

CHANGE
MECHANICS

SPECIAL REPORT

on the
Women Entrepreneurship Conference
WECON'17
held at HEC Auditorium

11th March, 2017



WOMEN
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
CONFERENCE

WECON 2017

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The world is changing and things are accelerating. It's a high-velocity world where technological innovation is happening at incredible speed. In order to survive in a digital society, businesses and organizations must embrace and keep pace with the changes in innovation and technological advancements.

Companies and people look at the pace of change as an obstacle, a hurdle, but Change Mechanics looks at it as a challenge and opportunity. Change Mechanics is embarked on an ambitious journey to meet this innovative challenge. We aim at building capacity and capability, spreading knowledge and skills of new technology advances through skills development & knowledge exchange programs, incubators and accelerators. We promote innovative research and development by building strong academia industry linkages through discussion forums and provide technology advisory services to universities, research and government institutions.

Working with startups and promoting entrepreneurship remains at the heart of our business. Change mechanics is an industry focused company with a mission of building ecosystems, supporting startups and partnering with industry players. We seek to connect startups and entrepreneurs with knowledge transfer networks and required resources enabling entrepreneurs to exploit new business models and technologies to excel in their businesses. Moreover, we provide people with the mindset, skills and confidence to create, and scale new business through training sessions and online mentoring by qualified mentors and advisors with deep industry experience. We act as a one stop source providing strategic management services, developing business plans and funding for commercialization of IP. In addition, we provide expertise to companies for growth and help them in implementation of business plans through workshops and seminars. We are the drivers of innovation, driven and empowered by rapidly developing technological tools, new practices and models that seek to decentralize innovation and invite participation.



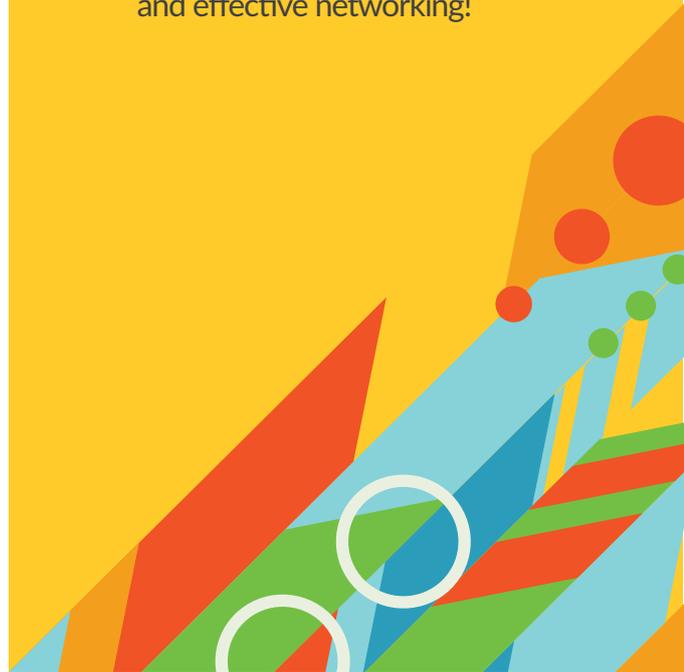
The Women Entrepreneurship Conference (WECON'17) was held at the HEC Auditorium, Islamabad on 11th March, 2017, bringing together a veritable 'Who's Who' from Pakistan's entrepreneurial ecosystem. In addition to providing a platform for celebrating our iconic women entrepreneurs, WECON'17 also featured in-depth discussions with ecosystem builders, incubators, accelerators, government bodies and fresh startups-highlighting the need for building a stronger entrepreneurial ecosystem and the actions that can be taken to achieve this.



Sayyed Ahmad Masud
CEO, Change Mechanics

“Pakistan right now is at a tipping point where technological innovations are combining with a lot of fortuitous circumstances making it one of the World's best places to launch a business.”

At Change Mechanics, we are committed in playing our part in strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem through knowledge sharing, mentor collaborations and effective networking!



