



**Attention: Business Editor**

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### **Microsoft women encourage high school girls in Kenya to take up careers in STEM**

*This exciting experience provides high school girls with opportunities to learn about careers in technology, talk with Microsoft employees about their life experiences, and enjoy hands-on computer and technology training.*

**Machakos, Kenya-** Microsoft Corporation employees marked this year's International Women's Day eve by holding the 4<sup>th</sup> Edition of Microsoft's ICT Day for girls dubbed "DigiGirLz", in Machakos County, Kenya. The one day ICT workshop will be hosted in partnership with; I Choose Life Africa, Craft Silicon Foundation and Techno Brain Limited.

The initiative is a Global Microsoft YouthSpark Program for young women to build a pipeline of future workers ready for the challenges of the global economy. It gives high school girls the opportunity to interact with female Microsoft employees to gain exposure to careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) as well as participate in hands-on computer and technology workshops. Locally, it is executed by Microsoft employees as part of the company's Employee Volunteer Program (EVP). To date, it has seen over 750 girls from schools within Nairobi County benefit from the program.

The annual event held for the first time outside of Nairobi brought together over 250 girls from 10 schools in Machakos County at Misyani Girls in Tala, where they received career planning assistance, information on technology and business roles. They also participated in thought-provoking exercises and interesting Microsoft product demonstrations.

"Microsoft is proud to offer technology programs that target youth. We hope that through this event, the girls will be motivated to not only take up careers in the ICT sector in a futuristic approach but also use the skills gained from the hands on training and mentorship session in creating solutions that can solve the problems in their immediate society/environment using technology. We also hope that the girls will

have a better understanding of what a career in technology is all about,” said Mariam Abdullahi, General Manager, East Africa Microsoft Mobile Device Sales.

“Craft Silicon Foundation is proud to be a partner on the DigiGirlz program as part of our dedication in encouraging girls and women to take up science and technology related career path. My advice to the young women is on 3 important aspects; firstly education is important for all, as it puts everyone on the equal footing regardless of your backgrounds and gives one a competitive edge, secondly as women , we need to have financial stability and acquire some form of financial means as it is prudent, and paramount for us to be self-sufficient and lastly I encourage women to pursue fields which were long ago male dominated , such as ICT software developers ,Science and the financial industry. As women we must believe we are gifted, capable and have contributions to make in the society,” said Priya Budhabhatti - CEO - Craft Silicon Foundation.

“I Choose Life recently launched the Adopt a School Campaign, and we are glad that Microsoft Corporation have championed the mentorship aspect of the campaign, through Mentorship of school girls to pursue further education and careers in ICT. This partnership brings together mentorship models that will inspire the girls to stay and remain in school to pursue their ambitions, directly impacting the student’s learning, enrolment, attendance and performance. We encourage other Corporates to join the Adopt a School Campaign! and provide mentorship and Infrastructure support to schools. With ICT at the core of any business operation, we are also pleased that Microsoft has also partnered with us to launch Biashara Centre’s across several counties, to provide knowledge and information to the Youth and Farmers therefore building capacities within the community,” said Mike Mutungi – CEO, I Choose Life – Africa.

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**For more information:**

<http://www.microsoft.com/enus/diversity/programs/digigirlz/digigirlzday.aspx>

**About I Choose Life - Africa**

I Choose Life – Africa (ICL) is one of the leading Non-Governmental Organizations that has programs in over 210 institutions (tertiary institutions, High Schools and Primary Schools) across 23 counties in Kenya and has a great focus on academic and career mentoring. ICL recently launched the Adopt a School Campaign! inviting Corporates to become professional mentors and provide resources to support school infrastructure improvement in County Schools.