ENGENDERING TECHNOLOGY

FAT

Feminist Approach to Technology

ANNUAL REPORT
2012-2013

Feminist Approach to Technology (FAT) was started in 2007 with the aim of strengthening women's participation in technological fields. For the women's movement in India, the question of technology had been relatively untouched. Therefore FAT strived to engage the issue through dialogue and action, by working with women's organizations, feminist groups, and adolescent girls from underprivileged backgrounds. Over the years, FAT has developed 6 programs; the Technical Center, the School Intervention Program, We Women In Technology (WeWIT) Initiative, Research and Documentation, Advocacy Initiative, and Technical Assistance to Women's Groups. This year, 2012-13, saw major focus on developing the Technical Center, as well as outlining FAT's future directions.

Experiences and Learnings

Funds and Technical Assistance to Women's Groups

In its initial years, FAT struggled to articulate the connection between science and technology to the women's movement in India, and was trying to establish links with various women's groups. Amongst the women's groups, there was a general understanding of what FAT was, but there was confusion about what it was trying to do. As FAT started to work with women's groups by assisting them with their technical needs such as website design and simplifying terminology, interest in FAT grew, as did a dialogue on the intersection of women and technology. Since it was not just a matter of providing technical services, but also strengthening the women's movement, the importance of this work became clearer. FAT, in turn, found its niche in bridging the gap between technology and women's groups while demystifying the language of technology. The collaboration became so valuable, that FAT even provided assistance to some international. Over the years, FAT has worked with We Can End Violence against Women Campaign, Sahayog's Mera Swasthya Mera Adhikaar project, Foundation for Social Transformation, North East Network of Assam, NCDHR, Women in Governance (WinG) Network, Kivulini Women's Rights Organization (Tanzania), New Light Children Center Organization (Tanzania), and Prevent Gender Based Violence Africa (East and Southern Africa).

In April 2012, Gayatri (Founder of FAT) and Shilpi (Volunteer at FAT) conducted a Video and Social Media Training Workshop in Mumbai for PUKAR (Partners for Urban Knowledge, Action and Research). The trainees were a diverse and very committed group, including 17 Youth Fellows and 7 staff of PUKAR. They learned how to make short films on their individual research topics and how they could be used on social media.

FAT's identity had initially been established through these trainings, but more importantly, it was also the medium through which FAT stayed financially operational in these formative years. However this technical assistance work was becoming FAT's mainstay, therefore shifting the original aim of strengthening women's roles in technology. Also, around this time many other individuals and agencies were providing a similar service, and as FAT was lacking technical resource people, a conscious decision was taken to pause this work and focus on its main work. Though it has been suggested to continue this work as a separate entity, it is not possible for FAT to undertake it at this point.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND ADVOCACY INITIATIVE

FAT also started its Advocacy Initiative in 2011 wherein the goal was to initiate a dialogue regarding intersections between science & technology and women's rights. Two national level consultations were organized in Delhi and Mumbai and attended by various women's organizations and feminist activists where positions, ideas, concerns, successes, and problems were put forth. A major outcome of these consultations was the support gained from these groups and individuals, with a feedback that the women's movement has not yet engaged with science and technology in a comprehensive manner and, therefore, there is a gap that needs to be bridged by capacity building.

Another initiative that was started by volunteers was the We Women In Technology (WeWIT) Program, an online database and network of women professionals and aspirants in the field of science and technology. It was started in 2009, and aims to disseminate information and provide mentoring for young women while creating a supportive professional network for women in technical and technological fields.

The challenge in sustaining both of these initiatives has been lack of both human and financial resources. As FAT does not have a Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) Registration, it has struggled for funds to continue all of its programs. Even if some program costs were cut, the lack of human resources at FAT has caused programs like the Advocacy Initiative and WeWIT to come to a halt. Stable funding and adequate human resources are both equally necessary in order to continue with our work in a consistent manner. To continue the Advocacy Initiative in a smaller way, Gayatri gives talks and presentations at women and tech forums in India and abroad. However, the desire to engage more systematically and widely with the topic remains to be completed.

This year, Gayatri spoke at XSEDE 2012 Conference (Extreme Science and Engineering Discovery Environment) in Chicago, USA. She spoke about the reasons for the gender disparity in STEM fields and ways to challenge them.

