

Women in Science Panel, Indian Academy of Sciences

Note to the President and the Council (5th August 2021)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that there can be no distinction or discrimination on the basis of gender. The concept of gender equality has been established within the core guiding principles of the United Nations, and unequivocally reflects a commitment to the equality of all, irrespective of the gender, in all aspects of human endeavour.

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles.

The **Indian Academy of Sciences** supports the advancement of gender equality and the elimination of unlawful and unfair discrimination on the basis of gender. The Guidelines on Scientific Values of the Academy reflect this outlook.

Most women in science in India have faced, and continue to face, gender-related problems in the course of their career. This includes sexual harassment and gender bias, as well as hurdles like discouragement, condescension and invisibility, inadequate institutional infrastructure that makes the workplace unwelcome for women, and administrative norms that make it less conducive for women to contribute to science. It is a matter of great urgency that pro-active steps be taken to improve the situation.

To this end, the Indian Academy of Sciences is adopting a concrete and constructive set of policies applicable to all Fellows and Associates as well as to its initiatives and activities. These policies will also guide the Academy's interactions with the government and the public.

Gender Policy Commitments

1. Promote gender equality as an explicit human right.
2. Identify and eliminate practices that create systemic and structural impediments to the advancement of women in science.
3. Support the empowerment of women to enable them to flourish in the scientific profession.
4. Identify potential risks and hindrances to women in their pursuit of science and implement strategies to eliminate them.
5. Engage with the Government of India, scientific institutions and the civil society to promote and support gender equality in general, and in science in particular.

The Academy will work towards implementation of these policy commitments, set specific goals to improve attainment of gender equity in the Academy's fellowship and its activities, and periodically monitor progress.

Gender Policy Implementation Guidelines

1. We shall strive to immediately improve the current representation of women scientists on the Fellowship and Associateship, at least to make it commensurate with the proportion of women scientists working in different fields of science in India. To achieve this, the President shall emphasize to the current Fellows of the Academy the critical need to nominate qualified women candidates to the Fellowship and Associateship. Without imposing any specific quotas, each year the Sectional Committees must obtain and take into careful consideration the existing statistics on women Fellows in their area and pro-actively select qualified women candidates. To help monitor progress towards improvement of the representation of women, each Sectional Committee Convener, at the time of making recommendations of the names of nominees for election to the Fellowship, must provide to the Council the numbers of women nominated and recommended. The Sectional Committee, through its Convener, may also present to the Council the steps that were taken to enhance the representation of women.
2. The Academy shall aim for a more significant representation from women in leadership positions such as President, Vice-President and Secretary; this need not be tied to the overall proportion of women scientists in the fellowship. Same shall be true of Editors, Editorial Board Members of the journals brought out by the Academy. Meetings, Conferences, Programmes and other events organized by the Academy shall ensure significant levels of participation by women.
3. Whenever academic evaluations are performed, the Academy shall consciously reach out to more women experts, nationally and internationally.
4. Gender neutral language shall be implemented in all aspects of the Academy's functioning. The statutes shall be amended to eliminate gendered terms. Academy Fellows and Staff alike shall be sensitised about conscious and subconscious bias and advised about the appropriate modalities of gender-neutral communication and behaviour.
5. The Academy should invest in designing an awareness test that may be offered to Fellows, Associates and staff, as well as new inductees. Such a test would serve the combined purpose of assessing as well as sensitizing each individual regarding these issues.
6. The Academy shall conduct an internal gender audit on an annual basis and the results of this shall be prominently displayed on its webpage and circulated to all Fellows and Associates, funding agencies and institutional heads.
7. The academy shall proclaim its commitment to gender equity prominently on its webpage.
8. The entire Fellowship of the Academy should participate in attaining the goals of the Academy in the matter of gender equity by implementing the specific measures listed above.