

Bridging the Digital Divide



Due to the expanding role of information and communication technologies (ICT) in global economic and social activities, the digital divide between those with access to ICT and those without has become a growing concern.

To accelerate efforts related to digital inclusion, Cisco® has developed new models of collaboration that harness the power of ICT to provide underserved populations with greater access to education and opportunities for social and economic participation.

Greater Access to Education

The Cisco Networking Academy® Program is a powerful example of how the Internet can be used to increase access to the knowledge economy by enabling network-centric skills. There are approximately 10,000 Networking Academies around the world, many of which have been developed in support of global initiatives. The ultimate goal of the program is to aid in social and economic development through digital inclusion and education.

Least Developed Countries Initiative

Cisco collaborated with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and United Nations Volunteers to launch the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) Initiative in 2000. Within this initiative, more than 200 ICT training centers, primarily Cisco Networking Academies, have been established in 40 LDCs, and 11 other developing countries. More than 17,000 students have been trained and targeted gender initiative projects have been established in more than 25 developing countries to address the under-representation of women in the ICT industry.

Economic Regeneration in Africa through ICT Workforce

There are currently over 300 Networking Academies in Africa teaching over 14,000 students. Cisco is partnering with the Government of Ethiopia to establish 100 Networking Academies in support of a project aimed at using Internet technologies to promote education, health, and prosperity. These Academies will play an important role in a plan for economic regeneration, which will help lift Ethiopia from its position as one of the poorest countries in Africa through the development of a sustainable ICT workforce.

Cisco is also working with the Minister of Capacity Building in Ethiopia to deliver leadership training through local companies to help accelerate plans to reform government organizations and improve the delivery of services to citizens. One of the primary goals of the program is to train more than 1000 managers and leaders over the next two years.

Internet Training Centers

Cisco and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) have worked together over the past 5 years to establish affordable Internet Training Centers in many developing countries. Within this initiative, Cisco and ITU have established more than 60 Internet Training Centers in 49 developing countries, and have trained more than 5000 students. There are more than 2000 graduates of this program, many of whom are now working in networking technology careers. This initiative also includes training for government officials and staff members in ministries of communications and telecommunications in developing countries.

In support of the Internet Training Centers Initiative, Cisco and ITU provide teacher and student training, online curricula, lab equipment, and support for workforce development programs. Cisco and ITU also announced a joint sponsorship of 100 Internet Training Center scholarships for women at the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2006 in Doha, Qatar. This initiative provides a compelling example of how businesses, international organizations, and governments can work together to meet the urgent needs of developing countries and promote digital inclusion.

Jordan Education Initiative

At the World Economic Forum in 2003, John Chambers, the president and CEO of Cisco, encouraged companies to work in partnership to narrow the gap between developed and less-developed countries through better education. This led to the development of the Jordan Education Initiative, which aims to create a model for Internet-enabled learning that can be implemented in other countries.

The JEI harnesses the power of technology to boost educational and economic development. The JEI is supported by 45 organizations, including international companies and government ministries. Its main objective is to create a transferable model for education reform through teacher training, technology-enabled learning, and ICT adoption in schools.

Achieving E-Quality in the IT Sector through Strategic Partnerships in the Middle East

Cisco has collaborated with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and USAID to implement a number of gender programs in the Middle East. In June 2001, the Cisco Foundation and Cisco Systems® formed a strategic partnership

with the UNIFEM Regional Office of Arab States located in Jordan to establish a project called "Achieving E-Quality in the IT Sector." The project was designed to promote women's participation in the ICT sector by establishing gender-focused training programs and helping graduates enter the ICT job market. Ten Cisco Networking Academies were established and two years later, the first students graduated from the program. To date, 2500 students have enrolled in the CCNA® course and, on average, 50 percent of them are women. To facilitate job placement of these students, UNIFEM and Cisco have worked with the Ministries of Education and Higher Education to host three job fairs.

Building on this success in Jordan, UNIFEM started a similar project in Morocco in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the State Secretariat of Professional Training in 2004. Ten Academies were established and 500 students, 50 percent of whom are women, enrolled in the program. The first class of 238 students graduated in May 2006 after completing all four semesters of the CCNA course. In conjunction with this project, Morocco was also chosen as one of seven countries to participate in the Women in Technology Scholarship Program funded by USAID. Through this program, 100 women were awarded scholarships to attend Networking Academies in Mohammedia, Rabat, and Errachidia.

A third related project was started with UNIFEM in Lebanon in 2005, in partnership with the Hariri Foundation and the Ministry of Education. Through the project, ten Networking Academies have been established in universities, schools, and NGOs.

Many other projects are currently being implemented throughout the Middle Eastern countries and the developing world. Working closely with strategic partners, Cisco is committed to providing ICT training that will enable people in developing countries to gain access to information and technology, and ultimately contribute to economic and social development.



Addresses, phone numbers, and fax numbers are listed on the Cisco.com Website at www.cisco.com/go/offices.