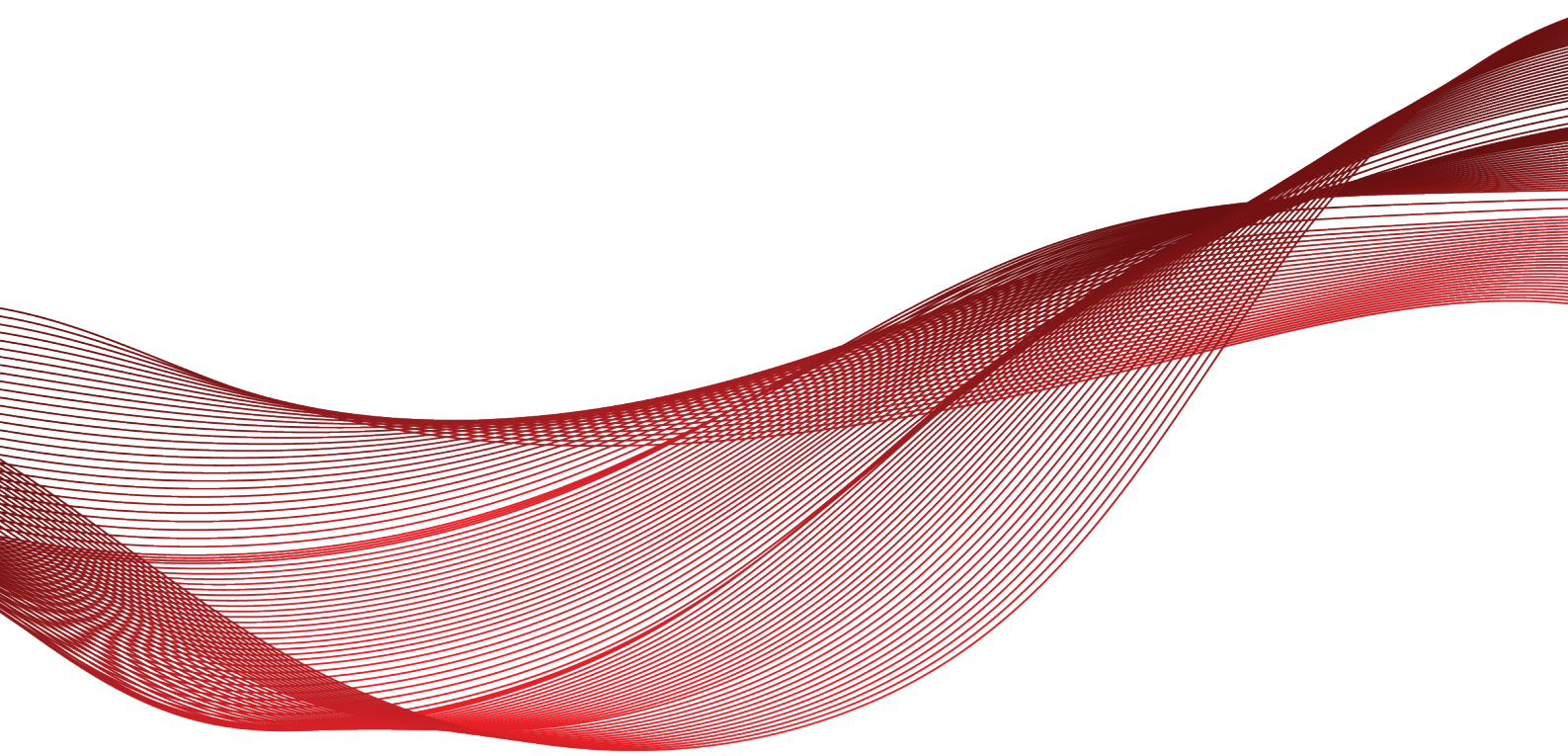


BANK THE UNBANKED IDEATHON

By Change Mechanics Pvt. Ltd. & Mobilink Microfinance Bank Ltd.

