



RIKEN

Envisioning Futures

Location: Japan

Target group: early-career women scientists

Budget: \$40,000 a year (2022, pilot)



Goals

- Produce 9 female PI's interviews, articles and videos in 2022-2023
- Capture leadership and management behaviors through interviews with PIs
- Increase visibility of female PIs in Japan and the challenges they encounter.

Activities & milestones

- 5 interviews conducted as of March 2023 with Dr. Goda, Dr. Mazuka, Dr. Mataga, Dr. Imamoto and Dr. Sodeoka.
- 2 interviews available on [RIKEN's dedicated website](#) (in Japanese) and YouTube channel.
- "Envisioning Futures" PI panel discussion on gender equality held at the 2022 Science Agora conference on November 6th. Panelists included Dr. Yuko Harayama, Former Executive Director of International Affairs at RIKEN and Elsevier Foundation Board Member – and Yukiko Goda, Team Leader and RIKEN's Center for Brain Science Synaptic Plasticity and Circuit Control Research Team.

Sustainability & future plans

- Compile the interviews in a printed-format book, in Japanese and English
- Host a launch event in the fall of 2023 at a dedicated RIKEN Symposium
- Explore the possibility of a special event at Science Agora 2023, and of follow-up events at AAAS and ESOF.
- Building on the initial funding, RIKEN aims to expand the interviewees to include male professors within and outside of RIKEN. The sustainability of "Envisioning Futures" however, depends on additional funding and identifying dedicated RIKEN staffing to support the program.

Main photo: Dr. Yukiko Goda. Below: Dr. Reiko Mazuka. Both are Team Leader at RIKEN Center for Brain Science.

Primary outcome

Map the journeys of distinguished Japanese women scientists with a series of oral histories, shedding light on challenges and best practices in a country with persistently low numbers of women researchers and research leaders.

Overview

Although the percentage of female researchers in Japan is on a gradual upward trend, at 16.9% in March 2020, it is still low compared to other countries. The percentage of women in leadership positions is even lower: in 2019, 4.6% female professors in faculties of science and 2.9% in faculties of engineering at Japan's national universities. At RIKEN, one of the largest scientific research institutes in Japan, the ratio of female researchers in leadership positions is 8.4%, a far cry from the global standard. Not surprisingly, the Japanese government has postponed its goal of reaching 30% women in leadership positions to 2030.

The [RIKEN](#) "Envisioning Futures" partnership focuses on interviews with Japanese women principal investigators (PIs) exploring how they acquired leadership and laboratory management skills, overcoming challenges as PIs. The interviews provide a special focus on the establishment of management policies through experiential learning and trial and error. Sharing this hard-won, critical experience will serve to accelerate the growth of women representation in leadership positions, to support their careers progress, and offer policy makers guidance for positive interventions.

