

Saksham

SNAPSHOT	
Organization(s)	PLAN International
Project Name	Saksham
Location	Delhi, Hyderabad, Uttarakhand; India
Date(s) of Implementation	May 2010 – Present
Funding Amount	USD 2.3 million
Partner(s) / Funder(s)	Wheelabrator France; W. Diamant; Accenture; Bombardier; GSRD Foundation; Exxon Mobil; Deutsche Banks
Number of Youth Beneficiaries Trained	Total: 6,000 Women: 3,660 Men: 2,340
Number of Youth Beneficiaries Employed	Total: 4,550 Women: 2,690 Men: 1,860
Number of Youth who created/registered new enterprises	Total: 1,200 Women: 900 Men: 300
Number of Youth who became self-employed	Total: 600 Women: 500 Men: 100
Avg. Monthly Earnings of Youth Beneficiaries after Program	USD 150 – USD 160 ¹
Type(s) of Digital Work	Private Sector: IT sector Private Sector: Non-IT sectors Digital entrepreneurship
Source of Metrics	Internal monitoring and evaluation

ABOUT SAKSHAM

Saksham provides young people with market-led trainings, support for transition into decent employment, entrepreneurship training and opportunities to work with their communities. This enables them to obtain employment in the private and public sector or become self-employed. Saksham’s approach is guided by the principles of decent employment, which focuses on creating an enabling environment, promoting equal wages and supporting freedom of expression for youth.

Gender mainstreaming² is an important strategy across all areas, and is promoted by:

- Systematically analyzing concerns of women and men through all program design phases;
- Implementing targeted interventions designed to enable women and men to participate equally in, and benefit equally from the program;
- Linking with the Safe Cities program; and
- Ensuring monitoring and evaluation of results using gender-disaggregated indicators.

¹ 8-10% average increase per year.

² Gender mainstreaming is the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs, with a view to promoting gender equality.

PROJECT DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION

Program Design	Supply-Side Components		Demand-Side Components	
	Training & Skills Development	✓	Improving Access to Finance for SMEs	×
	Employment & Intermediation Services	✓	Capacity Building & Information Provision	×
	Subsidized Employment	✓	Targeted Sector-Specific Approaches	×

ACTIVITIES

Youth Employment

The SAKSHAM program offers a matrix of activities within each of six program verticals. The elements work together to help youth to gain skills and be placed into decent job opportunities, eventually resulting in youth economic empowerment.

Saksham's program verticals include:

- **Job-Oriented Vocational Training (JOVT).** This refers to all processes and trainings undertaken in Saksham to provide youth access to job oriented vocational training and support to transition into formal jobs.
- **Skills Development Training.** Computer and digital skills training, along with complementary skills such as life-skills, workplace communication and financial literacy training.
- **Counseling and Aptitude Testing for Trades.**
- **Gender Equality and Life-Skills Training.**
- **Job Preparedness Trainings and Job Placement.** Youth are provided support in terms searching suitable jobs based on their interest and aptitude. Youth participants are provided with training on workplace communication, developing CVs, emailing and browsing, facing interviews etc. This helped participants to get ready before they face interviews with employers.
- **Post-Placement Support and Mentorship.** Saksham ensures follow up for at least 6 months after placement. Sustainability is sought on the personal level by ensuring the trained youth are empowered to deploy their skills to achieve their goals of decent work and economic security.

Youth Entrepreneurship

SAKSHAM also offers the following services to promote youth entrepreneurship:

- **Vocational Training for Entrepreneurship Promotion (VTEP).** Training was provided on key components of how to set-up self-employment units, sourcing seed-capital, developing a business plan (including market feasibility for a particular product/ service, calculation of opex and capex,

break-even analysis etc.), identification of suppliers / vendors and sellers/buyers to forge forward and backward market linkages, establishing linkages with government/ other welfare schemes (if any), developing local mentorship networks for supporting budding entrepreneurs to seek essential business operation's know-how.

