

Women in Technology

Cisco Networking Academy Scholarship Program

SRI LANKA SUMMARY REPORT March 2006

This report provides highlights of the Women in Technology Program (WIT) in Sri Lanka. 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 class in Colombo

ABOUT THE ACADEMIES

The WIT program in Sri Lanka trained women from July 2004 through March 2006 at the Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology (SLIIT) in Colombo, a Cisco Networking Academy. An additional class began in Jaffna at the Barbara Mulvaney Computer Training Center, but unfortunately the class was unable to continue after the devastating tsunami in December 2004.

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

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

Applications received from Sri Lanka: **126**
Scholarships awarded to Sri Lanka: **66**

Demographics	
Average age:	29
Age Range:	22 to 38
Marital Status:	
Single:	71%
Married:	29%

PARTICIPANT SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

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

How effective has the course been in meeting your professional training needs?

90% responded "Very Effective"

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

90% responded "Yes"

Would you recommend this course to other women?

95% 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?

90% responded "Yes"

"In countries like Sri Lanka, traditionally the participation of women in technical fields is very low. It has been increasing slowly in the past decade. In order to encourage their participation in the field of networking, the Women in Technology program has been extremely useful."

-- SLIIT WIT Instructor



WIT orientation ceremony at SLIIT

INSTRUCTOR FEEDBACK

Instructor feedback from SLIIT stressed the importance of providing scholarships to the success of the program and of the goal of **encouraging more women to enter the IT field**. The instructor noted that since many of the students work during the day, the training would be welcomed at different times during the day so that working students have options for when they can participate.

The instructor indicated that further training or enrichment activities would best support the career development of the WIT students. It was particularly emphasized that **internship/job placement assistance** is very important, as well as, additional computer and IT training programs, career skills training and attendance at conferences and meetings and membership in professional IT associations.

INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

Instructors and participants alike provided valuable feedback that will help to create a stronger, more effective program in the future. Many participants affirmed the need to target more women throughout the country and holding the classes at a variety of times to accommodate women with a variety of schedules. They also strongly recommended adding a **practicum or internship** component to the program.

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

1. ***Expand the scholarship program to more academies, specifically those in tsunami-affected areas***
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 Sri Lanka 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 Sri Lanka.

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.

*"This was a very valuable program. It was very easy for getting jobs. All the time, a job vacancy says "CCNA, CCNP" will be considered. I had opportunity to attend a conference for my research paper in Nepal. I attended CISCO routing workshop in that conference. Both CCNA WIT scholarship and CISCO workshop turned my life into better, clear and valuable direction."
-- SLIIT WIT Student*