TECHNICAL CENTER

The Tech Center located in Lajpat Nagar currently forms the backbone of FAT. It was started in 2010 with girls from some low-income communities near Lajpat Nagar. Team member Asha joined FAT in April 2011 and has now taken on full responsibilities of the Tech Center this year *(Read more about Asha below in 'Stories of Change'.)*. A group of 15 girls in a single batch undergo a six-month course in computers along with many workshops and activities on gender and patriarchy, media tools, and other relevant issues. However, when we first started working with this batch in 2011, it became clear that we were not dealing simply with teaching girls how to use technology.

As the discussions on gender and society progressed, the girls' personal stories became central as their experiences of domestic violence and early marriage

was their reality. The daily problems they faced became inseparable from the things they were learning at the Tech Center. While FAT was a safe space for these girls, team members also learned through much struggle that working with adolescent girls required much individual support and quick thinking on one's feet. It was an intensely personal and challenging time for team members, stretching their capabilities leading to a lot of introspection and discussion. The year 2012 was an important one as the batch of girls that started in 2011 completed their computer course and their stories became testaments to overcoming immense obstacles. Almost 90% of the girls in this batch had just completed senior secondary education and were sure that their parents would not allow them to pursue any further education. With the new-found confidence after completing their course at FAT's Tech Center, and the power of technology, they used the Internet to find out about the application procedure in several colleges, deadlines, cut-off marks etc., and applied together for seats in different colleges. Many parents supported the girls while several others objected, to the extent that one girl had to go on a hunger strike, another had to sign a contract with her parents to delay her marriage if her college fees was supported by a donor, one had to tell her father that she would not sign her "Nikahnama" (wedding contract) if he did not sign her college application. Almost each of them had to work part-time to support their college fees. It was a testing time for both the girls and our team, with many day-to-day struggles and joys. However, this testing time also helped us cross the hurdle of understanding

how technology can play a crucial role in empowering girls to make their own choices. This was the first time a girl went to college in many families. These girls became the superstars of their residential colonies, with other girls in their colonies looking up to them and asking them for advice.

Ever since this batch completed their course, FAT has never had to go door-to-door to promote our Technical Center program. Girls come to the Center for admissions in such numbers that we often have to keep a waiting list. As a result, the insufficient number of computers in our Center became a big deterrent for us. We were only able to cater to 15 girls at one time, with three girls sharing one computer. A timely and generous donation provided us with 15 more computers for the Center as well as printer, camera and some

networking equipment. Another phase for our Tech Center started with this new equipment. A small center with 5 computers and 15 girls turned into a technology hub with 60 girls attending every day. Some of the previous students started to volunteer and help Asha deliver the classes. We started seeing leadership of the participating girls in managing the center and the program itself.

As the number of participants increased, the power of collective action also started becoming visual. The girls were infuriated and participated in full force in the many protest marches that happened after the December 16 "Nirbhaya" rape case. This well-publicized case fueled a lot of discussion around sexual violence that girls face within their own community. Shortly after this incident, a personal tragedy came to light as one of our ex-Tech Center girls was assaulted at her house by an electrician who tried to rape her, and when he failed in his attempt, tried to murder her and brutally inserted a rod down her throat. As a response to this, the Tech Center girls initiated a protest march shouting slogans in their neighborhood and galvanized local support by holding a community discussion, followed by a street play on sexual violence by the Asmita Theater Group. Collective activism within the participating girls started with this, after which discussion on "what we can do to make girls' rights a priority issue within our community" became an important topic of conversation when they met in the Tech Center.

While we continued to support the activism of the young girls, we were also very focused on our end goal which is promoting STEM education for girls. For us, the Tech Center is heading towards becoming a hub of girls' activism using technology as a tool. But it is also a safe space where girls can learn more about Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, ask all sort of questions they want to, and get over their fear of these subjects. Towards this goal, volunteer Usha Srinivasan started taking Mathematics classes every Saturday. She answered questions in a fun and engaging way and

also played different Math games with the girls.

