

Women's Digital League

Digital Livelihood Training

Peshawar, Khyber Pukhtunkhwa

9 March 2015 – 29 May 2015



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Background

Women's Digital League (WDL) is a social enterprise that works for women empowerment by training them locally and connecting them globally through computer-based work. WDL in collaboration with the World Bank expanded its Digital Livelihood Training Program to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Thirty women from the province were selected for basic training, enhancing their skills in using digital tools for freelancing and later connect them to specific platforms for work.

The time period of the entire training program was three months, from March 9th, 2015 till May 29th, 2015. The actual training however, has been for a period of eight weeks with women of diverse age groups and backgrounds. These included college students, women who were already employed and housewives. A more interactive methodology was required to cater to the needs of the participants, partially because of the diversity within the group but mainly for the reason that there should be more interaction on behalf of the participants to chalk out their needs and discuss what they would want to learn more freely rather than following a more hackneyed path of prescribed guidelines.

Setting the Context

Despite the fact that women make up for over 50 percent of the population in the country, they do not even make up half of the working force. The changing levels of socio-economic trends globally and its effect on Pakistan is a topic of marked interest but under the context of a "war-torn" economy on the border of the North-West it a grim reading. Post 9/11, there has been great encouraged as a way of making changes to the status-quo of women in the Muslim world and re-addressing the balance of power within the family unit. But there are few available choices to exploit opportunities and those who even have the tenacity to face challenges are stuck up in an environment of a recessionary nadir.

The training session in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa nevertheless was encouraging. There were a total of eighty candidates that applied. Thirty were shortlisted after being observed for almost a week. But with time the number receded to nineteen. The encouragement however, did not die-out and teachers from the host college as well as some business women who were interested to learn basics like Gmail and Facebook to expand their businesses also joined the session.

During the first week of the workshop an array of topics were discussed and explored, these included;

- Google as a search engine
- Gmail
- Google Docs
- Google Drive
- Google Hangouts
- Google Plus
- Skype
- Facebook Personal Profile
- Facebook Page
- Introduction to oDesk
- Signing and setting up of oDesk accounts
- Creating profiles, writing overviews and adding profiles pictures
- Putting sample work into portfolios and choosing most relevant skills.
- Searching for jobs in different categories, choosing and applying for jobs most suited
- Different payment receiving mechanisms available
- Applying on oDesk
- Introduction to Elance
- Familiarization with Elance interface
- Signing and setting up of accounts in Elance
- Creating profiles and writing overviews
- Introduction to Fiverr
- Orientation of the site and hands on experience

