DENMARK/PAKISTAN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP COLLABORATION

Denmark/Pakistan IT Entrepreneur Forum (DPEF)

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SUMMARY

The Denmark/Pakistan women entrepreneurship collaboration consisted of a pilot project between Denmark and Pakistan that was held in July 2021. The objective of the pilot project was to create a women friendly work environment in Pakistan and **examine collaboration between Denmark/Pakistan tech working *cultures/methods* and identify improvements.**

Denmark/Pakistan women entrepreneurship collaboration project was initiated based on numerous independent studies[1] indicating women harassment as being a major issue in Pakistan impacting working women to engage in workplaces.

The pilot project exercise was hence conducted to support UN Sustainability Development Goal 5 on gender equality to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

The pilot project was based on google design sprint[2] agile delivery methodology and consisted of a Denmark start-up and a Pakistan start-up collaborating in developing a case handling solution on women harassment for workplaces in Pakistan.

Through the pilot project we learned that women entrepreneurs in cross-cultural teams improve the communication and focus on soft issues that adds value to customer journey´s. We learned that women entrepreneurs have a stronger footprint on impact projects with a social cause. Despite different regions, time availability, cultural backgrounds and quality barriers women entrepreneurs tend to focus more on empathy and life quality which is a key element when dissolving the challenges and proposing customer centric and value-added solutions.

The white paper describes cross cultural collaboration between Denmark and Pakistan to transfer knowledge on state-of-the art innovation development methods from Denmark to women led tech entrepreneurs of Pakistan. Danish start-up´s gain market access to an emerging Pakistan market with over 220 mill. population by the means of innovative and agile co-creation concept. During the development process the Denmark start-up educate and support the women led start-ups of Pakistan to increase their capability to implement digital transformations in Pakistan.

During this whitepaper we also examine the level of inclusion and structural support in Pakistan based public/not for profit research organizations to adapt innovations in an agile manner and aid to strong women entrepreneurship implementation in the society.

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[1] UK home office: Country Policy and Information Note Pakistan: Women fearing gender-based violence V.4 Feb. 2020. In Pakistan, women's representation in the workforce remains low (worldbank.org)

[2] Share and engage with the Design Sprint Community (designsprintkit.withgoogle.com)

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INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is with above 220 million population the 6.th largest population in the world representing the biggest middle-class market increase in Asia after China and India.

60% of the population is below the age of 30 and more than 30.000 IT graduates are educated yearly from the Pakistan universities representing a huge human capital and talent pool within IT.

Hence Pakistan represents a huge unsaturated growth market for Denmark for IT digitalization/innovation and a relative low-cost infrastructure gateway to even larger South Asian growth markets.

The low-cost infrastructure of Pakistan IT coupled with newly established women IT entrepreneurs can embed and learn from the Danish innovation concept benefitting women start-ups and Danish IT industry in general. Danish women start-ups and IT industry can improve existing business gains and efficient delivery models by collaborating with Pakistan IT and women start-ups.

Furthermore, the Danish IT companies/start-ups can spread awareness of Danish IT products/services in South Asia and benefit from a steep growth curve.

The Pakistan IT industry is looking to set a future digital ambition that Denmark being a highly digitalized society can provide inspiration to as a future digital and trusted blueprint.

OBJECTIVE

The Denmark/Pakistan women entrepreneurship collaboration pilot project was held in June 2021 and presentation to stakeholders in July 2021.

The pilot duration was 2 weeks and adopted an agile format for the execution. The overall objective of the Denmark/Pakistan tech pilot project was to support:

> ➤ UN Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender equality "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls".

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The pilot project development team had an ambition to change working environment for women in IT in Pakistan. Provide support in establishing a standardized "women-friendly" working environment.

The pilot project did not contain any complete end to end solution however a minimum viable product (MVP) was designed for a future solution on handling of women harassment at workplaces in Pakistan.

Detailed objectives

Following detailed objectives were derived for the Denmark/Pakistan women empowerment pilot project

- Successfully established partnership between Denmark & Pakistan to address UN Sustainable Development Goals. Hereunder to actively support the UN global compact goals and mobilize global movement of sustainable IT start-ups.