OTHER ACTIVITIES IN THE TECH CENTER

Volunteer Divya took self-defense classes by teaching a form of self-defense called 'Wenlido' in August 2012 in which the Tech Center girls were taught different hand techniques, how to defend against attacks from behind, and the importance of regular practice.

The YP Foundation conducted two workshops on gender and sexuality in March as part of their 'Shareer Apna, Adhikaar Apne' (Know your body, Know your rights) campaign and will continue to do so in the future.

FAT was also visited by representatives from the Nike Foundation in September to collect stories of change. One of the stories can be accessed here:

http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/ impact/success-stories/62-general/2041-tale-of-two-techies

FAT was also featured in Intel's report by Dalberg Global Development Advisors called "Women and the Web: Bridging the Internet gap and creating new global opportunities in low and middle-income countries". The report can be accessed at:

http://www.intel.com/content/dam/ www/public/us/en/documents/pdf/ women-and-the-web.pdf

SOME STORIES OF CHANGE

Aarti is a young woman from Jal Vihar (a settlement in Lajpat Nagar) and started coming to the Tech Center in March 2011. It was because of her that other girls from her neighborhood got to know about the Center and also started attending the classes. She was academically very gifted, achieving high marks in 12th standard and had a strong desire to pursue graduate studies at Delhi University. However, when her elder sister passed away after giving birth, Aarti faced much family pressure to get married to her brother in-law, as no dowry would be taken. Her family said they could not afford for her to pursue her education as she desired. She continued to fight, and even received a three-year scholarship from an individual donor through FAT. The only condition of the scholarship was that her parents could not have her married during this time, to which they agreed. Aarti has started her Bachelors' degree this year and wants to work in the educational field someday.

Meenu lives in Jal Vihar with her mother and six siblings. She was extremely fearful of going outside, whether it was the local market or even her school. Once she had witnessed a friend of hers being assaulted by a boy after her friend had stood up for herself, so Meenu thought it better to avoid public spaces altogether. A friend brought her to the Tech Center in 2011.She began to realize new things about herself; that she could talk openly with people, that she was being heard and she also learnt to make a short film. When foreign visitors came to FAT, it was Meenu who became their Delhi tour guide- showing them places like the Purana Qila and India Gate. Her fear of walking the streets alone has been shed as she gives night tuitions to children and has also taken up a job. She dreams of becoming a TV news reporter one day to highlight injustices against women and expose criminals.

Shabnam is a young woman filled with fire, outspoken about the ill-treatment of women, how they are prevented from doing certain things and denied certain rights. When she first came to the Tech Center she was too afraid to touch the computers as she thought they were not meant for her. She thought that only those with good English speaking skills can use computers. That notion soon changed, and afterwards, she was very adamant about pursuing college studies. After filling out the admission form, taking a loan from friends to deposit the tuition fees, all she needed was her father's signature. When he refused to do this, she said, "When you come for my signature for the marriage document, I will refuse in front of everyone and not sign." Shabnam continues to pursue her college studies and supports herself financially.

Raveena was Meenu's close friend and came to the center with her. After being at FAT for 8 months, Raveena was hired as

an administrative intern. Shy and an introvert by nature, she had a lot of trouble talking to new people, was anxious in public spaces and when traveling by using public transport. As part of her work with FAT, she had to go to banks and markets with lists of things to do and people to talk to. Initially, she was hesitant to go out alone, but braved her fears and ventured out. After a few months, she started taking the bus confidently, stopped calling to ask for directions, and even began using Google Maps. Soon enough, she was helping us interact with other girls from Jal Vihar and even organizing events for them.

After a whole year with FAT, she wanted to push herself further into newer surroundings. She applied for a job as a data operator, gave the interview, and was selected! She has shared that she does not feel shy any more and will speak out at her new workplace if the need arises. Raveena now contributes a substantial amount to her household expenses as well as single-handedly takes care of her own personal and educational expenses. She is currently pursuing her graduation in Arts.

Asha lives in Delhi and joined FAT as an office assistant after finishing her graduation. She is a passionate dancer and had been a member of Pragatisheel Yuva Sangathan since her school days, through which she worked in her own community teaching dance and doing street plays. She has always been outspoken about injustice, whether being involved in

protest marches or taking a stand against caste discrimination. In order to escape her family's pressure to get married, she went searching for work. Even though she was not very interested in computers, she was confident about speaking to people and had an understanding of community issues. Soon after she was hired, she started visiting Jal Vihar and meeting the girls there, establishing a good connection with their families.