Impact Report



Item	Details
Project Title	Bank the Unbanked Ideathon
Project Duration	15 December 2025 – 20 January 2026
Project Type	Design & Strategy Ideathon (Full-Day Sprint)
Implemented By	Change Mechanics Pvt. Ltd.
In Collaboration With	Mobilink Microfinance Bank Ltd. (MMBL) & CARE Pakistan
Program Theme	Women's Digital Financial Inclusion
Target Audience	Students & Young Innovators (Multi-disciplinary)
Geographic Reach	Nationwide (Pakistan)
Report Prepared By	Alina Atta
Report Purpose	Stakeholder, Partner, and Impact Documentation

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1- Executive Summary

The **Bank the Unbanked Ideathon** was a design-led strategy sprint organized by **Change Mechanics Pvt. Ltd.**, in collaboration with **Mobilink Microfinance Bank Ltd. (MMBL)** and **CARE Pakistan**, to address persistent gaps in women's financial inclusion in Pakistan. Despite growing digital banking infrastructure, women continue to face barriers related to trust, usability, product relevance, and financial literacy. The Ideathon was designed to respond to these challenges by generating **practical, user-centered, and implementation-ready solutions**.

Unlike traditional coding hackathons, the Ideathon adopted a non-technical, inclusive format, enabling participation from students and young professionals across business, marketing, design, psychology, and technology. A nationwide call for ideas resulted in **26 concept submissions**, out of which **12 teams** were shortlisted for the final Ideathon based on innovation, feasibility, and potential impact.

The final stage was conducted as a full-day sprint structured around three thematic tracks: **Responsible & Safe Banking for Women, Women-Centric SME Products, and Islamic Microfinance for Women and Youth**. Teams refined their ideas into detailed blueprints, including user personas, journey maps, financial logic, and impact indicators, supported by intensive, on-site mentorship.

A key strength of the Ideathon was its expert engagement model, with six mentors from **Mobilink Microfinance Bank, CARE Pakistan, and S&P Global**, which contributed two senior mentors. Their guidance played a critical role in strengthening solution design and grounding ideas in real-world operational and market contexts.

The Ideathon concluded with a jury-evaluated pitching session, after which three winning teams were awarded **PKR 50,000 each**. Beyond competition outcomes, the initiative successfully fostered youth engagement, cross-sector collaboration, and design-driven thinking for women's economic empowerment. The Bank the Unbanked Ideathon establishes a scalable model for future innovation initiatives under the **WECON** framework, with strong potential for real-world application and long-term impact.

2- Acknowledgments

Change Mechanics Pvt. Ltd. extends its sincere appreciation to all partners and collaborators whose support and expertise were instrumental in the successful execution of the *Bank the Unbanked Ideathon*.

We are grateful to **Mobilink Microfinance Bank Ltd. (MMBL)** for its strategic partnership, domain expertise, and continued commitment to advancing digital financial inclusion for women in Pakistan. Our sincere thanks also go to **CARE Pakistan** for its collaboration and for bringing a strong gender and inclusion lens that strengthened the overall impact of the Ideathon.

We would like to specially acknowledge **S&P Global Market Intelligence** for its support in nominating experienced mentors, whose insights and guidance added significant value to the participant journey and helped refine ideas into practical, impact-driven solutions.

We also thank our outreach partners **TechJuice**, **GEN Pakistan**, and **Google Developer Group (GDG)** for amplifying the call for participation and enabling nationwide outreach, ensuring diverse and multidisciplinary representation in the Ideathon.

The collective efforts of all partners made this initiative possible and contributed meaningfully to fostering innovation, youth engagement, and women's economic empowerment.

3.1- Background

Despite the rapid growth of digital financial services in Pakistan, women remain disproportionately underbanked; while the State Bank of Pakistan reported that women's account ownership rose from a mere **4% in 2018** to **52% by late 2025**, a significant **30% gender gap** persists in the financial sector. This disparity is fueled by a deep digital divide, as the **GSMA 2025 report** highlights that **35% of women** using mobile internet still lack their own devices, leading to inactivity due to privacy concerns, fear of fraud, and limited digital literacy.