- Facilitate access for Danish IT and women led start-ups to a South Asian growth market in a manner that utilizes low-cost digital delivery infrastructure to efficiently optimize business gains.

- Advise Pakistan IT start-ups and women entrepreneurs to grow, implementing knowledge of Danish innovation concepts/services and frameworks. Aid Pakistan IT and women led start-ups to become capable collaboration partners for Danish IT start-ups

A DPEF representative participated in the collaboration project as an independent observer to observe the team collaboration and identify obstacles and their solutions as part of the execution of pilot project.

Pilot project description

The pilot project format was based on google design sprint[3].

The pilot project outlined a product vision for the solution to empower working women in Pakistan by providing them safe and friendly work environment and thereby encouraging more women to join the workforce in Pakistan. The pilot team vision was to improve collaboration between Pakistan and Denmark IT companies.

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[3] Share and engage with the Design Sprint Community (designsprintkit.withgoogle.com)

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The goal of the solution was to be supplemental solution for the existing ecosystem in Pakistan. The solution would be a broker solution to the ministry of Human rights/Ombudsman case handling system in Pakistan to evaluate and monitor efficiency on the "Protection against Harassment of Women at workplace Act" by providing operational KPI measurements.

The proposed solution was a whistle-blower solution that recorded cases for women that were victims of harassment at workplaces in Pakistan. The solution intended to provide real time stats on response time and cases registered and real time updates on case complaint status. The solution also provided 1st line support in terms of guidance, quick advices, and psychological help.

The intent was to measure on harassment case development, progression, and resolution to show an overall working women happiness index for women in Pakistan.

FOCUS AREAS IDENTIFIED

There were the following focus areas noted within the Denmark/Pakistan women entrepreneurship pilot project team and pilot exercise.

➤ Role of women in Denmark/Pakistan pilot team and market survey

➤ Societal norms and adaptation of agile delivery model in Pakistan

The focus areas became very evident in short period of time due to agile methodology. The agile concept did put maximum pressure on the Denmark/Pakistan pilot project team for 2 weeks as full-time commitment and progression in working tasks were pursued in daily stand-up meetings. This did highlight the below pilot project challenges during the execution of the pilot project.
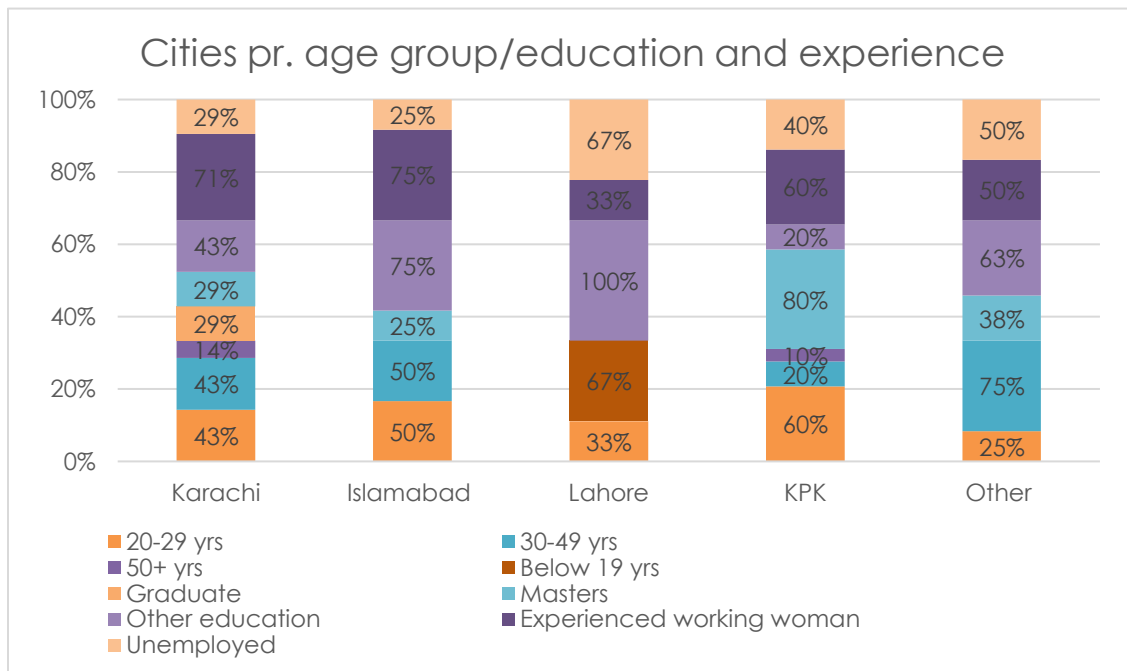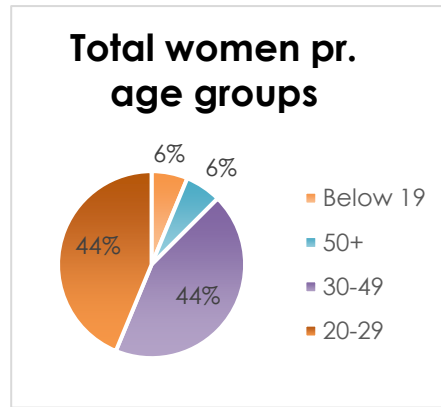

