M 23, Basement, Lajpat Nagar – II
New Delhi 110024, India
Telephone: +91-11-41004951
Email: fat@fat-net.org
Website: www.fat-net.org

Feminist Approach Technology is a not-for-profit organisation that believes that women's participation is equally important as men's not just in usage of technology, but also in the creation of and decision-making around technology. FAT envisions a world where all women have equal opportunities to learn, use and create technology, irrespective of their academic background or economic status; an environment where women are not intimidated by new technologies but rather have an open mind to experiment with and benefit from them.

History of the organization

FAT was formed by Gayatri Buragohain, a 28 year old engineer, in August 2007. While working at a women's rights organization as a technical support person, Gayatri got a chance to get involved in some women empowerment programs and also to interact with women working in many different NGOs (grassroots, national and international). During this period she realized that there was a huge gender gap in technology which meant many women were systematically left out of new age technological development even in urban settings.. Gayatri therefore decided to quit her job and devote her time to start an organization that will work towards empowering women using technology as the medium. Her aim was to facilitate easy and accessible technology education for women. She started to build a network of volunteers and also to invite board members to join her in founding the organization. Along with the network of volunteers, she conducted six workshops for women and girls on various technical skills between January 2008 and June 2008. The organization was finally registered as a Society under the Societies Registration Act 1860 on 9th July 2008.

Over the years, FAT's mission and strategy gas developed much beyond Gayatri's initial aim to encompass much larger goal of increasing women's participation in not just using, but also making of technology.

FAT's mission

Our mission is to enhance women's awareness, interest and participation in technology in order to decrease the gender divide in all technical fields and strengthen the involvement of women in the technical workforce and in policy making. We believe that technology is necessary for the empowerment of women because of the important role technology plays in the economic and social development. FAT is registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.

Background

Despite the overwhelming presence of technology in every aspect of life, women are either disinclined or intimidated to familiarize themselves with technology. Thus, they lose out on opportunities which would have not only helped them in evolving personally, but also to stand up for their rights. Absence of women in the decision-making positions involving technology poses a question: Are the technologies that govern our lifestyles today really appropriate technology for everyone?

Paradoxically, women who aspire to learn and work on technology are faced with a large number of hurdles at every step. They aren't provided enough sources to learn and develop their spirit of technological enquiry; look at technology as an academic pursuit. They seem to fight a constant battle in workspaces in terms of remuneration, avenues to move up and even be acknowledged for their efforts in the technological domain.

Perhaps this explains the low representation of women in technical workforce. In India, which is considered an IT giant, the percentage of women even in IT industry, considered women friendly, is 24% (SOURCE: NASSCOM). For other, less visible technical fields there is no data about women's participation.

The reasons in specific can be narrowed down to:
      a) Most girls are not encouraged to choose technology as their field of study.
      b) Among those who do study technology, it is difficult to seek employment in the
      technical domain.
      c) Those who may initially choose a technical job most either shift to a non-technical
      domain or stop working altogether.

To counter these issues FAT believes that we need to create a general awareness amongst both men and women on the particular need for women to participate equally in technology; encourage women to take initiative in learning, using and making technology; and also support women who do take such initiative. FAT aims to touch every woman's life with technology and help her improve her standard of life.

FAT envisages starting the dialogue on the issue of women and technology in India and also taking it forward by providing relevant forums to discuss the issue and spreading general awareness around the same.

Our Ongoing and Planned Activities

TECH CENTER PROGRAM
Status: Ongoing since 2010.
Objective: To train underprivileged young women on basic technical skills and empower them to use technology to improve their life as well as bring long term positive change in their community.
Activities: This center has been regularly training young underprivileged women on various technical skills since July 2010. Technology is used as a medium to discuss various social issues with the participants as well as their family. The women receive regular guidance on all sort of issues from their education, to career, to violence in family or street harassment.

THE SCHOOL CONTACT PROGRAM
Status: Pilot completed. Further support needed.
Objective: To create a positive environment in order to encourage girls from underprivileged section to choose careers in technology.
Activities: This program was launched in 2013 in the schools of Delhi to begin with. It targets both the school going children and their teachers. A study to understand the reasons behind self elimination of girls from Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects has been completed and a series of pilot workshops to promote STEM education for girls have been conducted.

COALITION OF WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS FOR ENGENDERING TECHNOLOGY
Status: Ongoing. Program support needed.

Objective: To bring together a wide spectrum of organizations working on gender issues in order to mainstream concerns of 'women and technology' in the feminist discourse, and to deploy technology to advance the struggle for equity.

Activities: Consultations with women's organizations to create the discourse; Working together with other organizations to frame policies to promote gender neutral work and education environment. 2 consultations were organized in 2011. Further activities are being planned.

Membership

At present FAT has 8 board members. 7 out of the 8 members are women. Board members meet twice a year and take decisions regarding governance of the organization. All board meetings are attended by the management team as well. Details about all board members can be found in the FAT website.

Management

FAT is managed by a group of 4 young women, all between the age of 22 and 30, who form the core team. They are:

- Asha Tiwari
- Shambhavi Singh
- Shivani Gupta
- Bhawana Prajapati

They are supported and mentored remotely by the founder of the organization, Gayatri Buragohain. Consultants are hired from time to time to provide specialized skills needed for program implementation.

All decisions regarding implementation of programs and day-to-day management of the organization are taken by the core team. Strategic decisions are taken by the core team and the founder of the organization. The founder of the organization moved out of the core team in 2013 to make way for leadership of younger team members.