



Press Release

ICDL GCC Foundation highlights dire need for computer literacy among women in the region

Estimated 100 million IT-illiterate people in the region, with women accounting for significant percentage

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ICDL GCC Foundation, the governing body and certification authority of the International Computer Driving License (ICDL) programs in the GCC countries and Iraq, recently called on policymakers, corporate citizens and women's societies for increased support towards initiatives that promote digital literacy among women in the Gulf region.

According to a study by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), digital illiteracy in the Arab World is at 29.7 per cent, compared to 19 per cent at the global level. The organization pointed out that there are 100 million IT-illiterate people in the region, 75 million of whom are between 15 and 45 years old, and digital illiteracy rates are higher among women.

The key to boosting IT literacy in the region is the effective adoption of digital initiatives such as the “e-Citizen” program of ICDL GCC Foundation that empowers digital literacy in the Gulf society and highlights its role in providing women the knowledge and skills required during an age of modernization. Such initiatives also create entrepreneurial opportunities for women and positively influence their country’s socioeconomic growth. Further, “e-Citizen” helps women develop their computer and Internet literacy, allowing them to maximize access to information and better utilize many online services, creating an opportunity for them to be more active in household financial transactions and also helping protect their children from Internet misuse and its threats.

The “e-Citizen” allows women to work in various areas and encourages them to take up eLearning and to establish home-based businesses, in areas such as design, translation, and financial market investments. Additionally, the skills gained by e-Citizens will help them perform daily errands online, such as shopping, bill payments, and banking, among other more. This kind of digital culture is beneficial not only on the professional level but also on the social level, as it enhances women’s roles by guiding, building and educating a generation capable of effectively using the internet and advanced technologies to achieve the future goals of Arab and Gulf societies.

Some studies show that the total number of women in the work force in the GCC currently stands at 30 to 40 per cent, while other studies show that some GCC countries still reveal high unemployment rates among female university graduates, which was observed to have negatively affected the national economy. According to these studies, governments have been intensifying their efforts to introduce wide-scale literacy programs in order to enhance the women’s role at the socioeconomic level.

“Enabling women and engaging them in the process of e-transition is an important step in furthering socioeconomic growth in the GCC, as women can contribute not only in household affairs but also in areas such as medicine and education. There are still a large number of women in our region who have not been given the opportunity to acquire the basic computer and internet skills. We hope that our e-women initiatives will trigger support from policymakers on a larger scale,” said Jamil Ezzo, Director General, ICDL GCC Foundation.

Around 26.8 per cent of the ICDL certificates issued by ICDL GCC in 2008 were received by women. A modest 0.8 per cent increase in women’s enrolments calls for more efforts from the governments, corporate citizens and women’s societies from around the region to support more initiatives that lead to promulgating digital literacy among women.

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