

OWSD Annual Report 2025

ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE
FOR THE DEVELOPING WORLD







Eugenie Kayitesi from Rwanda shares her thoughts during the OWSD General Assembly in Bogotá, Colombia (November 2025). She received the **OWSD-Elsevier Foundation Award** in 2023 for her research into indigenous, under-utilized plant-based foods. Dr Kayitesi is now Associate Professor at the University of Pretoria, South Africa.

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**ORGANIZATION FOR
WOMEN IN SCIENCE FOR
THE DEVELOPING WORLD (OWSD)
Annual Report 2025**

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ABOUT OWSD

The **mission** of the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD) is to promote and strengthen the role of women scientists from the Global South in science and technology. OWSD achieves this by empowering women through training and networking opportunities, supporting their research and leadership throughout their careers, and advocating for gender equality in science and technology. We envision a future where women scientists and technologists are agents of change in their communities, driving progress towards the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

4

QUALITY EDUCATION

5

GENDER EQUALITY

6

CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

9

INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

10

REDUCED INEQUALITIES

17

PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

OWSD members' and fellows' research covers all of the **17 SDGs**. The organization's programmes and strategy are currently focused on **SDG 4**: Quality Education, **SDG 5**: Gender Equality, **SDG 6**: Clean Water and Sanitation, **SDG 9**: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, **SDG 10**: Reduced Inequalities and **SDG 17**: Partnership for the Goals. In addition, in 2025 OWSD awards were focused on Inclusive Health (SDG 3).

3

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

1987

Abdus Salam, founder of The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS), recognizes the need to support women scientists in the developing world during the 2nd TWAS General Meeting in Beijing.

1988

218 women scientists from 63 developing countries attend a conference on 'The Role of Women in the Development of Science and Technology in the Third World' organized by TWAS in Trieste, Italy.

A **working group** is set up to explore the creation of an organization that would champion the experience, needs and skills of women scientists in the developing world.

1989

The Third World Organization for Women in Science (TWOWS) is established and a constitution adopted.

1993

TWOWS is officially launched at the **First General Assembly** in Cairo, Egypt

The **first executive board** is elected.

1997

OWSD receives financial support from the **Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)**, to support a South-to-South **PhD fellowships programme** specially for women from Least Developed Countries and Sub-Saharan Africa in STEM subjects. It is the only programme of its kind.

1999

2nd TWOWS General Assembly and Conference in Cape Town, South Africa.

2003

First **TWOWS National Chapter** is established in **Yemen**.

2005

3rd TWOWS General Assembly and International Conference in Bangalore, India.

2010

At the **4th General Assembly and Conference** in Beijing, China, members vote to adopt a new name - the **Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD)**.

2012-16

Sida increases funding to hire a Coordinator and more staff to be based at the **OWSD Secretariat in Trieste**. The number of PhD fellowships is increased, including funds to attend international conferences.

In 2012 the **OWSD annual awards** (funded by the Elsevier Foundation) are re-launched and a special awards ceremony takes place at the annual AAAS meeting in 2013.

THE ELSEVIER FOUNDATION

2016

5th General Assembly and International Conference in Kuwait City, Kuwait.

2017-2021

The **Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC)** joins forces with Sida to sign a new project agreement, including the **Early Careers Fellowship** programme.

2021-2026

Sida and IDRC sign a new 5-year agreement to continue jointly funding OWSD's programmes, including National Chapter support and institutional engagement.

In 2021, the **6th OWSD General Assembly and Conference** is held entirely online, hosted by OWSD Secretariat, Trieste, Italy.

2022

Dominican Republic becomes the **50th OWSD National Chapter**.

The **Aspen Institute Italia**, supports the Early Career fellowships programme.

2023

OWSD Membership reaches 10,000.

New Masters programme for displaced women scientists (OWSD WISDOM) is established and presented at the Global Refugee Forum in December 2025 in partnership with **UNHCR**.

2024

Launched in partnership with **Hashemite University** (Jordan) and **Istanbul Aydin University** (Türkiye), the **WISDOM programme** welcomed its first two cohorts of refugee women scientists.

2025

GenSIS - a new initiative on data collection and policy reform for gender equality in STEM, implemented with UNESCO and funded by IDRC - is established and presented at the OWSD General Assembly.

7th General Assembly and International Conference in Bogotá, Colombia.

Women. Science. Development.

4 OWSD Annual Report 2025

OWSD Annual Report 2025 5

From individuals to institutions: how OWSD amplifies women scientists’ impact on global development

Support for women in science is usually measured in opportunities: scholarships, grants, training,

mentorship. These are essential, but they raise a question too rarely asked: what happens after the programme ends? OWSD’s experience offers an answer that reframes such investment. Support directed at individual women scientists, sustained over time,

does not stop at the individual. It compounds—generating communities, institutions, and new forms of governance that outlast the programme that seeded them. The clearest evidence is the OWSD PhD Fellowship programme, which ran for



OWSD Early Career Fellows attending the in-person orientation workshop in Trieste, April 2025

sustains them is not funding but ownership. And their role keeps expanding: no longer only implementing activities, they are becoming actors in governance, shaping the organization’s direction. This shift from beneficiary to co-author reshaped OWSD itself, which increasingly works through and alongside its chapters rather than from the centre outward. Initiatives like GenSIS and the new Gender in Science Committees embody the same logic—durable infrastructure connecting research, policy, and advocacy over time. Investing in one woman scientist may look like a small step against a global gender gap; sustained over time, it builds the institutions that carry entire scientific communities forward.



Why focus on women in STEM?

Women bring critical perspectives based on their roles as caregivers, community leaders, and frontline responders to crises like water scarcity and food insecurity. Historically, research that overlooks women’s experiences can yield dangerous oversights, such as seatbelts not designed to protect pregnant women or heart-attack symptoms measured only for men. By empowering women in STEM, OWSD helps fill these knowledge gaps and ensures that scientific discoveries truly serve everyone.

twenty-five years, with a dropout rate of just 10%. Yet its deeper significance lies not in degrees counted, but in what grew around them: fellows stayed connected to OWSD and to each other, and in many countries these informal ties crystallized into National Chapters; formal structures led by women scientists themselves.

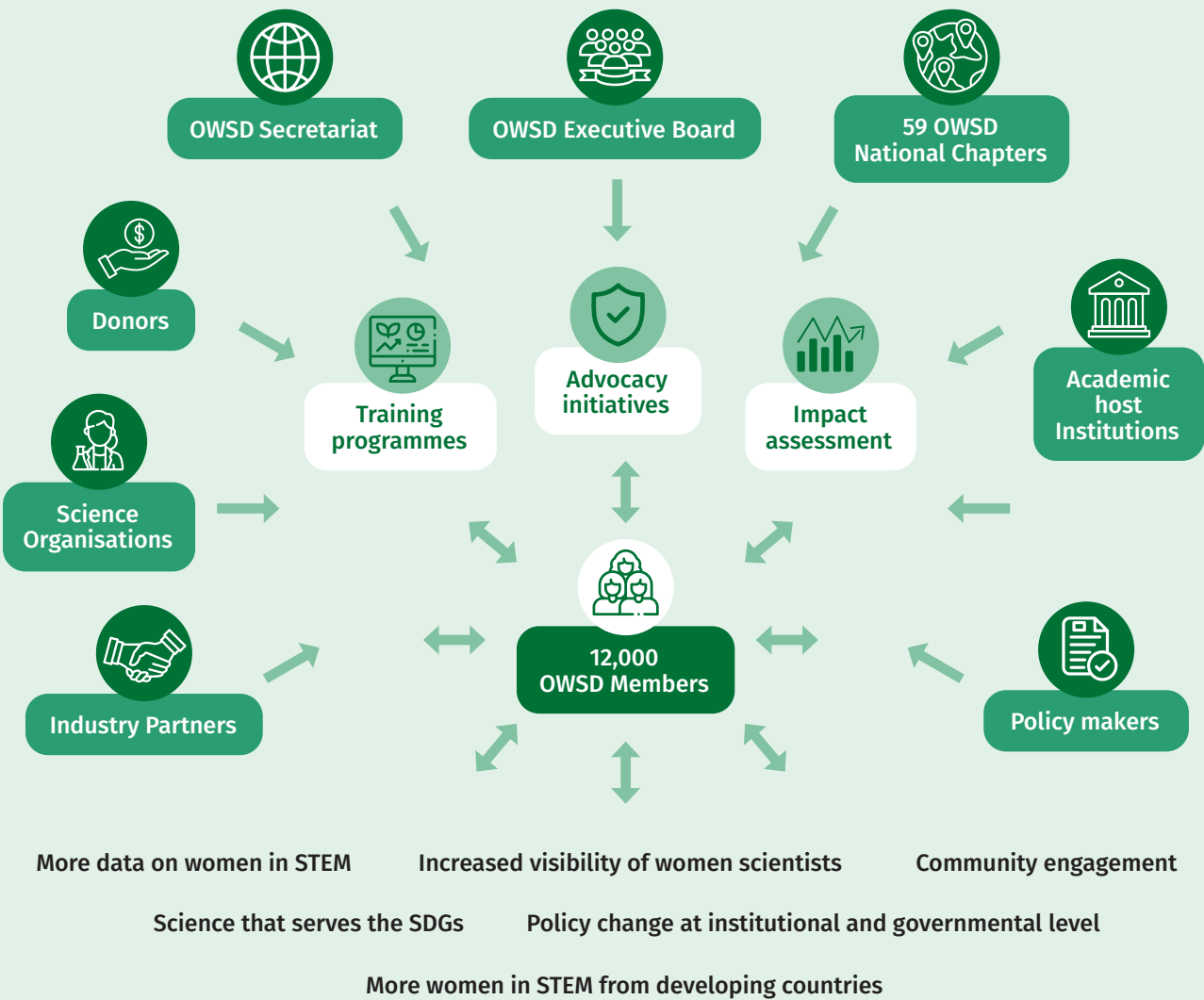
From beneficiaries to builders

Today, the National Chapters are the backbone of OWSD, organizing mentoring, conferences, outreach for girls, and policy dialogues under real constraints—and persisting regardless. What

“OWSD did not simply invest in my research—it invested in me. That investment continues to multiply: it has given me the confidence to embrace new leadership responsibilities at my university, build innovative AI and cybersecurity learning environments, mentor the next generation of scientists, inspire girls to pursue computing, and contribute to safer digital futures across Africa.”

Hellen Maziku, 2024 OWSD Early Career Fellow, Tanzania

OWSD ECOSYSTEM DIAGRAM
Empowering women in STEM



In 2025, with 12,000 members, OWSD operates as a thriving ecosystem where women scientists in the Global South share insights and drive inclusive research. Through its interconnected network of National Chapters, fellows, programmes, and projects, OWSD promotes visibility, dismantles barriers, and catalyzes lasting change for women in STEM worldwide.

OWSD Structure

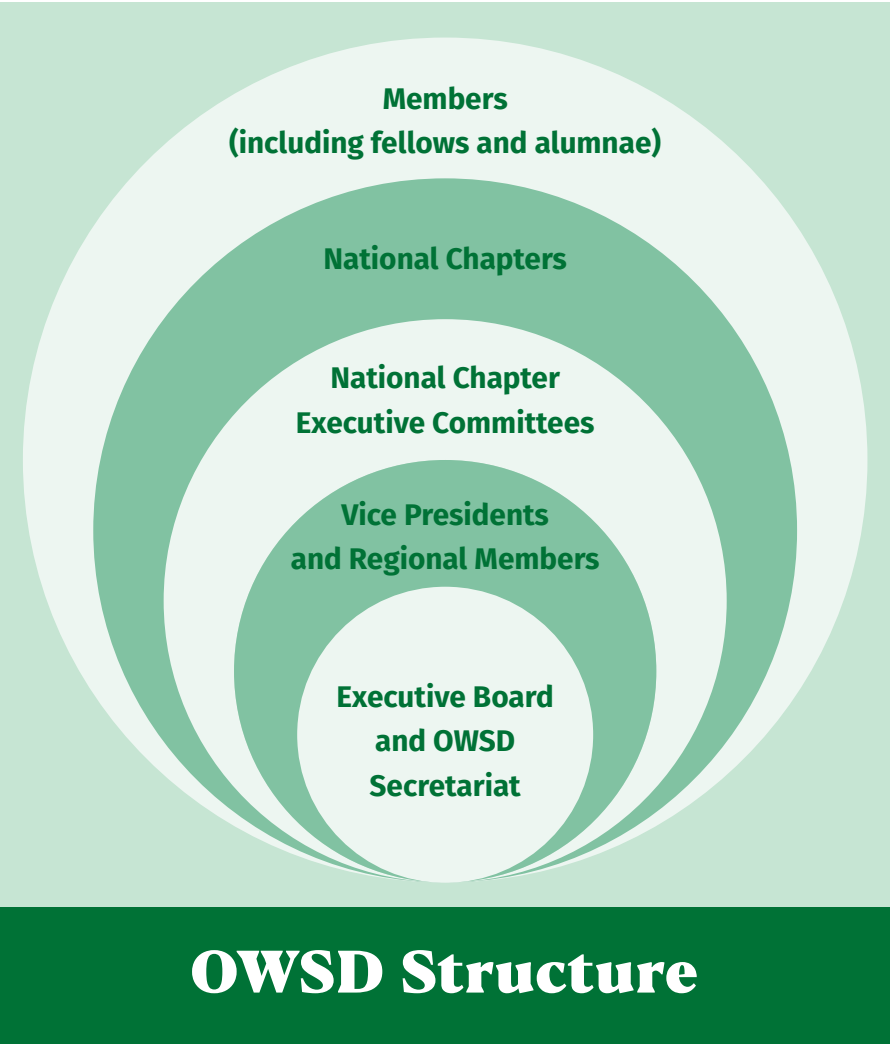
The OWSD structure ripples outwards in concentric circles. At its centre are the **members**, who establish **National Chapters** and organize events and activities. They disseminate information about OWSD opportunities and share hands-on experience, reaching girls and young women even in the remotest areas of the least-resourced countries. **Alumnae** from OWSD fellowship and awards programmes join National Chapters where they share their journeys as WISDOM fellows, PhD fellows, Early Career fellows and award winners, and encourage other members to apply and often assist in the application process.

Each chapter has an elected **national executive committee** (including a chair, vice-chair, secretary, and treasurer), who serve on a voluntary basis. The chair provides an annual report of activities to the relevant regional representative of the OWSD **Executive Board** (EB), who then reports during the annual EB meeting. The **OWSD Secretariat** sends out annual report templates, gathers and analyses data, and uses this feedback to adapt OWSD programmes, ensuring their relevance and effectiveness. Serving on the executive committee of a National Chapter provides members with leadership and management experience.

Executive committee members often progress to become elected members of the Global Young Academy or national young academies, paving the way for election to national science academies. Some OWSD national chapter members have even gone on to establish sciences academies in their countries. These environments offer contacts, networks, and opportunities to influence policy at various levels.

New Executive Board

The OWSD Executive Board, elected in 2025, comprises the acting **President**, four **Vice Presidents** (one from each region: Africa, Asia, Arab countries, Latin America and the Caribbean), and eight additional **Regional Members**. These board members serve as focal points for National Chapters, representing OWSD in international, regional, and local frameworks. They strive to enhance the organization’s visibility and representation, ensuring that the voice of OWSD is heard on a global stage. The executive board has traditionally been elected by the global OWSD membership every 4 years, and since 2021, elections have been held online. The structure of OWSD creates a powerful ecosystem for empowering women in science, driving positive change across the Global South, and fostering a global network of collaboration and support.



2025 OWSD EXECUTIVE BOARD

ACTING PRESIDENT



Luisa Fernanda Echeverria King

Vice President for LAC
Colombia



Luisa Maria Diele-Viegas

Regional Member for LAC
Brazil/United States



Maria Esther Quintana Caceda

Regional Member for LAC
Peru

LAC



Grace E. Iniama

Vice President for Africa
Nigeria



Evelyn Umemezia

Regional Member for Africa
Nigeria



Chao Mbogho

Regional Member for Africa
Kenya

AFRICA



Mervat Foda

Vice President
for the Arab Region
Egypt



Lobna Said

Regional Member
for the Arab Region
Egypt



Hanan Arahmane

Regional Member
for the Arab Region
Marocco/France

ARAB REGION



Yanfen Wang

Vice President for Asia
China



Tista Prasai Joshi

Regional Member for Asia
Nepal



Nadia Ayub

Regional Member for Asia
Pakistan

ASIA

New Executive Board Members

Elections for the new OWSD Executive Board (EB) took place in 2025. Aspiring members were invited to apply via a democratic, online process, and members were then able to vote for their preferred candidate for Vice President and Regional Member. In total, 27 candidates were shortlisted and around a quarter of eligible voters - full members of OWSD - cast their ballots. In the past, there have been two EB members per OWSD Region, but this year, three EB members were nominated per region, to acknowledge the scope of the work the board undertakes, and to ensure geographical diversity and coverage of members.