- **Link to microfinance institutions.** Youth beneficiaries were also linked to community managed microfinance institutions such as Self-Help Groups so that they can seek financial and other assistance.
- **Access to government subsidies.** Young people were provided with access to various governments based subsidies or schemes (if any) to source the seed-capital to set-up self-employment units.

Program Modifications

Over the past few years, SAKSHAM has modified its program design and implementation strategies to include:

- **Carrying out a market intelligence study before commencement of project (periodic updates).** The SAKSHAM staff conducted this study before the commencement of the program. Staff collected data to understand gender-based job requirements in Delhi, Hyderabad and Uttarakhand. Jobs indicators included: Number of men and women in the workforce; The profile type of skills required by employers; Remuneration levels for men and women; and Differences in work timing and shifts for young men and women.

Staff also researched details of facilities, infrastructure and benefits provided by local employers, including: the availability of maternity benefits; the existence of separate restrooms for women; availability of transport subsidies; and compliance with labor and safety regulations. During training and job placement, program staff also sought to understand the working environment of potential employers by reviewing human resources policies for compliance with safety standards and to see if companies included any specific language encouraging the hiring and retention of women. Program staff also monitored market trends to identify companies that hired only or mostly female staff. Through this study, SAKSHAM accordingly implemented its Gender mainstreaming strategy.

- **Introduction of gender mainstreaming and training (of youth, parents and project personnel) on gender-based programming.**
- **Introduction of financial literacy (saving and investing) and financial inclusion (opening and operating bank accounts).**
- **Extensive engagement of alumni to ensure that they share much needed job-related information with learners undergoing training**

RECRUITMENT

SAKSHAM applied a mix of youth and community mobilization techniques, including door-to-door outreach, project announcements on cars, strategically located information kiosks, and social media ads for recruitment. By emphasizing alumni stories, potential applicants can see how the program is relevant to their own lives. Videos and advertisements are posted in English and in Hindi, and depict girls and young women in classrooms, using computers, discussing the impact that Saksham has had on their personal and professional lives. Saksham also publishes blogs featuring interviews with current and past students.

Parent-engagement was central to PLAN India's strategy for recruitment and retention of youth, particularly girls. PLAN India conducted gender-specific career counselling sessions with parents and girls. By engaging parents on the process of training delivery from the start of the program through the job-placement phase, parents could develop the necessary confidence and trust to send the girls for training and jobs. PLAN India organized parents' visits to prospective job location where their children would be working, so that they get comfortable and understand that their daughters would be working in safe environment. PLAN India also facilitated interactions between parents and former program beneficiaries who were already working, so that parents can be motivated to send girls to job and trainings.

"In the beginning, my father didn't want me to look for a job. He is conservative. My mother and Saksham staff and I persuaded him. Now my family is very happy, my father is very proud."

Manisha, Saksham graduate

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Recruitment (especially for girls) was a challenge, as safety concerns are often present.

Retention. It was challenging for program staff to keep track of all youth beneficiaries as many of them changed their contact numbers post-training and did not inform at their respective centers.

Overcoming traditional job expectations. Young people wanted to work in 'traditional' jobs, due to a lack of awareness about new market economy jobs and new employment opportunities therein. To address this, SAKSHAM organized interactive sessions with beneficiaries to help youth learn about a range of potential job opportunities and career paths in these jobs.

Limited availability of seed-capital cost delays the business start-up process. Many youth beneficiaries had to face this challenge and linking them with the financial services was difficult. To mitigate this, youth were asked to plan their finances at time of business plan development. They were asked to start with small investments, support from other organizations/projects has also been sought besides youth linked to community managed micro finance groups.