WECON'17 PANEL SESSIONS

1. CREATE:

This session revolved around the procedures and structures for startups, potential policy level interventions and the steps taken by participating organizations to build a stable and sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem.



Ms. Shahnaz Kapadia Rahat, Founder Mera Maan, moderated the first session, 'Create'.

“ We should mentally empower women by educating them so that their analytical skills can be enhanced ”
- Dr. Arshad Ali



The panelists of session, 'Create' put forward their views on creating a stronger entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The first session, 'Create' aimed at uniting the existing support networks as well as mentors to bring about a better environment for women entrepreneurs. The session was moderated by Ms. Shahnaz Kapadia Rahat (Founder Mera Maan) and the panelists were Mr. Yusuf Hussain (CEO, ICT R&D Fund), Dr. Arshad Ali (Executive Director HEC), Ms. Khalida Habib (Director/HOD SECP) and Ms. Naima Ansari (Vice President FPCCI).



KEYPOINTS/CHALLENGES/ RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Fostering an enabling environment is critical to promote healthy growth of entrepreneurial activities and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in Pakistan.
- ▶ Starting a business is still a challenging reality for the women in Pakistan. It is imperative to create the ecosystem that will allow women to hold leadership positions while still being the members of Pakistani society that expects them to be homemakers.
- ▶ The solution for Pakistani women lies not only in promulgating gender mainstreaming laws and policies, but also in changing the attitudes of men. Men must have the courage to hear the opinions of women in business and give them the space they need to be a part of trade policy formulation.
- ▶ The gender gap must be reduced by initiating efforts where women are empowered to inclusively conduct business and actively engage at policy tables as decision-makers.
- ▶ Entrepreneurship should be integrated at all levels of the formal education system, where access to information related to entrepreneurship can be ensured. HEC has started working to organize the research activities and fully functional ORIC (Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization) in universities.
- ▶ Aspiring women entrepreneurs need to be trained with skills and knowledge to make informed financial decisions and manage their money wisely. SECP Investors Education Program 'Jamapunji' is facilitating women through training sessions.
- ▶ ICT R&D Fund is funding high tech ventures, commercializable technology, establishing solid tech startups and providing ICT based trainings to women across the country. Technology related training is a MUST for female entrepreneurs.
- ▶ Development of digital skills program is essential for women entrepreneurs to train them and to increase the number of women who are engaged in freelancing. These trainings should be offered in universities, colleges and other institutions.
- ▶ Education is interrelated with mental empowerment. There is a need to mentally empower women by educating them so that their analytical skills can be enhanced.
- ▶ There exists a lack of avenues for finding new innovative ideas. Therefore, the focus of entrepreneurship trainings and startup intervention programs should be centered on innovation for women entrepreneurs.
- ▶ Women need to take themselves seriously; if women will take themselves seriously only then others will.
- ▶ Government needs to establish trade policies for women, give them facilitation and provide subsidies for women entrepreneurs
- ▶ Media needs to play an active role in showcasing and celebrating women entrepreneurial achievements. Also, we need to have a television program that reaches out to general public and showcases freelancing and educational work of women to create awareness in the society.

2. CULTIVATE:

This session focused on the challenges, opportunities, achievements and the way forward for women entrepreneurship



Mr. Murtaza Zaidi, Executive Director TIE, Islamabad, moderated the second session, 'Cultivate.'

The second session, 'Cultivate' brought together people who are directly involved with women entrepreneurs in capacity-building through skills development and knowledge exchange. The session was moderated by Mr. Murtaza Zaidi (Executive Director, TIE Islamabad) and the panelists were Ms. Rida Shoaib (Project Manager, Herself), Ms. Maria Umer (Founder, Women Digital League/Women X), Ms. Shahina Waheed (Program Manager, UNIDO), Mr. Tauseef Zaman (ICCI) and Ms. Shehab Niazi (Entrepreneur, Mentor WeCreate, Pakistan).



The Panelists of session, 'Cultivate' engaged in intense and meaningful discussion.



