IT LADIES

ON ENGAGING GIRLS AND FAMILIES IN STEM

UNDP

Chats with STEMinists podcast

English transcript (21 September, 2021)

Host	Hello. My name is Mukhabbat Turkmenova and I am a UNDP Gender Specialist in Uzbekistan. Today, I have the honor to welcome the regional junior Technology Asia winners - the IT-Ladies team. The IT-Ladies team has developed an application called Rahmat to help people who find themselves below the poverty line. Today we would like to talk about how this application was created, what they encountered and what this team learned. Let's start with a little introduction to the girls and their mentor.
Samira	Hello, my name is Samira, and I am 12 years old.
Veronika	My name is Zarina, and I am 11 years old.
Zarina	My name is Veronika, and I am 12 years old.
Madina	My name is Madina and I am 11 years old.
Diloram	My name is Diloram, and I am the mentor for IT Ladies.
Host	Could you tell us how you started mentoring the team and how you joined Technovation?
Diloram	We first saw an advertisement on Facebook, and we became interested. We attended an event in December that was hosted by the Ministry of Innovation, and we really enjoyed it. I am Samira's mother. At first, Samira tried to join other groups in the competition, but it did not work out. Afterwards, we decided that she would create her own team, and the girls joined us: her close friend, Madina, and then Zarina and Veronika. And that's how we became a team. As for me becoming the mentor, the girls sent several requests for mentorship, but no one responded. Actually, it happened over the course of one day. They were getting nervous, and I decided to support my daughter and the team. I found training materials on the

	Technovation website, and I realized that it was very interesting and not very difficult. I registered as a mentor, and the girls accepted me into their team.
Host	What a remarkable experience. Was it difficult for Samira to participate in a team that was mentored by her mother? Or was it a useful experience?
Samira	It was interesting since my mother was practicing with me and she helped me. Overall, it was very interesting.
Host	Wonderful, this created a mother-daughter as well as mentor-team tandem. Very interesting. Girls, could you tell us what it was like for you to work in such a team?
Zarina	Everyone understands each other in this team, and we were quickly developing the application because we all worked hard, and it was interesting for everyone.
Host	Madina, what about you?
Madina	It was very interesting. We were all friendly, and we understood each other.
Veronika	We quickly became friends. We learned to work in a team. We divided tasks that needed to be done between us. It was very interesting.
Host	Could you tell us how you divided tasks? Who was responsible for which parts [of the project], and how you organized your workflow?
Zarina	In our team, the person who knows how to do video editing is responsible for video production. Someone knows well App Inventor, so someone worked on creating the application, and someone designed the logo
Madina	One of us worked on creating the application itself, and we wrote the script.
Diloram	The project started with girls getting together and studying which problems currently exist in the world and in Uzbekistan. It was very interesting to discuss these topics with them because as a mother, I discovered that children are able to discuss these problems in such a serious manner and provide very interesting ideas. The project started with girls working together. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the girls could not get together, and we met through conference calls where they were discussing all these problems and what type of solutions they found. Since the beginning of the project, it was a joint effort. They talked to each other every day discussing these issues. Similarly with the prototype, they each put together their own prototype and shared it with each other. Then they combined ideas that they liked the most into a joint prototype. It was difficult to attend school and to simultaneously work on the project, so they divided the work, and one person designed the logo, which was done by Zarina. To use a traditional Uzbek hat as a logo, to call the app Rahmat and the reasons behind the name were her ideas. After that we created the prototype and wrote the script. This work was not conducted as just between a mentor and four girls, but even other family members got involved. The girls did a really good job, and they were fully engaged in the process. They were very interested, and everyone participated in each aspect of the project. Even shooting and editing the video, while the final version of the video was produced by one specific person, in each aspect of the process there are efforts of all the girls.
Host	Thank you. What exactly motivated you to create this particular application?
Samira	We were inspired by the actions taken by China and how they combatted poverty. China fed, clothed and educated its poor population. Over a short period of time, the amount of poor people significantly decreased in China.
Veronika	Because of the pandemic, I think our application could help poor people because our application is developed for these types of situations.

