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SKILLING WOMEN FOR THE DIGITAL ERA

Women's labor force participation in the country currently stands at 23% even though women consist of 48% of the country's population. Furthermore, as work becomes more digital, this gender gap also translates into a digital divide.

The shift towards digital work has accelerated due to the Covid-19 pandemic, making it imperative that women have the technological knowledge and skills to work in the digital era.

Payneer's 2020 Freelancer Income Report¹ highlights that women's participation in the global freelance work force is increasing. The average female freelancer earns 84% of what her male counterpart earns. This pay divide is smaller in comparison to the traditional job market where

women earn 64% of what their male counterparts earn. Thus, freelancing work can offer a better opportunity to earn higher income for many women.

As women's mobility is limited in Pakistan due to cultural restrictions and household responsibilities, working outside of their home is not a realistic option. Fears of safety also play a part in many women's preference to work from home.

The need of the hour was to create a skilling program that gives women economic opportunities that helps them overcome the digital divide, provides self-employment and allows them to work from home during the pandemic.

PSDF SOLUTIONS



Punjab Skills Development Fund (PSDF) partnered with Extreme Commerce to deliver a free skills training course for women in Punjab to become Amazon Virtual Assistants (VA). This training would help women gain the necessary skills to provide administrative services in the areas of social media, real estate, research, e-commerce, data entry, book-keeping and marketing. Amazon Virtual Assistants can work as independent contractors and offer diverse services to clients around the world.

It would also give women the opportunity to gain new skills that will connect them with the global digital market and allow them to earn an income in the comfort of their homes.

KEY INSIGHTS

- Online work that allows women to work on their own time & from home helps to ease challenges that women often face such as limited mobility, safety, and domestic responsibilities.
- Women are eager to embrace the digital economy. Thus, more trainings should be offered in this field.

SHORT AND IMMERSIVE TRAINING OFFERED IN THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:



1: <https://pubs.payoneer.com/images/2020-Freelancer-Income-Report.pdf>



Months of training



Women received
online training
on Zoom



One month employment
boot camp led by PSDF
mentors to build soft-skills
and customer service skills

BRINGING WOMEN ONBOARD

PSDF ran a targeted social media campaign to raise awareness on the course and encouraged women to apply for this training. Applicants went through a rigorous selection process to be part of the training. They were assessed and short-listed based on their knowledge of E-commerce, proficiency in English and their commitment to course completion.

Mentorship: PSDF staff mentored the Amazon VA course trainees to boost motivation and engage with trainees to address any queries regarding the course. Sessions on enhancing communication skills were conducted. A WhatsApp group was made to stay in contact with the trainees to guide them throughout the course.

RESPONSE TO THE TRAINING

Over 3000 women applied for the course from across 23 districts in Punjab. The popularity of the course demonstrates the desire of women to upgrade and learn new skills to play an active role in carving out their economic future. It highlights the relevance and the need in the market for these types of skills training. The Amazon VA training empowered them with the technical and soft skills they needed to earn an income and connect with a global clientele.

IMPACT

The training enabled graduates to offer their skilled services to clients globally, increasing their access to a global market for income-generation.



Empowering women with
skills training



Making women self-sufficient
and economically independent



Earning up to
PKR 60,000/Month
on average



100 WOMEN
trained in pilot project



HABIBA'S EXPERIENCE

This training had a great impact on my life, I was able to work comfortably from my home. During the training, I learned about product hunting, product sourcing and launching everything online. I gradually started to earn, in the beginning I earned around \$100 (PKR 15,000). I think as a woman you can do anything and being able to make money from my home, I can't think of anything that suits me better.

