

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



## Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD)



### Location

Low- and middle-income countries



### Target group

Women scientists who have received their PhDs within the previous 10 years



### Budget

\$60,000 a year (2011, 2013-2018), \$80,000 a year (2019-2021), \$100,000 a year (2022-2026)



### SDGs

SDG5 (target 5.5); SDG10 (target 10.2) and SDG17 (target 17.6)

## Synopsis

The more diverse the pool of scientists, the more robust and impactful the research. Women scientists from low- and middle-income countries often make life-changing contributions to advancing the UN SDGs, identifying problems and finding solutions that others have not considered.

## Program description

Women scientists in low- and middle-income countries are advancing solutions to urgent global challenges, yet many face limited visibility and support at critical stages of their careers. Through a long-standing partnership with the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD), the Elsevier Foundation supports an annual awards program that recognizes outstanding early-career women scientists. Since 2013, the OWSD-Elsevier Foundation Awards have championed the achievements of 84 women scientists from over 38 low- and middle-income countries.

Winners receive a cash prize and are sponsored to attend major scientific conferences, where they participate in workshops, meet experts, and expand their networks.

In 2021, the awards were re-aligned with the UN SDGs, shifting focus from specific scientific disciplines to broader research areas, welcoming a range of interdisciplinary approaches. To date, the 2022 awards focused on climate action, the 2023 awards on Food Security, 2024 on Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene, 2025 on Inclusive Health, and 2026 on Sustainable, affordable and reliable energy. The prize also acknowledges the scientists' commitment to leadership, mentoring, and engagement.



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## Goals

- Recognize outstanding women scientists, enhancing their visibility and career advancement.
- Inspire and support future generations of women scientists facing indifference and a lack of support in their research environments.

## Activities and milestones

- 2025 winners (Inclusive Health) announced on 3 March 2025, ahead of International Women's Day. Media coverage included BBC Health Check and national newspapers.
- Two awardees attended the 7th OWSD General Assembly (Bogotá, November 2025), alongside 25 alumnae. To ensure full cohort participation, a separate health-related convening is planned for 2026.
- Three alumnae of the award joined us in a special panel session held in partnership with SciDev.Net at the World Conference of Science Journalists (Pretoria, December 2025) to discuss the impact of media visibility for women scientists .
- 2026 winners (Sustainable, affordable and reliable energy) announced on 24 February 2026 and will be celebrated in a relevant international energy conference.

*"This award is a defining moment in my career, giving me a chance to share my research work and its impact on a global platform. Beyond personal recognition, it represents an opportunity to inspire and empower other women scientists, reminding them that their work is valuable, and they should believe in their potential to provide meaningful contributions. This award serves as a reminder that the sky is never the limit, there is always room to grow, achieve more, and make an even greater impact."*

**Halima S. Twabi**

Associate Professor, University of Malawi

## Spotlight on the 2025 winners — Inclusive Health



**Manal Badrasawi, Palestine**

Clinical nutrition and public health, with a focus on women's health and food insecurity.



**Reem Obaydo, Syria**

Green analytical chemistry and sustainable pharmaceutical methods.



**Alejandra Paniagua-Avila, Guatemala/USA**

Recovery-oriented mental health research in Indigenous and under-resourced communities.



**Sarmila Tandukar, Nepal**

Environmental and wastewater surveillance for infectious disease detection.



**Halima S. Twabi, Malawi**

Biostatistics and data-driven research addressing maternal HIV outcomes and childhood nutrition.

