



Expression of Interest (EOI)

Gender-Inclusive Science Institutions & Systems (GenSIS)
Strengthening the Leadership of Women in Research & Higher Education

Expression of Interest for National Gender in Science Committees
(National GiS Committees)

**UNESCO - Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World
(OWSD)**

Funded by



Canada

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I. Introduction

Within the framework of the UNESCO Call to Action “Closing the Gender Gap in Science”, the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD) and the UNESCO Gender Equality in Science team have launched a new joint initiative, supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada. Entitled “Strengthening Institutional Capacity for Participation and Leadership of Women in Science: Evidence and Best Practice”, the project was announced during the OWSD 7th General Assembly in Bogotá, Colombia, and aims to strengthen the institutional and policy environments that enable women to participate, lead, and thrive in science.

The initiative brings together two complementary components: the establishment of National Gender in Science Committees in selected countries across the Global South and the creation of an International Community of Practice of institutions advancing gender equality in science. Anchored in national data collection, institutional best-practice analysis, and cross-regional learning, these components are designed to support evidence-informed reforms and strengthen institutional leadership for gender equality.

Together, they provide a coherent approach aimed at improving policy clarity, enhancing institutional capacity, and strengthening knowledge and networks—three conditions essential for advancing gender equality across national science systems.

II. Objective of the Expression of Interest

The primary objective of this Expression of Interest (EoI) is to competitively **create a pool of countries** in the Global South to progressively implement the new phase (2026-2028) of the **GenSIS** project.

This call seeks to identify national contexts where active OWSD National Chapters (OWSD NCs) are well positioned, both institutionally and strategically, to work with national STI authorities to establish National Gender in Science Committees (National GiS Committees). These committees will serve as sustainable, evidence-driven hubs that coordinate national data collection, bring stakeholders together, and support gender-transformative reforms across institutions and policies.

These committees will function as sustainable, operational hubs designed to:

- *Generate evidence*: use the OWSD national data collection tools, refining and adapting them where necessary, to compile high-quality, comparable gender-in-STEM data, uncover structural barriers, and identify the institutional gaps that limit women’s participation, retention, and progression.
- *Drive policy reform*: use this evidence to co-design and pilot gender-transformative policies, research grants, and fellowship schemes tailored to local realities.
- *Strengthen institutional capacity*: deploy a leadership, mentoring, and soft-skills curriculum to empower women scientists and institutional partners.
- *Mobilise knowledge and networks*: create and disseminate best practices, knowledge products, and outreach activities, including national case studies and cross-regional exchanges.

By establishing these mechanisms, the project aims to move beyond ad-hoc advocacy to build resilient, evidence-based STEM ecosystems where gender equality is embedded in the national science institutions and policy processes.

III. Who can apply?

This EoI is open to all OWSD National Chapters located in the Global South. Applications must be led by the OWSD NC and demonstrate formalised strategic partnerships with national research, science, and education authorities and Ministries, as well as with academia, the private sector, and other relevant institutions (e.g., National Science Academies, research councils, professional associations, women-in-STEM networks, innovation agencies,...).

To guide the selection process, applications will be assessed against a set of core criteria that reflect the institutional foundations required for establishing a sustainable National GIS Committees. Strong applications will demonstrate clear institutional anchoring, committed national partners, and the capacity to convene diverse stakeholders across the STEM ecosystem. Additional desirable elements, such as prior experience with gender-in-STEM data collection, engagement with IDRC-supported networks, or the potential to contribute to inter-regional dialogue, will provide added value in the assessment process.

a) Core criteria (essential)

Criterion	Description	Supporting Information/Evidence Required	Assessment Weight
<i>OWSD National chapter strength</i>	Demonstrated capacity, active engagement, and readiness to host and lead the National GiS Committees	Recent activity report (last 2 years), member count and registration on OWSD website, evidence of local initiatives/surveys	30%
<i>Proposal Strength</i>	Clarity, coherence, and feasibility of the proposed approach to establish and operationalise the National GiS Committee. The proposal must demonstrate a sound understanding of national gender-in-STEM challenges and opportunities	• Alignment with project objectives • Clear problem definition and proposed methodology • Realistic workplan and timeline	20%
<i>Institutional linkages and stakeholder engagement capacity</i>	Capacity to convene policymakers, academia, private sector, OWSD alumnae, etc. Clear and documented links and support from key national STI authorities (e.g., Science Granting Councils, National STI Ministries, National Commissions for UNESCO, private sector actors).	Letter of Support/Commitment from a high-level official (e.g., head of SGC, Minister/Deputy Minister, Director etc) List of previous collaborations	20%
<i>Institutional and resource commitment</i>	Demonstrated willingness by national institutions (SGCs/Ministries) to invest resources to ensure the National GiS Committees's sustainability. The partner must show they are seeking specific solutions to institutional gaps and are ready to support the National GiS Committees with in-kind or financial contributions (e.g., venues, staff time, administrative support).	Statement of institutional commitment detailing specific contributions, such as: • In-kind support (meeting venues, office space). • Human resources (dedicated staff time for coordination). • Integration plan (how the National GiS Committees will sit within existing structures).	20%