The 12 newly elected Executive Board members are as follows:

- **Acting President of OWSD/Vice president for LAC:** Luisa Fernanda Echeverria King.
- **2 LAC Regional Members:** Luisa Maria Diele Viega (Brazil), Maria Esther Quintana Caceda (Peru).
- **Vice President for the Arab Region:** Mervat Ibrahim Foda (Egypt)
- **2 Arab Regional Members:** Lobna Ahmed Said (Egypt), Hanan Arahmane (Morocco)
- **Vice President for the African Region:** Grace Ekpeyong Iniama (Nigeria)
- **2 African Regional Members:** Evelyn Iyose Umemezia (Nigeria), Chao Mbogho (Kenya)
- **Vice President for Asia and the Pacific:** Yanfen Wang (China)
- **2 Asian Regional Members:** Tista Prasai Joshi (Nepal), Nadia Ayub (Pakistan)

Spotlight on OWSD President, Luisa Fernanda Echeverría-King

OWSD’s newly elected President, **Luisa Fernanda Echeverría-King**, was born in Colombia and educated across several countries. She built her career at the intersections of education and science policy, and currently serves as **Director of Science Diplomacy and International Scientific Cooperation** at **Universidad Simón Bolívar** in Barranquilla, Colombia. Echeverría-King’s **involvement with OWSD** has deep roots. She is a **founding member of the Colombian National Chapter** and has worked consistently to build opportunities for women scientists across the LAC region. Her election to the international Executive Board, and subsequently to the presidency, reflects her track record of service and clarity of vision. At the **7th OWSD General Assembly** in Bogotá, she

delivered the **Bogotá Statement** on behalf of all attending members. She described the entrenched inequities and structural barriers keeping women scientists, particularly those from the Global South, on the margins of decision-making, and how OWSD must continue to move beyond visibility towards structural transformation, leadership skills training, and promoting women scientists. Echeverría-King also emphasised the need for **renewed funding commitments**.



CLICK OR SCAN
READ LUISA ECHEVERRÍA-KING'S FULL PROFILE



Outgoing and incoming Executive Board (EB) members at **7th OWSD General Assembly**, Bogotá.
L-R: Kleinsy Bonilla (outgoing VP, LAC), Patricia Castillo-Briceno (outgoing EB member, LAC), Luisa Maria Diele-Viegas (new EB regional member, LAC), Luisa Fernanda Echeverria King (new OWSD President), Tista Prasai Joshi (new EB regional member, Asia & Pacific), Mervat Foda (new VP, Arab region), Huda Basaleem (outgoing VP, Arab region), Olubukola Oluranti Babalola (outgoing VP, Africa), Maria Quintana (new EB member, LAC).

“Our future lies in shaping scientific ecosystems where talent is nurtured locally, careers are compatible with care responsibilities, and women scientists are recognised as key actors in development, policy, and knowledge production.”

Luisa Fernanda Echeverría-King, OWSD President

The election results were announced during the 7th OWSD General Assembly, in Bogotá, and the new EB members immediately got to work. Together, they established a review process for improving OWSD governance, and identified key priority areas for their work in line with the **Bogotá Statement**. It was also agreed that the Vice-President of LAC would be the acting president of OWSD for one year, to be reviewed. The new EB members represent the expertise and commitment of the wider OWSD membership to ensure women scientists from the Global South are supported to become influential leaders in their fields.

DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMMES

OWSD offers programmes to support women scientists in developing countries throughout their careers in four key areas: community, mobility, capacity, and visibility.

Community: Membership in the international OWSD network and National Chapters ensures access to information, opportunities, and skill-building activities, as well as direct participation in national events.

Mobility: The **WISDOM programme** (established in 2024) provides master's scholarships for displaced women scientists at host institutions in the Global South. It offers a capacity-building component that equips the host institute to better address the academic, social, and protection needs of displaced students.

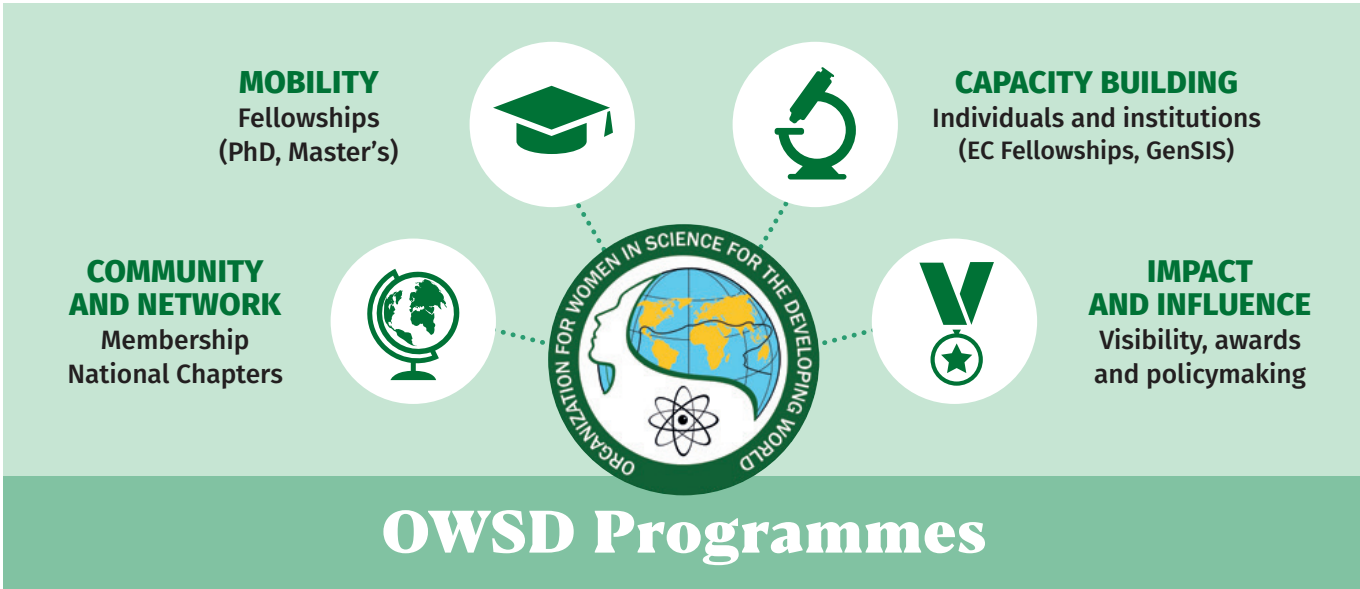
South-to-South **PhD Fellowships** (active from 1998) allow women scientists from poorly resourced countries to travel to centres of excellence in developing countries to study STEM subjects.

Capacity: Grants for **Early Career** stage women scientists (active from 2017) support research-related expenses in scientists' home countries with the aim of building international centres of research excellence, located in Science and Technology Lagging Countries (STLCs). The **Gender in Science, Innovation, and Systems (GenSIS)** project generates evidence and

identifies effective solutions within higher education and STI institutions, to accelerate progress toward gender equity in science.

Visibility: Targeted awards recognise the achievements of outstanding women scientists from developing countries. OWSD raises the profile of women scientists by showcasing the contributions they make to their fields via storytelling (films and podcasting), outreach, and scientific communication. Visibility helps challenge bias, dismantle stereotypes, and support representation of women across the scientific community.

Each of these programmes comes with a wealth of **training opportunities** which OWSD develops and provides with key partners in the Global South. Women scientists are supported to attend conferences and seminars, develop skills, receive mentorship, and ultimately become leaders in their field, while advocating for the inclusion of women's knowledge and needs in research projects.



2025 HIGHLIGHTS

2025 marked a year of impressive achievements at OWSD with the launch of the GenSIS project, the expansion of the WISDOM programme, and the election of a new Executive Board. The year culminated in the largest in-person gathering of women scientists from developing countries at the 7th OWSD General Assembly in Bogotá, Colombia.

One of the year's central milestones was the establishment and announcement of the Gender-Inclusive Science Institutions Systems (GenSIS) project. Building on a 2024 pilot, OWSD engaged National Chapters in Bolivia, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe to survey more than 4,000 women in STEM,

and develop tools to support institutional change. OWSD then partnered with UNESCO to expand the concept into a coordinated, evidence-driven policy reform of gender equality in STEM, at institutions across the Global South. The UNESCO-OWSD GenSIS project was officially launched at the

General Assembly in November, 2025, underlining the shift in OWSD's strategic direction from individual-focused support towards system-level transformation. 2025 also saw the expansion of the Women in Science Displacement Outreach Master's programme (WISDOM). After its successful inception in Jordan (2023), and Türkiye (2024), the programme was further consolidated by a new partnership with Mbarara University, Uganda, in 2025. WISDOM is a cornerstone of OWSD's new approach: addressing specific issues of inclusion (in this case displacement), investing in host institutions through tailored capacity-building that addresses structural gaps and supports the academic, social, and protection needs of displaced students. The third cohort in Uganda



underscores OWSD’s agility in responding to humanitarian crises through science, and its commitment to combining student support with institutional capacity building.

In November 2025, OWSD brought together **398 participants** at the **7th OWSD General Assembly in Bogotá, Colombia**, one of the largest multi-stakeholder events involving OWSD to date. **175 OWSD participants** were selected to attend through an OWSD Executive Board–approved process, and in total, **37 National Chapters** were represented by their national Executive Committee member.

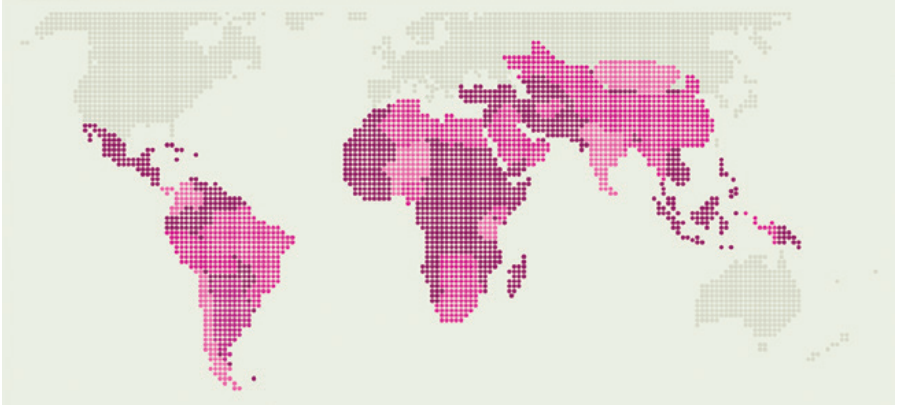
Representation was geographically diverse, covering **22 NC representatives from Latin America and the Caribbean, 18 from Africa, 6 from Asia and the Pacific, and 3 from the Arab region**. The high number of representatives from diverse countries in Africa was particularly impressive given the distance and difficulty of travelling to Bogotá from Africa. The Bogotá statement represents the culmination of meetings, trainings and discussions, where the attending executive committee members developed and approved a strategic, operational way forward for OWSD.

Visibility remained a central focus throughout 2025, as OWSD launched its redesigned website to reflect impact and sustainability. Website design innovation includes the clustering of members’ activities and research around challenges related to sustainable development with sections showcasing members’ successes and achievements.

OWSD website design innovation included focusing members’ activities and research around the challenges related to sustainable development

Climate Change

Women are disproportionately affected by climate change due to various social, economic, and geographic factors, making them more vulnerable to its impacts. They often face greater risks during natural disasters, are more likely to be displaced, and experience increased burdens related to food and water security. However, women are also key agents of change in climate action, holding valuable knowledge, and playing vital roles in adaptation and mitigation efforts. OWSD members are at the forefront of climate change research, developing and designing solutions that can impact lives and mitigate women’s vulnerability to this challenge.



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OTHER
June 3, 2026

LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN
Colombia
Webinar Turismo Científico y Regenerativo, el Rol de la Mujer ...
May 14, 2026

Events

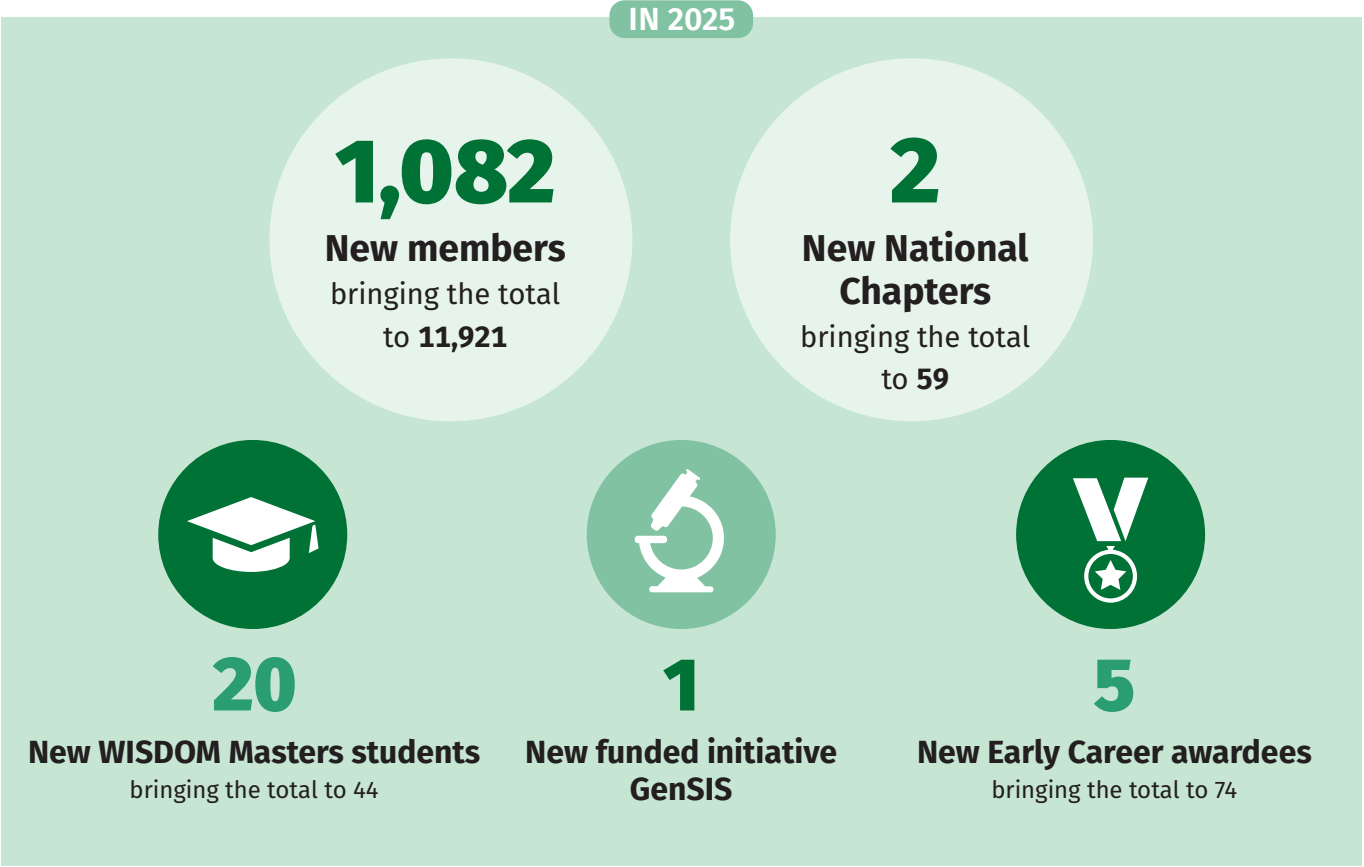
View all events →

04 . 01
Sep Sep
The 2nd Southwest Biennial Zonal Conference of OWSD Nigeria
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria
Conference

28 . 26
Aug Aug
V Congreso Nacional Científico
La Paz Bolivia
Conference

AFRICA | Nigeria

LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN | Bolivia



In summary, 2025 built on OWSD’s strategic impetus to combine support for individual scientists through fellowships and awards, and expanded into more fundamental engagement

with the systems that shape scientific research and inclusion. While funding limitations remain, OWSD’s commitment to transformative, long-term change ensures a strong foundation for

2026 and beyond, supporting women scientists to lead, innovate, and shape a more inclusive global research landscape.



COMMUNITY: OWSD MEMBERSHIP & NATIONAL CHAPTERS

OWSD's membership is the foundation of the organization, providing a much-needed sense of community for women scientists in the developing world who are often isolated, frequently the only woman in their department (especially in maths, physics or engineering), and sometimes the first female professor in the entire institute!

OWSD full members are women scientists living in developing countries who have a postgraduate degree in science subjects.

Affiliate members are at earlier stages in their careers, with undergraduate degrees only.

Friends of OWSD are women and men from developed and developing countries with at least an undergraduate degree.



Full Member

- Woman with a postgraduate degree in natural or social science subjects
- Living in developing countries

Includes

- Access to OWSD international network, mentoring and opportunities
- Membership of National Chapter
- Right to vote in OWSD General Assemblies



CLICK OR SCAN
TO BECOME A MEMBER



Affiliate Member

- Woman with a bachelor's degree in natural or social science subjects
- Living in developing countries

Includes

- Access to OWSD international network, mentoring and opportunities
- Membership of National Chapter



CLICK OR SCAN
TO BECOME A MEMBER



Friend of OWSD

- Woman or man with a bachelor's degree in any subject
- Living in developing or developed countries
- Committed to promoting the objectives of OWSD
- Can be invited by National Chapters to participate in events



CLICK OR SCAN
TO BECOME A FRIEND

IN 2025

11,921

Total active members

1,082

New members in 2025



82%

Full members

women with postgraduate degrees in science from developing countries



18%

Affiliate members

women with bachelor's degrees in science from developing countries



48%

Members under 40 years old



127

Countries

in the Developing World from which members originate



93%

coverage of all developing countries

Members in 127 countries out of 136



410

Friends of OWSD

from 46 countries in the Global North



OWSD Nigeria members receive Awards of Excellence during a chapter workshop on artificial intelligence.