Statistical Overview of the Training Workshop

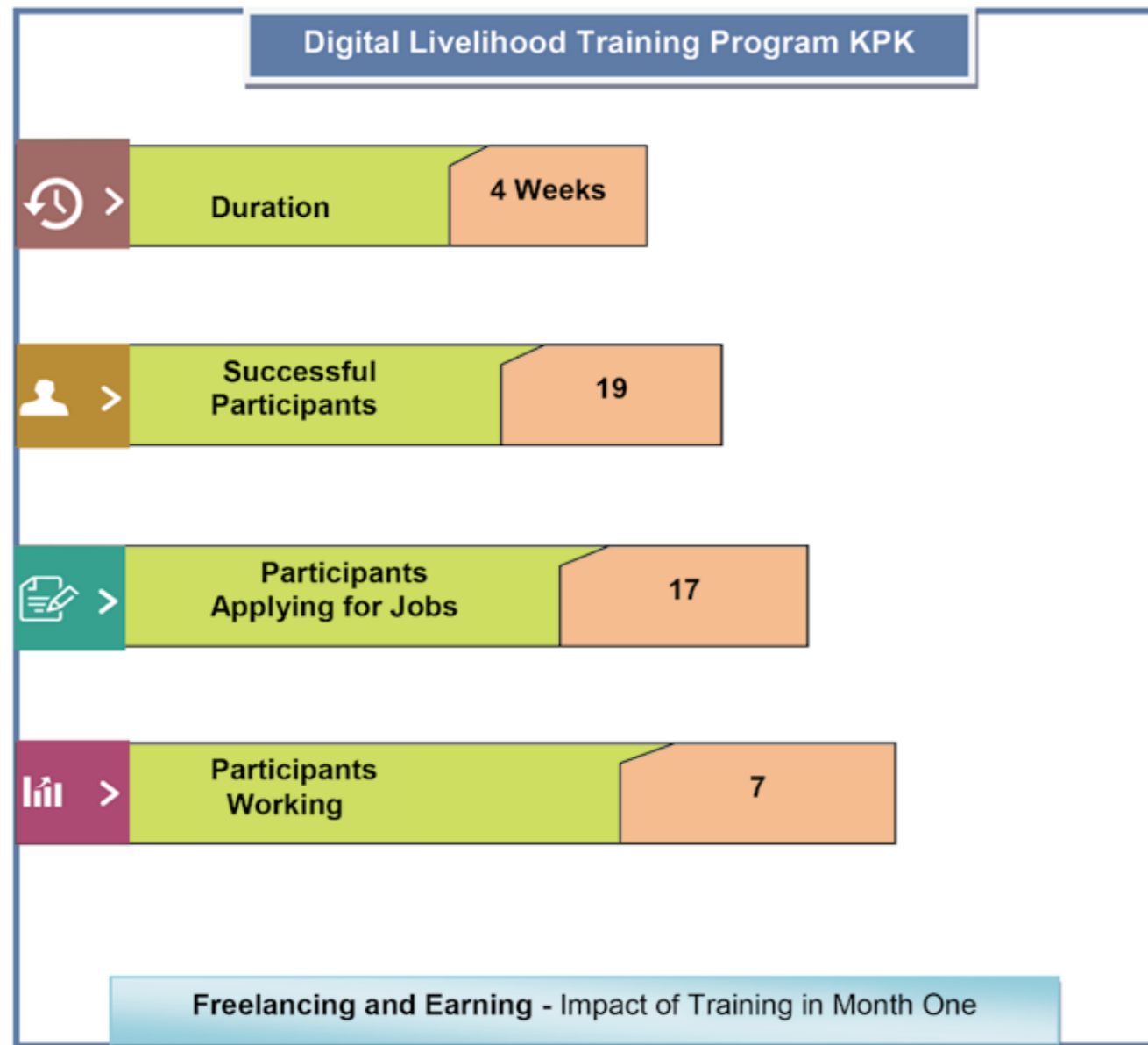


Table - 1

As table -1 shows after four weeks of training, nineteen participants managed to complete the work schedule. Majority of the women in the group were affiliated with handicrafts and had little knowledge of the digital world. However, despite varying ages did not make much of a difference with the interest of the participants, but as it has been previously noted as well, in some cases, that self-employed females cannot cope with this challenging environment as compared to paid employment and hence their motivation may suffer. This is an important factor to consider for any policy that aims to encourage long term female entrepreneurial involvement to foster socio-economic development.