<i>Proposed composition of the National GiS Committee</i>	Credibility, diversity, and strategic relevance of the proposed National GiS Committee members, demonstrating that the Committee will bring together the institutions and expertise needed to drive evidence-based policy reform.	Preliminary list of proposed National GiS Committee members (up to 10 representatives), demonstrating diversity across sectors and institutions.	10%
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Note: Partner institutions are national stakeholders that will participate in, or provide strategic support to, the National GiS Committee. They are expected to demonstrate a clear commitment to addressing institutional gaps and to contributing to the Committee's sustainability by investing resources and providing in-kind or financial support (e.g., venues, staff time, data or technical inputs, administrative assistance).

Applications must demonstrate that the OWSD National Chapter host institution and/or its formal partner institutions will provide measurable added value to the implementation of the National GiS Committee.

This must include at least in-kind contributions, and may also include financial contributions.

b) Desirable criteria (bonus points)

Prior data collection experience (e.g., OWSD, SAGA or other national gender/STEM assessments); Engagement with other networks (e.g., IDRC, Breaking Barriers in STEM Network, GEI); Potential for inter-regional dialogue (Africa–LAC linkages).

IV. Commitment and responsibilities of selected countries

Selected countries, through their National GiS Committees, commit to delivering on **four** core pillars of activity:

1. **Establishing the National GiS Committees.** The selected OWSD NCs are expected to establish a committee that functions as a cohesive, high-level coordination hub capable of advancing gender-transformative reform across the national STEM ecosystem. To ensure the necessary political buy-in and cross-sectoral influence, the committee's membership must span the full scientific ecosystem. Each National GiS Committees should bring together approximately ten representatives from across the scientific and policy landscape, including OWSD NC representatives selected because of their capacity to engage and communicate with diverse actors at diverse levels; senior officials from Science Granting Councils or relevant research, science, education authorities and ministries, university leadership such as rectors, deans or research directors, private-sector representatives, OWSD fellowship alumnae, early-career researchers, and where applicable, the UNESCO National Commission or UNESCO Field Office. This diverse group must commit to active and consistent participation in all key project activities, including steering the national data-collection process, contributing online webinars, and taking part in national meetings workshops.

The initial list may include fewer than 10 members, as additional representatives may be invited to join during the implementation phase based on needs and priorities identified.

Governance and roles within the National GiS Committee:

- *Chair.* The Chair must be a senior official of the national authority responsible for science, technology and innovation, research or higher education, such as a Ministry, a Science Granting Council or an equivalent public body, at a level able to convene other institutions and to bring proposals into national decision-making. The role is political and strategic. The Chair secures government ownership of the Committee, opens access to national policy processes, and commits the authority to taking forward the policy reforms that the Committee identifies, including beyond the lifetime of the project.
 - *The OWSD National Chapter as the engine of the Committee.* The OWSD National Chapter holds the executive and operational responsibility for the Committee. It convenes and services the meetings, drives the national data collection and the preparation of the national report, keeps the workplan on schedule, safeguards the quality of the deliverables, manages the grant and the reporting to OWSD, and maintains day-to-day contact with the OWSD Secretariat, UNESCO and the members of the Committee. The Chair provides the political authority. The OWSD National Chapter makes the Committee work.
2. **Lead the gathering of evidence for policy reform.** A core responsibility will be to lead the national data-collection and evidence-generation process based on the standardized OWSD tools, refining and adapting them as needed to ensure contextual relevance while maintaining cross-country comparability. The committee will consolidate the resulting findings into a comprehensive *National Gender-in-STEM Status Report*. This evidence base will enable the National GiS Committees to identify systemic barriers, diagnose institutional gaps, and translate insights into concrete, context-specific policy recommendations and action plans aimed at institutional and system-level transformation within higher education and research.
 3. **Engaging in policy and institutional reform.** The National GiS Committees will participate in an executive leadership program, including a policy leadership course and a policy innovation pilot. The leadership course will equip the participants with leadership, mentorship, advocacy and strategic planning skills to influence research agendas, institutional reforms, and national policy processes. They will use the learnings to design and execute innovative policy pilots that address the previously identified gaps in policies and governance arrangements using Results Initiative (RRI) methodology. These pilots will generate locally relevant solutions, such as reforming PhD and Early Career fellowship schemes, implementing training curricula to motivate women in scientific careers.
 4. **Mobilizing knowledge and sustaining engagement.** To ensure sustainability, the National GiS Committees must facilitate multi-stakeholder engagement and advocacy throughout the project lifecycle to build broad ownership of the new agenda. This includes active participation in cross-regional learning exchanges, such as the "Breaking Barriers" webinar series/events and convened by UNESCO and OWSD. As a key output, each committee will prepare a Country Case Study that documents local challenges, institutional responses, innovation pilots, and evidence-based recommendations. These contributions will feed into regional and global synthesis products and will shape the broader agenda for strengthening inclusive STEM ecosystems across the Global South.