BENEFICIARY EXPERIENCES

- More than 85% of youth have continued and joined higher/next level of education.
- 60% of youth provided with training and 54% of those place in jobs are girls and young women

"I can't even express how much of a change I have experienced in myself. I used to be so frightened to go out on my own or to deal with strangers. Now, I feel confident to deal with anyone and speak up for myself,"

Komal, Saksham graduate

EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

6,000
youth beneficiaries
trained

75%
youth beneficiaries
employed

Over 6,000 youth provided job oriented vocational training and vocational training for entrepreneurship promotion. Since Saksham was launched in 2011, more than 5,500 young people which includes 3,400 young women, were placed in jobs in various sectors such as hospitality, retail and IT- enabled services. ³75% of youth were employed, including self-employment. Youth were placed into jobs with international brands and companies including Café Coffee Day, Au Bon Pain, Futures Group, Reliance, Pantaloons, Big Bazaar and KFC, among others. Within 2 years of job placement, over 80% of the graduates increased their monthly income by two times.⁴

"I got a job and became the first girl in my family to be employed."

Alpana, Saksham graduate

ADDITIONAL OUTCOMES

- The average marriage age for girls in the target community has risen.
- There is increased trust in community and parents for Saksham training. Helping other parents as well to send their daughters for training.
- Overall family income of youth has increased.
- Enhanced financial literacy youth is increasing the ability of youth participants to save.
- Young girls represented Saksham at international forums.

³ <https://plan-international.org/eu/saksham-india>.

⁴ Ibid.

KEY FINDINGS

1. **Engagement of alumni is crucial for ensuring that the under-training youth get much needed exposure and support to understand job environment.**
2. **Employers' engagement at every stage of project implementation develops a partnership that is based on co-creation and shared understanding about goals and objectives of the project.** This makes the job placement process smoother.
3. **Parents' engagement is a successful strategy in selecting right youth for training.** Parent engagement helped develop a supportive and enabling environment for youth to receive and remain in jobs, which improved job retention rates.
4. **Youth and community mobilization requires a critical mix of techniques.** These strategies include door-to-door, auto announcements, information kiosks erections supplemented with new methods like use of mobiles, intent based applications etc. to source appropriate youth for the training.
5. **On-the-job training is crucial for youth to remove employment-related inhibitions among them.** It also helps them to gain confidence, understand job-opportunities, and get acquainted with their work environment. This also reduces job attrition rate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Conduct a market analysis prior to program design and implementation.** Understand key indicators and gender-based job requirements, including: number of females & males; nature of jobs for girls and boys; profile type of skills required and its implications, especially for girls; remuneration offered to girls & boys, timings & shifts for boys and girls. Program staff should also research details of workplace facilities, infrastructure and accommodation services, including maternity benefit, crèche, transport, separate toilets, rest room for girls, other statutory compliances and safety issues, etc. Programs should understand the company's working environment from a gender perspective, and check if the Human Resource policy of the company specifically encourages hiring of girls in written or unwritten way. Finally, program staff should explore new market trends such as companies that hire only/more female staff.
2. **Adopt gender-sensitive community- and youth-mobilization strategies.** Create awareness on gender issues at community level with a focus on women's economic empowerment and addressing gender based disparity and stereotypes. Develop gender specific special IEC material for motivation of girls and parents. Revise existing ALL existing IEC material and make it gender sensitive.
3. **Provide accommodation services for girls and young women.** Provide direct support or network with other NGOs to guide girls to get the necessary documents required for enrolment. Provide direct support or network with other NGOs for transportation, childcare or other support services. Extend support in opening bank accounts, as a part of financial inclusion process. Include financial literacy training, especially for girls and young women. Implement mandatory follow-up with

female dropouts, to understand their reasons for withdrawing and identify possible services could have helped them remain in the program.

- 4. Establish safe spaces for girls and young women.** Keep 'safety for girls' as one of the key criteria for selecting the location of training centers. Ensure gender sensitive infrastructure like separate toilets and drinking water zones. Recruit Female faculty as a policy: one female faculty against every male faculty. Ensure that the duration of training facilitates the transition from domestic work to formal employment. Provide gender-sensitivity training to all faculty members to enhance their comprehension of gender issues, including focusing on career counselling and job placement for young female beneficiaries.