KEYPOINTS/CHALLENGES/ RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Fostering an enabling environment is critical to promote healthy growth of entrepreneurial activities and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in Pakistan.
- ▶ Women are discouraged from working outside their homes, which is the major cause of a dormant women workforce. Women's Digital League has taken a step towards resolving this issue. Around 365 women in 7 districts have been trained through this platform out of which 40% of them are earning today.
- ▶ In addition to the existing support available, there is a need for business growth support for women. For this purpose, UNIDO has launched the Business Growth Center (BGC) of Pakistan to enhance mobility, visibility and connectivity of women entrepreneurs. It also provides access to information, market intelligence, business acumen, counseling and capacity building support for women.
- ▶ UNIDO in collaboration with ICCI also launched "Women in Clean-tech Campaign" which aimed at encouraging women entrepreneurs to embrace clean technology products that offered immense potential for business growth.
- ▶ Mindset is probably the major determinant of success in every walk of life. At one time or another, all entrepreneurs have heard a million reasons why they shouldn't have gone into business. To prevent this, there is a need to change this mindset and create awareness among people.
- ▶ Women need to have equality when it comes to the wage gap. Women are equally skilled as men, but unfortunately they get paid less than men; that's where women need equality.
- ▶ Women entrepreneurs are hesitant to come forward and are unaware of the opportunities that exist. WECREATE provides a very holistic kind of support for women interested in starting or expanding an existing business.
- ▶ Bridging the gap between men and women becomes difficult, when women are not even supporting other women. Women need to make an active decision not to engage in competition and support one another- when women truly support one another, amazing things happen.
- ▶ Women need to step out of their comfort zones and embrace new challenges. Breaking your own mold can only make you stronger and more confident to reach higher levels in your professional and personal life.
- ▶ People involved in entrepreneurial programs and organizations need to develop and introduce specific strategies different from the general existing strategies to increase women's participation.

3. CELEBRATE:

This session showcased the success stories of inspiring women entrepreneurs.

“ The aim should not be ‘big profits’
but rather ‘big impact.’ ”
- Shahnaz Kapadia Rahat

The third session, ‘Celebrate’ aimed to celebrate the entrepreneurial way of life of successful entrepreneurs and highlighted their insights, challenges, opportunities and achievements. Ms. Maryam Arshad (Community Manager, N I C) moderated the session and the panelists were Ms. Manzil e Maqsood (Founder and CEO, Oxbridge Innovative Solutions), Ms. Nigar Nazar (CEO, Gogi Studios), Ms. Sihah Waris (Founder & CEO, Rise Mom) and Ms. Shahnaz Kapadia Rahat (Founder Mera Maan).



The Panelists of session, ‘Celebrate’ engaged in intense and meaningful discussion.

Ms. Maryam Arshad,
Community Manager,
N I C, moderated the third session,
‘Celebrate’.





KEYPOINTS/CHALLENGES/ RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ A vast majority of working women are mothers, often worried about their children left at day cares. Rise Mom is working tirelessly to ensure the empowerment of working mothers, and to act as a mediator between Mothers and day care centers.

 - ▶ There is a need to create an immersive environment for students. Active learning strategies should be incorporated into every component of course design in schools to transform classroom into a dynamic learning environment.

 - ▶ The current Science and Mathematics curriculum at the primary school level in Pakistan is monotonous. STEAM is fostering a constructionist immersive to stimulate the thinking and creative skills, so that students are able to think 'out of the box'.

 - ▶ Gogi studios used a totally different medium for advocacy on various issues to raise awareness on children rights, environment and sexual harassment. From raising awareness to childhood development, to a life of poverty, to education and environmental degradation, Gogi covers a gamut of our society's positives and pitfalls.

 - ▶ Mera Maan, a Social Enterprise in spirit and soul, focuses on building people and organizations 'capacities to build capacities', so that successful pilots across the country can
- ▶ be scaled up. It is an innovative thinker, in designing and implementing programs in enterprise and value chain development, scaling up capacity building, and modeling community-based social enterprise platforms to address poverty.