V. National GIS Committees support and benefits

To operationalise this mandate, the OWSD Secretariat will provide a direct grant of up to EUR 25,000 to each selected OWSD NC. This funding is intended to support the full evidence-to-action cycle, including the organisation and execution of national gender-in-STEM data collection, the analysis and preparation of the resulting national report, the design and testing of short-cycle policy innovation pilots, and the implementation of outreach and knowledge-sharing activities at national and regional levels.

Beyond the financial grant, National GiS Committees will receive technical and strategic support to carry out their mandate. This includes assistance with the OWSD data collection and analysis tools, accompanied by methodological training; participation in a tailored capacity-building curriculum with leadership and “Train the Trainers” components; and opportunities for peer-matching and institutional learning. National GiS Committees will also benefit from visibility and knowledge-exchange opportunities through the OWSD General Assemblies, regional workshops, and other UNESCO-supported platforms.

VI. Submission and assessment process

1. **Submission content:** Submissions must include a signed and completed EoI template (available as a [Microsoft Form](#) and see Annex I) and the required supporting documentation.
2. **Deadline:** 30 October 2026
3. **Submission Method:** online

VII. Eligibility of the host institution of the OWSD National Chapter

Please note that the host institution of the OWSD National Chapter must meet UNESCO’s eligibility requirements for partner institutions.

Eligible host institutions are **not-for-profit organizations**, including but not limited to: non-governmental organizations (NGOs), research institutes, universities, foundations, professional associations, governments, governmental entities, and intergovernmental organizations. United Nations entities are also eligible. In addition, the host institution must meet the following criteria:

- a) Be able to make an effective contribution to the achievement of UNESCO’s objectives, in conformity with the principles proclaimed in UNESCO’s Constitution;
- b) Have purposes, functions, and operations that are not-for-profit in character;
- c) Possess adequate facilities and the capacity to manage funds and implement agreed activities efficiently and effectively;
- d) Be fully involved in the elaboration of the work plan for the activity or project implemented in partnership with UNESCO;
- e) Submit an estimated implementation cost breakdown that is reasonable, fair, and represents value for money;
- f) Provide added value through a quantified monetary or in-kind contribution;
- g) Demonstrate sound financial status and appropriate internal control procedures (audited financial statements must be provided);
- h) Have the capacity to participate in planning, monitoring, and assurance activities;
- i) Possess adequate managerial and record-keeping competencies, including permanent staff and the ability to manage and support staff in the field;
- j) Not appear on the Consolidated United Nations Security Council Sanctions List, nor on the United Nations Global Marketplace vendor ineligibility list.

Annex I - Expression of Interest (EOI) Template

Section 1. Applicant information

1.1 Country:

1.2 OWSD National Chapter:

1.3 National Chapter Chair

- Name
- Position
- Email
- Phone
- Do you endorse this application? Signature

Nominated focal point for correspondence concerning this application:

- Name
- Position
- Email
- Phone

1.4 Additional NC Executive Committee Members involved in this application:

- Names and positions

Section 2. Rationale for selection

Please clearly reflect the core selection criteria.