During this year, Asha has taken on immense responsibilities in both handling administration and taking charge of the Tech Center with much enthusiasm. She used to think the Internet was boring, and would get frustrated and overloaded, but now uses it to find information and plan activities. She guides discussions regarding gender, sexuality, and patriarchy and mentors and supports the Tech Center girls. She plans to continue taking up more of a leadership role in FAT in the coming year.

With the increasing number of girls at the Tech Center, we have realized that we need a trained counselor for the girls who share various problems with the FAT team. We are also continuously trying to reach out to other organizations who can come and take sessions on social issues regularly. We also intend to get involved in community mobilization in a more structured and systematic way with the help of more experienced people.

User Profile: Translating online skills to offline confidence

Ravina Gurung at the FAT technology training center
Photo credit: Feminist Approach to Technology

Ravina Gurung, Age 18
Delhi, India

"Because of the Internet, I feel I am more confident. When I had to ask about something, I was reluctant to ask strangers and that was difficult. Now I don't need to ask anyone. I can just go online and get the information."

Ravina Gurung knew that she'd need ICT skills to get a job when she graduated from university. But her parents couldn't afford a computer or Internet connection, and she didn't understand what the Internet was. When a friend told her about a nearby technology training center called Feminist Approach to Technology (FAT), she decided to come and try to understand the basics of computers and the Internet. "I was a bit scared about whether I [would] be able to learn," she says.

That was two years ago. Now Ravina spends four to five hours per day on the Internet. She uses it to search for information and to indulge her photography habit with Photoshop. She chats with friends online and sends them free SMS's. When she needs to travel around the city, she searches out maps and timetables, which saves her time and prevents her from getting lost. She uses online translation software to decipher English words whose meaning is unfamiliar. All of this has translated into a greater sense of control over what she can accomplish on her own. "Because of the Internet, I feel I am more confident. When I had to ask about something, I was reluctant to ask strangers and that was difficult. Now I don't need to ask anyone. I can just go online and get the information."

But knowing how to use the technology and access information has also increased her sense of self-confidence offline, in the real world.

"I used to feel scared earlier to even go out on my own," Ravina says. "After I joined FAT, I gained confidence that I can go out and talk to people.

The second-year university student also uses the Internet on her phone—mostly to chat on Facebook and to download music—but "everything is very small. On the PC, it's [large], and hence it's better." Still, she says, if she had unlimited Internet on her phone, "I'll use it 24 hours" per day!

When asked what should be done to get more girls and women online, Ravina draws on her own experience. She didn't understand what the Internet was or what it was capable of until she learned how to use it at FAT. "First, they need to know," she says. "They need to know that there is such a thing called the Internet," she says. "They need to know that their confidence will improve and they'll be able to search and get information about jobs and even personal information."

CONCLUSION

In 2011, the FAT team brainstormed and drafted its program strategy for the next five years. One area where we felt we needed to start working immediately was working within schools to promote STEM education for girls. In the summer of 2012, three students from Tata Institute of Social Science (TISS) Guwahati interned with FAT for a month. During their internship, we asked them to do a small baseline survey within the communities in Delhi we already work in to determine the present notions on girls studying STEM subjects. This study gave us some insights on what the present trend is with respect to STEM education of girls in low income families and what challenges seem most obvious. It was evident that direct and indirect gender discrimination that girls face within their families make it hard for girls to access higher education. However, many of the younger girls reported that they are encouraged to go to school by their family and they like science and maths. In that case, what might be the reasons behind them not taking up STEM stream in senior secondary school? This question led us to undertake a study followed by some intervention within the school setup to promote STEM education for girls. We were lucky to have found a partner organization that was equally interested in this area. In partnership with Vikas Society for People's Development, we started our School Intervention Program in February 2013. We are looking forward to see how the program progresses in the coming years.

We feel immensely proud of our achievements of 2012-2013, especially considering the fact that we did not have adequate funding. We are very thankful to the many volunteers at FAT, the board members and advisors who have been instrumental in delivering this work. It has been a learning year for us, a year when we realized we have found our footing and we now know how to move forward.

