PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

Agamir Pothey: Scholarships for Female Workers

For Olympic Industries Limited

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1. INTRODUCTION

Agamir Pothey: Scholarships for Female Workers project prepared six selected female scholars to work at higher grades in specialist positions within the factories of Olympic Industries Ltd. Higher grade in this case refers to Assistant Operator level, the first level technical position in Lolati and Madanpur factories. Scholars were chosen from the Packaging Unit following a rigorous selection process.

Both factories selected scholars from the Packaging Unit and each of the scholars were assigned a mentor. In both factories mentors work at Assistant Operator level.

The project started in June 2017 and was originally scheduled to be completed in June 2018. However, identifying the technical training provider took longer than originally anticipated. Reason for this delay is explained in section 4. The project ultimately completed in August. Final assessment of the project to determine scholars' readiness to work at higher grade was completed in July.

2. KEY APPROACH OF AGAMIR POTHEY

The main approach of the *Agamir Pothey* project was to instill self-belief among the six scholars. The project throughout its three component uses experiential learning techniques that build confidence (you can do it!), celebrate achievements (you did it!) and use these achievements to foster further self-belief (you can do it again!). See figure 1 for details of the experiential learning cycle.



FIGURE 1: THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE

3. METHODOLOGY AND WORKFLOW OF THE SCHOLARSHIPS PROGRAM

The following diagram explains methodology and workflow of the program.



FIGURE 2: METHODOLOGY AND WORKFLOW FOR AGAMIR POTHEY PROGRAM

The *Agamir Pothey* project team comprised of i) a Program Manager, responsible for overall implementation; stakeholder relationship management; monitoring and reporting of the program; and ii) two Project Assistants responsible for day to day follow-up and counseling the scholars, their families and supervisors at factory level. The project manager and project assistants' main emphasis was to improve self-esteem and build confidence; and to support learning of technical skills and application of those skills in the workplace. The team received regular guidance and overall supervision from Quay Asia's senior management team.

