

PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Development Programme

Afghanistan Country Office, Shah Mahmood Ghazi Watt, Kabul



Afghan Girls Prepared for High-tech Jobs

Kabul, 24 March 2010— Over one hundred female students who had successfully completed Basic Training Programme in Information Technology (IT), which was introduced at the CISCO Networking Academy in November 2009, awarded with certificates during the 27th graduation ceremony of CISCO Networking Academy attended by high officials of Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MoCIT) and UNDP.

The MoWA representative, Ms. Nahid Wazin, highlighted the key role CISCO Networking Academy is playing in building the human capital of Afghan girls which is a major objective of both the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) as well as the National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA), to promote equal participation of women and men in national development through development of their human capital. She also thanked UNDP and MoCIT for supporting the Academy which in turn is assisting the trained students in getting jobs and improving their careers. She underpinned the significant role of the Academy in view of the constraints young girls face in attending training courses due to concerns of their parents to allow them to go to only safe places -that are very few in Afghanistan- to upgrade their skills.



CISCO Networking Academy is the only institution in Afghanistan which provides IT training courses exclusively for female students which is very significant keeping in mind the prevailing social and cultural environment in the country where parents are always anxious to send their girls to a secure and safe environment for learning different skills which is not readily available. As a result, the demand for IT training programmes at CISCO Networking Academy has been increasing and since its inception in 2003, more than 1,000 female students have been trained.

The Director-General of MoCIT, Mr. Aimal Marjan, thanked UNDP for supporting the national priorities of the Government of Afghanistan and hoped to expand different programmes at the Academy to the context of development that would be a real progression in this regard. He said that he is confident that here is a tremendous scope to diversify into different activities related to the acquisition of IT skills by female students which could then help them in becoming economically empowered. He assured his Ministry's continued support to the Academy and agreed to extend technical assistance to the Academy to address some of the immediate needs of the students.

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Addressing the ceremony, Mr. David Akopyan, Deputy Country Director of UNDP emphasized the significance of achievements of CISCO Academy in developing the human capital of young Afghan girls who are the “future” of Afghanistan and key actors in the process of national development. He further mentioned that after having acquired IT knowledge at the Academy, the girl students are only “a click away” from the outside world and in this way their interaction with other countries can be guaranteed for strengthening their intellectual capacity.

The CISCO Networking Academy which is a joint initiative of MoWA and MoCIT supported by UNDP, has since 2003 established an exclusive training facility at MoWA for providing young Afghan girls with a safe and secure environment to learn IT skills and equip themselves with the necessary technical networking knowledge that would help them to enter and participate in the job market effectively and on equal terms with their male counterparts. The Gender Equality Project of UNDP is currently managing the Academy and is engaged in up-scaling the facilities and scope of opportunities that are presently available and being offered at this institution.



This ceremony marked beginning of a new chapter in the progress of CISCO Networking Academy which has come a long way since its beginning in 2003 and it hopes to continue building upon its strengths for advancing steadily in the direction of empowering Afghan girls to become real agents of change.

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