For women entrepreneurs, the hurdles are even greater: although financing reached **Rs. 230 billion** between **2024 and 2025**, over **93% of these loans** were restricted to microfinance, with only **1% of commercial bank loans** reaching women-led enterprises. To address these systemic barriers, **Change Mechanics** and **Mobilink Microfinance Bank** launched the **Bank the Unbanked Ideathon**, a strategy-focused initiative aligned with the **National Financial Inclusion Strategy (2024–2028)** to design the inclusive, safe, and scalable digital tools necessary to bridge the gap for the millions of women still outside the formal net.

3.2- What is an Ideathon?

An ideathon is a **full-day design sprint** that emphasizes **ideation, strategic planning, and user-centered solutions** rather than coding. Unlike traditional hackathons, which often require technical development skills, ideathons encourage participation from students across a wide range of disciplines, including business, marketing, design, psychology, and computer science. The focus is on creating actionable strategies, storyboards, process maps, and campaign concepts that can be implemented in the real world. This particular ideathon was **designed with inclusivity at its core**, allowing participation from students nationwide and welcoming individuals from all fields of study. Through facilitated sessions, participants were guided from concept to **implementation-ready blueprints**, ensuring that their ideas were practical, inclusive, and scalable.

3.3- Objectives of the Bank the Unbanked Ideathon

The Ideathon aimed to:

1. **Promote financial inclusion for women** by generating practical and innovative solutions that address real-world barriers.
2. **Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration** by allowing students from diverse fields business, marketing, design, psychology, and computer science to contribute their unique perspectives.

3. **Develop actionable, user-centered solutions** such as storyboards, process maps, and campaign concepts that can be implemented in real-world scenarios.
4. **Foster problem-solving skills** through guided, full-day design sprints that combine strategy, creativity, and mentorship.
5. **Identify and nurture top talent nationwide** capable of creating scalable solutions for women-centric financial services.

4- Core Sprints

The Bank the Unbanked Ideathon was structured around **three challenge tracks**, each addressing critical financial barriers faced by women in Pakistan.

Sprint 1: Responsible & Safe Banking for Women focused on the need for trusted and secure digital banking experiences. Many women avoid mobile banking due to fear of fraud, privacy breaches, and lack of confidence in digital systems. The challenge encouraged teams to design solutions that protect women from digital fraud, preserve privacy, and build confidence in using financial services.

Sprint 2: Women-Centric SME Products addressed the unique financial realities of women entrepreneurs, particularly those running home-based or micro-enterprises. Participants were tasked with designing gender-intelligent SME banking products that align with irregular cash flows, lack of collateral, and the everyday business rhythms of women-led enterprises.

Sprint 3: Islamic Microfinance for Women & Youth focused on ethical and interest-free financing. Many women and youth prefer Sharia-compliant financial solutions, but existing products are often complex and inaccessible. Teams were challenged to create **simple, digital, and user-friendly Islamic microfinance products** that enable small businesses to grow sustainably.

5- Ideathon Design and Methodology

The ideathon was executed in two stages. **Stage 1** involved the submission of initial concept ideas. Teams were required to submit a concise 2-page PDF or a 5-slide deck, detailing the selected sprint, the target user persona, the problem definition, high-level solution overview, step-by-step usage flow, and differentiation of the idea in terms of inclusivity, practicality, and scalability. This stage helped shortlist the **top 5–7 finalist teams** for the grand finale.

Stage 2, the final Ideathon day, was a **high-energy, mentor-guided strategy sprint**. Finalist teams refined their ideas with guidance from field experts, translating concepts into **implementation-ready blueprints**. The day focused on developing detailed user journeys, process flows, operational integration, financial logic, and visual storyboards. By the end of the sprint, each team submitted a polished 10-slide deck, a 5–7 minute pitch, and supporting visual flows or diagrams, which were evaluated based on clarity, feasibility, user-centered design, integration potential, and projected impact.

A total of **26 innovative submissions** for the Bank the Unbanked Ideathon were received. After careful evaluation, **12 of the most promising ideas** were shortlisted, and these teams were invited to participate in the **final ideathon**, where they refined their concepts into actionable strategies and solutions.

