

# Women in Technology

## *Cisco Networking Academy Scholarship Program*

### **BANGLADESH SUMMARY REPORT** **March 2006**

This report provides highlights of the Women in Technology Program (WIT) in Bangladesh. The WIT program is a pilot project sponsored by the **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)**, and administered by the **Institute of International Education (IIE)**, through a grant from the **dot-GOV Program of Internews Network**. The program provided scholarship awards to women to attend the **Cisco Networking Academy Program (CNAP)**, a comprehensive global training program that teaches students to design, build, and maintain computer networks, preparing them for industry-standard certification as networking professionals.



*WIT students in Dhaka*

#### **ABOUT THE ACADEMY**

The WIT program in Bangladesh trained women from July 2004 through March 2006 in four cities at five Cisco Networking Academies hosted at the following institutions:

- Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology (AUST), Dhaka
- American International University Bangladesh (AIUB), Dhaka
- Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (CUET), Chittagong
- Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (RUET), Rajshahi
- Sylhet University of Engineering and Technology (SUST), Sylhet

#### **ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS**

The WIT program was publicized extensively through the Academies as well as through other academic institutions, NGOs and government agencies in Bangladesh. IIE convened selection committee panels comprised of specialists and nationals with expertise in women's empowerment and the IT field to review applications and select award recipients.

Applications received from Bangladesh: **359**  
Scholarships awarded to Bangladesh: **112**

| <b>Demographics</b>    |          |
|------------------------|----------|
| <b>Average age:</b>    | 25       |
| <b>Age Range:</b>      | 19 to 35 |
| <b>Marital Status:</b> |          |
| Single:                | 80%      |
| Married:               | 20%      |

## PARTICIPANT SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

Participant survey responses confirm that the WIT program in Bangladesh succeeded in preparing women for a future career in IT. The following responses provide a highlight of the survey results from WIT Bangladesh.

### How do you find the level of difficulty of the training?

91% responded “Challenging but right for my level”

### Are you learning skills that will be valuable to you in your future career?

94% responded “Yes”

### Would you recommend this course to other women?

98% responded “Yes”

### Are you willing to serve as a mentor or role model to girls and women interested in pursuing a career in Information Technology?

95% responded “Yes”

*“As a developing country like Bangladesh, where the women are much more behind in almost every field than men, the scholarship program gives them the perfect opportunity to strengthen their knowledge in the field of IT.”*

*– AUIB WIT Instructor*



*WIT graduation ceremony in Rajshahi*

## INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Participant feedback also shows that there is high demand for internship placement and further IT training opportunities in Bangladesh. In 2005, A A Munir Hasan, National Project Coordinator for Strengthening the ICT Capacity in the Prime Minister's Office in Dhaka placed six WIT students in IT internships. Two of the women worked with Munir in the Prime Minister's office on a networking project. Munir also arranged for four WIT students to begin internships with Network Operation Centres in local ISP companies. XPEED GROUP, an ISP company in Dhaka provided short internships to four WIT students and Munir Hasan, who helped to arrange the internships, is preparing a study/job list for the interns that they may use as a guideline on how to best benefit from this experience. These opportunities allow WIT students to immediately apply their new skills, build upon them and expand their career connections in the IT field.

## INSTRUCTOR FEEDBACK

Five instructors provided feedback on the WIT pilot program in Bangladesh. All five of the instructors stressed the importance of providing scholarships to the participants and the impact of the scholarships on the success of the program and of the goal of **encouraging more women to enter the IT field**. Instructors gave important feedback noting the importance of encouraging women's participation in the IT industry to the country's development. They stated that as women are able to earn a living in the IT field, the welfare of families will improve and the country's economic status will improve.

## INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

In order to create a stronger, more effective program in the future, instructor and participant feedback affirmed the need to target more women throughout the country and increase the number of scholarships available to encourage more women to participate. Several participants encouraged the idea of providing **stipends for needs such as transportation**, to allow women who have great financial constraints the ability to participate. Students also strongly recommended adding a practicum or internship component to the program and **linking the use of technology to fields in which many women work**, such as agriculture. They also recommended frequent refresher courses and updates in the field of IT.

In order to continue and build upon the positive impact of the WIT program in Bangladesh, IIE looks to expand the WIT program in Bangladesh in the following ways:

1. ***Expand the scholarship program to more women and more academies***
2. ***Include additional computer/IT training options***
3. ***Incorporate professional development and community outreach components***
4. ***Create an alumnae network and sustainable women's IT association***

## CONCLUSION

The WIT pilot program in Bangladesh has been successful in providing its participants the skills and information necessary to pursue a career in the IT field. Participants attest to the value of the training and its role in increasing their opportunities in the IT industry and **raising their economic status and independence**. They strongly agree that the program should continue and expand to serve more women in Bangladesh.

By providing women with access to cutting-edge IT skills and practical training as well as professional development activities and the ability to organize a sustainable professional association, the WIT program is ideally positioned to empower women with the skills they need to become **pioneers for change** in their society.

IIE welcomes all inquiries and invites additional sponsors and partners for the expansion of the program.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information on the WIT program, please contact the Institute of International Education at [wit@iie.org](mailto:wit@iie.org).

*"There are a lot of women in our country who are brilliant and motivated but because of the lack of proper training programs and scholarships; they fail to specify the right track for them. Most of them end up as housewives, which is a waste of valuable human resource. The CNAP program creates a scope for self-acknowledgment and provides a competitive environment where women learn more than just a curriculum. They learn to value themselves. I hope that there will be further scholarships for the CCNP program."*

*-- AUST WIT Student*