The Categorization

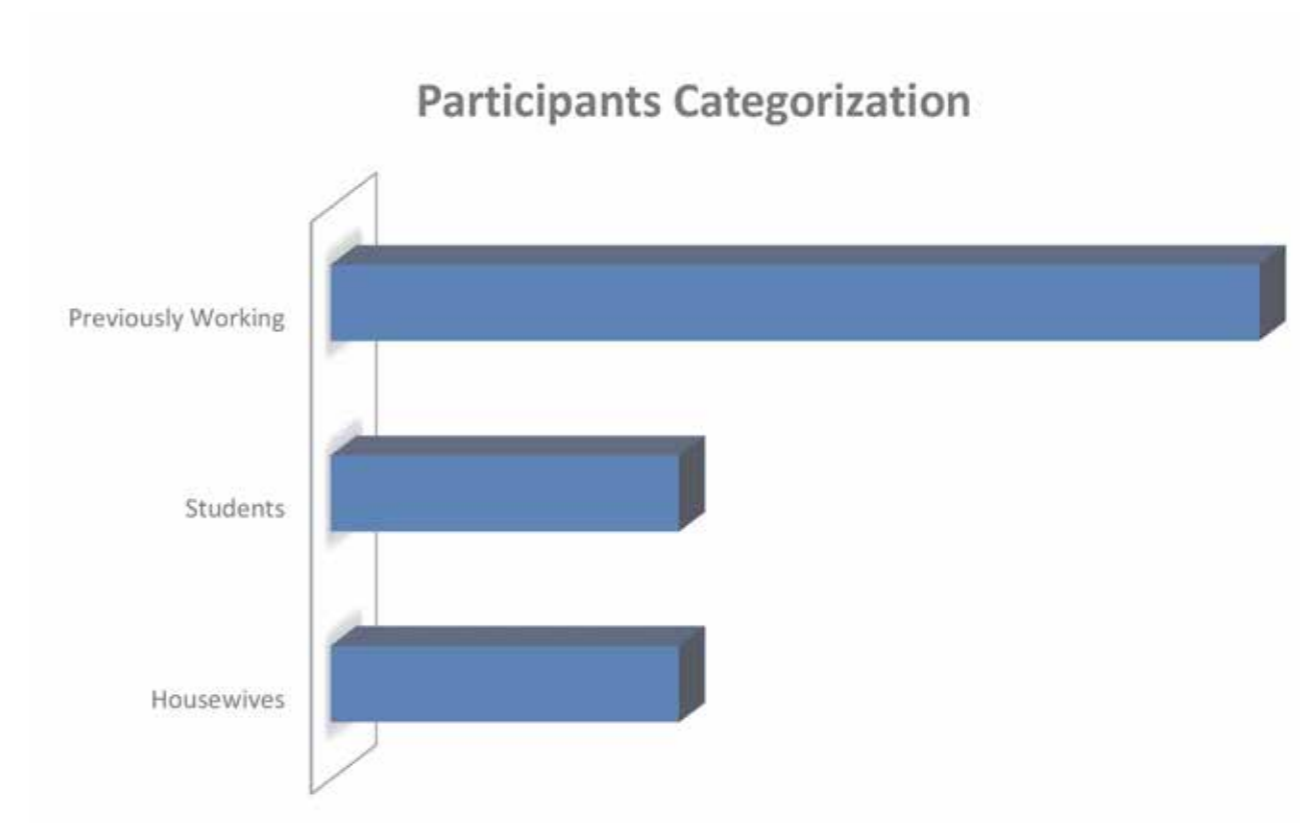


Table -2

Table-2 exemplifies that those women who had some employment experience managed to complete the training for the complete period of 8-weeks. One of the reasons observed is that, apart from the cultural constraints and the law and order situation, the job-market also poses threats to women who then become self-employed. At regular jobs, women may not get their desired roles that allow them to grow according to their capabilities. Their growth may be barred creating a “glass ceiling” which makes women who are already employed more ambitious and enthusiastic about learning newer skills to benefit monetarily. Moreover, the Working Women category is mostly made up of women who worked at some time before joining the training and are not working at the time of attending the training.