5.1 - Mentorship & Expert Engagement Model

A core component of the **Bank the Unbanked Ideathon** was the involvement of experienced mentors who guided the participating teams throughout the day. Our mentors brought extensive expertise in digital finance, product development, analytics, and financial inclusion. They worked closely with teams to refine ideas, provide strategic insights, and help translate concepts into actionable, user-centered solutions. The mentorship ensured that solutions were practical, scalable, and aligned with real-world needs, maximizing their potential impact on women's financial empowerment.

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Meet Our Mentors

Obaid Ur Rauf Qazi
Executive Manager, Research & Product Development, MMBL

Samia Abbasi
Senior Program Manager, S&P Global Market Intelligence

Areesa Masood
Head DWH Reporting & Analytics, Mobilink Microfinance Bank

Salwa Abdul Hayee
Scrum Master, S&P Global

Rida Sarwar
Assistant Vice President, Research & Product Development, MMBL

Viqar Murtaza
Digital Financial Inclusion Coordinator, CARE Pakistan

IDEATHON BANK THE UNBANKED

The mentors for the Ideathon included **Samia Abbasi** (Senior Program Manager, S&P Global Market Intelligence), **Salwa Abdul Hayee** (Scrum Master, S&P Global), **Rida Sarwar** (Assistant Vice President, Research and Product Development, Mobilink Bank), **Areesa Masood** (Head, DWH Reporting & Analytics, Mobilink Bank), **Obaid Qazi** (Executive Manager, Research & Product Development, Mobilink Bank), and **Viqar Murtaza** (Digital Financial Inclusion Coordinator, CARE Pakistan). Their guidance and expertise were instrumental in helping the teams turn their initial ideas into well-structured, implementation-ready strategies.

5.2 - Panel of Judges

Meet Our Judges

Hassan Shahid
Head of Digital Banking,
Mobilink Microfinance
Bank

Muhammad Hassan
Head of SME & Housing,
Mobilink Microfinance
Bank

Maria Umar
Team Lead CARE Pakistan
for MasterCard Strive
Women Program

Salwa Abdul Hayee
Scrum Master,
S&P Global

Samia Abbasi
Senior Program Manager,
S&P Global Market
Intelligence

National Incubation Center, H-9, Islamabad.

19th January, 2026

IDEATHON
BANK THE UNBANKED

The final pitches were evaluated by a distinguished panel of judges, each bringing deep expertise in digital finance, program leadership, agile delivery, and inclusive banking. **Samia Abbasi** — Senior Program Manager, S&P Global Market Intelligence, **Salwa Abdul**

Hayee — Scrum Master, S&P Global, Maria Umar — Team Lead, CARE Pakistan, Hassan Shahid Arain — Head of Digital Banking, Mobilink Bank, and Muhammad Hassan Warraich — Head of SME & Housing, Mobilink Bank lent their guidance and insights, ensuring that each idea was carefully assessed for both impact and practicality. Their expertise helped identify solutions that have the potential to truly bank the unbanked



