

# **Workshop Report**

## ***AASSA Regional Workshop “Women in Science”***

Baku, Azerbaijan  
2-5 May 2012

The AASSA Regional Workshop on “Women in Science” took place May 2-5 2012 at Azerbaijan State Museum of History and Irshad Hotel in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The workshop was jointly organized by the Association of Academies and Societies of Sciences in Asia (AASSA) and the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS), and was supported by the Global Network of Science Academies (IAP).

The aims of the workshop were to recognize and discuss the status of women in science, and to search for methods to promote women scientists and engineers appropriate to AASSA member countries. We hope that this workshop will be the start of a series of activities for the advancement of women in science in Asian countries.

The themes of the workshop were 1) to identify the problems of women scientists and engineers, 2) to explore government policies and the role of the scientific community for advancement of women scientists and engineers, 3) to collate best practices in promoting the role of women, and 4) to find ways to encourage girls to become professionals in STEM.

Arif Hashimov, first vice president of ANAS, welcomed the workshop participants on behalf of Mahmud Kerimov, President of ANAS, in the opening ceremony. Honored Guests: Howard Alper, co-chair of IAP, Namik Aras, representing AASSA, Doe Sun Na, the international co-organizer of the workshop, Hijran Heseynova, Chairperson of State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, Azerbaijan, Velikhanli Naila, vice-presidents of ANAS, Vagif Farzaliyev, Academician-secretary of ANAS, and international guests and speakers. Velikhanli Naila, vice-president of ANAS and Hijran Huseynove, Chairman of State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, Azerbaijan, Howard Alper, co-chair of IAP, and Namik Aras, representing AASSA, also gave a welcome address.

The opening ceremony was followed by three sessions. More than 70 scientists from 5 countries, Azerbaijan, Canada, Korea, Malaysia and Turkey, as well as the government representatives from Azerbaijan, took part in the two-day discussion. During the sessions, 12 reports were presented.

Dr. Howard Alper from Canada introduced Canadian experience in motivating young girls to pursue potential careers in science, engineering and technology areas and proposed methods to retain women throughout their professional careers.

Dr, Farida Habib Shah from Malaysia, who is Vice President of Organization for women in science for the developing world (OWSD) and TWAS Fellow, pointed to the critical periods

of “leakage” throughout the careers of women in S&T and suggested practical approaches to fix, reduce or prevent this leakage, which serves as the basis for the recommendations of the workshop.

Three presentations were made by scientists from Korea. Dr. Doe Sun Na summarized the progress of women scientists and engineers in Korea during the last ten years and she explained the affirmative action policies of the government and activities of women scientist organizations that contributed to this progress. Dr. Eun Hee Cho introduced the activities of Korea Federation of Women Science and Technology Associations (KOFWST) and Dr. Hei Sook Lee presented the mentoring system of Korea Advanced Institute of Women in Science, Engineering, and Technology (KAI WISET) as examples of good practices that promote development of women in S&T.

Dr. Arzum Erdem Gursan from Turkey presented the activities of the Turkish Academy of Sciences (TUBA) in promoting development of young scientists including women. In 2001, TUBA set up the supporting program “TUBA-GEBIP” to reward successful young scientists of Turkey without any gender or subject discrimination, and the number of women fellowships of TUBA-GEBIP increased to 24.5 % in the last decade (total number of awardees is 264).

Six presentations were from Azerbaijan, the host country. Prof. Velikhanly Naila Mammadali, Dr. Mehdiyeva Salima, Dr Mustafayeva Ayten, Dr. Rzayeva Roida, Dr. Mirzazade Rena Riza, and Dr. Shabanov Zeynaddin Musannif shared gender perspectives and status of women in Azerbaijan. Azeri women have held important positions throughout Azeri history and played important roles in developing this country. Azeri women have been very active in political movements and in science. In addition Azeri women, like other women around the world, have important responsibilities as mothers and wives. Azerbaijan culture is multifaceted, thus tolerance and respect are needed to understand gender issues in this multicultural country. Azerbaijan is witnessing a strong influx of women into science and engineering and many outstanding women occupy top ranked positions. All the lecturers from Azerbaijan delivered the message that Azerbaijan provides equal opportunities to women scientists therefore they do not see any noticeable issue of women in science.

