



The OWSD-Elsevier Foundation Awards for Early-Career Women Scientists in the Developing World

Women scientists in developing countries often experience isolation, lack of role models and visibility. For the past seven years, the Organization for Women in Science (OWSD) has collaborated with the Elsevier Foundation addressing these issues through a unique awards program for five outstanding early career women scientists from Africa, the Arab region, Asia and the Pacific region and Latin America and the Caribbean. The prizes rotate each year between three areas: (biological sciences, physical sciences, and engineering, innovation and technology).

Each winner receives a cash prize of USD 5,000 and is sponsored to attend the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), held every year in February. The winners are presented with their awards at a special AAAS networking ceremony, and have the opportunity to attend workshops and sessions, meet experts in their fields, visit local laboratories and institutions, and attend a celebratory networking dinner organized by the Elsevier Foundation.

The meeting is an important opportunity to establish contacts and collaboration networks with colleagues from different parts of the world.



Beneficiary group

5 women scientists

Demographic

There is no age limit but the awardees must have received their PhDs within the previous 10 years.

Budget

\$85,600

Location

The 2020 winners are from: Bangladesh, Guatemala, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Yemen

Primary outcome

The Awards aim to increase the number and influence of women doing high-level science in the developing world. The premise is simple: the more diverse the pool of scientists, the more robust the science. Women scientists often make life-changing contributions, identifying problems and finding solutions that others have not considered.

Goals

- Increase the visibility of outstanding women scientists in developing countries
- Support their career advancement
- Inspire future generations of women scientists in the developing world, who struggle with a research environment that are often oblivious, indifferent and even hostile to their needs, expertise and experiences

Milestones

- Since 2010 **54** scientists have been awarded, **35** since 2013 (when the awards were redesigned to the current format of 5/year).
- Women from **19** countries have been awarded since 2013.
- In 2019, an additional travel grant component was added to the Award offering awardees the opportunity to continue broadening their networks through conferences or workshops, to amplify the impact of the award.
- Additional funds: since 2014, a supplementary cash award of \$2,500 per awardee has been made by private donors, past AAAS President, Dr. Gil Ommen and his partner, Martha Darling.
- Increased scientific excellence: invitations to present on international and regional panels, to collaborate on publications and visit laboratories.

Level of evidence

Level 1	Quasi-experimental
Level 2	Pre-post or cross-sectional
Level 3	Point-in-time study
Level 4	Performance metrics/stats
Level 5	Anecdotal evidence

Monitoring media coverage; reports from past awardees; email feedback.

Future plans

- Integrate the winners into the broader OWSD network of 9000+ members throughout the developing world as key mentors and advisors; enable them to play key roles as advisors and trainers to OWSD national chapter members, PhD and Early Career Fellows.
- Stronger impact monitoring through post-award surveys modeled on other OWSD SIDA and IDRC-funded programs



Above: Dr. Fathiah Zakham, Dr. Champika Ellawalla Kankanamge, Dr. Samia Subrina, Dr. Chao Mbogo and Dr. Susana Arrechea during the 2020 Award Ceremony at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in Seattle, WA. (© Alison Bert/Elsevier)



Left: During their week in Seattle, the winners received training in public engagement and science communication by Emily Cloyd, Director of the AAAS Center for Science Engagement. The training was complemented by Dr. Jennifer Thomson, President of OWSD (far left in the picture).

SPOTLIGHT ON NAREL PANIAGUA ZAMBRANA 2019 WINNER - BOLIVIA

Dr. Paniagua-Zambrana received direct recognition from her country's then President, Juan Evo Morales Ayma, who posted a tweet congratulating her, and organized a face-to-face meeting with her upon her return to Bolivia. She was able to share with him her research and her vision for helping indigenous communities in Bolivia to catalogue their use of native plants and contribute to the body of scientific literature. Paniagua was also approached by the World Food Program in Bolivia who created a wall-size mural portrait of her for International Women's Day, with the message "Every Girl can be a Scientist if she wants." She was also able to discuss with them the possibility of developing a joint collaborative research project using traditional knowledge for food security.

"These scientists are living proof that, if given the opportunities and support, women all over the world can become leaders in their field."

— JENNIFER THOMPSON, President, Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World