OWSD membership provides the opportunity to connect with a national, regional and international network of women scientists in similar fields of scientific research, facing similar challenges. OWSD membership also offers access to a wide range of opportunities, such as training, travel, research visits, and funding, which are announced through international and regional OWSD mailing lists.



CLICK OR SCAN
IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN CONTACTING ANY OWSD MEMBER



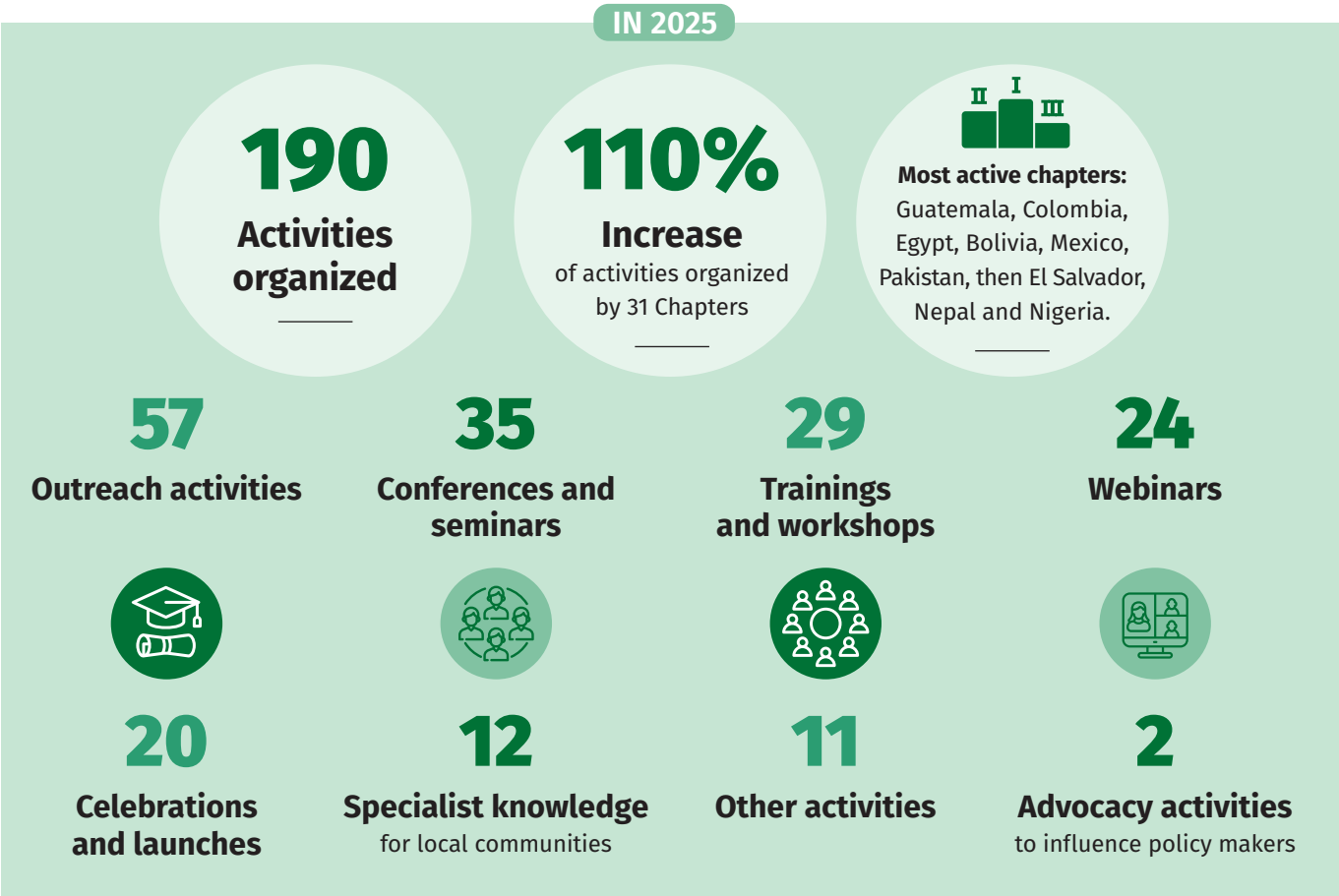
OWSD Egypt was among the most active National Chapters in 2025, with fifteen activities spanning advocacy, research and community outreach — from the launch of the Arab Women in Science Platform at the UNESCO Regional Office to its 3rd International Conference on the Sustainable Development Goals, alongside a workshop on artificial intelligence in scientific research and annual health-screening campaigns for chronic diseases and breast cancer.

National Chapters

National Chapters are at the heart of OWSD’s mission to enhance outcomes for women in science in developing countries. Any developing country with more than 20 members is eligible to apply to the Executive Board for National Chapter status, and in 2025, OWSD cultivated contacts for potential new chapters in eligible countries, and proudly welcomed two new chapters: **Ethiopia** in Africa, and **Argentina** in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2025, OWSD National Chapters reported **189 activities across 31 countries — more than double the 90+ recorded in 2024**, reflecting a marked expansion in the reach and vibrancy of the network. Outreach activities and conferences and seminars formed the backbone of chapter work in 2025, complemented by trainings and workshops, webinars and celebrations and launches.

Guatemala was by far the most active chapter, while Bolivia stood out for implementing a decentralized model that carried science into six cities — from national scientific congresses and International Day of Women and Girls in Science fairs in public plazas, to café-style “Talking with Women Scientists” dialogues and *Neuroexplore 2025*, a neuroscience, AI and mental-health programme culminating in a student hackathon — collectively engaging more than 2,000 participants. Elsewhere, Colombia’s *Fashion Lab Women in Science* united fashion, art and science to reframe the legacy of women researchers. Malaysia convened the high-level international forum *Breaking Barriers in Cancer Research*, engaging over 180 participants from across Asia-Pacific and beyond, and Pakistan combined scientific programming — an expert lecture on gene discovery and the *OncoSafe* session

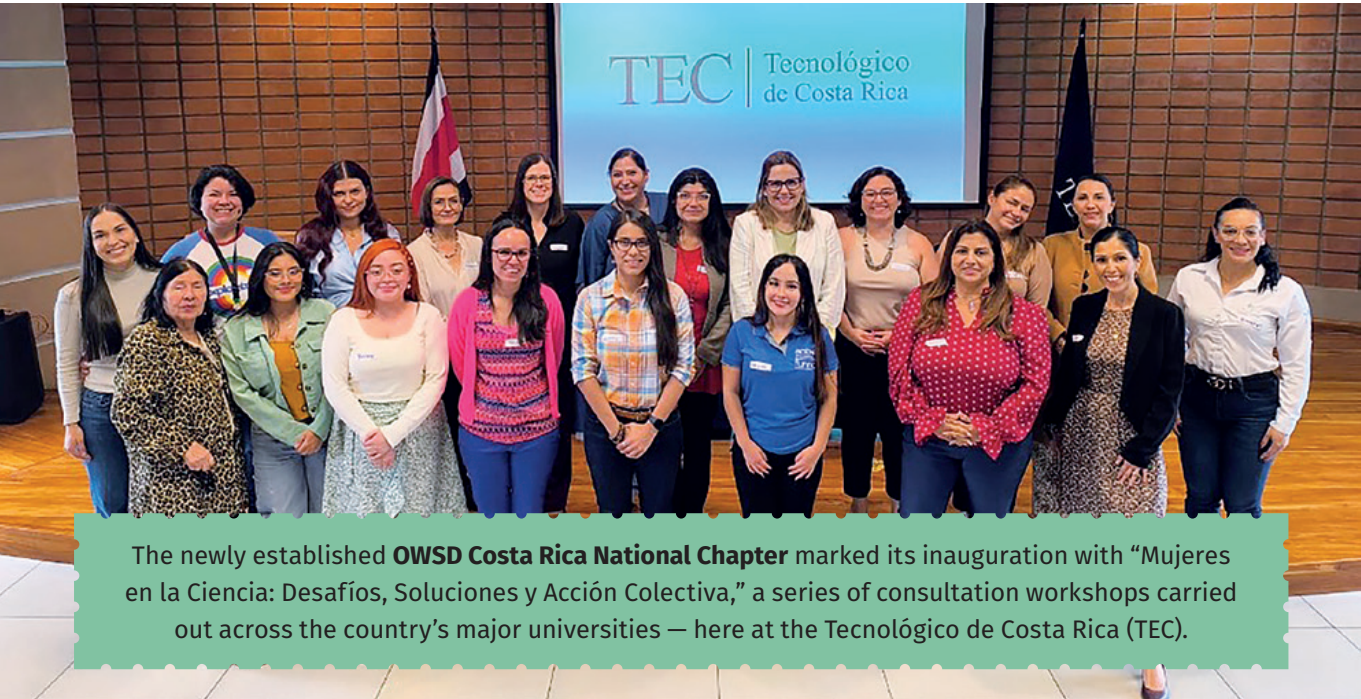
with cancer survivors — with a Memorandum of Understanding with Jinnah University for Women, the country’s first women’s university. Capacity-building featured strongly, from Nigeria’s webinar on preparing competitive TETFund research-grant concept notes, several of which were subsequently approved, to Nepal’s awareness drama on antimicrobial resistance. A dedicated OWSD call for applications provided direct financial support to **13 National Chapters**, with the maximum grant **doubled to USD 2,000** per proposal to broaden reach and impact; three recently established chapters — **Costa Rica, Cuba and Haiti** — received additional support toward their launch events. Highlights included Haiti’s inaugural conference “*Science and resilience: the role of women in the reconstruction of Haiti*,” Mozambique’s “*Bringing science to the girls*” outreach at the Casa do Gaiato orphanage,



Mauritius’s sensory STEAM gardening initiative fostering inclusion among special-needs communities, Myanmar’s

applied workshop on rice husk as a low-cost adsorbent for water purification, and South Africa’s launch of the Sustainability

and Environmental Leaders Development Initiative (SELDI). The increased funding enabled several chapters to run event



The newly established **OWSD Costa Rica National Chapter** marked its inauguration with “*Mujeres en la Ciencia: Desafíos, Soluciones y Acción Colectiva*,” a series of consultation workshops carried out across the country’s major universities — here at the Tecnológico de Costa Rica (TEC).

IN 2025

59

Total
National Chapters

1

New National Chapter
from Latin America
(Argentina)

1

New National Chapter
from Africa
(Ethiopia)

series rather than single activities, extending OWSD’s presence into new regions and consolidating its newest national communities.

Together, these activities reached thousands of participants and reaffirmed the chapters’ role in advancing women in science at community, national and regional levels.

National Chapters at the OWSD General Assembly

Strengthening National Chapters was a core objective of the 2025 General Assembly in Bogotá, framed within the broader goals of capacity building and community weaving. National Chapters were therefore central participants: all NC Chairs were invited as priority delegates, or a designated representative where the Chair was unavailable.

In total, 37 National Chapters were represented, bringing 63 NC Executive Committee members to the Assembly. Of these, 42 were funded by OWSD, while at least 21

participated through self-funding or partner-institution support, including 10 from Colombia, the host country. Representation was geographically diverse, with 22 delegates from Latin America and the Caribbean, 18 from Africa, 6 from Asia and the Pacific, and 3 from the Arab region; the strong African turnout was especially notable given the distance and cost of travel to Bogotá. Reflecting their centrality to the OWSD ecosystem, NC representatives formed the single largest share of funded participants — nearly half of the total. Beyond plenary and thematic sessions and the Community Weaving training, NC delegates were offered scheduled one-to-one consultations with Secretariat staff. These meetings created space to raise operational challenges, governance issues, programme ideas, membership procedures



OWSD South Africa successfully launched the **Sustainability and Environmental Leaders Development Initiative (SELDI)** under the theme Developing and Empowering Future Leaders for a Sustainable Tomorrow. SELDI represents both a movement and a call to action and responds to the intertwined “3x3 crises” of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution—issues central to South Africa’s development and economic agenda. The initiative aims to address the invisibility of black and women professionals in environmental disciplines and to cultivate a visible, influential cohort of leaders who can shape solutions and outcomes that ensure human and planetary well-being.



OWSD Cuba delivered a workshop entitled “Developing career and mentoring networks for women in STEM” as part of a 2-day event, in May 2025, which included the official presentation of the OWSD Cuba National Chapter.

and technical questions, and proved effective in surfacing systemic constraints and capacity needs while strengthening communication between the Secretariat and the Chapters. Building on their success, OWSD will establish periodic one-to-one online meetings between the Secretariat and NC Executive Committees starting in 2026.

Strengthening Chapter Governance

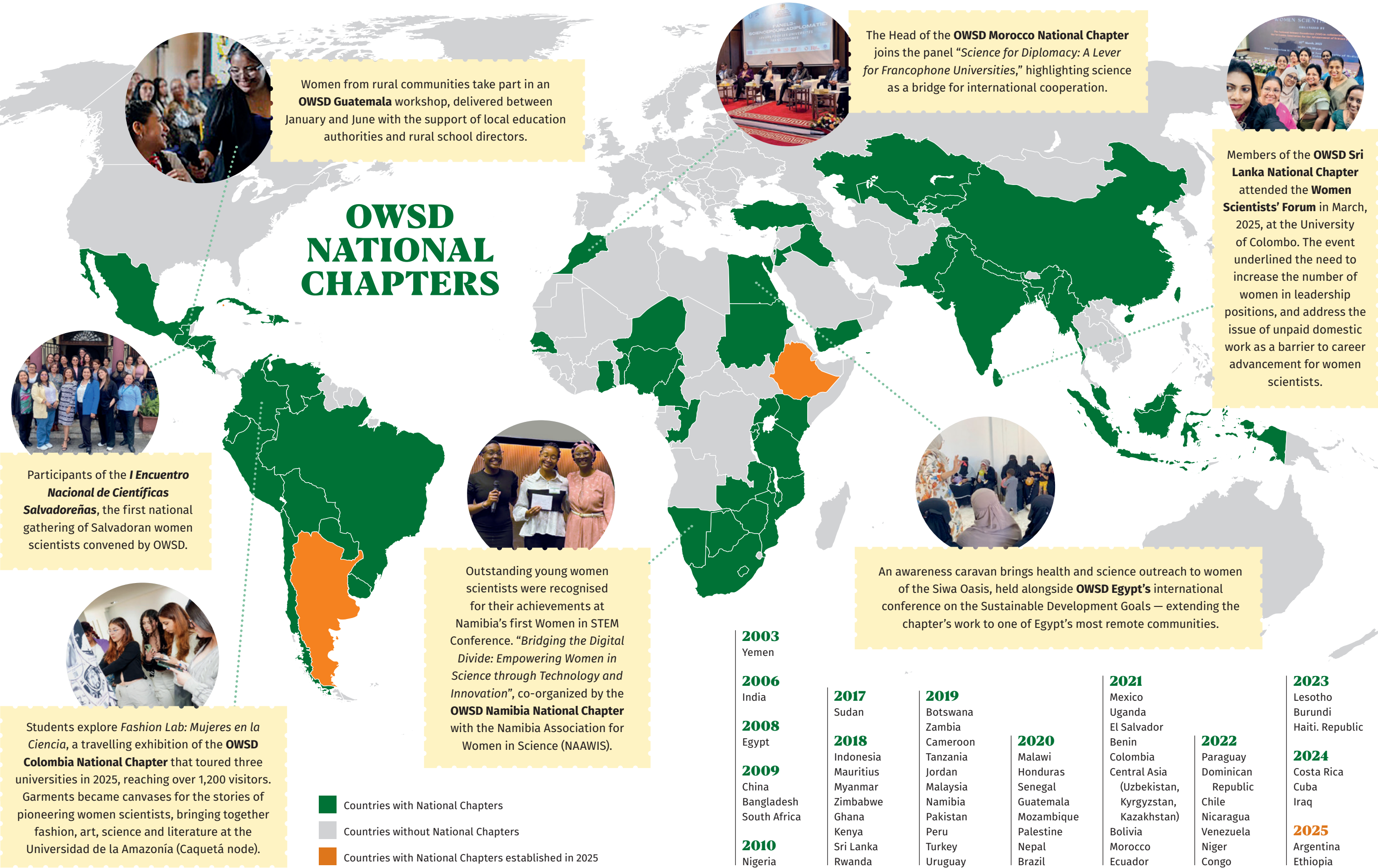
In 2025, several National Chapters held elections to renew their Executive Committees. At their request, the OWSD Secretariat provided direct operational support, facilitating the process through a centralized online voting system and helping strengthen the transparency of the process. These cases brought

structural governance gaps to the surface, including the absence of standardized election procedures, outdated tenure norms and limited leadership turnover, pointing to

the need for clearer governance and reporting requirements across the network — a priority OWSD will carry forward alongside the new Executive Board mandate.