The age paradigm

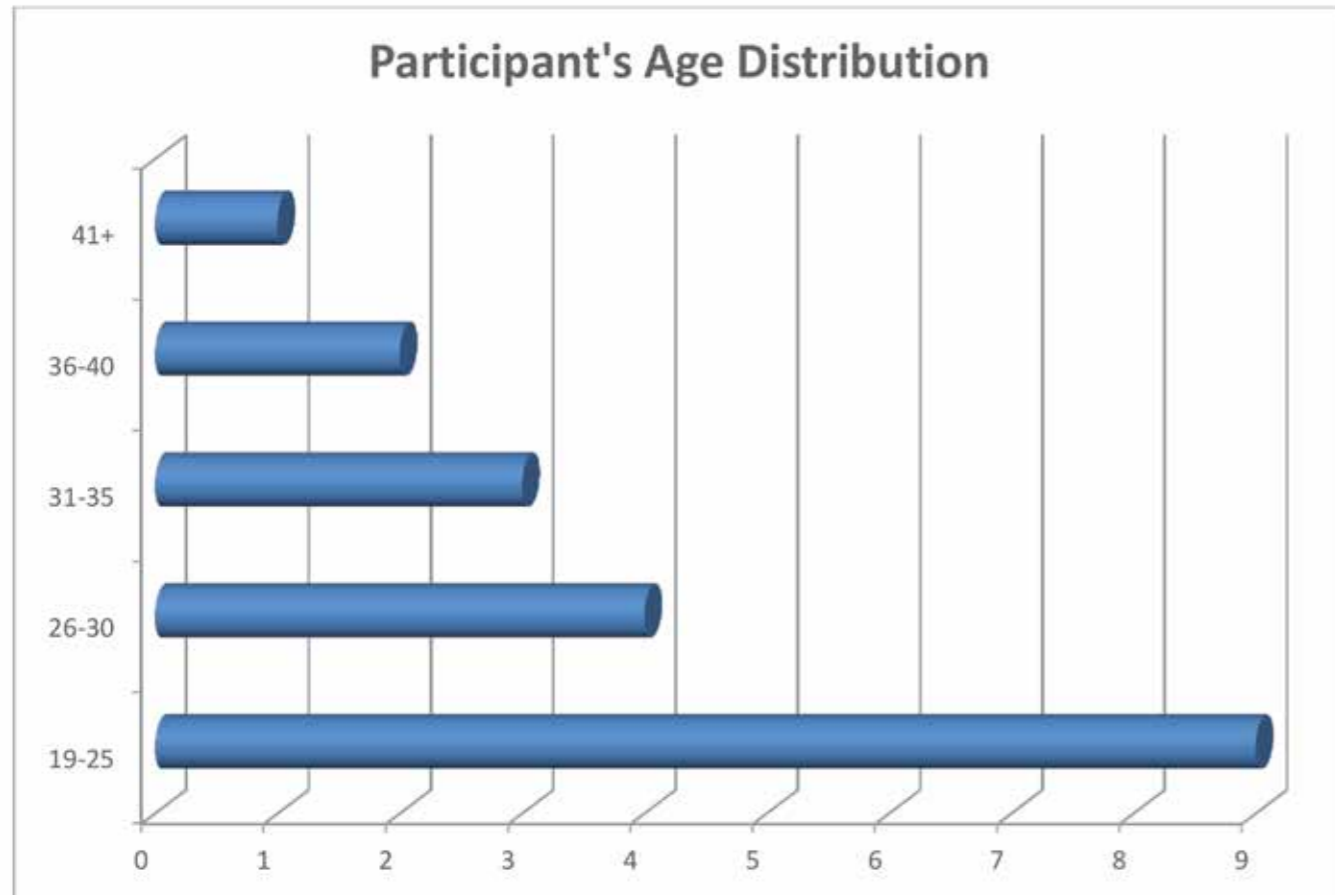


Table-3

In table-3 the varying degrees of age are strong indicators of interested participants from each age-group. 59 percent of the total female population of the country is between 18 to 27 years, the largest age-group in the training; with 9 candidates. Although traditionally it would have been believed that the marked age differences would have its own impediments, but the 49-year old participant was equally participative as the others. It can be ascertained with credibility that no matter what type of business they're in and no matter their age, aspirants of all kinds face challenges in starting and growing. Not surprisingly, the types of challenges they face tend to be similar.

After the conclusion of the first week, participants were more open to discussions and problems they faced with their work. The Facebook group created, was actively used by the participants who were networking and collaborating with each other by sharing ideas and plans on how to move ahead with trainers, through the page. This proved to be very helpful in resolving their problems continuously, even after the training had elapsed.

Week Two of the Workshop

Week two began with introduction to oDesk. Each of the trainees was helped with creating their **oDesk** account. Once made, they were practically shown how to;

- create profiles,
- write overviews,
- add profiles pictures,
- create portfolio,
- search and apply for jobs,
- receive payments

By this time the trainees began applying for different jobs, while most of those who were still undergoing a review process; they started saving jobs for which they would be applying in the near future. Each of the participants was tasked to apply for a minimum of five jobs for at least five days a week during their class. They were also taught to write a cover letters that defines the targets and put them in a complacent position even in case of a slightest opportunity.

