

Global Development Awards Competition: A Case Study

Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Project (MIDP) 2016:
Japanese Social Development Fund (JSDF) Award 2016:
Power99 Foundation



Girl students learning from educational material

Providing accessible and affordable education to children from marginalized communities, through radio

Fakhira Najib is the Chief Executive Officer of Power99 Foundation, a non-profit development organization focused on improving accessibility and affordability of education for children in Pakistan. She has developed the 'Broadclass – Listen to Learn' radio program for improving literacy and numeracy, and promoting healthy habits in children. In the 2016 edition, she won the Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Project (MIDP) of 30,000 USD and then secured the follow up Japanese Social Development Fund (JSDF) Award of 200,000 USD to implement and upscale this radio education program in Pakistan.

Promoting access to education through radio

Fakhira Najib has a strong passion for education. She started her career as a primary school teacher for the federal government and worked with the Ministry of Education for over 15 years. During her work and travels across Pakistan, she observed the

educational challenges children, and especially girls in Pakistan face, with her own eyes.

Pakistan has the world's second-highest number of out-of-school children in the world, with an estimated 22.8 million children not attending school. Most girls cannot continue with their primary or secondary education for security and economic

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Young boy tuning into the radio station

reasons because schools are not located in the vicinity. It is Fakhira's strong belief that education is important for every girl, and that society progresses only when all its girls are educated.

While working in education, Fakhira had the chance to work with an international organisation, that had a program on interactive radio education. Following this experience, she started working at the radio station Power99. At the time, the radio station was already working on topics related to the improvement of education. In fact, it was one of the first to interview Malala Yousafzai on radio. The station wanted to focus more on education, and with her strong background in the field of education, Fakhira was asked to join the program development team.

Following the huge earthquake in Pakistan in 2005, Fakhira developed a communication strategy that focused on storytelling radio shows for children in the affected areas. This was a new format, and one of the first radio programs in Pakistan that were targeted specifically at children. The stories focused on developing life skills, coping with trauma, and moral development of children. The response of children to the storytelling radio gave Fakhira abundant motivation to continue on this path.

In 2009, she started setting up an interactive education program in radio format at Power99 Radio. With a limited budget, and the assistance of female volunteers and interns, she was able to produce the first episode. The aim of the program was to increase the quality of education of children in marginalised communities and to provide girls, both in and outside of the classroom, the opportunity to receive this education free of cost. In 2012, she registered the Power99 Foundation and started piloting its episodes in classrooms. These shows became the Interactive Radio Instruction Program 'Broadclass - Listen to Learn', a program focused on improving literacy, numeracy, and English as a second language in Pakistan's primary schools.

Every day there is a live 45-minute interactive broadcast that teachers use in their classrooms. The radio shows are complemented by a face-to-face teacher training and community support. The large advantage of this methodology is the high accessibility and low costs for users, through which they can reach girls, both inside and outside of the classroom. After seeing the promising results of the first pilots in three districts, Fakhira and her team applied for a GDN MIDP award, in order to roll out the program in schools in Abbottabad.

The impact of winning the awards

Fakhira Najib and her team at Power99 Foundation won the MIDP award in 2016. The award ceremony took place in Lima, where she was able to present the program. Seeing how the judges and other attendees appreciated their story, provided tremendous motivation for Fakhira and her team.

“Winning the award totally changed our way of thinking. We realised that now we could do something that could be scaled up. Something we can sustain not only in Pakistan, but in the rest of the region as well,” she shares.

The GDN grants led to an increase in exposure and collaboration requests for the Power99

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Foundation. In general, Fakhira would highlight their continuous engagement with GDN and the widespread visibility and network it opened up for the Power99 Foundation. According to her, *“GDN gave us space to communicate with others, which helped us to find partners. Sharing the success of the GDN award with other partners increased their trust in us.”*

One example of this is the partnership with the Open Society Foundations, that was evidently the result of winning the GDN award. Together with this organisation, the Power99 Foundation was able to increase the number of districts covered. Another interesting development was that the Broadclass concept was featured in a documentary on national television, which generated extensive exposure. Up until now, Fakhira Najib sees that through GDN, Power99 Foundation is getting connected to other organisations. Recently, the organisation got connected to Canada International with whom they developed podcasts during the COVID pandemic. Another development during the pandemic was that, they were recognized by a Hundred in Finland as innovators of the month.