OWSD Pakistan National Chapter signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Jinnah University for Women, Pakistan’s first private women’s university, formalizing a partnership to advance women in science.



Evidence into Action: The Gender in STEM Pilot and the Launch of GenSIS

National Chapters are not only conveners of community; they are increasingly drivers of evidence. Since 2023, OWSD has worked with selected chapters to pilot a research and outreach initiative on gender in STEM, developing a standardized yet context-sensitive methodology for data collection, stakeholder mapping and policy analysis. The pilot demonstrated the strategic value of National Chapters as locally embedded actors able to engage ministries, universities and research bodies, and its findings laid the groundwork for the new **OWSD/UNESCO GenSIS (Gender-Inclusive Science Institutions & Systems) initiative**, a three-year global project funded by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

The pilot
Between December 2024 and August 2025, OWSD implemented the pilot across three National Chapters — Bolivia, Rwanda and Zimbabwe — to address persistent gaps in reliable data on women's participation, retention and leadership in STEM. Working with an international expert consultant, the chapters applied a harmonized mixed-methods design combining survey instruments at individual, institutional and policy levels with focus group discussions, key informant interviews, stakeholder mapping and policy analysis. The tools were adapted locally through participatory consultation to ensure cultural, linguistic and institutional

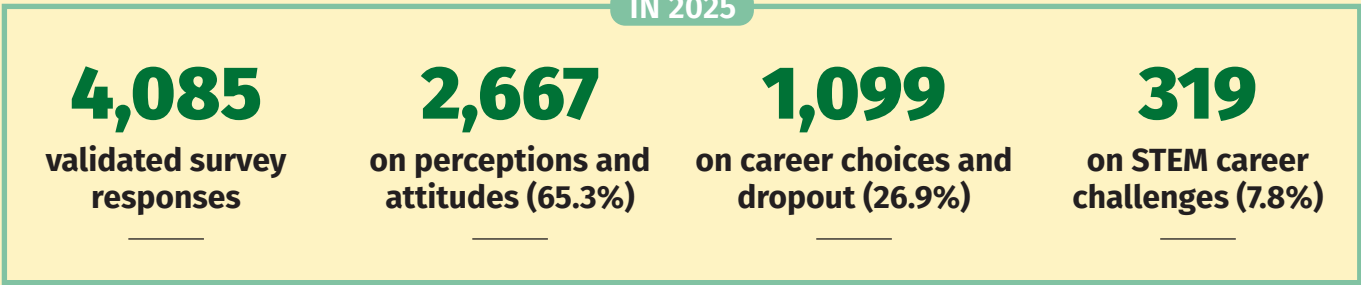
relevance while preserving cross-country comparability, drawing on the UNESCO SAGA project and earlier OWSD National Assessments. The pilot generated more than 4,000 validated survey responses, complemented by focus groups and interviews with secondary and university students, STEM professionals, teachers, ministries and women's associations. The result was the first triangulated evidence base across three national contexts on gendered STEM trajectories from secondary school to professional careers.

What the evidence showed
The pilot revealed a shared structural pathway: high early enthusiasm for STEM, declining clarity and support during university, and intensifying gendered barriers in the workplace, with the specific drivers varying by national context. At secondary level, interest in STEM was strong across all three countries, but awareness of concrete study pathways was uneven, and technology was consistently more visible than mathematics or science, pointing to a shared global influence of digitalization on young people's perceptions. At university level, motivations converged around passion and problem-solving, but students moved from enthusiasm to uncertainty as they progressed, with dropout driven by a combination of academic, financial and psychosocial pressures rather than performance alone. The sharpest disparities appeared at the professional level: in Rwanda, all surveyed STEM professionals reported gender-based discrimination and half reported workplace harassment; in Zimbabwe, women described a persistent "glass ceiling" despite rising female entry into STEM education; and in Bolivia, institutional limitations combined with caregiving responsibilities to constrain progression. Across every context, mentorship emerged as the most critical support factor — and the least consistently available. Country experiences also underscored the value of context-sensitive implementation: Zimbabwe fully piloted the tools but faced roll-out delays tied to ministerial approvals; Bolivia benefited from strong chapter networks and stakeholder mapping while navigating terminology and ethics-committee requirements; and Rwanda achieved high engagement at school level but lower uptake among professionals, partly due to connectivity constraints.



Students take part in a focus group discussion at Kepler College, Rwanda, contributing to the OWSD Gender in STEM pilot research that laid the groundwork for GenSIS.

From evidence to GenSIS
The findings made clear that isolated, small-scale interventions would be insufficient to address structural barriers spanning the entire STEM pipeline. What was needed instead was a system-level initiative combining national evidence generation, institutional reform and coordinated policy engagement. Building on the pilot methodology and a strategic alliance with UNESCO Headquarters, OWSD secured dedicated funding and co-created GenSIS with the UNESCO STIP unit. The initiative closes persistent gender gaps in science by strengthening women's leadership in research and higher education through two complementary components: the establishment of National Gender in Science Committees in selected countries of the Global South, and the creation of an international community of practice for institutions advancing gender equality in science. Initial outreach to ministries, STI agencies and other policy actors began during the Bogotá General Assembly, where potential policymakers were invited to meet with their National Chapters, and where awareness-raising webinars and panels laid the groundwork for the first National Gender in Science Committees — marking the start of a coordinated effort to translate evidence into policy and institutional change.



Young students in engineering at the OWSD Bolivia science fair in a public square in La Paz. Held for the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, the fairs formed part of the Gender in STEM Research and Outreach Pilot Project, laying the groundwork for GenSIS.

OWSD Arab Regional Meeting and Workshop for National Chapter Chairs

OWSD’s regional meeting in Muscat, Oman, held in partnership with the **International Science Council**, strengthened collaboration and networking among national chapter heads in the Arab region. This was the fourth in the series of regional gatherings of chapters in the 4 OWSD regions, and OWSD invited a delegation of members from Jordan, Yemen, Palestine, Egypt and Iraq. The international event convened scientists and institutions to discuss pressing issues around regional science and development, and provided a dedicated space to reflect on the specific regional challenges. Discussions focused on structural barriers to engagement, including limited institutional stability, constraints on mobility, and cultural factors affecting women’s participation in science and scientific networks. Participants also addressed gaps in communication and coordination at regional level and explored practical suggestions to strengthen collaboration among National Chapters, improve information flow, and increase visibility and mutual support.



OWSD funded a delegation of **4 OWSD Arab Region National Chapter** representatives, and **1 OWSD Early Career Awardee** from the Arab region to participate in the **OWSD Arab Regional Meeting**.

The meeting also highlighted the need for more targeted coordination mechanisms, and culturally sensitive approaches to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of OWSD engagement.



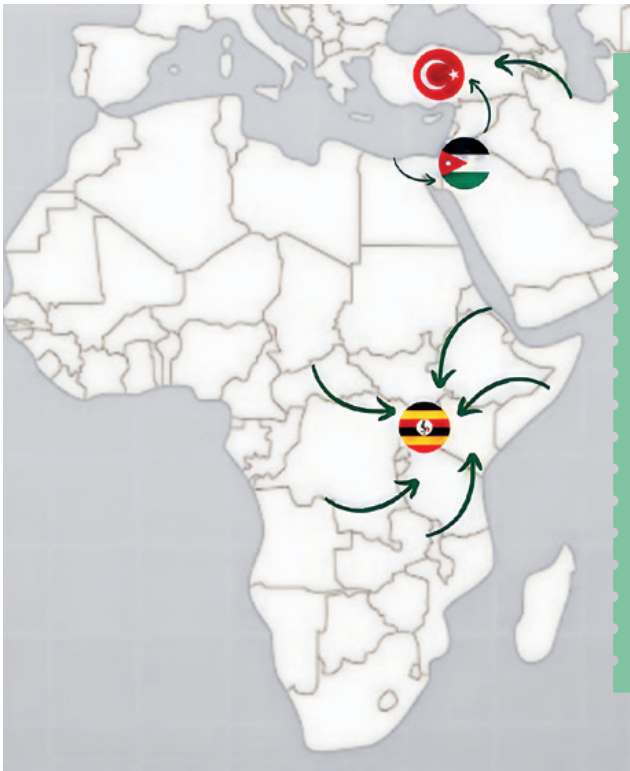
Members of the OWSD Secretariat and **4 Arab Region National Chapter** representatives at the **OWSD regional meeting in Muscat, Oman**. L-R: Tonya Blowers (OWSD coordinator), Paiman Ahmad (chair of the Iraq NC), Mervat Foda (chair of the Egypt NC, and VP for the Arab region), Huda Basaleem, (chair of the Yemen NC, and former VP for the Arab region), Rana Dajani, (former chair of the Jordan NC), Giulia Signori (OWSD Secretariat).

MOBILITY: OWSD WISDOM AND OWSD PHD FELLOWSHIPS

For 29 years, OWSD has championed South-to-South mobility and supported women scientists to pursue high-level opportunities abroad. OWSD expanded this model in 2024, and throughout 2025 has continued to support displaced women scientists in their host countries across the Global South.

OWSD WISDOM
The OWSD WISDOM (Women in Science Displacement Outreach Master’s) programme, launched in 2023 and expanded in 2024-2025. The programme is OWSD’s

timely response to the global challenge of displacement, and supports women scientists who have fled conflict or crisis and resettled in countries across the Global South. These women



The WISDOM network in 2025: 44 scholars, displaced from across Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, now studying at host institutions in Jordan (Hashemite University), Türkiye (Aydin Istanbul University) and Uganda (Mbarara University of Science and Technology).

WISDOM Master’s Scholarship

ELIGIBILITY

- Women with undergraduate degree in a STEM field from 66 eligible countries
- Displaced, refugee, or asylum-seeking status in designated host countries
- Fulfilment of admission requirements at the host university

INCLUDES

- Monthly stipend, tuition fees, personal allowance, travel allowance, residence documentation costs, health insurance and language and orientation support from the host university
- Capacity building component for host institute tailored to gender and protection needs

FUNDED BY

- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

often face a difficult reality: they may be safe, but their education and careers have been put on indefinite hold. Moreover, the experience and expertise they have developed in

IN 2025

44

Master students

attending the WISDOM programme

3

host institutions

in 3 countries
(Jordan, Türkiye, Uganda)

1

new host institution

Mbarara University of Science
and Technology (MUST), Uganda

resilience and adaptation can be of exceptional value and relevance in conflict situations. WISDOM offers fully funded Master's scholarships,

along with a supportive academic environment that allows women scientists to restart their scientific studies and contribute to research design and development. OWSD works with carefully chosen host institutes that have experience in hosting displaced students. At the heart of the model is a **co-designed Capacity Building component** where the host institute is supported in the design and implementation of policies and practices around gender and protection. An additional **Student Network Building component** also ensures students are guaranteed continued support at the end of the programme. WISDOM recognizes a fundamental truth: mobility is already happening. In the face of conflict, climate change, and instability, people move. OWSD's

role is to meet displaced women scientists where they are and create meaningful opportunities for continued education and leadership. By investing in refugee women scientists and the institutions that host them, OWSD is building resilient bridges between displacement and possibility—turning crisis into opportunity, and mobility into empowerment.

In 2025, the WISDOM programme underwent significant expansion with the addition of a new host institution, Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST), in Uganda. The call received **51 applications**, and **20 scholars** were selected to join the programme. The new cohort come from seven countries (Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda, Eritrea, Ethiopia, South

Sudan and Somalia), residing in six different refugee settlements in Uganda and enrolled on 10 different Master's programmes in STEM subjects. This adds to the two WISDOM partner institutes established in Jordan at Hashemite University and in Türkiye at Aydin Istanbul University, where 24 scholars are hosted coming from the surrounding region, including Afghanistan, Palestine, and Syria. Key partners such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network (GAIN), and the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee initiative (DAFI), have been essential in identifying eligible candidates and aligning the programme with local legal and logistical frameworks.



CLICK OR SCAN

TO GET TO KNOW THE SECOND
SELECTED COHORT OWSD WISDOM
SCHOLARS

As a component of the WISDOM programme, four researchers were commissioned by OWSD to complete **4 case studies on gender, science and displacement** - an inter-related nexus about which little scholarly work has been undertaken. The research focused on displaced women scientists in Myanmar, Sudan, Ukraine and Venezuela, and will be submitted for publication in a book, edited by OWSD. The studies focus on the specific challenges faced in these countries, with policy and best practice recommendations to sustain scholars during displacement.

A second call for researchers, in July 2025 received 90 applications,



OWSD WISDOM students from Afghanistan, Palestine, and Syria attending a **Masters course** at Hashemite University in Jordan.

and three research grants were issued to scholars from Syria, Democratic Republic of Congo,

and Kenya. The resulting case studies will also be considered for publication in the book. Additionally, all 7 researchers have been invited to contribute to the organization of a WISDOM International Conference to be held at the **Accademia dei Lincei in Rome, in 2026**.

WISDOM at EURIE

In 2025, OWSD showcased the WISDOM programme to an international audience of university leaders, scholarship providers and higher education stakeholders at the EURIE Eurasia Higher Education Summit, in Istanbul. Alongside an exhibition booth and panel participation, OWSD convened a research workshop bringing together WISDOM Fellows from the Istanbul cohort for the first time to focus on their experiences as displaced women scientists. The workshop on "Science in Turmoil: How Conflict and Gender Shape the Experiences of Women Scientists" explored how displacement, gender and

Meeting scholars where they are: OWSD outreach at Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement in Uganda, part of the recruitment drive that brought 20 WISDOM scholars from seven countries to Mbarara University of Science and Technology.



IN 2025

20

new WISDOM students

at Mbarara University, Uganda
from **51 applications**

7

countries of origin

in the new Uganda cohort
(Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda, Eritrea,
Ethiopia, South Sudan, Somalia)

6

refugee settlements

in Uganda from which scholars
were recruited



OWSD convened a research workshop for the Istanbul cohort of WISDOM fellows at the Eurasia Higher Education Summit (EURIE) 2025

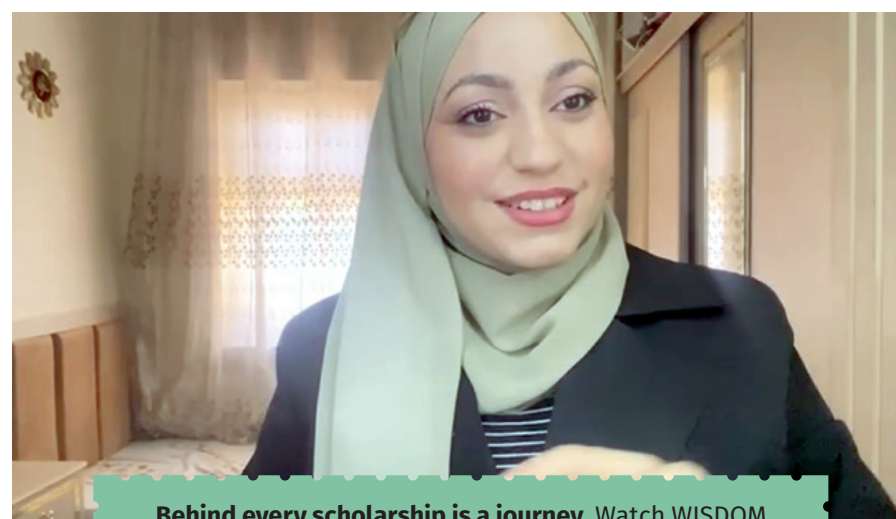
institutional barriers intersect to shape academic careers. The workshop adopted a participatory approach grounded in critical reflexivity, reciprocity and respect, creating a confidential environment in which participants could speak openly about institutional and personal challenges.

Discussions highlighted challenges including credential recognition, language barriers and research disruption, while underscoring the importance of networks that recognise participants as scientists rather than solely as displaced persons. Valuable insights were gathered during the workshop and will

contribute to the forthcoming Gender, Education, and Migration in Science (GEMS) research initiative and future programme development.

WISDOM at the 7th OWSD General Assembly in Bogotá

WISDOM Master students could not participate in the OWSD General Assembly, in Colombia, as their refugee status restricted their ability to travel outside their host countries. Nevertheless, representatives from the academic and administrative staff of the three host institutes were invited to attend, alongside two WISDOM researchers from Myanmar and Ukraine, now residing outside their countries.



Behind every scholarship is a journey. Watch WISDOM scholars share their stories of displacement, resilience and return to science on the OWSD YouTube channel.



CLICK OR SCAN

TO WATCH THE VIDEO OF A WISDOM MASTER STUDENT, GHAZAL OMARA

Dr Phyu Phyu Thin Zaw - WISDOM researcher on gender, science and displacement

Dr Phyu Phyu Thin Zaw from Myanmar is a **displaced medical doctor** whose WISDOM research focuses on gender, science, and displacement. Even though she can no longer live in her country of birth, she works tirelessly to deliver health education in Myanmar, which since the military coup, is one of the most dangerous countries for medical personnel. For Phyu Phyu, education represents the opportunity for transformation and purpose and is the most effective form of resistance. Consequently, she serves as **Head of the School of Health at Spring University Myanmar**, a **virtual learning platform** that currently connects 500 faculty members and displaced scientists with 19,000 students from Myanmar, enrolled on its programmes. The platform ensures students' safety by using nicknames and avatars to hide their identities.