 - ▶ Social enterprises work through a heart and mind model. The aim should not be 'big profits' but rather 'big impact'. Given the social issues in this country, there is a need to promote hundreds of thousands of social enterprises. Women often work through their hearts and passion, and can be amazing candidates for social entrepreneurship.

 - ▶ Successful entrepreneurs are resilient. Man or woman, it is the ability to land on your feet each time you face a challenge, and emerge stronger. There may be times when you must challenge expected traditions and norms, and work towards changing mindsets and thinking.

 - ▶ Entrepreneurs need to be constantly innovative, i.e. challenging themselves to doing it cheaper, better and faster. In the absence of this competency, it will be impossible to sustain and grow.

4. INVESTORS LOUNGE:

This session uncovered and accelerated business approaches to help women led businesses grow and succeed in our particular environment.



“Passion can take you anywhere. If you have passion in your heart and the idea is innovative, you can achieve anything.”

- Ayesha Hamid



Ms. Rabia Ahmad, Director, Corporate Advisory Council (CAC), NUST, moderated the last session, 'Investors Lounge'.

The last session, 'Investors Lounge' aimed to facilitate more interaction between aspiring women entrepreneurs and potential investors by creating awareness about sources of funding and the realistic expectations of investors. The session was moderated by Ms. Rabia Ahmad (Director, Corporate Advisory Council (CAC) of NUST) and the panelists were Ms. Ayesha Hamid (President OPEN Lahore), Mr. Faisal Sherjan (Director of LUMS Centre for Entrepreneurship, Co-founder Patari) and Mr. Murtaza Zaidi (Executive Director, TiE Islamabad).



The panelists of 'Investors Lounge' shared their perspectives on the entrepreneur/investor relationship.



KEYPOINTS/CHALLENGES/ RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Women are not far behind in terms of quality; quality is there, quantity might be lesser.
- ▶ Money is not the problem right now. It's the quality and attitude of the startup – the research that they do before reaching out to an investor and the integrity and scale which they propose. StartUp Cup has been designed to increase the quality and quantity of entrepreneurs in the community.
- ▶ Today's environment is completely conducive for women entrepreneurs and women must take advantage of it. When we make a comparison of 1986 and 2017, we see that today women have more opportunities and less challenges; at that time there were no opportunities and very difficult challenges.
- ▶ Passion can take you anywhere. If you have the passion in your heart and the idea is innovative, you can achieve anything.
- ▶ Challenges are in the mind. If women actually step up, they will find support from within and outside the family.
- ▶ Think of entrepreneurship and not the gender of the entrepreneur.
- ▶ Women need to reassure and prove that they are committed to their business ideas in order to live up to investor's expectations.
- ▶ A lot of people want to start their businesses, but the problem is that they don't go out and research and don't identify a problem that is an opportunity.
- ▶ In the past couple of years, the quality of startups has declined because there is not enough information out there for startups to get their innovative ideas into action. There is a need to build entrepreneurship, the incubations, the startups, the funding and the scaling. Start Up Academy has been specifically designed to give hands-on mentoring and coaching, donate legal services and offer access to funding sources and specialists in the start-up process.
- ▶ Entrepreneurs need to chase after the money; the money is not going to come chasing after them. They need to be proactive and need to showcase themselves.
- ▶ To alleviate poverty and create economic stability, Seed Out is funding directly to micro-entrepreneurs through crowd funding.



KEY NOTE ADDRESSES

THE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS INCLUDED

• Ms. Ayesha Hamid (President OPEN Lahore)



Ms. Ayesha Hamid, President OPEN Lahore, established the underlying theme with her keynote address.

• Ms. Hira Batool Rizvi (Founder/Owner of Shekab)



Ms. Hira Batool Rizvi, the brains behind Shekab, Shared her inspirational story.

• Ms. Samar Hasan (Co-founder Epiphany)



Ms. Samar Hasan, Co-founder, Epiphany, spoke about the need for support systems to have the right platform for entrepreneurial growth.