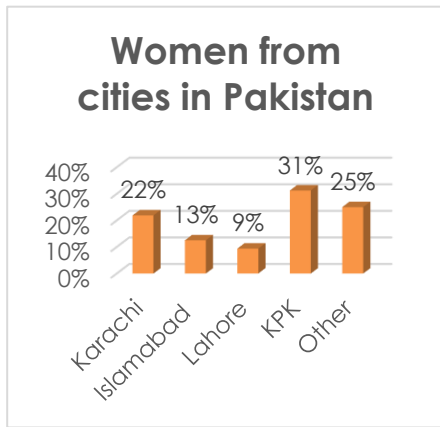### Role of women in Denmark/Pakistan pilot team and market survey

Focus group of women respondents

➤ During the pilot project the Denmark/Pakistan team conducted a focus group survey of 32 Pakistan women throughout Pakistan to deep dive on the health of the working women environment in Pakistan. The scope of the focus group results are illustrated below:

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➤ The women were from 5 of the major cities in Pakistan with an age bracket of below 19 to 50+. 44% of the women were evenly divided majorly in the bracket of 30-49 and 20-29 years of age.

Women from cities in Pakistan

City	Percentage
Karachi	22%
Islamabad	13%
Lahore	9%
KPK	31%
Other	25%

Total women pr. age groups

Age group	Percentage
Below 19	6%
50+	6%
30-49	44%
20-29	44%

Cities pr. age group/education and experience

	Karachi	Islamabad	Lahore	KPK	Other
Unemployed	29%	25%	67%	40%	50%
Other education	71%	75%	33%	60%	50%
Masters	43%	75%	100%	20%	63%
Graduate	29%	25%		80%	38%
Below 19 yrs	29%			10%	
50+ yrs	14%		67%	20%	
30-49 yrs	43%	50%			75%
20-29 yrs	43%	50%	33%	60%	25%

Legend: 20-29 yrs, 30-49 yrs, 50+ yrs, Below 19 yrs, Graduate, Masters, Other education, Experienced working woman, Unemployed

The women´s educational background was recorded together with their work status to ensure a diverse focus group and quality in the answers. The pilot project both interviewed highly educated women in skilled jobs and women in blue collar jobs as well as unemployed women across the major cities in Pakistan.

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The focus group of women were asked about work environment and about work friendliness as it showed that the "Protection against Harassment of Women at workplace Act" initiatives and implementation her off was not known by 63% of the working women in the focus group.

Despite the lack of knowledge about improvements in workplaces the women expressed the desire for a diverse working culture as 56% of the working women answered that they didn't want the workplace to be separated between men and women.