Dr Phyu Phyu Thin Zaw's research examines the nexus of gender, science and displacement in Myanmar.

"I need to be useful for my community. I need to give back to my people back home."

Dr Phyu Phyu Thin Zaw, lecturer at the University of Hong Kong School of Public Health

Determination and usefulness have defined Phyu Phyu's career. Alongside her WISDOM research and work with Spring University Myanmar, she holds fellowships at the **University of Melbourne** and the **Australian National University**, and lectures at the **University of Hong Kong**. She combines her wider research on global health and health policy with leadership roles supporting education and displaced scholars, and serves on the **Steering Committee of the Science in Exile initiative of The World Academy of Sciences and UNESCO**.

Speaking of her experience as a displaced scientist, Phyu Phyu says: "We might appear as if everything is all right, but behind the scenes we all are struggling enormously." But despite the uncertainty that shapes the lives of displaced academics, Phyu Phyu is resolute. "We continue our science," she says. "We continue as academics and women scientists ... to protect our student community and do our job."

OWSD PhD Fellowships

The South-to-South PhD Fellowships programme, OWSD's original flagship activity, has been supported by the **Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)** since 1998. The model provides comprehensive support to women scientists from developing countries in pursuit of their PhD. By the end of 2025, **437 fellows had graduated**, while **76 are completing**, with **48 enrolled full-time** and **28 participating in sandwich programmes**. The OWSD Secretariat is in regular contact with these fellows, providing ongoing administrative support, and highlighting graduates' success stories. A key retention mechanism within the PhD programme is the **Support Allowance**, which provides critical assistance tailored

PhD Fellowship

ELIGIBILITY

- Women in STEM with a master's degree
- Citizens from 66 eligible countries
- Study outside of home country in any developing country in the Global South

INCLUDES

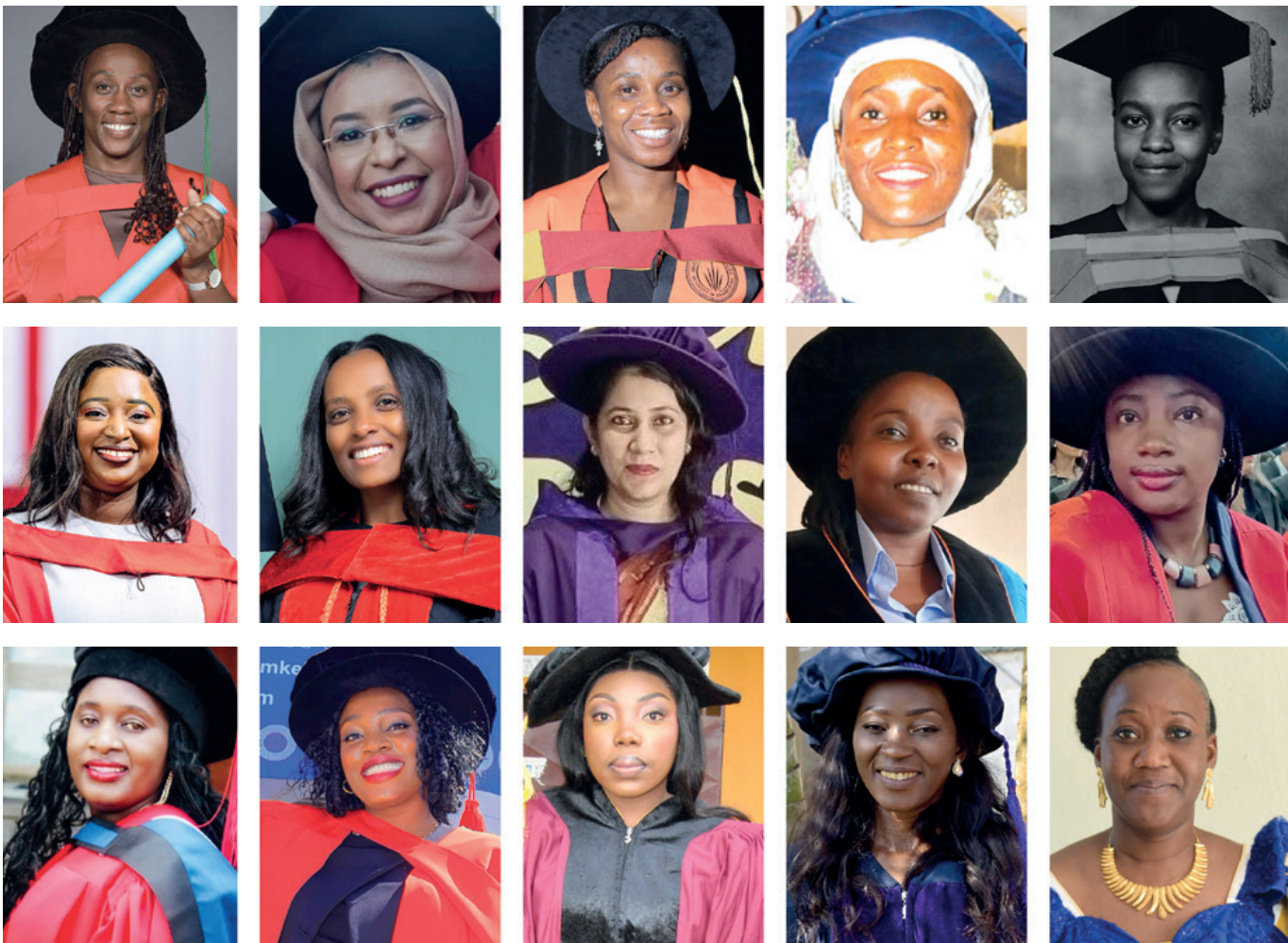
- Monthly stipend, travel grant, tuition fees, support allowance

FUNDED BY

- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)



OWSD PhD Fellow Jennifer Nambooze (Uganda) on her graduation day at the University of the Free State, South Africa, where she completed her doctorate in Chemistry. Her research investigated the anticancer activity of compounds isolated from three plants native to Uganda — *Prunus africana*, *Annona muricata* and *Elaeodendron buchananii*



Celebrating OWSD's 2025 PhD Graduates

Each year, we celebrate our recently graduated OWSD PhD fellows. These women leave their home countries to carry out either a full-time PhD programme or research visits at institutes abroad, often leaving behind family, friends, and jobs to pursue their passions. From a medical scientist from Cameroon developing targeted photodynamic therapies for skin cancer, to an agricultural scientist investigating which soil-borne fungi are contributing to rice diseases in Bangladesh, to an earth scientist using drones to make cadastral maps of customary land in Uganda, OWSD PhD graduates are already making big changes to a world that needs their vision, their ideas and their talent.



CLICK OR SCAN
TO GET TO KNOW ALL OWSD
2025 GRADUATES

to fellows' needs. This can include travel home during the fellowship, support for accompanying family members' travel, and childcare

costs. Testimonials from the fellows suggest this allowance was critical to their successful completion.

IN 2025

76

Active fellows

enrolled in ongoing
PhD programmes
(48 full-time and 28 sandwich)

18

New graduates

437

Total graduates

since the programme began
in 1998

CAPACITY: OWSD EARLY CAREER FELLOWSHIPS

OWSD builds scientific capacity in the Global South by supporting early career women scientists to lead high-impact research in their home institutions. These fellows are creating centres of excellence, mentoring future scientists, and driving institutional change, laying the foundation for stronger, more inclusive research systems.

OWSD EARLY CAREER FELLOWSHIPS

Since its launch in 2018, the Early Career (EC) Fellowships

programme (funded by the Canadian International Development Research Centre - IDRC) has established itself as

Early Career Fellowship

ELIGIBILITY

- Women in STEM with a PhD degree
- From 66 eligible countries
- Employed at a university or research institute in any of the 66 eligible countries

INCLUDES

- Up to USD \$50,000 over 3 years for equipment, training, & more

FUNDED BY

- Main donor: Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC)
- 1 fellowship is supported by Aspen Institute Italia

a prestigious award offering up to USD 50,000 over three years

2017-2026

124

total EC Fellowships awarded

63

total completed

50

ongoing

IN 2025

15

EC Fellows participated in an orientation workshop in Trieste, Italy

to individual women who have completed their PhDs in STEM and are employed at academic or scientific research institutes in one of the 66 STLs. The programme supports the development of high-quality research activities, laboratories, and teams, and has evolved to include enhanced training components in science advocacy, communication, and policymaking, further supporting EC fellows and their home institutions. This robust initiative has consolidated a network of outstanding women scientists who are providing leadership for the next generation of STEM professionals in low- and



2025 OWSD Early Career Fellows during their orientation workshop in Trieste, where they toured laboratories across the Trieste Science System and connected with the wider research community

middle-income countries, with early indications showing that these fellows are already influencing institutional change toward gender equality in science.

Workshops and training for Early Career Fellows

In April 2025, the 15 women awarded OWSD Early Career Fellowships in 2024 participated

in an **orientation workshop in Trieste, Italy**. The workshop included practical sessions designed to help the fellows manage their research grants, with sessions on UNESCO procurement procedures and monitoring and evaluation of project outcomes, as well as sessions aimed at broadening fellows' perspectives beyond



OWSD 2024 Early Career Fellow Tahmina Foyez in her laboratory in Bangladesh, where she develops biocompatible self-healing hydrogels with promising antimicrobial and wound-healing applications.



“As a molecular biologist from Sri Lanka, I have always believed that science must serve the realities of the people we come from—but belief alone is not enough; we need community, mentorship, and the courage to lead. Becoming an OWSD Early Career Fellow gave me that foundation and connected me with a remarkable network of women scientists across the Global South. Through this fellowship I have learned that our work in the lab is only part of the story; the other part is showing up for each other, advocating for inclusive science, and ensuring the next generation of Sri Lankan girls sees themselves in every discovery we make.

Besides providing funds, OWSD is truly a movement that proves when you invest in women scientists, you invest in the very fabric of a sustainable and equitable future.”

Pradeepa Bandaranayake, 2019 OWSD Early Career Fellow, speaking at the General Assembly



OWSD 2024 Early Career Fellows visiting laboratories of the Trieste Science System during the Early Career Orientation workshop held in Trieste, Italy, in April 2025.

their own scientific field or laboratory to thinking about aspects of scientific leadership and outreach, from commercializing discoveries, to communicating science, to science diplomacy.

The fellows were invited to visit Trieste's AREA Science Park, where they attended a presentation and Q&A session on intellectual property and visited laboratories and research centres of their choice, including the Laboratory of Data Engineering (LADE), Laboratory of Genomics and Epigenomics (LAGE), Life Sciences Open Lab, and Innovative Materials Open Lab, at AREA Science Park as well as the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), the University of Trieste, and the Astronomical Observatory of Trieste.

Fellows received coaching in presentation skills, emphasizing the importance of the 'elevator pitch' and following the format of the recent 'Short Talks, Big Impacts' competition focusing on brief, 3-minute research presentations. The fellows had the chance to put this training into action at a visit to the nearby United World College Adriatic (UWC), where they pitched their research and answered questions from UWC students, some of whom came from their own countries. The workshop feedback was very positive, with fellows describing the experience as "incredibly impactful" and "beyond my expectations".



OWSD 2024 Early Career Fellow Oumou Kalsom Gueye practicing her presentation skills at the Orientation workshop in Trieste

IN 2025

9

new laboratories
set up in 2025

332

educational and outreach
activities
implemented

9,236

beneficiaries
of activities
4,480 female, 4,576 male,
180 unspecified

Early Career Fellows at the OWSD 7th General Assembly in Bogotá

All ongoing OWSD Early Career (EC) Fellows were invited to use the fellowship budget line dedicated to travel and conference participation to attend the OWSD 7th General Assembly. 15 fellows in total attended. Throughout the Assembly, EC Fellows played an engaged and visible role, contributing actively to plenary discussions, thematic and training sessions. Several EC fellows had previously taken part in the 2024 Gamechangers workshop and identified themselves as “Gamechangers” during the Assembly. In one of the closing sessions, the group autonomously took the floor

to share reflections from the workshop and to articulate a set of proposed initiatives aimed at fostering a structured platform of changemakers within OWSD and towards policy reform and influence.

By the end of 2025, 124 EC fellowships had been awarded: 63 have completed while 50 are ongoing.

Impact of the OWSD Early Career Fellowships Programme

The OWSD Early Career Fellowships Programme completes its cycle at the end of 2026, and therefore in 2025, no new fellows were selected. Given the importance and impact of the



2023 Early Career Fellow Dr. Juliana Moura Mendes Arrua, from Brazil, presented new OWSD-funded research findings on Emerging Fungal Diseases at a major scientific gathering in Paraguay. Throughout 2025, a total of 332 outreach, teaching and communications activities were conducted. These included linking with OWSD members, National Chapters, and science academies; development of communications materials (e.g., flyers, posters); and delivering training and mentoring.



Maura Quezada Aguilar (Guatemala), OWSD 2024 Early Career Fellow, leads OAKS_GT — research on oaks as key elements of forest conservation in Guatemala’s volcanic chain

programme, however, OWSD sincerely hopes to encourage countries involved in the new GenSIS project to establish their own fellowships based on this model, at the same time as looking for new partners to invest in the programme. The 2025 survey of 50 active fellows highlights notable advances in fellows’ publications, collaborations, and capacity building and demonstrates the fellowship’s pivotal role in setting up and maintaining crucial research infrastructure. Enhanced career advancement was widely reported: 86% of fellows experienced professional growth, and more than two-

thirds (68%) noted increased international visibility. More than a third (36%) were promoted, and over half anticipate a future promotion. Additionally, a quarter (24%) of respondents reported influencing policy in areas such as national climate strategies and intellectual property legislation. This demonstrates that supporting leadership and mentorship initiatives not only underpins fellows’ career advancement, but also their institutional and national influence. These findings underscore the ongoing impact of the OWSD Early Career Fellowships programme: empowering women scientists in the developing world to build research infrastructure, lead with

IN 2025

40%

of fellows
used their fellowship funds
to set up or upgrade laboratories

46%

of fellows
reported a significant impact
on their ability to travel
for research

24%

of fellows
have proposed or influenced
policy changes

86%

of fellows
reported that the fellowship
was highly beneficial for their
professional growth

70%

of respondents
have been very or somewhat
involved with the National
Chapters

confidence, and connect to global scientific networks, and thus drive lasting change in their careers and communities.

The scientist rebuilding Tanzania’s botanical archive

Angela Mkindi grew up on the slopes of Kilimanjaro, where she first learned how certain plants could protect crops without chemicals. Today she fears her children may never see that world. As warming drives up insect pests, Tanzanian agriculture leans on chemical pesticides that are expensive and harmful to farmers, ecosystems and

“What’s disappearing isn’t just the trees being cut. It’s the small, unseen life that made food grow.”

Angela Mkindi, OWSD Early Career Fellow

consumers. For generations, farmers have made their own pesticides from plants such as *Tephrosia vogelii*, but the process is slow and imprecise. An OWSD Early Career Fellow at the Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology, Angela is building the science to change that: a contemporary botanical archive of northern Tanzania’s pesticidal plants, catalogued with their locations, uses and phytochemistry, alongside optimized formulations farmers can actually reproduce. Ten years of trust with farmers’ groups in Hai district underpin the work. In a continent of extraordinary botanical diversity, Angela believes the possibility has never been closer.



CLICK OR SCAN
TO READ THE STORY OF ANGELA
MKINDI



VISIBILITY: OWSD AWARDS

The OWSD-Elsevier Foundation Awards recognize exceptional women each year who have overcome significant social, economic, and cultural barriers to produce internationally competitive research in their early careers.

Awardees benefit from visibility at high-level conferences and events within their research area, and are often celebrated by

national media in their home countries and recognized by government officials. Since 2021, the awards have focused

OWSD Awards

ELIGIBILITY

- Women in STEM with a PhD degree
- Citizens from 66 Eligible Countries
- Demonstrable impact on the research environment
- Contribution to UN SDGs.

INCLUDES

- USD 5,000 prize
- Attendance at international events and visibility

FUNDED BY

- The Elsevier Foundation



2025 OWSD-Elsevier awardee, **Reem Obaydo**, is a pharmaceutical analytical chemist and educator from Syria. Her research focuses on green analytical chemistry, and sustainable, eco-friendly methods for pharmaceutical analysis. By reducing the use of hazardous chemicals in drug testing, her work ensures the safety and efficacy of medicines while minimizing environmental and health risks. She also integrates sustainability assessment tools to evaluate the environmental and health impact of her analytical methods. Reem Obaydo also supports Syrian women in conflict-affected areas by providing digital guidance on mental health management, and ensuring accessible care for those in need. Due to travel restrictions imposed on Syrian scholars, she has participated in international conferences online to advocate for sustainable scientific research and safer practices in pharmaceutical laboratories worldwide.

on research areas related to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2025, the focus was on **SDG3: Inclusive Health**.

2025 Awardees

The research conducted by the 2025 winners spans a diverse range of critical health issues, from innovative approaches to maternal and child health, sustainable pharmaceutical analysis, environmental health interventions, and advancements in mental health care. Their



“These five impressive women scientists are tackling the critical health challenges faced by their communities using a broad range of fields to produce innovative research and inclusive solutions. Our longstanding award celebrates both their scientific achievements and their leadership in inspiring future generations of women scientists to drive real change.”