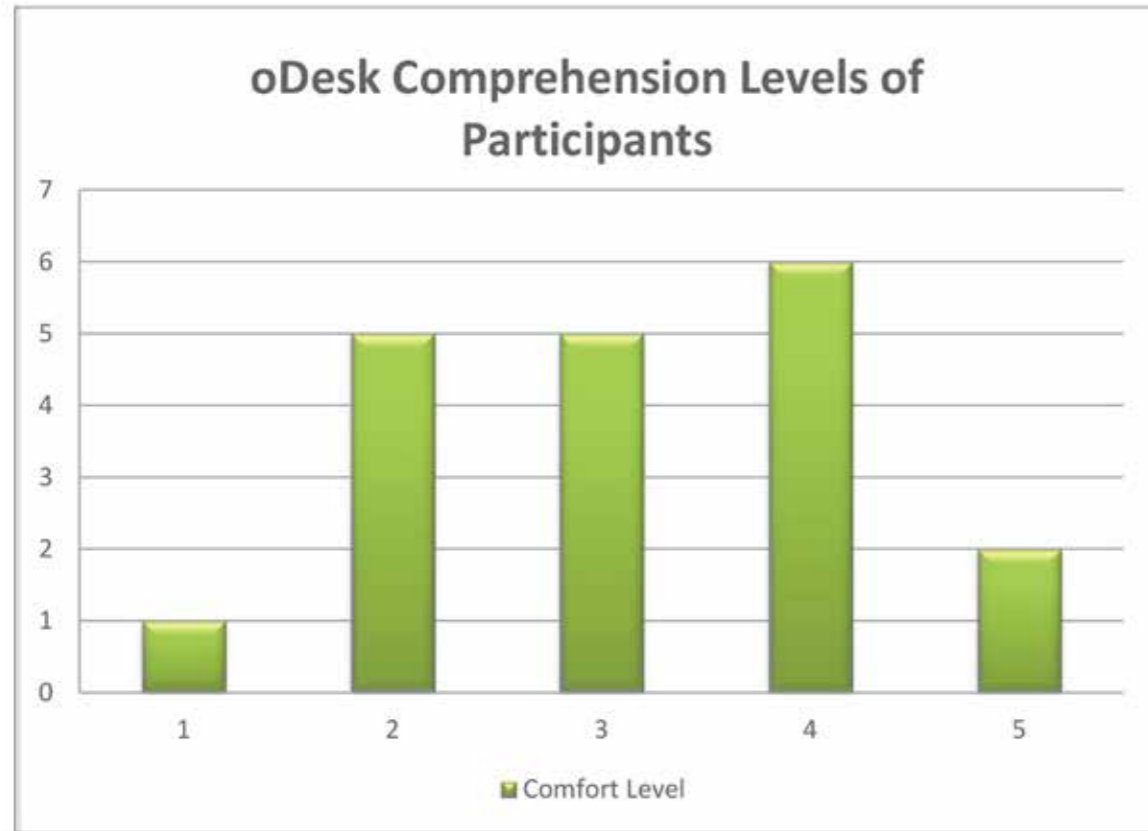
Week Three of the Workshop

During the third week the participants were introduced to **Elance**. In a similar way as oDesk, each of the participants was introduced to the Elance platform to get accustomed to the interface. During the week trainees who had been able to acquire work through oDesk, Elance and other external clients; shared their experiences with the rest of the participants so as to facilitate and inspire them.