Work environment
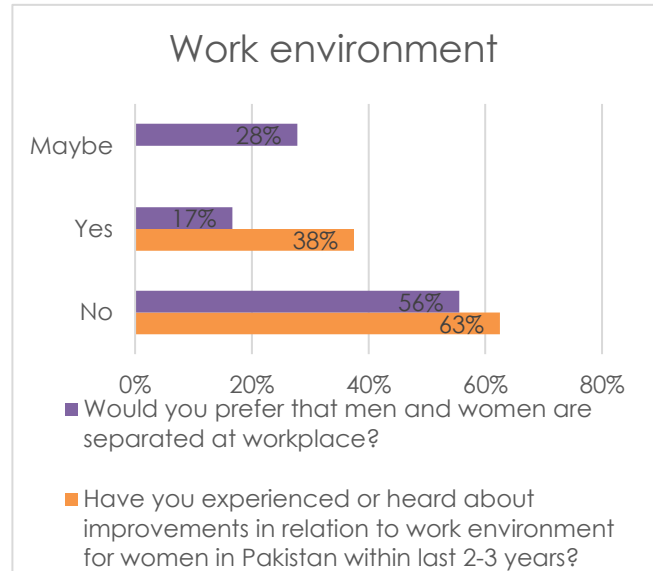
To measure the work friendliness the working women in the focus group were asked if they loved to work and 78% expressed that they loved to work although when the women were asked about facilities regarding maternity leave and children sickness 67% expressed that there were no such facilities at their workplace. Despite this fact the Pakistan women liked to engage themselves at the workplace and expressed to work in a diverse work culture.

Women work freindliness

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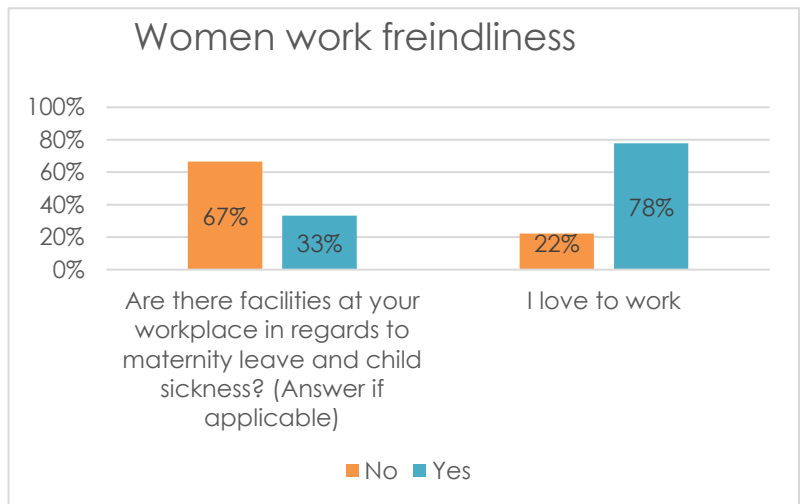
Women harassment solution survey

As the pilot project solution aimed at recording women harassment cases at workplaces in Pakistan. The pilot project conducted a survey of 182 women on whether there was a need for a platform solution where the women could report women harassment cases and whether the women would prefer to disclose their identity when reporting.

91% of women preferred a harassment case reporting solution and 62% would prefer to be anonymous when reporting their cases through such a system.

During the survey the Pakistan women also were quite loyal to their employer and preferred to solve the case within the company if that could be done objectively. According to Hofstede's[4] cultural theory the Asian culture does implicate a workplace that get more involved in the employee's personal matters then the Nordics.
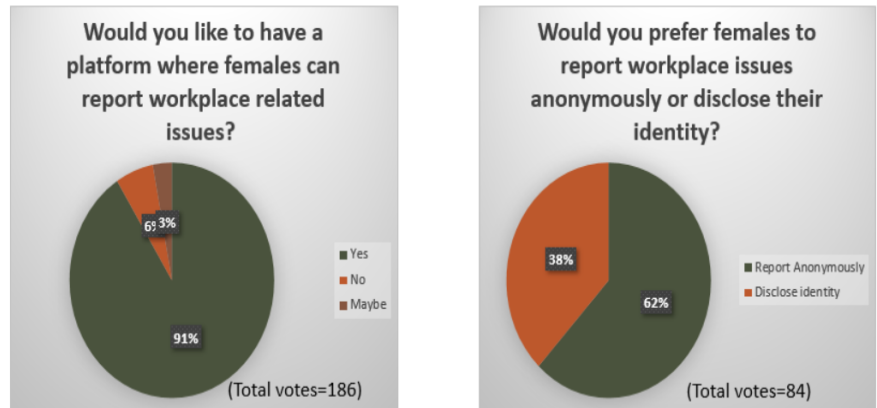
According to Hofstede Pakistan is more masculine dominated culture. This means that the society is more driven by competition, achievement, and success. Denmark on the other hand is influenced by a more "feminine" culture - focused on caring for others and quality of life. This sets the tone for spontaneous impulse driven and empathetic communication by the Denmark team members vs a more controlled, goal focused and neutral communication by the Pakistan team members in the pilot project.