Ylann Schemm,
Executive Director
of the Elsevier Foundation

work addresses some of the most pressing health challenges in their respective regions, and serves as an exemplar of leadership, mentoring and community engagement.

2025 OWSD AWARDEES



Manal Badrasawi

health sciences, clinical nutrition
Palestine



Reem Obaydo

Green chemistry, public health impact
of hazardous chemicals, environmental
pollution reduction
Syria



Alejandra Paniagua-Avila

mental health, psychiatric epidemiology,
systems science
Guatemala



Sarmila Tandukar

environmental health, medical
microbiology, waterborne diseases
Nepal



Halima Sumayya Twabi

causal inference for maternal and child
health and behavioural studies longitudinal
and survival analysis for health research
Malawi



2025 OWSD Awardees Alejandra Paniagua-Avila (Guatemala) and Sarmila Tandukar (Nepal), celebrated their awards with OWSD-Elsevier alumnae at the OWSD 7th General Assembly and International Conference in Bogotá, Colombia

Achievements of OWSD Awards Alumnae in 2025

- 2020 award winner Chao Mbogho and 2024 award winner Lidia Antonella Rivera Peñalva participated in the **Short Talks, Big Impacts** competition, organized by OWSD, and Chao Mbogo won top prize in the Africa region competition and was placed third in the audience vote for the global finale.
- Three alumnae - **Augustina Alexander (2024)**, **Halima Twabi (2025)**, and **Eugenie Kayitesi (2023)** - were invited to participate on a panel on how to improve journalistic coverage of women scientists at the **World Conference of Science Journalists, December 2025 in Pretoria, South Africa.**
- 2023 awardee **Eugenie Kayitesi** was selected to present the **Key Outcomes of the ‘Third Interregional Dialogue on Education and Development between Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe’** during the closing plenary, held in Bogotá, Colombia.
- 2019 awardee **Tista Prasai Joshi** was elected as Regional Member representing Asia Pacific on the OWSD Executive Board.talent.

IN 2025

55

eligible applications

28-58

age range

SDG 3

focus on SDG 3,
Inclusive Health

The 2025 awardees were invited to the OWSD 7th General Assembly and International Conference in Bogotá, Colombia. Two awardees, **Alejandra Paniagua-Avila (Guatemala)** and **Sarmila Tandukar (Nepal)**, were able to attend and were recognized at a special event that celebrated all five winners’ individual achievements, and the growing global network of women in science. They were joined by other programme alumnae who emphasized how the award had helped them strengthen their confidence, and amplify their voices in the wider scientific community. The 2025 winners also contributed to discussions around formalizing the alumnae network in a workshop led by **Elsevier Foundation Partnerships Director, Domiziana Francescon,** and **Regional Officer for INGSA-LAC with the International Science Council, Carolina Santacruz-Perez.**

“Attending the 7th OWSD General Assembly was a wonderful opportunity for me. It gave me great exposure and the possibility to connect and network internationally. I met many women researchers who share aims and dreams similar to mine. Despite facing numerous challenges, women around the world are attempting to achieve positive change, and this experience pushed me to strive harder and give more.”

Sarmila Tandukar, 2025 awardee from Nepal



The Ripple Effect of Awards to Early Career Women and Awardees in the OWSD Ecosystem

Visibility is the sunlight that fuels the transformative power of the OWSD Awards within our ecosystem. By recognizing and celebrating the achievements of women scientists from underrepresented regions, the Awards serve as a beacon of excellence, with success stories showcased internationally through our communications, media, and through awardees’ participation in high-level events. These visible role models inspire the next generation of women in STEM and drive gender-transformative change by positioning OWSD members in influential roles where they can advocate for policies and institutional practices that support women’s leadership in research and decision-making.



2025 OWSD Awardee Halima Twabi is a biostatistician from Malawi who employs advanced statistical methodologies and data-driven approaches to understand health issues. Her work identifies factors contributing to health disparities among vulnerable populations such as women and children and assesses intervention effectiveness, especially those affected by HIV infection, in socio-economically disadvantaged communities. In 2023, she was named a Young Affiliate of The World Academy of Sciences and received the 2020 L’Oréal-UNESCO Young Talent Award for Sub-Saharan Africa. She is currently collaborating on a project ‘Strengthening Women’s Research Network and Capacity to Address Women’s Health in Sub-Saharan Africa’ project, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s Global Grand Challenges as a country lead for Malawi.

STORYTELLING, PARTNERSHIPS AND ADVOCACY

OWSD recognizes that advancing the role of women scientists from the developing world requires more than providing resources. Training and tools for telling compelling stories can be game changers.

In 2025, communications served as a linchpin for reaching broader audiences and spotlighting the accomplishments of women scientists, while OWSD’s partnerships shifted register: from participation in dialogues to co-design of programmes, and from evidence generation to policy-oriented implementation. Both strands converged at the 7th OWSD General Assembly in Bogotá.

Each regional session attracted 170–200 viewers, and more than 1,300 people registered for the final event. The judging panel reflected OWSD’s strategic partnerships, including **Olubukola Oluranti Babalola, OWSD Vice President for Africa**, alongside communications and science officers from **TWAS, IAP and**



“Visibility is the sunlight that allows the OWSD ecosystem to thrive.”

Tonya Blowers, OWSD Coordinator

ICTP. Four winners were selected through a combination of jury assessment and audience vote, and were invited to the 7th General Assembly; two participated in person and presented their work to the Assembly audience. Beyond visibility, the initiative generated concrete spillover

Short Talks, Big Impacts: science communication as a peer-driven tool

In 2025, OWSD launched **Short Talks, Big Impacts**, a new initiative designed to strengthen science communication skills among members and increase the visibility of research addressing local and global challenges. The competition engaged the membership through three regional live sessions (Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Arab region), followed by a global finale featuring 11 finalists selected through audience voting.



Why science communication?

Science communication training gives women scientists the means to translate research into influence: to be heard by policymakers, to attract funding, and to become visible role models in contexts where few exist. By building these skills across the membership rather than concentrating them in the Secretariat, OWSD turns communication into a distributed capacity of the network itself.

effects, with several winners reporting that they have since organized similar competitions within their own institutions—

“Through this event, I gained valuable insights into various scientific applications, presentation styles, and also how to organize this type of event. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the OWSD Secretariat for taking the time to acknowledge each presenter’s strengths after their presentations. A heartfelt thank you to the esteemed panel of judges for their time and expertise.”

OWSD member **Thiyanga Talagala**, winner of the OWSD Short talks, big impact competition



demonstrating the format’s scalability as a peer-driven tool for strengthening communication, leadership and impact.



CLICK OR SCAN
TO KNOW MORE, READ THIYANGA’S BLOG ABOUT HOW SHE MANAGED HER PRECIOUS 180 SECONDS:



Multimedia OWSD Stories

In 2024–2025, OWSD implemented the **Multimedia OWSD Stories** pilot to expand its audiovisual storytelling and support women scientists in communicating research impact using accessible visual tools. The initiative produced two in-depth photo-stories featuring Early Career Fellows in Tanzania, each combining some 50 curated photographs, narrative text and a 5-minute audio interview, alongside two short promotional videos, documenting research in

laboratories and field settings. Two Early Career Fellows were also trained in photo-storytelling through a four-month tutoring programme, producing two further photo-stories independently. The project generated 15 professional photo-portraits and short interviews during the 2025 Orientation Workshop in Trieste, and culminated in a pilot exhibition at ICTP that demonstrated photography-based narratives as a cost-effective, member-empowering complement to OWSD’s video-focused strategy.

Storytelling and communications drive OWSD’s mission

In 2025, OWSD’s channels reflected broader global shifts in digital engagement, with short-form video driving the most reach. OWSD contracted a video editor to produce videos tailored to different platforms, and short-form content was central to the General Assembly campaign, with daily stories and recap reels. In parallel, OWSD piloted an **animation project**, developing hand-drawn animated visuals for short videos featuring two OWSD

2024 OWSD Early Career Fellows photographed during the 2025 Orientation Workshop in Trieste, as part of the Multimedia OWSD Stories project. From left: **Akissi Marie Florence Yebouet** (Côte d’Ivoire), developing a multispectral drone to detect cassava mosaic disease at its earliest stage; **Priscilla Muheki** (Uganda), searching for coronal emission lines in young active stars; **Cecilia Rolence China** (Tanzania), valorizing cashew nut husks and banana stems to produce tannins for leather processing; and **Mbolatantely Fahazavana Rakotondramanana** (Madagascar), developing a new biofortified lowland rice variety. Dr. Rakotondramanana chose to show a hat and scarf to celebrate her traditional culture.



IN 2025

14,555

Subscribers
to OWSD mailing lists

LINKEDIN

+ 10%

Followers

INSTAGRAM

+ 20%

Followers

FACEBOOK

+ 3%

Followers

YOUTUBE

+ 29%

Followers

94

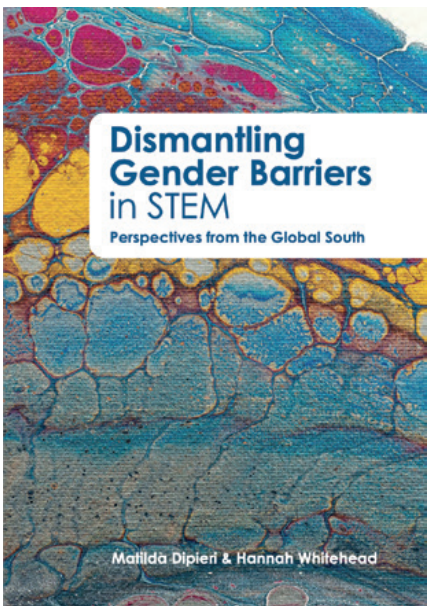
selected opportunities
and announcements
disseminated over the year

scientists—a format expected to evolve into a broader initiative across communications, reporting and educational materials. All channels grew, thanks to specialised short-term consultants and strategic investment in quality content. The focus on short-form video paid off particularly on Instagram, where views nearly tripled and both reach and content

interactions more than doubled. The strongest-performing posts covered the General Assembly, the OWSD Awards calls and winners, and Short Talks, Big Impacts. During the Assembly, OWSD piloted **WhatsApp** as a communications channel, with an announcement channel and a community space moderated by a volunteer member and structured through thematic sub-groups. Initially created for logistics, it proved effective for peer exchange and remains active, and OWSD plans to extend the model to the wider membership.

Following a consolidation phase in 2024, the **redesigned OWSD website was launched in September 2025**, migrated to Drupal 11 with a fully reviewed information architecture, developed with Trieste-based Interfase. The new site showcases OWSD’s impact through success stories, programme data and interactive features such as maps illustrating the geographical reach of its activities.

OWSD contribution to global gender-in-STEM knowledge
In 2025, a new edited volume, ***Dismantling Gender Barriers in STEM: Perspectives from the Global South***, brought together Southern-led research from Latin America and Africa on the systemic, institutional and cultural factors shaping women’s participation and leadership in STEM, emphasizing that gender disparities are driven not by individual choices but by structural constraints. OWSD contributed a chapter, *From*



CLICK OR SCAN
DOWNLOAD A DIGITAL COPY OF
THE BOOK AND READ CHAPTER 10

Individuals to Institutions: Scaling Up Women Scientists’ Impact in the Global South, authored by members of the Secretariat. The book was launched in a dedicated plenary at the 7th General Assembly, reinforcing collaboration between OWSD, UNESCO and IDRC.

OWSD within the Trieste Science System
OWSD is hosted on the ICTP campus and shares its Executive Director with TWAS, giving it access to significant institutional assets: TWAS Fellows on selection committees, linkages with TWAS Young Affiliates, the AAAS-TWAS Science Diplomacy Course, and collaboration with IAP on gender and science. In 2025, this collaboration expanded strategically: at the initiative of the TWAS Executive Director, OWSD contributed to the TWAS Strategic Planning 7 document, and worked

with TWAS and ICTP on the shared Trieste Next gazebo. OWSD also became a member of **SiS FVG** (Scientific and Innovation System of Friuli Venezia Giulia), reinforcing its ties within the region and opening opportunities for new partnerships.



Strategic partnerships
UNESCO Headquarters and a new project
OWSD strengthened its partnership with UNESCO Headquarters in 2025, particularly with the Science, Technology and Innovation Policies (STIP) and Open Science Division, building on years of engagement with

the **Call to Action to Close the Gender Gap in Science**. On this basis, IDRC—a long-standing donor—invited OWSD to jointly develop a new project translating the Gender in STEM pilot into systemic institutional reform, marking a shift from evidence generation to policy-oriented implementation. Early visibility of the strengthened partnership came through OWSD’s inclusion in UNESCO’s **For Women in Science** network and the launch of the **UNESCO Virtual Museum**, featuring six OWSD members and fellows.

CLICK OR SCAN
VISIT THE VIRTUAL EXHIBITION
WOMEN IN SCIENCE AT THE
VIRTUAL SCIENCE MUSEUM

Obreal and the General Assembly partners
OWSD’s partnership with **OBREAL** culminated in the alignment of the 7th General Assembly with OBREAL’s Third

OWSD Newsletter:
<https://lists.ictp.it/mailman/listinfo/owsd-newsletter>

Subscribe to **OWSD mailing list** to receive updates:
<https://lists.ictp.it/mailman/listinfo/owsdw-update>

OWSD LinkedIn:
The Organization for Women in Science
for the Developing World (OWSD)

OWSD Instagram:
owsdsecretariat

OWSD Facebook:
owsd.net

OWSD Youtube:
OWSD Secretariat

IN 2025

94

new articles
on the OWSD website

3.58M

Search impressions
(1.58M in 2024)

3

Regional Short Talks
sessions
+ 1 global finale

1,300+

in person screening

4

Photo-stories produced

6

OWSD members in the
UNESCO Virtual Museum

Interregional Dialogue on Education and Development, within the CELAC–African Union framework. The resulting “Week of Synergies and Impact” gave participants direct access to policymakers while sharing major operational costs. OBREAL acted as strategic convener, EAN University as host and implementing partner, and the OWSD Colomba National Chapter anchored the event nationally.

International Science Council

A Category 3 member of ISC since 2020, OWSD was invited in January 2025 to the **Muscat Global Knowledge Dialogue and Third ISC General Assembly**, concluding its cycle of regional representation for 2022–25 and setting the scene for a new series in 2026–27 aligned with WISDOM and GenSIS. OWSD funded a delegation of four Arab Region National Chapter representatives and one Early Career Awardee.

Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei

OWSD’s longstanding relationship with the **Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei**, fostered through OWSD Ambassador Alberto Quadrio Curzio, was strengthened in preparation for a joint initiative: in April 2026 the Accademia will host **“Sustaining Knowledge during Crises: Gender and Displacement in Science”**, organized by OWSD in Rome. The conference will bring together researchers, practitioners and displaced scientists, and will inform a forthcoming collaborative publication.

Nepal Leadership Academy

OWSD’s collaboration with the **Nepal Leadership Academy (NLA)**, initiated through leadership training for Early Career Fellows, became a formal implementation partnership in 2025. Building on the LEAD framework adapted to Global South contexts, NLA will design a context-sensitive leadership curriculum for Science Granting Councils and National Chapters under the **GenSIS project**, support innovation pilots, and contribute



OWSD’s exhibition booth at the Eurasia Higher Education Summit (EURIE), at the Istanbul Congress Centre, April 8-10, 2025

to governance activities—anchoring leadership development as a core pillar of OWSD’s approach to gender-transformative change.

Events and international influence

In 2025, OWSD members and staff were invited to contribute to key international panels and conferences. In February, OWSD showcased the WISDOM programme to an international audience of university leaders and stakeholders at the **EURIE Eurasia Higher Education Summit** in Istanbul. Alongside an exhibition booth and a panel discussion, OWSD convened a research workshop, *Science in Turmoil: How Conflict and Gender Shape*

the Experiences of Women Scientists, which brought together WISDOM fellows from the Istanbul cohort to focus on their experiences as displaced women scientists.

OWSD’s most significant and high-profile event of 2025 was the 7th OWSD General Assembly, held in Bogotá from 3–7 November 2025. The event brought together almost 400 participants for five days of reflection, renewal and forward planning for OWSD at a time of significant transition in the global science and development landscape.

OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE AND DONOR COMMITMENT

OWSD is a programme unit of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and is **administered under TWAS**, the World Academy of Sciences. OWSD is governed by an Executive Board elected by OWSD members every four years.

The Secretariat of OWSD is **hosted on the campus of the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP)** in Trieste, Italy. OWSD is grateful to the following donors for their generous support of OWSD programmes in 2025:



Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)

PhD fellowship programme and Secretariat support



International Development Research Centre (IDRC) - Canada

Early Career fellowship programme and Secretariat support



The Elsevier Foundation

Awards programme

OWSD additionally thanks the following private donors who contributed to our programmes in 2025:

Nelida Rodríguez Osorio, Lisa Dyce

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Financial income and expenditure for the biennium 2024–2025 is reported in the tables below.*

INCOME¹	AMOUNT (USD)
Balance brought forward 01.01.2024	1,910,242.83
International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada	1,912,379.79
Swedish International Development Agency (Sida)	1,702,460.40
Elsevier Foundation, USA	200,000.00
Contributions from OWSD members	868.59
Transfer to OSWD Reserve Fund	(200,000.00)
Investment revenue	726,285.00
TOTAL INCOME	6,252,236.61

EXPENDITURE	AMOUNT (USD)	
	APPROVED BUDGET	SPENT
1) Fellowships		
1.1 Masters Fellowships	1,400,000.00	898,064.14
1.2 Early Career Fellowships	750,000.00	749,802.85
Subtotal for (1)	2,150,000.00	1,647,866.99
2) Workshops, Trainings and Resources		
2.1 Fellows Support Allowance	25,000.00	
2.2 Early Career Orientation Workshops	100,000.00	97,096.44
2.3 Training Programme	285,000.00	122,330.87
2.4 Success Stories for Impact	120,000.00	40,487.38
Subtotal for (2)	530,000.00	259,914.69

Continue on next page

EXPENDITURE	AMOUNT (USD)	
	APPROVED BUDGET	SPENT
3.1) OWSD Membership	422,000.00	366,903.71
3.1.1) Governance	102,000.00	84,765.51
3.1.2) National Chapters	320,000.00	282,138.20
3.2) OWSD Awards Scheme	200,000.00	156,324.33
3.2.1) Awards	50,000.00	50,000.00
3.2.2) Travel of awardees to ceremony	50,000.00	36,579.12
3.2.3) Alumnae support (mentoring, conferences, events)	100,000.00	69,745.21
3.3) Communications, Visibility and Outreach	410,000.00	232,054.30
3.3.1) Funraising and advocacy	150,000.00	101,025.97
3.3.2) Communications	90,000.00	77,490.88
3.3.3) Global search portal	120,000.00	30,282.34
3.3.4) Staff travel	50,000.00	23,255.11
Subtotal for (3)	1,032,000.00	755,282.34
4.1) Monitoring & Evaluation	250,000.00	144,046.33
4.1.1) Monitoring & Evaluationt	30,000.00	27,463.31
4.1.2) Research and Strategy	150,000.00	109,970.00
4.1.3) Mid-term evaluation	60,000.00	
4.1.4) Database consultant	10,000.00	6,613.02
4.2) Implementation costs	1,365,000.00	1,305,086.88
4.2.1) Programme support staff	980,000.00	971,892.61
4.2.2) Administrative and finance support staff	260,000.00	254,843.47
4.2.3) Operational expenses (ICTP services and office costs)	125,000.00	78,350.80
Subtotal for (4)	1,615,000.00	1,449,133.21
Management costs	372,890.00	287,853.80
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	5,699,890.00	4,400,051.03
Savings on prior years' obligations		1,063,935.07
Excess of income over expenditure		2,916,120.65

RESERVE FUND²	AMOUNT (USD)
Amount available at the beginning of the period	355,393.19
Transfer from OWSD account	200,000,00
Transfer to TWAS reserve fund	-56,000.00
Savings on End of service entitlements	-61,215.60
Reserve Fund balance end of period	438,177.59

1. All contributions are expressed in US dollars and have been converted using the UN official rate of exchange in effect at the time the contributions were received.

2. The purpose of the Reserve Fund is to cover the end of service entitlements of OWSD Staff.

LOOKING FORWARD

Sustainability, innovation, and impact

In 2025, OWSD continued to demonstrate resilience and adaptability through strategic change, following funding contractions. Transformation focused on adapting our model to one which builds capacity and long-term sustainability for OWSD and our partners. Despite the loss of dedicated staff, OWSD consolidated its communications strategy and increased members' visibility and impact. New alliances were forged and existing ones strengthened, most visibly at the 7th OWSD General Assembly in Bogotá, Colombia, which demonstrated the transformative power of collective collaboration and produced the **Bogotá Statement** – a political positioning document and a strategic mandate for the newly elected Executive Board. The closure of the pioneering PhD Fellowships programme and of the Early Career Fellowships programme was mitigated by new initiatives and partnerships, exemplified by the Gender-Inclusive Science Institutions and Systems (GenSIS) project and the continuing growth of the WISDOM Master's Scholarship programme for Displaced Women Scientists in STEM.

A system-level approach

In 2026, OWSD will consolidate a strategic transition from fellowship-based interventions towards a system-level approach, with GenSIS as a unifying framework and the Bogotá Statement as its shared reference for priorities, partnerships and institutional direction. Further Women in Science National Committees will serve as platforms for data collection, policy dialogue and institutional engagement. OWSD's core operational budget is designed to extend and capitalise on GenSIS outcomes, ensuring coherence across programmes, governance and advocacy. Implementing the mandate of the new Executive Board will shape the 2026 agenda. A restructuring of governance procedures is underway, clarifying roles, decision-making and reporting lines between the Secretariat, the Board and the National Chapters. In parallel, the progressive decentralisation of National Chapter support remains an organisational priority: OWSD will strengthen governance, electoral processes and operational consistency across chapters, while



piloting regionally anchored coordination modalities with Board members.

OWSD will prioritise the analysis of long-term impact, leveraging its unique 30-year longitudinal dataset of women scientists, and will advance new strategic research examining how AI-enabled systems shape the career trajectories of women in science – positioning women scientists from the Global South as active contributors to AI governance, in line with UNESCO priorities on ethical AI and inclusive science systems. Investment will continue in training, networking and visibility alongside GenSIS capacity-building, consolidating OWSD's role as a global hub for women scientists' research and networks. Executive Board members will take an active role in regional and international representation, positioning OWSD as a knowledge broker bridging individual scientific careers, institutional reform and global policy processes.

OWSD calls on members, supporters, and potential donors to help sustain and expand these vital programmes

To make a donation, please contact **owsd@owsd.net** with the subject line "OWSD for the future."

Bogotá, Colombia 3–7 November, 2025

7th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Women. Science. Development.
Our conversation

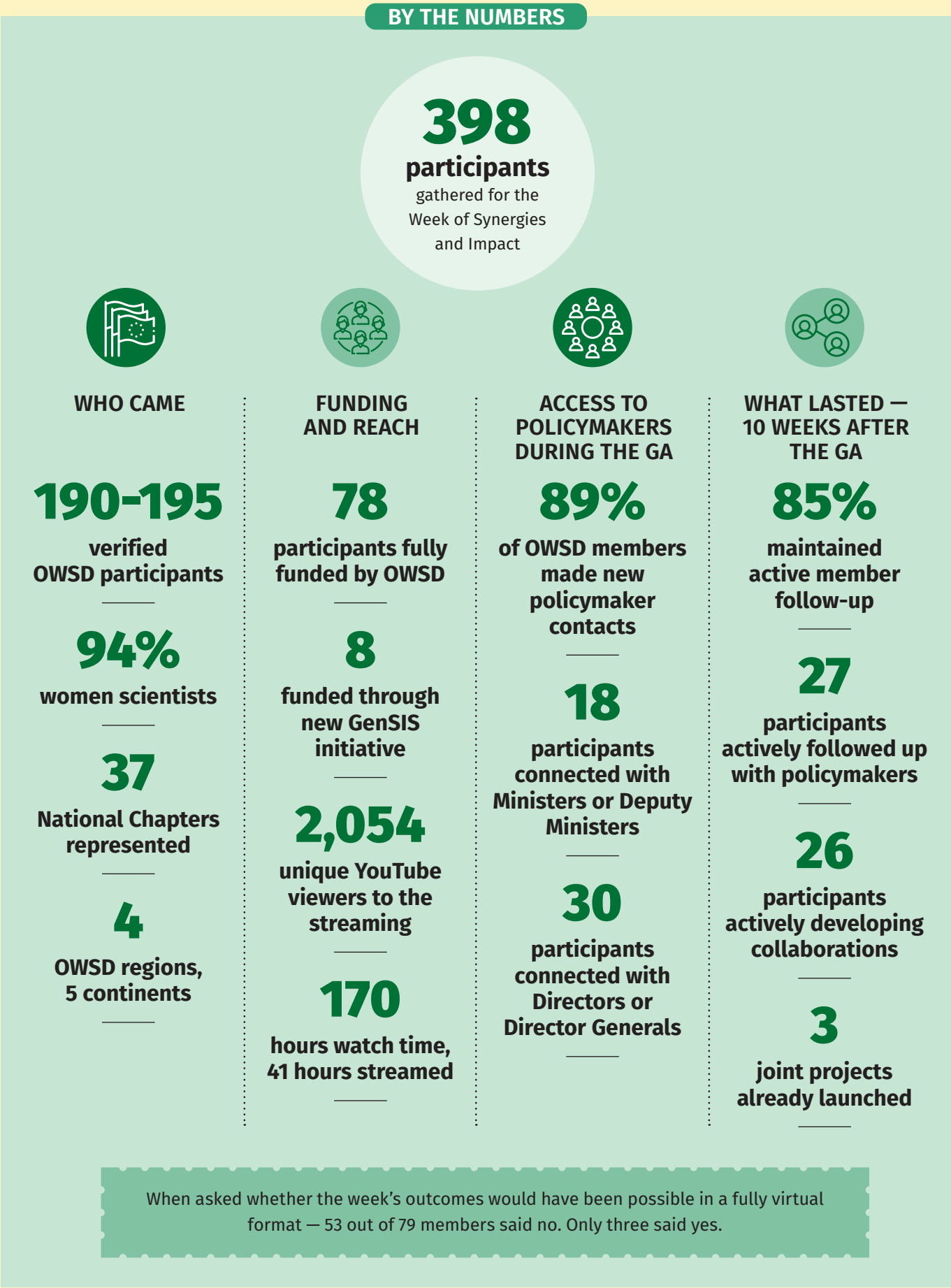
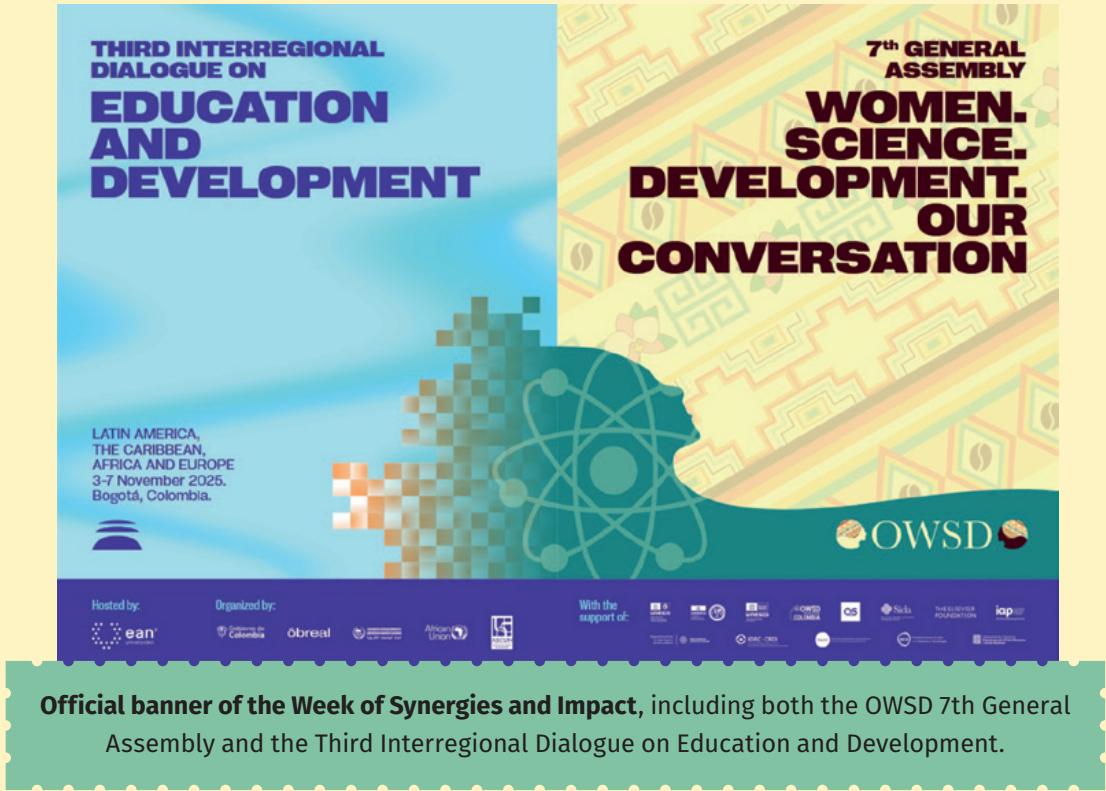
In November 2025, OWSD came to Latin America for the first time. What followed was five days that redefined what a General Assembly can be – and what OWSD is becoming.

The Assembly, the moment, and the model

The General Assembly is OWSD’s principal governance forum — held approximately every four years, bringing together members, chapter leaders, and partners from all regions. The 7th edition, held in Bogotá in November 2025, was the **first ever hosted in Latin America**, arriving at a defining moment: a changing funding landscape, a new strategic cycle, and a global environment demanding clearer impact. But what made this Assembly distinctive was not only where it was held or when — it was how it was designed. Rather than standing alone, the General Assembly was embedded within OBREAL’s **Third Interregional Dialogue on Education and Development**, a high-level platform bringing together ministers, commissioners, university leaders, and regional bodies from Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe. For OWSD members, the co-location meant access to policy conversations and decision-makers that a standalone scientific community gathering would not normally reach.

Together, the two events formed a “Week of Synergies and Impact” — and that framing proved to be more than a label.

The OWSD Secretariat and partners began planning in 2024, following a connection made through their common funder, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Over the months that followed, OBREAL, EAN University, and OWSD built a shared structure — a colour-coded, interlinked programme that allowed each organisation to pursue its own objectives while creating genuine points of convergence. **The result was an event that was more than the sum of its parts.**





A new chapter

Every General Assembly marks a transition, and the 7th was no exception. But the scale of change, and the clarity of direction, made Bogotá a turning point rather than a routine handover. The Assembly formally introduced a **newly elected, 12-member Executive Board**, returned through a democratic vote of OWSD’s eligible Full Members. **Luisa Fernanda Echeverría King** of Colombia was named Acting President — the first from Latin America. The Assembly’s principal output was the **Bogotá Statement** — developed through Community Weaving sessions, drafted by the Acting President from members’ collective input, and formally adopted on the closing day. It sets three commitments anchoring OWSD’s direction for 2025–2030:

- 01

Strategic partnerships
Deepening alliances with multilateral agencies, regional bodies, and academic networks.
- 02

Resource mobilisation
Diversifying funding and strengthening chapters’ capacity to access resources.
- 03

Capacity building
Expanding training in science policy, diplomacy, and strategic communication



“The Bogotá Statement reframes women’s scientific leadership not as symbolic representation but as “strategic, necessary, and urgent.”

Luisa Fernanda Echeverria King

The incoming Board was appointed for a one-year term, pending a procedural review of election processes. This is a governance milestone, signalling that the Assembly was able to not just make decisions, but reflect on the process of how decisions are made.



CLICK OR SCAN
TO DISCOVER THE FULL BOGOTÁ STATEMENT



Incoming and outgoing Executive Board members during the handover session at the General Assembly



OWSD Coordinator Tonya Blowers and incoming Acting President Luisa Fernanda Echeverría King — the handover that opened a new strategic cycle.



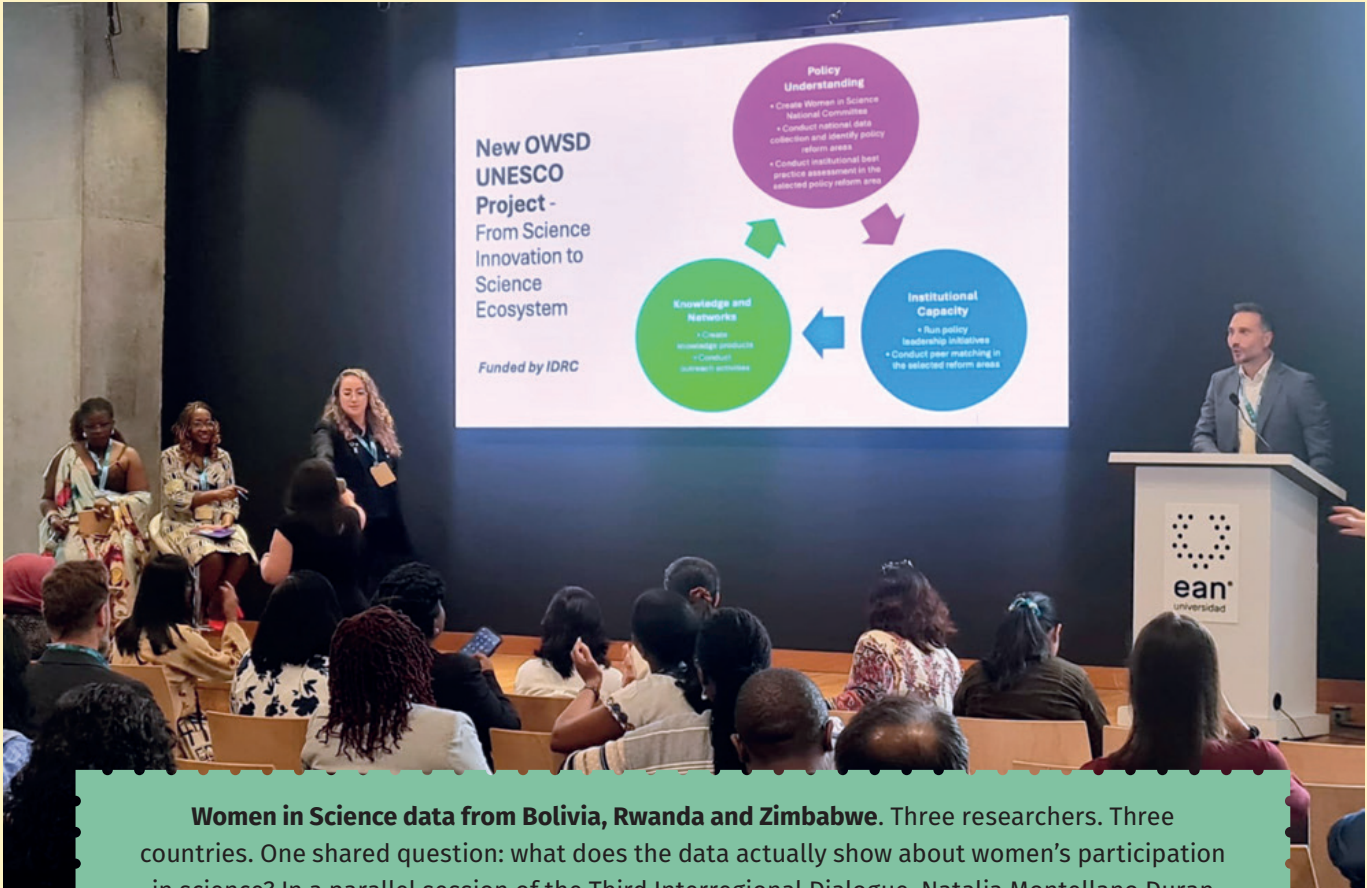
Former Executive Board reports to the General Assembly. Every General Assembly begins with accountability. The outgoing Executive Board — elected in 2021 and serving through a period that included a global pandemic, a funding transition, and OWSD's most significant governance review in years — presented its four-year report to the membership. It was a moment of institutional continuity: the work of one cycle formally handed to the next.



Members of the OWSD Colombia National Chapter, co-organizers of the 7th General Assembly. The Chapter led the poster session, mobilized student volunteers, supported engagement with Colombian institutions, and provided on-site coordination throughout the week.



An unplanned visit that became the highlight of the week. Colombia's Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Yesenia Olaya, requested to join an OWSD session as an observer. The agenda was rearranged on the spot. What followed was an impromptu exchange between the Minister and OWSD members, structured as an informal interview: one minister, many scientists, no script. Several participants described it as the most moving moment of the week. Members spoke about their careers, their barriers, their countries. The Minister listened, and spoke in return — not as a representative of policy, but as a woman who had navigated the same systems.



Women in Science data from Bolivia, Rwanda and Zimbabwe. Three researchers. Three countries. One shared question: what does the data actually show about women's participation in science? In a parallel session of the Third Interregional Dialogue, Natalia Montellano Duran (OWSD Bolivia National Chapter), Marie Sagesse Uwurukundo (OWSD Rwanda), and Blessing Magonziwa (OWSD Zimbabwe) presented the first results of a new measurement tool developed under the pilot of the GenSIS project, moderated by Alessandro Bello of UNESCO/OWSD.





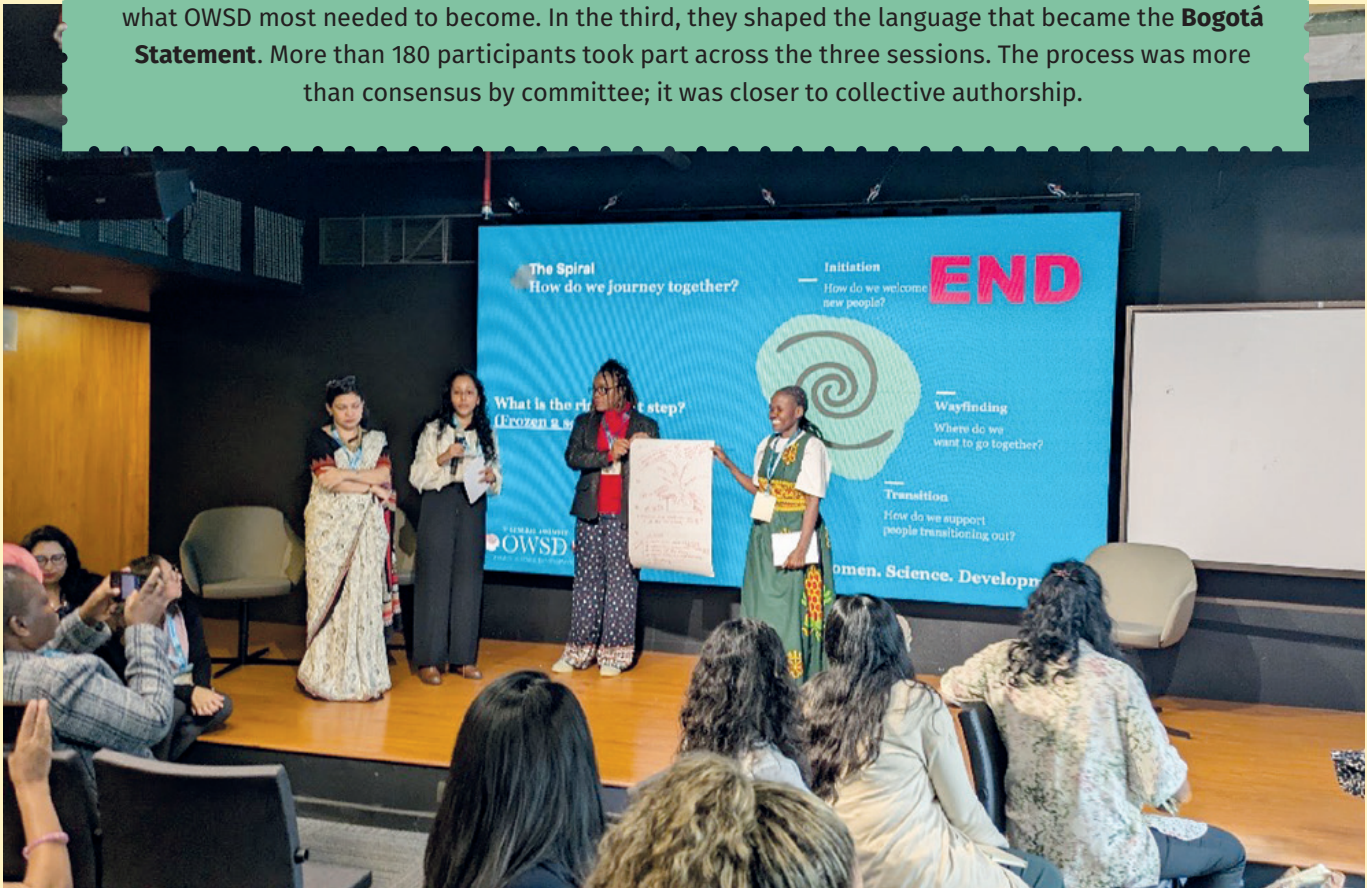
OWSD members after the parallel session on sexual harassment in academia. Some conversations need privacy and the parallel session on sexual harassment in academic environments was one of the Assembly's most attended closed sessions. What came out of it was not a statement per se, but something harder to document: the recognition, shared across regions, that this is not an isolated problem. This photo taken after, shows everyone smiling, and that matters too.



Members intervening in programmatic discussions. The Assembly was not designed for passive attendance. Across every session — from governance to programme reviews to policy debates — members intervened, challenged, proposed, and pushed back. The quality of the discussion reflected years of accumulated expertise: these are scientists who know their fields, know their regions, and have strong views about what OWSD should be doing.



Community Weaving sessions. The Community Weaving sessions were the methodological heart of the Assembly — three linked workshops, designed and facilitated by **Andrés Felipe Vera-Ramírez**, that moved participants from personal narrative to collective priority-setting to shared commitment. In the first session, members mapped their own journeys into science. In the second, they identified what OWSD most needed to become. In the third, they shaped the language that became the **Bogotá Statement**. More than 180 participants took part across the three sessions. The process was more than consensus by committee; it was closer to collective authorship.





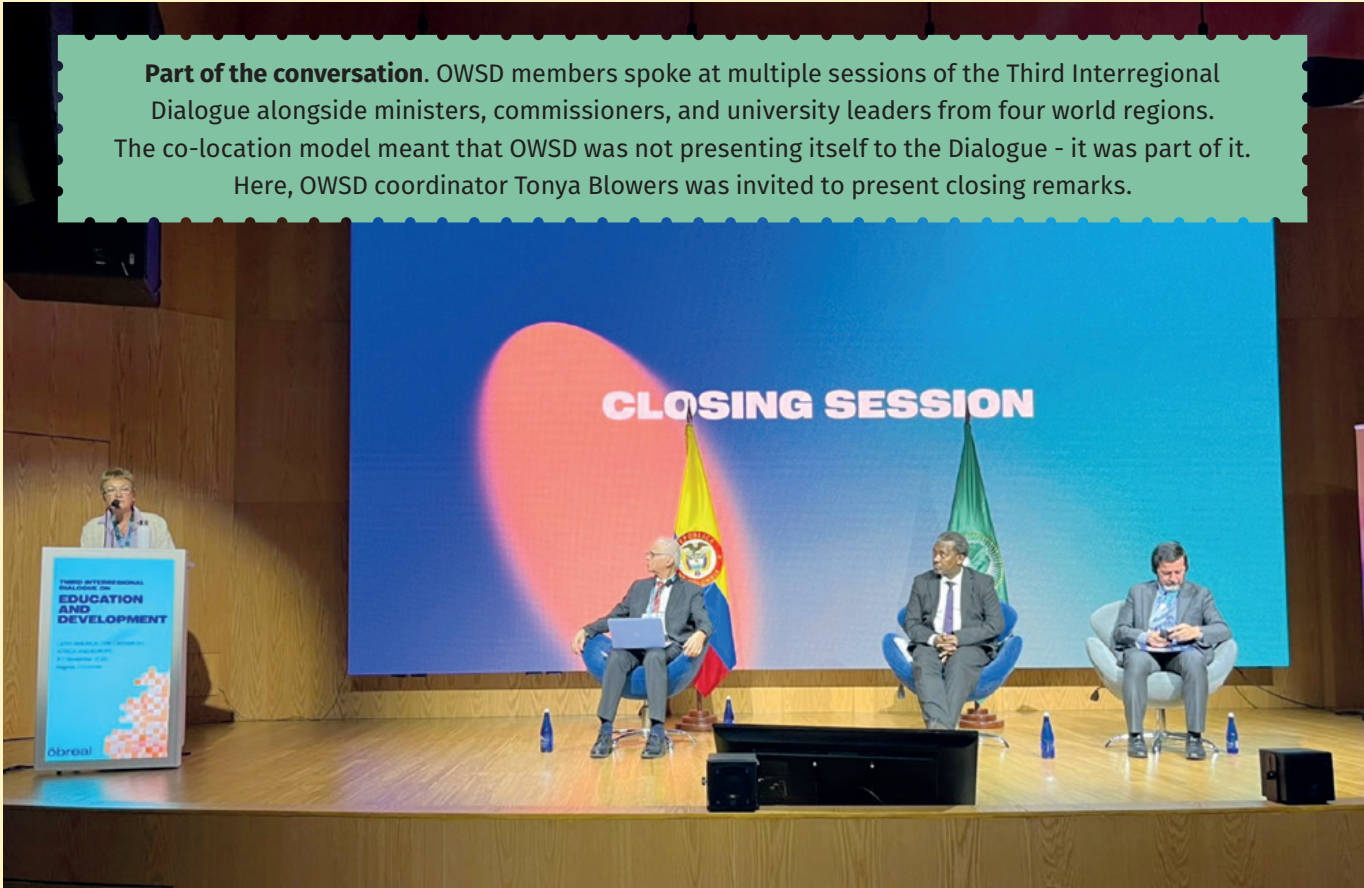
Elsevier Foundation Awardees at their celebration. Recognition, in person. The OWSD–Elsevier Foundation Awards evening brought together the current cohort and alumnae — many meeting for the first time. Each awardee’s work was displayed as a full-colour poster in the venue’s main gallery.



WISDOM presentation and cocktails. Science travels with the scientist. The WISDOM Programme, which supports women researchers working in contexts of displacement, migration, or exile, was introduced to a wider audience during the networking cocktails, in an informal presentation that reached participants from partner universities, granting councils, and regional bodies. Two WISDOM researchers attended the Assembly in person: one from Myanmar, one from Ukraine.



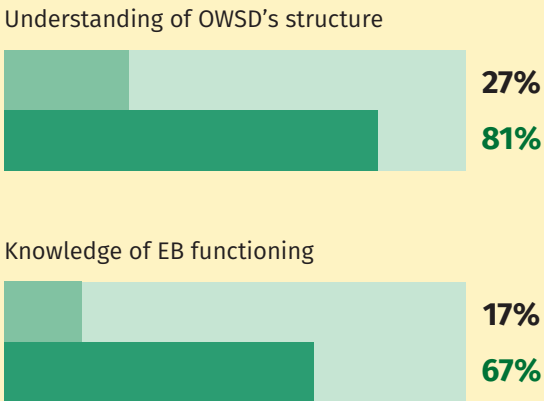
Help desk on National Chapter issues. One of the week’s quiet innovations: a dedicated help desk where chapter representatives could sit down, one-to-one, with Secretariat staff and work through their specific operational challenges. The sessions were fully booked within the first day. They will become a standing feature of OWSD’s annual calendar from 2026.



What changed

The real measure of an Assembly is not what happens during the event, but what continues after. In Bogotá, the evidence on both counts was unusually strong.

BEFORE / AFTER THE ASSEMBLY



79%
new policymaker
contacts

18
Minister level
or above

30
Director General
level

After the in-person meeting in Bogotá, I managed to meet a partner for future collaboration, focused on how we can engage together in outreach."

"Together with the OWSD National Chapter in Guatemala, we are in communication to submit a proposal for UNESCO's latest call for projects."

Ten weeks later, the connections had not faded.

TEN WEEKS AFTER BOGOTÁ (OUT OF 68 SURVEYED)



"I have started a research contact with Bolivia. Thanks for this important experience — greetings from Mexico."

"I organised an awareness session for high-school girls to encourage them to take an interest in science, because science opens up opportunities for girls."

What the Assembly set in motion

GENSIS

A new flagship project launched

OWSD's new project with IDRC and UNESCO's Science, Technology and Innovation Policy unit was publicly launched during the Dialogue. Pilot results from Bolivia, Rwanda and Zimbabwe were presented to ~300 participants, and a full implementation roadmap agreed. The Assembly also brought the full GenSIS team together in person for the first time.

NATIONAL CHAPTERS

37 chapters, present and heard

63 Executive Committee members from 37 National Chapters attended. One-to-one Secretariat–chapter consultations proved so effective they become a standing feature from 2026. Community Weaving sessions engaged more than 180 participants across three linked workshops.

WISDOM

Science without borders

Present through a networking dinner, bilateral meetings with four Colombian universities, and the participation of two WISDOM researchers from Myanmar and Ukraine. New pathways opened through introductions to East African science granting councils.

EARLY CAREER FELLOWS & AWARDS

15 fellows, 10 alumnae, one ceremony

Fifteen Early Career Fellows participated actively across plenaries and governance. The OWSD–Elsevier Foundation Awards cohort gathered alongside ten alumnae, with strong appetite for a formalised alumnae network to be developed from 2026.



Lora Gailly, UNESCO Associate Project Officer from the Gender Equality in Science team, presents the UNESCO Call to Action: Closing the Gender Gap in Science to the OWSD member and Interregional Dialogue Participants. Based at UNESCO in Paris, she is the focal point for the joint OWSD-UNESCO GenSIS project, launched at the GA.

Partnerships deepened

The Colombian Ministry of Science became an active institutional ally, co-issuing a national press release. UNESCO's presence generated concrete follow-up in the months after. IDRC reinforced its partnership through the joint launch of *Dismantling Gender Barriers in STEM: Perspectives from the Global South*.





What comes next

The Bogotá Assembly was a starting point. In the months since November 2025, the work it set in motion has continued. **GenSIS has entered its inception phase**, with the full implementation team now collaborating with a closeness that the week made possible. The **governance review** initiated by the incoming Executive Board is under way, working toward a reformed election process.

The one-to-one Secretariat–chapter consultations are **becoming a standing feature** of OWSD’s annual calendar. The Elsevier Foundation alumnae network is in development. And across regions, the collaborations that began in Bogotá are quietly producing results.

The Assembly left OWSD with something harder to quantify but equally important: **a shared language**. The Bogotá Statement gave the incoming Board and the wider membership a common framework that will shape how the organisation talks about itself for years to come.

What Bogotá demonstrated, above all, is that the **in-person, partnership-embedded model works**. It delivers governance outcomes, policy access, programme momentum, and human connection in a combination that no other format has yet replicated.

OWSD came to Latin America for the first time in 2025. It left with a new Board, a new strategic direction, and a community more connected than it had been in years.

The conversation continues...

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