Host	Thank you so much. It is very interesting to hear about China's experience because it means you studied this problem and took the issue seriously. Can you tell us if you are planning to launch this application in the future, and if yes, how?
Samira	Yes, we are planning to launch it, but we would like to give this idea to true professionals so that they could make a better version of our application, finalize our idea and make a working application.
Host	Great. Could you tell us how Technovation changed your perception of technology and whether you are planning to continue working in this area, for example, by taking some additional courses or by starting career in technology?
Samira	Yes, we are planning to. Before Technovation we did not know much about the IT sphere, but it turned out to be very interesting and programming is an unusual and interesting activity. We really enjoyed this project. We would like to continue and maybe take some courses.
Veronika	I joined the International School of Programming. Currently they are on a summer break but starting in the fall I will begin taking classes for programming.
Madina	Before Technovation, I was not interested in technology, but after it I became interested in technology and programming.
Host	Zarina?
Zarina	Before Technovation, I did not know what it was. When we attended the event in December, I became interested in how it works and how to create it. I am also planning to attend an IT school of Al-Khwarizmi.
Host	Thank you, girls. Could you tell us how your experience changed your perception of young women in science?
Samira	Usually in films and books it is men that are scientists, teachers, and during the project we learnt that women and girls can also be interested in science, and can make world discoveries, and study science.
Host	Thank you, Samira. Veronika, what do you think about it?
Veronika	Usually, people say that mostly boys are involved in technology and computers, but I think girls can also do it because when I started working on it, I really enjoyed it and it inspired me for the future.
Host	Madina?
Madina	After IT Technovation I realized that girls can be as successful as boys and even more.
Host	Thank you. Zarina?
Zarina	I've never heard that girls become programmers - only boys. And after the project I learnt that it is possible. Girls can also do it; they can program like boys.
Host	Great. What challenges do you think girls and women face when they go into STEM? Have you faced any barriers on your path?
Samira	Yes, we faced difficulties because we needed to combine schoolwork and this project. We did not have a lot of free time. It was a bit difficult. Also, when we first learnt about Technovation and registered, Zarina and I were accepted into a team, but they did not respond for a month, and we left the team after we had lost a month.
Host	And even despite that, you were able to put together such an amazing team and win this remarkable award. What advice would you give to girls and young women that maybe hesitate or only begin considering their future careers in STEM, in science, in technology.

Zarina	One should just start working, continue, and do not stop.
Madina	I think even if it did not work out the first time, it is important to try again because it is possible that the second time will be successful.
Veronika	I think it is important not to give up, keep moving forward in order to continue gaining knowledge and skills, and always move forward.
Samira	I think girls should forget the stereotype that a girl is only a housewife. I think girls should only spend their time on useful things. They should focus, [they should] not be nervous or afraid.
Diloram	As a mentor, I also would like to add that those girls and young women that can hear us should move forward and not be afraid, and just as girls said, they should forget the stereotype that women only belong to the domestic sphere, because girls are capable of a lot, come up with brilliant ideas, they are tough and hard working. They can do a lot and change this world. All girls should pursue their dreams because all girls have a dream. They should pursue it no matter in what sphere this dream is, especially if it is in STEM. Such an approach to any work gives positive results. Of course, girls face some difficulties. I would like to talk about some difficulties that the girls faced during the project. At the beginning, the application had only users that needed help. They were poor people who own smartphones and have access to the internet. It also included people that wanted to help. And that's it. When mentors and judges saw the first draft of our pitch, they all asked the girls what truly poor people should do without access to a smartphone or internet. It was a real issue, but other grown-ups, mentors, and organizers of the event guided the girls. I bring it up because there are always issues and problems along the way and girls should not be afraid of that, should not be afraid of criticism, because only criticism gives an incentive to strive for something new, for self-improvement, for self-knowledge, for new ideas. The girls that hear me now, don't be afraid of criticism. Push forward. Do not be afraid of difficulties. It is important to learn to work in a team, to present your ideas and thoughts, and to listen to other people.
Host	Thank you. Madina, maybe you would like to share your thoughts?
Madina	An IT profession is a great idea for girls. First, they can choose their own schedule, when to begin and when to finish working, but it is important to finish tasks on time.
Host	Thank you very much, girls, for your advice. I am glad that you were able to overcome all difficulties, and that you learnt all these interesting skills during your participation in Technovation Girls 2021 that became possible with the support of the UNDP, Embassy of Japan, and the Ministry for Support of Mahalla and Family. Thank you for your participation today, and I am sure that your experience will inspire a lot of girls to participate in technology. It will show them how interesting this sector is and that it allows us to take into consideration various aspects. And despite the fact that you had to face some barriers and difficulties, you were able to effectively solve them, and that will probably help other girls. Thank you for your participation. All the best.