There was a brief mentoring session for young scientists in the afternoon on the second day of the workshop. A few young scientists at the post-graduate level participated in the mentoring session. They were enthusiastic about their work and career and eager to seek information on career development, such as ways getting fellowships for advanced training or studying abroad. The international participants provided information on global fellowship programs as well as exchange programs for young foreign scientists in Canada, Korea and Turkey. They also informed the trainees of fellowships for postgraduate and postdoctoral studies offered by OWSD. The young scientists were made aware of awards and prizes offered to young women by L’oreal Young Women Fellowship and OWSD young woman scientist awards.

The workshop was successful, thanks to the efforts of local organizers in Azerbaijan along with the international organizers. It helped participants recognize the problems for women in S&T Asia and provided opportunities to share the experiences of participating countries, and how they strive to overcome barriers and bias against women scientists and engineers in

pursuing their careers. Upon wrapping up the active and constructive discussion over these two days, recommendations were made for the countries in this region to promote further development and participation of women in S&T with emphasis placed also on the retention of women in scientific careers. Recommendations were made on multiple levels, such as a general level and specific targeted levels.

**It was decided to include the following measures to the workshop Communiqué:**

### **1. General Recommendations**

- Create awareness of all stakeholders on the significance of engaging women and getting women into the mainstream
- Establish a national chapter of OWDS or a national focal point to enable women in science to be part of an international network, as well as help in the organization and support for women in S&T at the national level
- Increase awareness on gender equality in science and technology at multiple levels such as in education, employment, advancement, recognition, and income.
- Collate and adopt good practices for supporting women scientists and engineers in other countries
- Build a life-long mentor-mentee systems among women scientists and engineers, and between successful senior scientists and younger women scientists
- Highlight successful women in science as role models and increase visibility of women scientists and engineers in society by providing incentives such as awards and funds for young women scientists and mid-level career scientists
- Provide more training programs for capacity building of young scholars, especially in the newly emerging sciences
- Provide supporting facilities and women-friendly environment that will enable more girls and women at each step of their professional career right up to the top management or professorial levels
- Develop an international network and be a member of international organizations such as Global Network of Science Academies (IAP), Organization for Women in Science for the developing world (OWSD), and Global Young Academy

### **2. Specific Recommendations**

#### **2A. National Academy and Societies**

- Increase number of women members in academy of sciences
- Include female scientists on selection boards for prizes and recognition.
- Make more effort to ensure nominations go to women scientists
- Allocate more travel funds, PhD fellowships, and post-doctorate fellowships for young women scientists

#### **2B. Government**

- Implement policies that support women in science and technology
- Collect and analyze the necessary data on women scientists in various stages of career development to obtain gender-disaggregated data
- Push to have crèches and day care centers at the workplace or by local councils

#### **2C. Faculty and academia**

- Strengthen National Network Chapters for women scientists to network

- Allocate funds to women researchers and scientists as project leaders
- Bring up issue of women in science as a regular agenda in seminars and workshops
- Encourage international research collaboration, and networking of women scientists
- Ensure that more women are hired into full-time tenure track positions in science and engineering faculties
- Develop mentoring and networking opportunities for female faculty members and students
- Encourage women scientists in self actualization and self realization of their potential

#### **2D. Postgraduates and Young scientists**

- Develop more training programs for scientific communication and presentation skills to build confidence
- Allow young women scientists to receive academic scholarships up to 40 years of age
- Ensure that more young women scientists are invited to present in conferences and workshops.
- Conduct training programs to develop skills for grant applications, report writing, and other skills that will help them develop scientific leadership skills

#### **2E. Tertiary education:**

- Identify role models for women scientists
- Set up scholarship and funding to enable women to stay at universities

#### **2F. Secondary education**

- Create more awareness campaign through math and physics Olympiads, fairs etc
- Use new and emerging technologies for popularizing S&T among young children and young women

#### **2G. Private and Public Sector**

- Provide awareness program on gender equality training for senior staff
- Make special effort to recruit qualified female professional staff
- Ensure that boards of directors include balanced numbers of men and women
- Provide flexible working hours and recognize the need for work/life balance
- Provide women-friendly work environment for women scientists.

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Date : May 2012