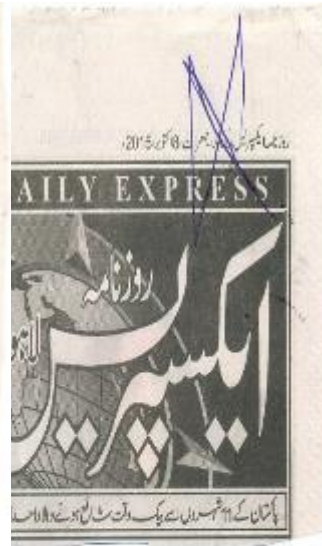




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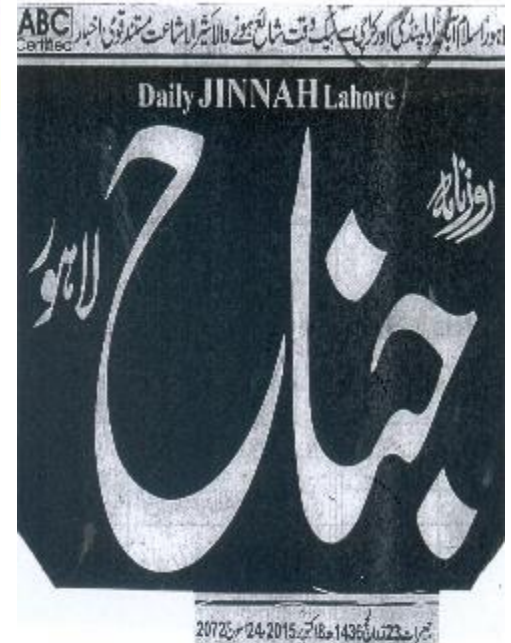


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**یو ایس ایس میں سانجھ پریت آرگنائزیشن کے زیر اہتمام مدد کشاپ**  
**آئی ٹی سکٹر میں کام کرنے والی خواتین کی تعداد بہت کم، برصغیر کی ضرورت ہے فوری اقدام**

اسلام آباد (خصوصی رپورٹر) یو ایس ایس میں سانجھ پریت آرگنائزیشن نے ایک مشاورتی ورکشاپ کا اہتمام کیا۔ اس مشاورتی ورکشاپ کو مقصد رکھنے کا بنیادی مقصد آئی ٹی سکٹر میں خواتین کی آئی ٹی سکٹر میں روزگار کے مواقع برعکس ہے اور ان کو اعزیز شب فراہم کرنا ہے۔ سانجھ پریت آرگنائزیشن نے ایس ایس کے خواتین سے ملازمت پر کام کے تحت آئی ٹی سکٹر میں خواتین کیلئے روزگار برعکس ہے لے کام کر رہی ہے۔ آئی ٹی سکٹر میں کام کرنے والی خواتین کی تعداد بہت کم ہے اس کو برعکس ہے لے کام کر رہی ہے۔



**یو ایس ایس میں سانجھ پریت آرگنائزیشن کی مشاورتی ورکشاپ**  
**یو ایس ایس میں سانجھ پریت آرگنائزیشن کی مشاورتی ورکشاپ**

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## روزنامہ نوائے وقت لاہور۔ راولپنڈی/اسلام آباد۔ ملتان۔ کراچی جمعرات 23/ ذی الحج، 1436ھ / 8 اکتوبر 2015ء



عابد حسین گل، ایم راشد عزیز، پرویز اختر، محترمہ فوزیہ وقار، سمیل ظفر چیمہ، عباس گیلانی، مدیحہ جاوید مشاورتی ورک شاپ سے خطاب کر رہے ہیں

**آئی ٹی سیکٹر میں خواتین کیلئے  
چیلنج اور مواقع موجود ہیں**

ہے۔ سانجھ پریٹ آرگنائزیشن یو ایس ایڈ کے تعاون سے سال گرانٹ پروگرام کے تحت آئی ٹی سیکٹر میں خواتین کیلئے روزگار بڑھانے کیلئے کام کر رہی ہے۔ مشاورتی ورک شاپ میں سانجھ پریٹ آرگنائزیشن کے سی ای او عابد حسین گل، ایم راشد عزیز، پرویز اختر، فوزیہ وقار، سمیل ظفر چیمہ، عابد حسین گیلانی اور خواتین کی بڑی تعداد نے شرکت کی۔ فوزیہ وقار نے کہا کہ آئی ٹی سیکٹر میں خواتین کیلئے چیلنج اور مواقع موجود ہیں۔

لاہور (پ ر) یو ایس ایڈ میں سانجھ پریٹ آرگنائزیشن نے ایک مشاورتی ورک شاپ کا اہتمام کیا۔ مشاورتی ورک شاپ کو منعقد کرنے کا بنیادی مقصد آئی ٹی سیکٹر میں خواتین کیلئے آئی ٹی سیکٹر میں روزگار کے مواقع بڑھانے اور ان کو انٹرنیٹ فراہم کرنا

روزنامہ دنیا لاہور، جمعرات 8 اکتوبر 2015ء



روزنامہ ایکسپریس لاہور، جمعرات 8 اکتوبر 2015ء



**مشاورتی ورک شاپ کا اہتمام**

لاہور (شاف رپورٹر) یو ایس ایڈ میں سانجھ پریٹ آرگنائزیشن نے ایک مشاورتی ورک شاپ کا اہتمام کیا۔ اس مشاورتی ورک شاپ کو منعقد کرنے کا بنیادی مقصد آئی ٹی سیکٹر میں خواتین کیلئے آئی ٹی سیکٹر میں روزگار بڑھانے اور (صفحہ 5) (5 اکتوبر 2015ء)

ان کو انٹرنیٹ فراہم کرنا ہے۔ سانجھ پریٹ آرگنائزیشن یو ایس ایڈ کے تعاون سے سال گرانٹ پروگرام کے تحت آئی ٹی سیکٹر میں خواتین کیلئے روزگار بڑھانے کیلئے کام کر رہی ہے۔



فوزیہ وقار، عابد حسین گل، ایم راشد عزیز، مدیحہ جاوید، سمیل ظفر چیمہ، عابد حسین گیلانی اور خواتین کی بڑی تعداد نے شرکت کی۔ فوزیہ وقار نے کہا کہ آئی ٹی سیکٹر میں خواتین کیلئے چیلنج اور مواقع موجود ہیں۔