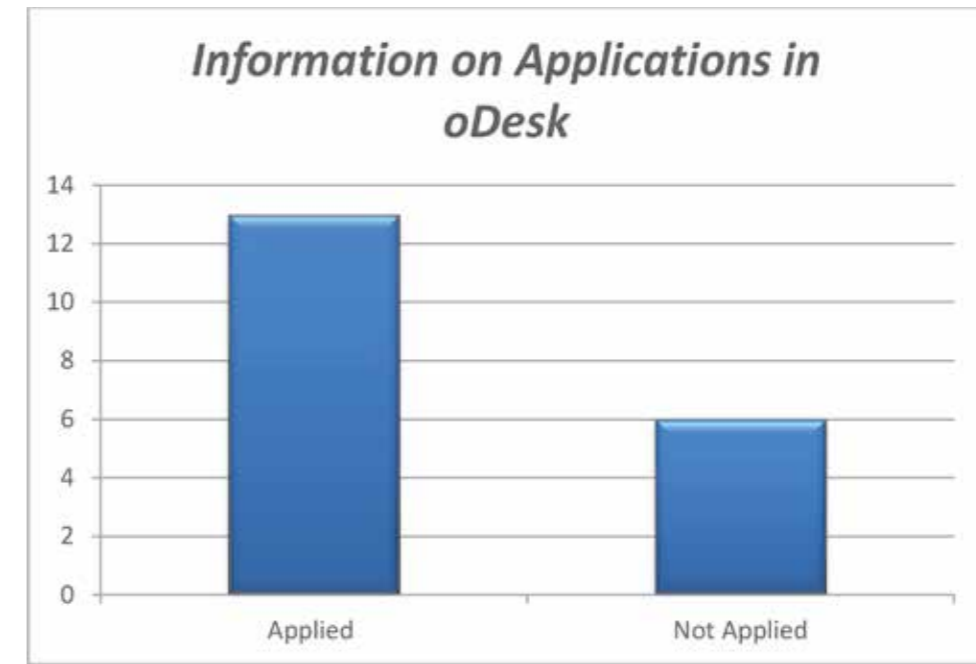
Next on, the trainees were introduced to Fiverr which is another platform for online work; but operationally differs from oDesk and Elance. Trainees were given detailed orientation of the site and helped with the various experiences it had to offer. All participants then created their profiles and posted their gigs to be hired according to their skills.

This Fiverr platform was particularly included to facilitate women who feel linguistically marginalized for other tasks. They are now using it to present their handicrafts into the open market. The training was visited by the Secretary Education, Government of KP during his visit to the Frontier College Peshawar. A professional photographer visited the training during the week to take pictures of all participants which were used as their profile pictures for oDesk, Elance and Fiverr.

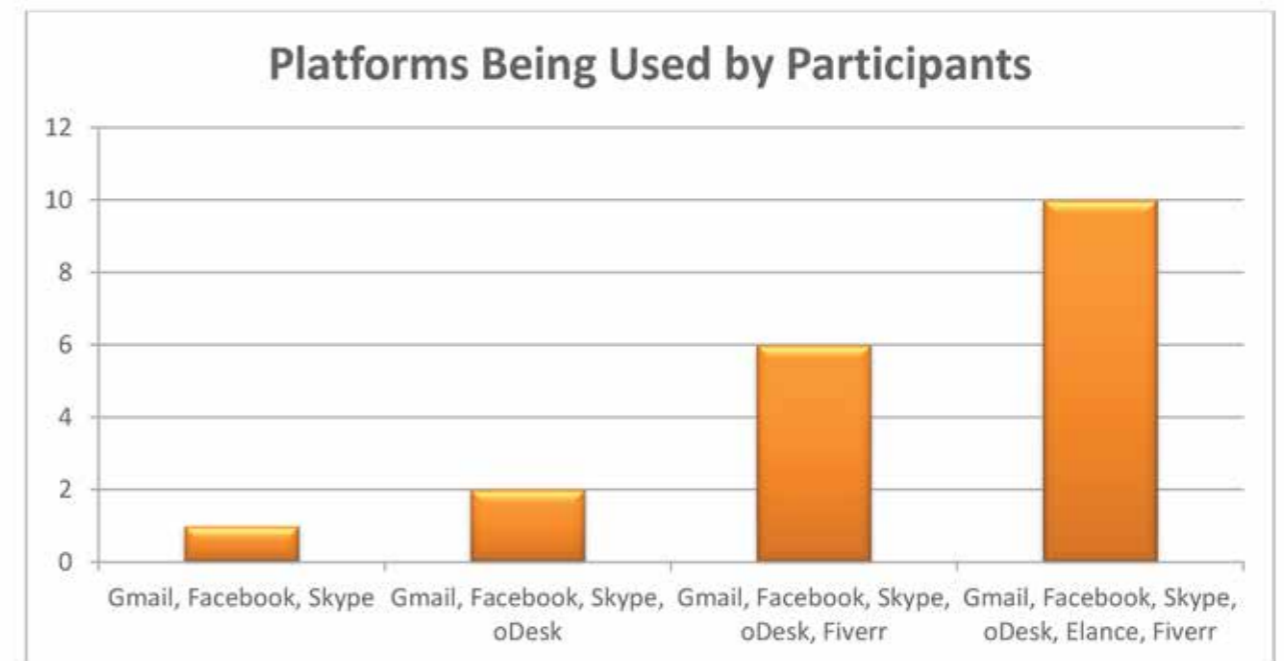
Compatibility, Comprehension and Comfort