4. OUTCOME AT DIFFERENT STAGES: CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS AND RESULTS

Stages /Process	Outcome	
Training Needs Assessment	The plan was to choose scholars from different units such as maintenance, stock	
TNA was carried out in Lolati and Madanpur factories jointly with HR representatives from these factories.	management, supervision, numan resources development, production engineering, marketing, packaging, printing, compliance and quality assurance. Initial test of female workers preference and suitability indicated two ideal units: printing and packaging.	
Discussion with female workers, observation of workers at work, discussion with HR representatives and selected key management staff in these factories helped the TNA.	A closer analysis of job requirement, general education levels among front line women workers on factory floors, potential for employing greater numbers of women, and female workers preference validated this selection of the printing and packaging units.	
	The purpose of the TNA was to understand how the multi-stage <i>Agamir Pothey</i> program could be successfully implemented. It consisted of analysis at three levels: 1) Organization, 2) Job, and 3) Personal.	
Research on Private Training Providers	A number of private and public training providers were contacted. There is a sho	
Desk Review Research was carried out to understand the supply. Representatives of a few selected institutes were interviewed.	originally wanted a customised training program to suit specific needs of selected units in their factories. A few private and a public provider were willing to customise the training program contingent on a class of at least 50 students and an assurance of repeat training.	
	The <i>Agamir Pothey</i> project team ultimately managed to convince BITAC, a public training institute under the Ministry of Industries to arrange a short course combining selected material from two existing generic courses.	
Selection of Trainees	In Lolati three scholars were selected from a total of 16 applicants. In Madanpur three	
The scholarship project was widely advertised: an	scholars were selected from a total of 21 applicants. Selection criteria was based on the following factors:	
factory managers, advertising of the scholarship project	Applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds 25	
through attractive posters at several spots within the factory compound, and information dissemination among	 Years of service and commitment to Olympic and career 30 Tests of technical competency. literacy. numeracy and trainability 45 	
workers union by factory managers. All women workers		
Tachnical Education	The training program strangthened both technical and communication skills, and solf	
The technical Education The technical skills and experience required for (male) Assistant Operator were selected as the key benchmark skills. In addition, <i>Agamir Pothey</i> project team analyzed the underlying barriers to women progressing to technical positions. The analysis suggested, in general and not unique to Olympic factories, absence of adequate technical skills, gender stereotypes and a history of technical positions mostly being occupied by men as the key factors inhibiting women from progressing into technical positions. The final design of the training program was based on these factors.	confidence of the scholars.	
	"At first I did not take the news of the training program seriously. I thought that our managers were out of their mind. But, time passed, I realized the importance of the training program for my own career development." [Maya Rani, Scholar, Madanpur]	
	"My husband, who never showed much interest in my work, noticed how I changed. He was very happy when he heard our training course might help us get a promotion and raise our income. One day he even cooked for me and looked after our house while I attended the class. This made me so happy!" [Mukta Akhter, Scholar, Lolatii]	
	"The training will help me to get a promotion. People will start to honor and respect me." [Farzana Akhter, Scholar, Madanpur]	
Shadowing, Mentoring and Placement This is a structured on-site learning process. Each scholar was assigned a mentor. Mentors were chosen from packaging unit. During the first week, the scholars mostly observe the mentors at work. From the following week the scholars were temporarily placed in positions where they could put their learning into practice. At this phase the mentors carefully observed the scholars, gave feedback on performance and helped them learn the required skills for potential future roles as Assistant Operator. Simultaneously counseling and confidence building sessions by the project team continued.	"When the Operators are on lunch break I am already running the machine on my own. I am so happy!" [Farzana Akhter, Scholar, Lolati]	
	"I was a shy girl. But now I feel the shy girl in me is disappearing day by day since I started training. I am learning how to run machines and I am very happy! I can turn the machine on and off, cut and seal packets, and adjust the temperature." [Marufa Yasmin, Scholar, Madanpur]	
	<i>"In my opinion Sheflai is qualified to work at Assistant Operator level."</i> [Abul Hossain, Mentor, Lolati]	
	"Mukta can operate machine independent of any help, and her performance is improving everyday, and I hope she can teach others in future!" [Razib Chandra, Mentor, Lolati]	
Final Assessment: Readiness to work	Overall the progress of scholars in both factories is good. The scholars learned quickly	
 Following criteria were used: Concentration, attention to detail, teamwork, problem solving, creative thinking, following instructions Familiarity with specific machines, trouble shooting, identifing key mechanical problems 	factories validated the observations of the mentors regarding the scholars' readines: to work at a higher grade.	
Knowledge of occupational health and safety, personal		

Stages /	Process
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Outcome

5. CONCLUSION

health, and food hygiene

- 1. The scholars have shown good overall progress in both acquiring technical skills and selfconfidence.
- 2. Degrees of confidence among the six scholars vary from very high to high in their own ability to work at a higher grade. The mentors' assessment is similar.
- 3. "I noticed the female scholars in this factory are learning very fast. Their performance and pace of learning is even better than our staff members who are UCEP graduates." [Mentor Razib Chandra, Lolati factory]
- 4. It is understood from both factories that most male Assistant Operators work as apprentices with senior colleagues for a number of years before they start working at Assistant Operator/Operator level. This might make supervisors hesitant to immediately promote the scholars to higher level.
- 5. We noticed the overall progress of scholars in Lolati factory is slightly better than the scholars in Mandanpur factory.
- 6. We recommend Olympic to conduct an additional test to fully understand the scholars' capacity and readiness to perform at a higher level in both factories.
- **7.** For motivational and reputational reasons, it is important that *Agamir Pothey* graduates are promoted into the Assistant Operator positions soon after successful graduation.
- 8. Olympic may consider keeping the informal mentoring opportunity open to scholars for another three to six months after the scholars start working as the Assistant Operator role. This will help strengthen the learning and development culture within Olympic factories.