



Outstanding WIT participants attend IIE's Annual Gala in New York

Three delegates of the Women in Technology (WIT) program travelled from Iraq, Lebanon and Morocco to attend the annual Institute of International Education (IIE) Gala in New York and share their moving stories. The Gala honored one of WIT's strongest supporters, Microsoft. During the event, IIE presented Microsoft with the *Opening Minds Corporate Leadership Award* for its global philanthropy and outstanding commitment to corporate social responsibility and education in communities around the world.

Pamela Passman, Microsoft's Vice President of Global Corporate Affairs, Zaki Khoury (Director, Gulf at Microsoft) and Akhtar Badshah (Senior Director, Community Affairs), hosted a breakfast where the WIT delegates shared their stories of how the program impacts their lives. Najla Abou Hamzeh from Abadiyeh, a rural village outside of Beirut in Lebanon, spoke with enthusiasm for the project. "After completing WIT, I started telling women to always pursue what they want and never underestimate what they are good at." Thanks to WIT's training, Najla developed a business that sells hand-made crafts made by women in her village to buyers in Sweden, thus helping women in her community financially support their families. [Watch video interview with Najla](#)

Khadija Ait Kaddour, from the Ifrane province in Morocco, visited New York for the first time and shared about her support for emerging women entrepreneurs in her community. After graduating from WIT, Khadija volunteered as a trainer in Entrepreneurship and lobbied government agencies on behalf of women in Ifrane. As a result of her efforts, she secured funding for women entrepreneurs in the region, allowing them to launch their businesses. "I was so pleased to find out that the local government programs approved the funding for more than 25 new businesses started by women in my community." Khadija stated with a smile. [Watch Khadija share her full story](#)

Rana Hadia, a longtime participant of the WIT Iraq program in Baghdad, shared "Women in Technology is not about a project, for me, it is my whole life." After surviving a traumatic bomb attack in April 2006 at the University of Baghdad, Rana spent a year recovering from serious injuries that confined her to a wheelchair. Despite Rana's horrific experience, she was determined to continue her education and enrolled in WIT courses. Rana explained, "I considered the first day of my training as the first step in my new life...after graduating from WIT, I actually felt like a new person, different from the old Rana. It gave me such a strong sense of hope." Soon after she was hired as a trainer and has since been involved in a wide range of activities to serve and inspire the Iraqi community. [Watch Rana tell her story on video](#)

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For more information on the WIT program, please visit www.witmena.org or contact witmena@iie.org