The participants were asked to rank themselves on the scale of 1 to 5 as to how comfortable they felt working on oDesk with 1 being the least comfortable and 5 being the maximum comfort level. 19 participants responded in total. 1 participant ranked herself at level 1, 5 at level 2, a further 5 at level 3, 6 ranked themselves at level 4 and 2 at level 5.



The participants were asked to provide information if they had applied for different jobs on oDesk. 19 participants responded in total to this query as well. A total of 13 participants reported to have applied for jobs on oDesk, 6 participants responded in negative. However the reason for most of those who had not applied was that their account was not activated by oDesk.



When the participants were asked to provide information which platforms had they started using out of the ones that they had been taught. 19 participants responded in total. 1 participant mentioned using Gmail, Facebook and Skype, 2 participants mentioned using Gmail, Facebook, Skype and oDesk, while 6 participants reported using Gmail, Facebook, Skype, oDesk and Fiverr and 10 participants reported using Gmail, Facebook, Skype, oDesk, Fiverr and Elance.

The Way Ahead

Based on the feedback from the participants, their problems, constraints and challenges were put together. And it was decided that the next week would be used to help them out in areas that they lagged behind.

Week 4 of the Workshop

- Resolving oDesk issues of remaining participants
- Applying for further oDesk jobs
- Making more gigs in Fiverr
- Mock tasks for trainee's still awaiting actual jobs
- Photoshop training

A professional graphic designer volunteered to teach the women about the basics of Photoshop. This was done to facilitate the women in creating more gigs in Fiverr and also sell their skills as social media assistants. This was one of the most enthusiastically attended sessions of the training.

Week 5-8 of the Workshop

In Week 5 – 8 students were required to come only twice a week. They were helped with their problems on different platforms, given mock tasks, guided on how to perform tasks given by clients. A Wordpress workshop was also conducted by a volunteer that was very well received.

Result At a Glance

Ten of the trainees have found work. Some got it directly from Fiverr and oDesk while others were given work from the Women's Digital League platform. Currently, they are working on diverse tasks such as social media assistance, data entry, data scraping, blog writing, and network administration.

Nine trainees were unemployed at the time of attending the training. Five were students, four housewives, and one was waiting for work after finishing her education. Tenth was a lecturer at the host college. She had started a Facebook Buy and Sell group before the training but did not know how to work on it. She has now successfully made her first sale using that group. They are in the age bracket of 21 to 33 years. The data here shows performance during second month of the training. Most have been offered better paying full-time work from home and are in talks with client on expectations and timings. Ninety percent have seen an income growth of 100%.

Trainees with weak English language skills are also being helped. A young trainee with a Master's degree in Islamiyat is being trained in teaching Qura'an to Muslim children living abroad via Skype. Another lady running her embroidery school is connected to the KPK Tourism Ministry which will help her set up her stall at their promotional events throughout the province at zero cost and pay her a travel stipend. She is promoting her products using a Facebook page.

Ten of the nineteen women have become employed from home doing digital work or using the digital medium to sell their products. A 100% increase in earnings is observed in nine cases. According to projected earnings made on practical assumptions these women should be able to break even the USD 6000 fund given by World Bank in a period of ten months.

