



Concept Note

Young Female Scientist Programme

Background and development context

Science, technology and innovation (STI) play a central role in the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) under the 2030 Agenda. Technology is a means of implementing the Global Goals and is one of the areas for partnerships under SDG17. Moreover, strengthening STI research capacity is also critical to enhancing the sustainability of the national STI system and a country's ability to exploit the benefits of emerging technologies. This is in line with SDG Target 9.5, which calls for enhancing scientific research in developing countries — in turn driving the development of productive capacities and inclusive economic growth in those countries.

At the same time, female engagement in STI research is still limited. The gender mainstreaming of R&D activities has been flagged as a key issue, especially in the developing world. Closing this gender gap is necessary to harness STI for truly inclusive and sustainable development for all communities and all countries, which will also contribute to the achievement of gender equality and gender empowerment set forth in SDG 5.

In this context, UNCTAD as the secretariat of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) joined hands with the University of Okayama (Japan) by launching the Young Female Scientist Programme in November 2020, offering short-period joint research activities in various fields at the University for women researchers from CSTD member States in Africa and Southeast Asia.

Objective and features

The programme aims at enhancing scientific research capabilities in developing countries through building human capital in science, technology, and innovation-related fields in these countries. It also seeks to close the gender gap in scientific research that is particularly pronounced in the developing world.

The programme features opportunities for eligible young female scientists from ASEAN and African countries to engage in joint cutting-edge research activities at Okayama University in Japan for 14 to 30 days. Participants can gain hands-on research experience in their respective STI fields with the help of leading faculty at the university. These research activities will break new ground on issues important for sustainable development. After returning to their own countries, participants will also be able to build on the knowledge, skills and networks acquired through the programme in their research, further contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.