2.1. Institutional readiness and National Chapter capacity

*Describe why your country is ready to engage in this initiative, referencing the strength of your OWSD National Chapter.
Include recent activities, membership, governance, national initiatives, surveys, or gender-related work.
Make also a specific mention of activities funded by the Secretariat or by other entities.*

2.2 Joint engagement with national authorities and institutional partners

*Explain how the OWSD National Chapter and national authorities (e.g., Science Granting Councils, STI Ministries, National Academies, UNESCO National Commissions) will work together to establish and support the National GIS Committees.
Describe existing collaborations, institutional commitment, and how the Committee will be anchored within national structures.
Refer to elements such as staff time, venues, administrative support, and other in-kind or financial contributions.*

2.3. National gender-in-STEM context and key challenges

Provide a 1–2 paragraph overview of key gender-in-STEM challenges in your country. This may include barriers to participation and progression, institutional or systemic gaps, issues related to higher education, research environments, funding opportunities, or workforce retention. Briefly explain why these challenges are particularly relevant in your country, making reference to political, social, cultural, and economic factors. If available, reference existing studies or datasets .

Where relevant, highlight how these challenges could be addressed through the work of the National GiS Committee, for example by improving national gender-in-STEM data, strengthening institutional coordination, identifying systemic barriers, and informing evidence-based policy and programme reforms.

2.4. Stakeholder engagement capacity

Describe your ability to convene key actors (academia, ministries, private sector, OWSD alumnae), citing, if relevant, recent events, networks, collaborations, or multi-stakeholder initiatives.

2.5 National capacity to support data collection

Describe institutional capacity for evidence generation, including access to data sources, staff availability, and mandates.

Indicate whether your NC or partner institutions have previously conducted gender-in-STEM assessments (e.g., OWSD surveys, SAGA, Breaking Barriers, GEI), and briefly summarise the experience.

2.6 Budget outline and institutional added value

Provide a summary budget outline describing how the available grant will be used to support the establishment and operation of the National GiS Committee.

Clearly indicate and quantify any in-kind and/or financial contributions from the OWSD National Chapter host institution and/or partner institutions (e.g. staff time, coordination support, meeting venues, office space, administrative support, data access).

Section 3. Proposed initial composition of the National GiS Committee

3.1 Please provide a preliminary initial composition of the National GiS Committee. The initial list may include fewer than 10 members, as additional representatives may be invited to join during the implementation phase based on needs and priorities identified.

The proposed composition may include OWSD NC Executive Committee members; representatives from national research, science, and education authorities and Ministries; representatives of women-in-STEM networks and innovation agencies; National Science Academies; professional associations; universities; OWSD fellowship alumnae and early-career researchers; private-sector or industry representatives; and the UNESCO National Commission or UNESCO Field Office (where relevant).

The application must in addition specify the proposed governance of the Committee, in line with Section IV of the call:

Proposed Chair: name, institution and position. The Chair must be a senior official of the national authority responsible for science, technology and innovation, research or higher education (Ministry, Science Granting Council or equivalent public body).

3.2 For each proposed member, include:

- Name
- Institution
- Position
- Email

3.3 Sustainability measures

Explain how the National GiS Committees will be integrated into existing institutional structures and how the work will be maintained after the project period.

Section 4. Institutional commitment

Potential partner institution information

Partner institutions are national key stakeholders that will collaborate with the OWSD National Chapter in establishing and supporting the National GiS Committee, including through in-kind or financial contributions.

Please provide information for up to two institutions:

4.1 Name of partner institution

4.2 Type of institution

(e.g., Ministry in charge of education or science, technology and innovation; Academy; UNESCO National Commission; Science Granting Council; etc.)

4.3 Institutional focal point

- Name
- Position
- Email / Phone

4.4 In-kind or financial contributions

<i>Describe the support that partner(s) will provide (e.g., meeting venues, office space, administrative support, staff time).</i>
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4.5 Existing collaboration

<i>Briefly describe any previous or ongoing collaboration between the NC and this institution.</i>
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4.6 Reference Letter

Please attach a Reference Letter confirming the institution's willingness to participate in and support the establishment and functioning of the National GiS Committee. (Required)

Section 5. Additional information (Optional)

You may include:

- Engagement with IDRC networks (Breaking Barriers, GEI, SGCI)
- Potential to contribute to cross-regional dialogue (Africa–LAC, Africa–Asia, LAC–Asia)
- Planned synergies with national strategies, donor programmes, or women-in-science initiatives

Section 6. Signature

OWSD National Chapter Focal Point

Name:

Signature:

Date: