



WIT Partner Update: Effat College, Saudi Arabia November 29, 2007

"I feel happy when I hear that some women are getting better work opportunities now due to the training they have received," says Dr. Eman Mohamed, lead Women in Technology (WIT) representative in Saudi Arabia. Since WIT was launched at Effat College in 2006, 117 students have received training in computer and software fundamentals (through Microsoft's Unlimited Potential curriculum) and professional development.

Mohamed describes the typical students taking WIT courses at Effat College: "Some of them are employees at Effat College who are from lower level positions—like security ladies, messengers, etc. Some are graduates of secondary schools who have not gone on to college due to different reasons, financial or family not allowing them to do so."

The program also trains employees of non-profit societies who use their skills to adapt to new computer systems in the workplace. "We have just been asked by a group of ladies from a specific society to offer them the IT Skills training outside our schedule, and we are ready to accommodate them," says Mohamed. Women from minority groups, who are often not allowed to go to college, also attend the trainings. By earning IT certificates, they become eligible for more positions in a highly competitive job market.

One of Mohamed's present challenges is to find the means to expand the WIT program and to accommodate more participants. Currently, students are trained in classes of about 15-20 women each, in a computer lab rented from the college. Mohamed hopes to train more trainers and set up a computer lab specifically for the WIT program, in order to run courses more often and to give students ample time to practice.

Another goal is to spread information about the program to other communities. "We have succeeded in letting the people in the area around us aware of [the WIT program], and this has got us a large number of participants," she says. The program currently has a long waiting list for course registration. "We are growing gradually I believe, and this seems logical at this stage. I am dreaming that we would expand to offer other programs by IIE that can help women further. I also hope that we can expand it to a greater number of women in the Kingdom."