Learning points

Overall, the Pakistan work environment is healthy as the women in Pakistan want to work and express an attitude towards diversity in working culture. However, the work environment is un-supported as poor implementation of facilities exist to support need of working women. The women in Pakistan clearly express a need for a platform where females can report work related issues anonymously and get support relating work related issues.

The experience in the Denmark/Pakistan women entrepreneurship pilot project has been positive to interact with women as part of the cross-cultural project team. Participation of women did make the overall communication more soft focused on empathetic values which benefitted the solution for women as the team members were good at capturing inputs in the pilot survey in dialogue with Pakistan women regarding their issues and wishes for a potential new women harassment solution.

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[4] Country Comparison - Hofstede Insights (hofstede-insights.com)

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At large the Denmark/Pakistan tech pilot project demonstrated that women in general have a greater footprint on impact driven innovation projects where value is demonstrated in the society and benefitted for a social cause.

Societal norms and adaptation of tech agile delivery model in Pakistan

Collective vs individualistic society norms

According to Hofstede[5] Pakistan is more of a collective society whereas Denmark is much more influenced by increased individualism. The scale has to do with whether people´s self-image is defined in terms of "I" (individualistic) or "We" (collective).

One of the feedbacks by the pilot project teams during the post retrospective session was also that teammates needs to be "supporters rather than rigidly tied to progress". "The more the team supports each other the more the team achieves" and "culture in Pakistan is less bound in fixed working hours".

Due to the inequality in experience level in the pilot team there was a stiff learning curve by the Pakistan team members whereas the Denmark team members were used to fix working hours as planned and Pakistan team members were used to more fluid working hours and often work late night to reach project deadlines.

The pilot project team did conduct a focus group survey of 32 women giving detailed input and describing the obstacles that Pakistan women face in workplaces hereunder also in terms of harassment. Furthermore, the pilot project presented their solutions to 5 women in Pakistan who gave feedback and validation of the proposed solution as part of the pilot project.

The Denmark/Pakistan pilot project team presented the demo website to gather women harassment cases to forward to established government channels. They presented to Ombudsman for women harassment in Pakistan who owns the process of case handling of women harassment cases in workplaces.

The Ombudsman's perception was on a final solution whereas the project team presented a minimum viable demo solution. The Ombudsman´s comments to the pilot project team were hence focused on lacking functionality related to the solution. Feedback was collected on the basis of the proposed system as "competing" with existing solution whereas the intent of the pilot project team was to "supplement" existing

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[5] Country Comparison - Hofstede Insights (hofstede-insights.com)

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solutions to work more efficiently in case handling women harassment at workplaces and thus establishing a healthy work environment in Pakistan.

In the feedback session it was clear that the concept of MVP (Minimum Viable Product) in google design sprint was not understood at the traditional public institutions in Pakistan.

This gap between the authorities in Pakistan and the technical innovation methods were clear as business models and services are disrupted also in Pakistan e.g. in Fintech and banking sector the hierarchical organizational structures represent a constraint in terms of implementing digital tech solutions in a "silo" based format. This is though more innovative with and end-to-end approach in a community-based society model such as Denmark where work unions, interest organizations and not for profit associations often fund new solutions that are adopted by industry and further enhanced.

Although Pakistan has an emerging market and 60% of population below 30 the country needs to fully adapt to the community-based society model and abandon the hierarchical structures in order for Pakistan to fully benefit and scale digital transformations.

There are many channels of innovation into the industry and eventually to end-user and society however a bureaucratic and decision heavy organization structure in corporations and public institutions will not serve as a prime mover for technological adoptability in Pakistan.

Here Denmark has a great advantage with a well-functioning non industry sector serving the industry with innovation and research that is readily adopted by the industry.

Pakistan has though implemented national innovation centers and tech parks to start the digitalization and utilize the human capital into tech services however the society backbone e.g. research centers, universities, NGO´s, public institutions need to be strong to add to this development.