Success Stories



After 3 years of marriage, I have one daughter and I had completely disconnected from my studies, I came across the advertisement for this program 1 day while surfing the net. This has been one of the most wonderful things that have ever happened to me. I met some amazing intellectual people. This program helped me explore my capabilities. With the help of my trainers I got my first online job. This training boosted my confidence to a new level and made me believe in myself.

Anum Saad



"I was unemployed before taking this training when I was starting this training I was not aware with social media and online earning procedures but after taking training I am able to do online jobs and also promote my business by using social media like Facebook, twitter, Pinterest, etc. One important thing in half time of training I got amazing response from a Mexican client for monitoring her social media. So according to me this training is beneficiary for everyone who has little knowledge about computer and internet surfing."

Beenish



Below is some feedback by the trainee's on what they feel about participating in the training program

Being an ordinary girl of Peshawar I always thought of doing something different but belonging to the world of two options "Doctor" and "Engineer" has always kept me away from it. Joining Women Digital League, founded by Maria Umar, a young lady showing the women of KPK a way out for proving their skills to the world by sitting at home. WDL has given us a new ray of hope, enlightening us by polishing our skills, enhancing our potentials and providing us a platform where we can learn to grow without breaking the walls of our culture. We have

learned how to use Facebook in a positive way, learning and practicing O Desk, Elance and Fiverr. They are also providing us with the opportunities of Blogging, Article writing, Media monitoring which indeed has given us chance to put our lives into a better place. She has given us the new concept of "THINK GLOBAL WORK LOCAL".

Maha Sethi

Observations, Recommendations and Impacts

- Women with no prior experience with computers felt more at ease working on software's with an easy interface like Skype and Facebook but felt reluctant to operate oDesk
- While it was encouraging that a considerable number of housewives attended the training they did not have enough time at home. While most of them were living in joint family system, they had to pool in for the household work.
- Linguistics barriers were one of the major impediments and participants whose minimum linguistic competence did not meet the criteria found it hard to freely operate sites such as oDesk, Elance and Fiverr, online.
- Whilst some participants had initially indicated basic computer literacy in their forms it was observed that they were mostly unaware of it.
- We received 80+ applications for the training program. 30 applicants were shortlisted after observing them for a whole week. Over the weeks the numbers receded to 19. There were two reasons for this:
 - i. Due to their conservative backgrounds women shied away from adding any information about themselves online.
 - ii. Participants found it hard to keep their commitment to three months.
- It is recommended that in future at least a week each should be given separately for the training of Photoshop and Wordpress. The 2-days workshops were received very well and participants requested more in-depth training. More time is required to explain these programs in detail to add value to their online skills.
- For any future training, application forms must include the question whether the participants will be able to share basic information about themselves online, like name, age, sex, location.
- It is recommended that the duration should be kept at a maximum stretch of 4 weeks. Only those who show interest should be asked for an additional 4 weeks for specialized training in social media, Wordpress, Photoshop and other skills.



 Women's Digital League's
Digital Livelihood Training Program for KPK

FABRICATE YOUR FUTURE

LEARN TO EARN ONLINE
WDL will be conducting a 3-month workshop in Peshawar District on earning a digital livelihood. We will provide the right tools for you to grow and become a significant part of the society.

Who Should Attend:

- Women with minimum matric qualification
- Basic knowledge of operating a computer and using the Internet.
- Women who want to work but can't due to
 - kids,
 - nonavailability of job opportunities, or
 - because they are discouraged from working outside their homes

For further information and application form, please visit the link below
www.womensdigitalleague.com/KPKtraining

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Training Program
for KPK**



**CONCEAL
BUT NOT YOUR DREAMS**

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**YOU'VE GOT SKILLS
MAKE RIGHT USE OF THEM**

LEARN TO EARN ONLINE

WDL is conducting a 3-month workshop that will include two months of hands on assistance in finding and also connecting graduates to online work. Polish your skills and explore unlimited opportunities.

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