

Oman Program Manager Abeer Al-Mukhaini talks about running the WIT program in Oman, as well as her personal goals and interests.

Could you tell us a little about yourself and your family?

I was brought up in Oman, Muscat. I started my studies in Jordan and completed my studies in Caledonian college of engineering in Oman, and graduated with a bachelors degree. I am planning to pursue my MBA hopefully this year to help me in my career and future goals.

My first work experience was in a telecommunication company customer service. I have encouraging parents and a supportive family. My family consists of 5 brothers and 3 sisters.

Could you tell us a little bit about the work you do at OWA?

My role in OWA is to manage the WIT program. The organization consists of the board members, 4 staff, and a chairperson. There are 48 associations in Oman, OWA Muscat is the first OWA in Oman. We graduated 205 students and there are around 80 enrolled in the WIT program now.

In Muscat we offer two classes at 5 different times a day to enable people with different schedules to participate. Everyday operation includes monitoring WIT classes, trainers and participants. I have an IT coordinator, and 3 trainers who help me with the daily operation.

What would you list as your best accomplishments?

My best accomplishment is working on the WIT program. Through it, I witness lots of changes and achievements in the program and participants. I hear stories from participants about how WIT made a big change in their life. One participant told me how she feels self-confident and can teach her child without hesitation. Another told me how she used to have a PC at home but never touched it, and how she is now using the PC, installing programs and using the internet.

WIT is also expanding to 9 partners in Oman and more are coming. We are also receiving computer donations. I originally felt I would never be able to get even one PC donated to the WIT program. But I met supportive people through my career who believe in the program, who played a big role in getting pc donations.

Graduating 205 students and the courses still being taught is also an achievement to us. We never expected this number of graduates.

How do you identify donors for your activities?

I identify potential donors through the newspaper and through the association. After that we determine how such a donor could contribute to the program. Then we start contacting donors to give them a general idea of the WIT program and how it is progressing in Oman and we give them brochures and newsletters. We keep following up on the donation request until we get a definite answer from the donor. We also use press releases which help us and the donors. We use different methods to contact potential donors, beginning with phone calls and official letters.

What advice would you give to women who are trying to start efforts such as yours?

My advice is to do what she believes in, even if she has to stand alone in front many people, eventually she'll find all those people supporting her.

It's rewarding I think, we are offering a new service to the associations, without anything in return except for commitment and punctuality. This program can do more and can help lots of families in many regions. The program was never rejected by any association, it was always most welcomed. The program opens women's minds and makes her think right and act right.

What are the biggest challenges that face your current efforts and how have you overcome them?

The biggest challenge we faced was the cyclone, which forced us start over from scratch. [Tropical Cyclone Gonu hit Oman in June of 2007, damaging many buildings and businesses including the Omani Women's Association building where WIT courses were being held.] But we overcame this challenge with the help of Microsoft. There is always a bright side to everything.

One of the challenges we are still facing is working without board members, which make it a bit hard to ask different sectors for PC donations. Making the program known to the public sectors takes time.

What are your future plans for the program?

We are trying to add something new by creating new course packages to attract more participants. Future plans are to extend our programs as much as possible to other women's associations; there are three new potential partners on the horizon.