

WIT Saudi Arabia Pioneer Scholarship Program



Women in Saudi Arabia benefit immensely from a scholarship program pioneered by Women in Technology in partnership with Effat University. The scholarship program was launched in December 2008 when WIT provided Effat University with a grant to offer underprivileged women an opportunity to enroll in WIT training. In collaboration with Effat University, WIT Saudi Arabia approached a local charitable society to identify the most qualified women in need of financial assistance to enroll in the program. Each quarter three women are selected to receive scholarships. Two recipients, Hanna and Zara, share their stories of how they were introduced to the WIT scholarship program.

When **Hanna's** mother passed away last year, she and her 9 siblings were left in the custody of a father who was unable to properly care for them. Some of the children were not able to obtain birth certificates, thus making it impossible for them to attend school. Before her death, Hanna's mother realized that her children would have no one to care for them and sought the help of the charitable society to obtain a small stipend for her children. When the Society learned of the father's negligence, they realized Hanna and her siblings needed much more assistance than a meagre stipend in order to become less reliant on their father's support.

In partnership with Effat University, the Society offered Hanna a scholarship to participate in the WIT training program, believing that the skills she learns will enable her to secure a job to support herself and her siblings. Indeed the training gives Hanna, who is 20 years old, a sense of confidence and independence to better assist her family and lead a successful life.

Zara, a 28 year old WIT participant, endured a divorce four years ago, after a short marriage. Since she could not pursue her education beyond high school, it was a struggle for Zara to find a job and provide for herself. When she sought support from her parents, who were both separated and remarried, their new spouses refused to accommodate Zara. Desperate for help, she sought assistance from the charitable society, which provided her with a small apartment in a shelter for needy people, and a monthly stipend to help her survive.

Zara's diligence was rewarded when she was selected to receive a scholarship for the WIT program at Effat University. "We hope that her training with us will allow her to develop her personality as well as her job skills," says a WIT trainer. The program is cultivating Zara's skills with computers and professional development, enabling her to find a job and become self-sufficient.