6- Ideathon Day Highlights

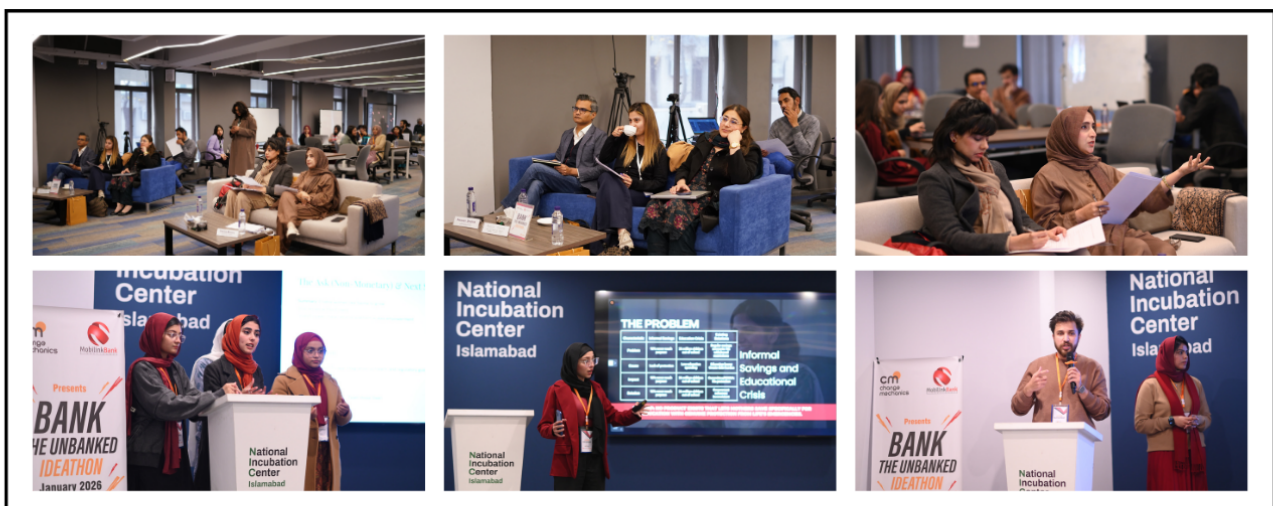
6.1 Mentorship & Expert Guidance



The ideathon day kicked off with dynamic mentorship sessions, where each of the 9 participating teams had the opportunity to work with all 6 mentors. Each team received **20 minutes with each mentor**, making the sessions highly productive and focused. The mentors, experts in digital finance, product development, analytics, and financial inclusion, guided the teams through refining their user journeys, storyboards, process diagrams, and campaign concepts. Their insights helped the participants turn initial ideas into actionable, real-world solutions, providing clarity and strategic direction.

6.2 Ideation Sprint

Following mentorship, teams immersed themselves in the ideation sprint, collaboratively working to fine-tune their solutions. Using storyboards, visual flows, and campaign concepts, participants iteratively developed their strategies for women's financial empowerment. The atmosphere was vibrant and full of energy, as students from diverse disciplines business, marketing, design.



6.3 Lunch & Refreshments

Midway through the day, participants, mentors, and judges enjoyed a well-deserved **lunch break**. This break also provided an informal space for networking and discussion, allowing teams to share ideas, reflect on mentor feedback, and recharge before diving into the final rounds of the ideathon. The thoughtfully arranged refreshments ensured that everyone remained energized and focused for the rest of the day.

6.4 Final Pitching

After the mentorship sessions and lunch, each team presented their refined ideas in the **final pitching round**. Teams were given **7 minutes** to present their concepts clearly and concisely, followed by **5 minutes** of questions and feedback from the panel of judges. This format



encouraged focused, impactful presentations while allowing judges to probe key aspects of each solution. The pitching sessions were highly engaging, showcasing the creativity, strategic thinking, and practical approaches developed by the teams throughout the ideathon.

6.5 Certificate Distribution Ceremony

At the conclusion of the Ideathon, A **Certificate Distribution Ceremony** was held to honor the hard work and creativity of all participants. Each team received a certificate recognizing their contribution and efforts throughout the day. In addition, we presented **acknowledgment shields to our mentors and judges** as a token of appreciation for their invaluable guidance and support. The ceremony was a moment to celebrate collaboration, innovation, and the collective drive toward advancing **women’s financial inclusion** in Pakistan.

6.6 Winners Announcement

The Bank the Unbanked Ideathon concluded with the selection of **three winning teams**, each of whom demonstrated exceptional insight, practicality, and impact-driven thinking. These teams were awarded a **cash prize of PKR 50,000 each** in recognition of their innovative solutions aimed at advancing women's financial inclusion in Pakistan.

Team Tabeer presented “*Dost-e-Hunar*,” a micro-invoice financing solution designed for women entrepreneurs operating home-based businesses. The concept shifts away from traditional asset-based lending toward **flow-based lending**, using business activity as the primary indicator of creditworthiness. Through a Buy-Now-Pay-Later (BNPL) model, credit is issued directly to vendors via digital vouchers, ensuring funds are used strictly for business supplies. By removing collateral requirements and minimizing misuse of funds, the solution enables women like Zahra, a home-based reseller and crafter, to sustainably grow their enterprises with confidence and dignity.

