

28 April 2011

Girls in ICT Day





AFP/Image Source

International “Girls in ICT Day” launched

- *On 8 April 2011, ITU announced the establishment of an international “Girls in ICT Day”, which will be held every year on the fourth Thursday in April. Girls around the world gathered on 28 April 2011 to celebrate the first annual international Girls in ICT Day. The Day celebrates girls’ interests and strengths, and encourages them to choose a career in information and communication technologies.*

The new “Girls in ICT Day” is the direct result of the adoption of Resolution 70 by ITU’s Plenipotentiary Conference in Guadalajara, Mexico, in October 2010. The Resolution, “Gender mainstreaming in ITU and promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women through information and communication technologies”, resolved to incorporate a gender perspective in the implementation of all ITU programmes

and plans. Other results so far include the launch of the Global Network of Women ICT Decision-Makers, and a high-level debate to mark the 100th anniversary of International Women’s Day.

Girls can do ICT!

The message “Girls can do ICT!” was the theme of this year’s celebrations. The aim was to exchange ideas and experiences, and find ways to tell girls and young women information and communication technologies are tools of empowerment, and that a career in ICT not only offers new and exciting challenges but also is very rewarding.

“This new Girls in ICT Day will provide a much-needed boost to female participation in the ICT sector,” said ITU Secretary-General Dr Hamadoun I. Touré. “With many countries now forecasting a shortage of skilled ICT

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professionals within the next ten years, it is vital that we attract young women into technology if we are to sustain healthy growth rates for the industry overall. With excellent employment opportunities and very good remuneration, a career in technology represents an excellent choice for girls in every country worldwide.”

What will the Day achieve? Although women and men have the same choices of careers, there is still a mindset that distinguishes between typically male and female occupations. This creates a predetermined picture of the future careers of boys and girls, tending to restrict choices. As a result, girls are underrepresented in engineering and computer science. “Girls in ICT” Day encourages girls to let their career path be defined by personal interest and talent, not by stereotypes. It promotes an interest in technology, computer science, new communication media and engineering, offering girls opportunities to make contacts for their future career and to be inspired by women in leadership positions.

Looking ahead

ITU actively encourages its Member States and Sector Members to get involved and organize local, regional and national events designed to showcase ICT and technology careers to young female students. It also invites ministries of education, ministries of communications and other government entities to support the initiative by partnering with private-sector companies to reach out to young girls through schools, tertiary institutions and in-house mentoring and shadowing programmes.

ITU’s Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) will be spearheading a number of gender-related initiatives over the course of the year, such as the new partnership with Telecentre.org to train disadvantaged women in basic use of ICT equipment and applications. “Technology is now widely recognized as a critical enabler of socio-economic development,” said BDT Director Brahim Sanou. “Leveraging the power of ICT to improve the livelihood of women worldwide has the power to accelerate progress towards achieving, by the target date of 2015, United Nations Millennium Development Goal 3: promote gender equality and empower women.”

A toolkit designed to provide all the information and resources needed to run a national “Girls in ICT Day” is now available at: <http://witnet.org/documents/girlsday-toolkit.pdf>.