FAT team during 2012-2013

- Gayatri Buragohain – Founder
- Asha Tiwari – Program Associate
- Srirupa Bhowmick - Program Associate (till November 2012)
- Raveena Gurung – Tech Center Alumni and Intern

FAT board members during 2012 - 2013

- Monisha Behal - Chairperson
- Gayatri Buragohain - Secretary
- Rambishnu Sasmal – Treasurer
- Kavita Dasgupta – Member
- Hassath – Member
- Gurinder Kaur – Member
- K. Lalita – Member
- Rita Banetji – Member
- Simrita Gopal Singh – Member

Donors during 2012 – 2013

- Global Fund for Women, USA

AUDITED ACCOUNTS

MALHOTRA & ASSOCIATES
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

309, DELHI CHAMBER, DELHI
GATE, NEW DELHI - 110002.

FEMINIST APPROACH TO TECHNOLOGY SOCIETY : NEW DELHI
BALANCE SHEET AS ON 31ST MARCH, 2013

LIABILITIES		AMOUNT	ASSETS		AMOUNT
CAPITAL FUND			**FIXED ASSETS**		
Opening Balance	108,434.00		Computer & Acce. Op. Bal.	44,220.00	
Addition	4,900.00		Addition		
Less : Depreciation Contra	35,973.00	77,361.00	Less : Depreciation	26,532.00	17,688.00
GENERAL FUND			Furniture & Fix. - Op. Bal.	8,736.00	
Op. Bal. - As On 01.04.2012	118,567.00		Addition	4,900.00	
Less : Excess of Expenditure			Less : Depreciation	1,119.00	12,517.00
Over Income	31,541.72	87,025.28			
			Office equipment - Purchased	55,478.00	
			Less : Depreciation	8,322.00	47,156.00
CURRENT LIABILITIES & PROV.			**CURRENT ASSETS**		
Sundry Creditors		3,540.00	Security-Rent, TDS & Other Adv.	75,911.00	
			Cash - in - hand	713.88	
			With ICICI Bank	13,548.00	
			With Standard Chartered Bank	392.40	90,565.28
TOTAL(RS)		167,926.28	**TOTAL(RS)**		167,926.28

For Feminist Approach to Technology Society

FOR MALHOTRA&ASSOCIATES
CHARTERED ACCUNTANTS

Gayatri Buragohain
Secretary

Rambishnu Sasmal
Treasurer

(Ashok k. Malhotra)
Prop.

Place : New Delhi
Dated : 02.07.2013

**MALHOTRA & ASSOCIATES
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS**

**309, DELHI CHAMBER, DELHI
GATE, NEW DELHI - 110002.**

**FEMINIST APPROACH TO TECHNOLOGY SOCIETY : NEW DELHI
INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED ON 31st MARCH, 2013**

EXPENDITURE		AMOUNT	INCOME		AMOUNT
1. Global Fund For Women - Cost			**Grant-In-Aid**		
Programme Cost	622,216.00		Received during the year from :-		
Admin Overheads	173,626.72	795,842.72	1. Global Fund For Women		815,250.00
			Donation & Contribution		22,050.00
2. Society Account			Misc. Receipts		2,910.00
Salary	46,826.00		Bank Interest		2,213.00
Documentation & Stationery	12,780.00		Training & Technical support		205,000.00
Office Rent	64,970.00		Membership Fee		150.00
Travel & Conveyance	11,074.00		Excess Of Expenditure Over Income		31,541.72
Programme, Workshop & Training	90,493.00				
Admin. Overheads	52,229.00				
Furniture & Fixture - Purchased	4,900.00	283,272.00			
TOTAL(RS)		1,079,114.72	**TOTAL(RS)**		1,079,114.72

For Feminist Approach to Technology Society

FOR MALHOTRA&ASSOCIATES CHARTERED ACCUNTANTS

Gayatri Buragohain
(Secretary)

Rambishnu Sasmal
(Treasurer)

(Ashok k. Malhotra)
Prop.

**Place : New Delhi
Dated : 02.07.2013**

Feminist Approach to Technology