



SUCCESS STORY

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Cisco Systems, Inc.
170 West Tasman Drive
San Jose, CA
95134-1706

First Group Of African Women Graduate From ECA

The first twenty-six African women from 16 English-speaking African countries graduated from the Cisco Networking Academy Program on 31st January 2002, after 280 hours of training at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The training program, organized by ECA's Information Technology Centre for Africa (ITCA), is the first of its kind, based on the established curriculum of the Cisco Networking Academy Program, a global program operating in more than 137 countries worldwide.

The program is underpinned by three goals: one, to reverse the current unequal access of women and men to the new technologies; two, to address the shortage of skilled African human resources in new technologies; and three, to provide trainees with skills that can produce high-income employment and provide entrepreneurial opportunities.

In addition to the core course work, through ECA's African Centre for Gender and Development, Development Management Division and the ITCA, the course participants learned about gender and development, entrepreneurship and business management, and ICT policies and challenges in Africa.

Students were also exposed to other major African development issues and among other things participated in the second meeting of the Committee on Development Information (CODI II), where many ICT issues were raised and discussed by ECA's member states.

ECA established as a Cisco Networking Academy at the ITCA in the context of the UN Secretary General's Global Compact, which advocates enhanced development partnerships between the UN system and the private sector. The program is a partnership initiative in collaboration with leading Information Technology company Cisco Systems Inc. and InfoDev of the World Bank. It is supported by the Government of the Republic of Korea. Most of the graduates are employees of governments, NGOs and the private sector. They are expected to return to their jobs, where they will make use of the skills and knowledge acquired at ECA. Many have also expressed an interest in consulting and training, and are looking to secure start-up funding to establish their own companies.



Female graduates from ECA, Regional Academy, Ethiopia



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The next batch of African women, to be selected on a competitive basis from French-speaking African countries, will enroll and start training in March 2002. The ITCA training team of certified Cisco trainers, will maintain close contact with the graduates and monitor their progress via mailing list and website. In the broader context of ECA's work in Information and Communications technologies (ICTs) for development, the graduates will be involved in regional and sub-regional activities, and will be encouraged to participate in the development of National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) plans in their respective countries.

ECA has been promoting ICTs in Africa for more than two decades. Through the African Information Society Initiative (AISI), ECA has marketed ICTs as an engine for Africa's development. AISI is an action framework to build Africa's information and communication infrastructure. It is a mission statement for Africa's quest to narrow the information technology gap between Africa and the rest of the world, and to speed the continent's entry into the information age. ITCA is an ICT-focused exhibition, training and content development hub, established by ECA in 1999.



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