Furthermore, the community-based value model will demonstrate a more representative gender diversity then the hierarchical decision dominated structures that tend to be adverse in terms of gender equality.

Learning points

To underline communication with emphasis on the agile concept development for non-IT stakeholders in Pakistan to make the exercise clearly understandable and spend more informal time aligning outcome expectations before the final pitch sessions.

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Liaison more with research institutions in Pakistan to narrow the gap from R&D to industry ready tech solutions.

Pakistan to learn community-based innovation development from Denmark and state-of-the art innovation approaches to be implemented in the Pakistan start-ups by Denmark start-ups.

CONCLUSION

Denmark/Pakistan women entrepreneurship pilot project was initiated based on numerous independent studies[6] indicating women harassment as being a major issue in Pakistan impacting working women engaging less at workplaces.

The pilot project combined two women-led tech start-ups between Denmark and Pakistan in an agile format to develop a solution that will enforce a "women-friendly" working environment in IT sector of Pakistan and examine collaboration between two different cultures with IT as common denominator.

A "win-win" was established in the pilot project team as both Denmark/Pakistan women team members came across cultural barriers and managed to align the different communication styles to focus on soft women issues in conducted pilot survey and focus group presentations. The final pitch presentation was conducted by the women participants of the pilot team adding value to the proposed whistle-blower handling system.

Overall, the Pakistan work environment is healthy as the women in Pakistan want to work and express an attitude towards diversity in working culture. However, the work environment is un-supported as poor implementation and facilities exist to support need of working women. A women harassment system is hence much needed in Pakistan as the pilot project survey showed that 63% of women did not know about any women improvement initiatives at workplaces for the last 2-3 years implicating lack of implementation of the "Protection against Harassment of Women at workplace Act". Furthermore 91% of an additional pilot project survey showed that Pakistan women preferred a harassment case reporting solution which 62% of the asked women would like to use in an anonymous way when reporting cases and seeking advices for work related issues. The women in Pakistan therefore clearly express a need for a platform where females can report work related issues anonymously and get support relating work related issues.

DPEF pilot project revealed that Pakistan societal backbones e.g. public and government institutions, research/development institutions and worker associations need to play a contributor role in women-led agile transformations and be more inclusive in order to support local industry transformations. Pakistan can learn from Denmark on building a community-based supportive societal backbone where independent institutions are directly integrated in providing value to the industry clearly creating a competitive edge particular supporting IT and women-led IT innovation models.

The detailed objectives of the Denmark/Pakistan pilot project and their status is illustrated below:

Detailed objectives of pilot project	Conclusion	Status

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[6] UK home office: Country Policy and Information Note Pakistan: Women fearing gender-based violence V.4 Feb. 2020. In Pakistan, women's representation in the workforce remains low (worldbank.org)

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• Successfully established partnership between Denmark & Pakistan to address UN Sustainable Development Goals and UN Global Compact Goals. Hereunder to actively support the UN global compact goals and mobilize global movement of sustainable IT start-ups.	The pilot project execution delivered on the UN SDG goal 5 on gender equality.	✓
• Facilitate access for Danish IT and women led start-ups to a South Asian growth market in a manner that utilizes low-cost digital delivery infrastructure to efficiently optimize business gains.	The format is low-cost with big scalability for Denmark start-ups to scale in Pakistan.	✓
• Advise Pakistan IT start-ups and women entrepreneurs to grow, implementing knowledge of Danish innovation concepts/services and frameworks. Aid Pakistan IT and women led start-ups to become capable collaboration partners for Danish IT start-ups	The pilot project did educate the Pakistan women led start-up on working methods/tools and concepts ensuring sustainable start-up collaborations.	✓

ABOUT DPEF

Denmark/Pakistan IT Entrepreneur Form (DPEF) is a not for profit Denmark based association that works to promote transverse tech innovation projects. The innovation projects involve tech and are focused on UN SDG goals involving Denmark/Greater Copenhagen, Pakistan, and UK tech ecosystems.

DPEF also bridges the gap between regional innovation and funding possibilities to ensure great sustainable ideas can scale on emerging markets.

DPEF ensures dissemination of knowledge on state-of-the art innovation between regions. A key focus area for DPEF is women entrepreneurships between ecosystems.

For more information about us visit our website on: http://www.DPEF.DK

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