



## In the Gulf:

*Refurbished PCs Change Lives and Reduce Environmental Risks*





## Refurbished PCs Change Lives and Reduce Environmental Risks

Countries within the Gulf Co-operative Council are making impressive economic strides and witnessing tremendous investment and growth. In spite of these factors, technology continues to be out of reach for many people. A new initiative that has been put in place between private organizations, non-profits and government agencies aims to bridge the digital divide by refurbishing second hand computer hardware and donating them to underserved communities. Working in partnership with these organizations, Microsoft provides affordable software through its Community Microsoft Authorized Refurbisher programme, in line with its commitment to promote the reuse of technology and provide computers to schools and charities.



**A**s we hurtle down the technology highway at speeds far faster than many consumers can keep up with, today's most advanced computers are often discarded by businesses after only 2-3 years that will enable putting discarded PCs plenty of life left to Good Use in the future

The need to find alternative ways to dispose of computers is growing rapidly. The number of personal computers sold in the Middle East is set to double by the end of 2008. And it is estimated that by 2010, 500 million computer systems in the world will be unused - a number twice the size of the population of the United States. The technology analyst firm Gartner estimates that two-thirds of used PCs are either discarded or stored.

“As you are aware, computers and computer components contain toxic substances including lead, mercury and lithium” A typical processor and monitor may contain 3 kg-4 kg of heavy metals, which can leak upon disposal, causing a threat to both human health and the environment. The disposal of computers and related items is one of the most rapidly growing problems all over the world. ”

**Hamdan Al Shair,**  
**Director of the Environment Department, Dubai Municipality.**



The Dubai Municipality Refurbishment Centre project was formally launched in February 2007 at a cost of Dhs1.5 million. Over 2040 refurbished computers have been distributed to various establishments including charity associations, educational institutions and special needs centres in the UAE. The biggest obstacle to expansion, says Qasem is to persuade more organizations to donate their surplus computers. Recently, Dubai Women's College (DWC) donated 100 computers and several laser printers to the refurbishing centre.

## The Refurbishing Process Begins

To comprehend the full scope of this growing secondary PC ecosystem, we begin with a modest warehouse located in Al Quoz, an industrial district in Dubai, where rows of tables are stacked high with surplus computer monitors, CPUs and keyboards. The PCs are received through Dubai Municipality collection centers located in Karama, Al Tawar and Al Hatta. The donated items are then dropped off at the main warehouse in Al Muhaisina where a four member team from Dubai Municipality separates and logs the stock. The PCs are then put through a series of tests to check for technical errors and functionality and if required, changes to spare parts are made. They also install genuine Microsoft Windows XP and Office 2003, provided by Microsoft through their Community Microsoft Authorized Refurbisher program (Community MAR) for a nominal fee. The computers are then connected, to a local area network so their hard drives can be wiped clean. One key factor in making the secondary PCs effective is the month long training program that teaches high school students to fix and maintain computers where they do practical work, testing the machines and loading them with software

while they are getting employable skills they will be able to take advantage of throughout life. In the final stage, the refurbished PCs are then handed over to the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Humanitarian and Charity Establishment who is responsible for identifying the organizations that need PCs. Recently, the centre handed over 1000 refurbished PCs to the National Human Resource Development and Employment Authority (Tanmia), which will use the computers to train young UAE nationals in enhancing their technical skills in order to enable them to compete effectively in the local job market. Hussain Nasser Lootah, Acting Director General of Dubai Municipality said that the initiative was aimed at spreading the culture of technology and protection of the environment.



A Secondary PC  
Ecosystem

## At a Glance

The centre houses as many as **6542** personal computers, **8199** monitors, **2214** printers, **446** scanners, **3795** keyboards, **2391** mouse, **328** speakers and **304** laptops.

“ Although these are substantial numbers, the biggest obstacle to expansion of the program, says Qasem is to persuade more organizations to donate their surplus computers..... ”

**Hussain Nasser Lootah,**  
**Acting Director General of**  
**Dubai Municipality**

## Skills Training Leads to Job Creation and Fosters Socio-Economic Growth



Graduates from Women in Technology Program in Oman with Oman Women Association.

*“I already knew MS Word which I learnt in school but was not very good at it. Now I can use most of the features of MS Word as well as the other tools of MS Office like Access, Excel and PowerPoint. I really enjoyed the course and am now reaping the rewards of what I learnt”*

Majida who is the youngest among three sisters and the only employed member in their family.

The biggest economic and social challenges facing the Middle East are youth unemployment and a rapidly growing workforce. One of the main objectives of the Community MAR project is aimed at providing affordable access to technology to stimulate jobs and support personal achievement. Refurbished PCs are already being used to provide people with computer skills and increase an individual's employment prospects. Take Khuloud Ali Al Hatmi for example, who works as a supervisor for the National Training Institute in Oman. After finishing her high school last year, Khuloud had found it difficult to pursue higher studies because her father had retired. Khuloud says;

*“My father receives a very small sum as pension. So, I desperately needed a job to support my family”*

However, getting a job proved to be difficult, so earlier this year, Khuloud decided to take up a two-and-a-half-month Women in Technology (WIT) course conducted by the Oman Women Association (OWA) that was the recipient of 90 refurbished PCs from the Community MAR program. The training and knowledge that Khuloud was able to gain from the course helped pave the way for a promising career.