Team Impact IRL proposed a **women-centric SME product** that combines microfinance with long-term social impact through education. Their model integrates business loans with a mandatory education savings mechanism, splitting financing into **70% working capital and 30% ring-fenced savings for children's education**. Built around the persona of Shazia, a tailoring business owner and mother of four, the solution addresses irregular cash flows while promoting systematic savings. Additional features such as business training, skills-transfer apprenticeships, performance-based incentives, and an insurance safety net further strengthen the model's sustainability and intergenerational impact.

Team Super Bazaar introduced a **Banking-as-a-Service (BaaS) platform** that seamlessly merges commerce with finance for women-led SMEs. The solution enables women to list products on a digital marketplace, accept digital payments, and access broader markets while simultaneously building a verified digital footprint. With **paperless CNIC-based onboarding**, alternative credit scoring, and tools like “Stock Now, Pay Later” and sales analytics, Super Bazaar removes traditional barriers to finance. The platform transforms everyday trade into a formal financial identity, empowering women to scale their skills into sustainable livelihoods.

Collectively, these winning solutions exemplify how **design-led, user-centric innovation** can translate into practical, scalable pathways for banking the unbanked and accelerating women's economic empowerment.

7- Participant & Stakeholder Testimonials

The impact of the Bank the Unbanked Ideathon was strongly reflected in the feedback shared by participants, mentors, and judges during on-ground interviews. Their testimonials

highlighted not only the quality of engagement but also the value of design-led, inclusive innovation spaces for youth.

Samia Salik, Senior Program Manager, S&P Global Market Intelligence, shared that: *mentoring at the Bank the Unbanked Ideathon was a highly rewarding experience, and expressed optimism that the ideas developed during the sprint have strong potential to evolve into real-world, impact-driven solutions.*

One of the Judges **Muhammad Hassan, Head of SME & Housing, MMBL** added: *“This ideathon is a highly engaging and valuable initiative for students. Platforms like these provide critical industry exposure and practical insights that are often missing from traditional learning environments. Regularly organizing such ideathons can significantly enhance students’ understanding of real-world challenges. I look forward to seeing more impactful ideathons from Change Mechanics in the future.”*

One of the participating teams, **Team Super Bazaar**, shared that *“this ideathon helped us in so many ways, from refining our idea to understanding how real-world financial systems work.”* They emphasized that more such ideathons should be organized and appreciated Change Mechanics for *“creating a platform that genuinely involves youth in solving meaningful, real problems rather than hypothetical case studies.”*

From **Team Ikhtiar Aurafied**, participant **Fatima Rizwan** described the atmosphere of the day as intense yet energizing. She noted that *“the adrenaline rush is real people are panicking, thinking, and smiling all at the same time.”* She expressed gratitude to the organizing team and mentors, stating that the guidance and overall experience made the ideathon both enjoyable and impactful, and shared her hope that *“initiatives like this continue and grow across Pakistan.”*

These testimonials collectively underscored the ideathon’s success in fostering excitement, collaboration, and purpose-driven innovation, reinforcing its role as a meaningful intervention for engaging young minds in advancing women’s financial inclusion.

8- Way Forward

Building on the momentum and insights generated through the Bank the Unbanked Ideathon, Change Mechanics envisions this initiative as the foundation of a long-term, scalable program under the broader WECON framework. The ideas, energy, and solutions that emerged during the ideathon reaffirmed the critical role of youth-led, design-driven innovation in advancing women’s entrepreneurship and financial inclusion in Pakistan.

Moving forward, the focus will be on deepening industry collaboration, expanding participation across regions, and translating high-potential concepts into pilot-ready solutions in partnership with financial institutions, development organizations, and ecosystem enablers. Future editions will explore broader themes such as women-led MSME growth, digital trust

and safety, Islamic and ethical finance, climate-resilient livelihoods, and access to markets for home-based and informal women entrepreneurs.

Change Mechanics aims to institutionalize ideathons as a recurring platform that not only sparks ideas but also supports their journey beyond ideation towards validation, implementation, and real-world impact. By continuously engaging young innovators, mentors, and policymakers, the program seeks to contribute meaningfully to an inclusive economic future where women are not just users of financial systems, but active participants and leaders within them.