The Power99 Foundation used the MIDP grant funding to pilot the implementation of Broadclass Listen to Learn in 127 Grade 1 classrooms in three districts in Abbottabad. The impact assessment at the end of the pilot program showed that there was consistent and significant evidence that the program had increased students’ literacy, numeracy, and healthy habits. Based on the successful implementation and promising results of the program, they received a follow up JSDF grant to scale up to 187 Grade 2 classrooms at the same partner schools in Abbottabad.

Through the MIDP grant, the Power99 Foundation benefitted 4,963 children, 127 teachers and 2,151 parents, school council and community members in Abbottabad. With the JSDF scale up, they

have targeted 7,585 children, 2,500 parents and around 240 teachers. Girls make up 60% of the total learners. The main target group is children between the ages of 5-10 years old. However, there are indications that several adults are listening to the programs as well. Even though the main beneficiaries are targeted through school programs, girls that have dropped out of school can still be found listening to the radio episodes to keep learning from them. The MIDP’s project implementation in Abbottabad has created a huge demand from the government and communities, for its extension and replication in other areas.

Plans and ambitions for the Power99 Foundation

Initially, when Power99 Foundation was implementing the GDN grants, they focused only on Grade 1 and 2 students. Since then, they have managed to expand the content of their program further. By now, they have expanded up to Grade 5, and offer more subject areas. Where they were initially working with English integrated into all subject areas, they now have separate language sessions. They are also working on environment, history, geography, music and languages and during COVID, included art and culture. The Power99 Foundation plans to expand from radio to for example, video lessons for children. The team is currently working to receive inputs to further improve the content of their classes. In addition, the Power99 Foundation has also started working with refugees that are in high school, in the largest refugee camp in Pakistan with the support of UNESCO. In this program, the youth broadcast radio episodes on their own. Fakhira Najib and her team at the Power99 Foundation are striving to upscale the impact of their initiative to benefit more children in marginalized communities, across Pakistan and beyond. They see the need to replicate the program in the region and intend to work towards achieving this in the coming years.

AWARD

The Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Project (MIDP) 2016 – First Prize

This award category awards projects currently at the stage of implementation, and which have a high potential for impact targeting exceptionally marginalized and disadvantaged groups located in low- and middle-income countries by local non-profit NGOs.

Japanese Social Development Fund Award (JSDF) 2016

The JSDF award focuses on piloting socially innovative development projects that have been identified as having the potential for development impact and replicability through the MIDP Award. The objective of JSDF Award is to support community-driven development and poverty reduction programs that serve to enhance productivity, increase access to social and community services and infrastructure, and improve the living conditions of poor and vulnerable groups in eligible countries.

INTERVIEWEE

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KEY WORDS

Education, marginalised communities, radio, Pakistan

About the Global Development Awards Competition

The Global Development Awards Competition (GDAC) is an award scheme that identifies talent, supports the career advancement of researchers in developing countries, and funds innovative social development projects, implemented by NGOs, to benefit marginalized groups in the developing world. The award categories include the Japanese Award for Outstanding Research on Development (ORD), the Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Projects (MIDP), and the Japan Social Development Fund Award (JSDF).

About GDN

This initiative is administered by GDN, funded through the Policy and Human Resources Development Fund (PHRD) trust fund at the World Bank, and generously supported by the Ministry of Finance, Government of Japan. The competition has awarded US\$4 million in grants since 2000 to more than 200 projects.

This is one of six stories commissioned to Aidenvironment as an update of the Impact Study from 2018 (<https://www.gdn.int/gdac/impact>) to document the outcomes of the 2015-2017 editions of the Global Development Awards Competition.

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