*“I was trying to do similar courses but they were either very expensive or not suitable because of longer duration or insufficient curriculum. Then I learnt of the WIT programme through my friends. In such a short period I learnt all the basic computer skills and after completing the course I was able to find a good job with help from the Ministry of Manpower,”*

she says. With nine siblings at home, Khuloud's income now goes a long way in making her family financially stable; much to the relief of her father. In partnership with Microsoft Community Affairs and Middle East Partnership Initiative of the US Department of State, WIT is implemented by the Institute of International

Education and implemented through Oman Women Association(OWA) in Oman. Microsoft works with OWA to train hundreds of women in basic IT skills. By offering Microsoft's Unlimited Potential Curriculum and donating substantial amounts of software and resources, Microsoft aims to empower women through technology and increase their employment prospects. The course not only provides training that imparts basic technology skills but also grooms young girls to be professionals in today's global work environment.

Microsoft Unlimited Potential is Microsoft's commitment to reaching those currently underserved by technology, with the goal of reaching the next 1 billion people by 2015. Unlimited Potential weaves together innovative technologies, new business models and partnerships with businesses, governments and development organizations to help address the diverse social and economic challenges faced by those who currently receive little or no benefit from technology.

Since its launch in December 2006, WIT has provided training to 200 students, while 160 more are currently enrolled in the course. Of them 25 girls, who were seeking jobs, were placed with different organizations. One of them was Majida Majid Al Sally, public relations coordinator of NCTI. Her story is also not very different from that of her colleague and course-mate Khuloud. Majida also attended the WIT programme to ensure she would find a job after finishing school. Through the course, she learnt how to work on Microsoft Office, browse the web and the basics of web design and digital media.

Abeer Ali-Mukhaini, Programme manager for WIT says the programme is aimed at girls belonging to low income group families in Oman.

“This course is highly subsidized and we charge only 45 Omani Riyals per student where as they would have to spend no less than 200 riyals anywhere else for a similar course. Over 25 refurbished PCs were sent to a charity organization in Sudan to provide technology training to deaf or hearing-disabled people. In addition, 45 machines were sent to the Zayed Orphanage in Afghanistan. by Mohammed Bin Rashid Foundation.”

### **Ibrahim Bumelha, Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Mohammed Bin Rashid Foundation**

Says that the Community MAR initiative has been receiving tremendous response from various government and private institutions in the country.



### **Looking forward**

Computers and software have tremendous potential to empower people and to facilitate healthy, sustainable economic growth. They can be an important tool in advancing education, improving the delivery of social services, increasing business productivity, fostering local innovation and creating new jobs. Yet 80 percent of the world's population still has no access to technology.

Meanwhile, tens of millions of still-usable computers are dumped in landfills each year. This constitutes an enormous waste of resources as well as a burden on the environment. The reuse of computers—through donation, refurbishment or resale—offers tremendous promise for increasing access to technology, especially for people underserved by technology. Only recently, however, has the technology industry begun to embrace the use of secondary PCs as a way to expand access to technology while also addressing environmental concerns

Microsoft believes that getting the maximum use out of existing computers—through programs that support donation, refurbishment and resale of used PCs—is key to serving the goals of digital inclusion and environmental stewardship. This approach requires a shift in thinking within the computer industry, including a commitment to creating tools and programs that can help expand and improve the currently fragmented market in secondary PCs. Microsoft is embracing this challenge by developing strategies and partnerships that help to foster a more vibrant market in used PCs that run genuine software.

These efforts reduce the environmental impact associated with manufacturing new PCs and discarding old ones, while bolstering the reuse of existing hardware. As demand for PCs increases and organizations retire a growing number of still usable computers, Microsoft will continue to explore new strategies and partnerships that align business, environmental and socio-economic goals.

A Secondary PC  
Ecosystem

## **At a Glance**

“Many organisations have been donating their old computers in a bid to support this noble initiative that serves both the environment and educate citizens. We aim to collect around **5,000** computers a year and hope to make it **10,000** by working with different local and federal government bodies and private establishments. With these computers and their accessories the foundation will try to support developmental and educational projects and spread the use of technology across the region..”

**Ibrahim Bumelha,**  
**Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Mohammed Bin Rashid Foundation**

**For more information on:**

**Microsoft Community MAR please visit:**  
[www.microsoft.com/communitymar](http://www.microsoft.com/communitymar)

**The Dubai Municipality Refurbishment Centre please visit:**  
[www.pcrecycle.ae](http://www.pcrecycle.ae)

**To learn more about Microsoft Unlimited Potential programs and investments visit :**  
[www.microsoft.com/up](http://www.microsoft.com/up)

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