• Ms. Hira Batool Rizvi (Founder/Owner of Shekab)



Ms. Huma Mustafa Beg, Founder Ministry of Change, gave an inspiring speech about the ability of our entrepreneurs to be an integral part of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

• Ms. Samar Hasan (Co-founder Epiphany)



Mr. Kaiyan Yousaf, Senior Manager Knowledge Management, Karandaaz, spoke about the importance of supporting women-owned startups.

• Ms. Marvi Mustafa Soomro (Founder Innovate. Educate. Inspire (IEI) Pakistan)



Ms. Marvi Mustafa Soomro, a 26-year-old girl, left her successful career behind and moved to a small valley to empower children through education.



KEYPOINTS/CHALLENGES/ RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Creating platforms for women is the need of the hour, since nearly 50% majority of our population comprises of women. Enabling environment to promote entrepreneurship will impact poverty reduction.
- ▶ 80% of the population of Pakistan never gets to be on a platform like WECON'17. No country can become stable and strong economically until and unless we take all those people on board. Thus, we have to impact them and need to take them with us.
- ▶ Pakistan is the nexus for the paradigm shift from the West to the East.
- ▶ There is a need for pressure groups to make the government and industry formalize policies that will help women in becoming successful entrepreneurs.
- ▶ All we need is to strengthen ourselves and come together as an ocean.
- ▶ No one can be motivated unless you have the reason to be motivated.
- ▶ It is the understanding of your privilege of being privileged that basically becomes your reason to act. Each one of us is privileged one way or another but most of us, unfortunately, are oblivious to what it is that makes us privileged.
- ▶ 17 million Pakistani women struggle with transportation problems every day. Unfortunately, this is the main reason for women preferring to stay confined within the four walls of their houses rather than realizing their full potential. SheKab is one of the solutions to this problem and we need initiatives offering similar services.
- ▶ Tackling the real problems that hinder women empowerment is really the solution to our problem.
- ▶ There is a need for development assistance, nurturing social entrepreneurship, building institutions, governance research and promoting policy advocacy.
- ▶ If you have lived your journey with commitment, honesty and passion; then you are a winner.
- ▶ Start to think of your business as something which is a solution for a problem. If it's worth it; then you are on the right track.
- ▶ Don't let anyone tell you that if you want to have children, you need to sit at home; there are a number of female entrepreneurs who are working out there and making it. Both are just as important.
- ▶ We talk about women empowerment but are not ready to invest money for women startups. Therefore, women need to strategically figure it out themselves.
- ▶ People are doing incredible things but unfortunately do not have a platform to showcase it. Ministry of Change is a platform that works towards making the best of Pakistan visible. It is for people who are obsessed with creating change and people who want to participate in something big.
- ▶ The Innovation Challenge Fund by Karandaaz identifies economic and social problems that government and private sector are unable to solve due to limited resources and guarantee issues respectively. So, Karandaaz and ICF take up such risks, provide financing that eventually leads to the product getting rolled out.
- ▶ The collective factors in an ecosystem are twice as important as individual factors. Women need to be confident that they will be able to grow. Women who are more ambitious are less susceptible to self-limiting beliefs.
- ▶ Men are much less aware of the challenges faced by women. Men need to believe that women face problems in order to support them.
- ▶ Make sure you are doing something which is better than what others are doing.
- ▶ Innovate. Educate. Inspire. Program is working to empower students of remote valleys through innovative and interactive education. It aims to empower communities through art to be self-expressive, imaginative and observant.



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- ▶ We support universities in capacity building of Business Incubation centers and ORICs.
- ▶ We provide corporates with startup led innovative solutions.
- ▶ We arrange leadership and management trainings from globally renowned national and international trainers.
- ▶ We act as a bridge between industry and academia in finding innovative solutions for industries through academic research
- ▶ Creating a knowledge hub "startup.pk" to empower startups.

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Our success stories



Pakistan

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