Amity International Model United Nations 2025

United Nations Women

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Letter from the Executive Board

Greetings, Delegates!

On behalf of the Executive Board, it is our utmost honor and privilege to welcome you to the United Nations Women (UNW) Committee. We are thrilled to have you join us in what promises to be a stimulating and impactful session centered around a highly significant agenda: Bridging the Gender Gap in STEM and Leadership.

In an age where human achievement reaches into the farthest realms of science, technology, and exploration, it is imperative that these strides reflect the principles of equality and inclusivity. While progress has been made, deep disparities persist—particularly in access, participation, and leadership for women and marginalized genders in STEM fields. Addressing this gap is not merely a matter of equity; it is a prerequisite for sustainable and innovative global development.

This committee represents a space of shared responsibility—one that transcends geography, ideology, and nationality. Here, we unite in purpose to tackle the systemic barriers that hinder gender parity in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and positions of influence. To overcome these challenges, we require not only data-driven understanding and policy acumen but also a commitment to collaborative and forward-thinking solutions.

The Background Guide you've received is designed to provide an initial framework for your research. It is by no means exhaustive. We encourage you to delve deeper, challenge assumptions, examine lived realities, and bring fresh perspectives to the table. This agenda encompasses a wide spectrum—from educational access and workplace equity to institutional bias, mentorship gaps, and global policy frameworks.

As you prepare for the sessions, remember that impactful contributions stem not just from eloquent speech, but from well-researched arguments, practical proposals, and actionable solutions. We urge you to balance scientific insight, diplomatic skill, and visionary leadership in your interventions.

Should you require any assistance in understanding the agenda or preparing your positions, do not hesitate to reach out to us. We are here to support you and ensure your experience in this committee is enriching and empowering.

We look forward to dynamic deliberations filled with intellectual rigor and passionate advocacy. The outcomes of this committee have the potential to influence discourse and decision-making far beyond the room we share.

We wish you the very best for a thoughtful, informed, and productive session.

With warm regards,
The Executive Board
United Nations Women Committee

Chairperson - Khyati Naudiyal

Vice Chairperson - Shaurya Singh

Rapporteur - Arnav Garg

Sources of Evidence

With due respect to the debate course, we acknowledge the clash of ideas in forms of records or substantive quotes and in this occurrence we, as the Executive Board, generally ask for evidence. Below given are few sources which are generally accepted yet the dominion of delegate over the source lies:

1. United Nations:
Documents and findings by the United Nations or any related UN body is held as a credible proof to support a claim or argument.

2. Multilateral Organizations:
Documents from international organizations like NATO, NAFTA, SAARC, BRICS,
EU, ASEAN, OPEC, the International Criminal Court, etc. may also be presented as credible sources of information.

3. Government Reports:
These reports can be used in a similar way as the State Operated News Agencies reports and can, in all circumstances, be denied by another country. However, a nuance is that a report that is being denied by a certain country can still be accepted by the Executive Board as a credible piece of information.

4. News Sources:
i. Reuters: Any Reuters article that clearly makes mention of the fact or is in contradiction of the fact being stated by a delegate in the Assembly.
ii. State operated News Agencies: These reports can be used in the support of or against the State that owns the News Agency. Some examples are – RIA Novosti8 (Russian Federation), Xinhua News Agency11 (People‘s Republic of China), etc.

Note:- Under no circumstances will sources like Wikipedia, or newspapers like the Guardian etc. be accepted. However, notwithstanding the aforementioned criteria for acceptance of sources and evidence, delegates are still free to quote/cite from any source as they deem fit as a part of their statements.

About United Nations Women (UNW)

UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN Women supports Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with government and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes, and services needed to ensure the standards are effectively implemented and benefit women and girls worldwide. UN women works to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and promotes the UN systems work in advancing gender equality and respective agreements linked to the 2030 agenda. UN Women works to position gender equality as fundamental to the Sustainable Development Goals and focuses on four strategic priorities: leadership; socioeconomic autonomy; the eradication of all forms of violence; and equitable peace and security.

The work of UN-Women is guided by the principles established in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPIA), UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women and Peace and Security, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), which contains the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other norms related to women's rights and gender equality. CEDAW and the BPIA are comerstones of the activities of UN-Women and provide the overall guiding principles for its work. Over the past 15 years, UN Member States have also gained greater awareness and understanding regarding the role women play in peace and security due in part to the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women and Peace and Security, and subsequent resolutions: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), and 2242 (2015). These resolutions establish a foundation for improving the lives of women and girls in areas affected by armed conflict and guide efforts at the international, regional, national and local levels. Supporting efforts to mainstream implementation of these global norms, as well as the principle of gender equality is central to UN-Women's mandate and at the heart of the organization's mission.

Governance, Structure, and Membership

UN-Women is govemed by an Executive Board, which is responsible for Intergovernmental support and supervision of all operational activities. The Board consists of 41 members that are elected by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for a term of three years and are allocated by regions as follows: ten from the group of African states, ten from the group of Asian states, four from the group of Eastern European states, six from the group of Latin American and Caribbean states, and five from the group of Western European and Other states." The final six seats are allocated to contributing countries, from which four seats go to the countries that provide the highest voluntary contribution to UN-Women and two seats to developing countries.

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

The mandate for UN-Women, articulated in General Assembly resolution 64/289, is to provide "guidance and technical support to all Member States, across all levels of development and in all regions, at their request, on gender equality, the empowerment and rights of women and gender mainstreaming. "70 The mandate is separated into policy and norm-setting activities, and operational activities in cooperation with UN Member States. 21 The work of UN-Women is a combination of four formerly separate UN agencies: the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

UN-Women serves as the secretariat to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). CSW is responsible for the overall formulation of standard-setting policies, while UN-Women is responsible for carrying out these policies in its operational activities in the field. UN-Women also provides substantive policy support to the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and the Security

Council in their efforts to advance the global agenda on gender equality. 25 UN-Women is also mandated to hold the UN system accountable for its efforts to mainstream gender across all aspects of its work, including coordinating the UN's work for gender equality under the 2030 Agenda.

Bridging the Gender Gap in STEM and Leadership

Despite progress, women remain underrepresented in science, technology, and leadership roles. This committee will discuss global strategies to promote gender inclusivity and equality in these fields.

INTRODUCTION TO THE AGENDA

In today's world, STEM skills are essential for tackling global challenges, which makes inclusive representation more important than ever. 2025 marks the 10th anniversary of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science (IDWGS) — a key moment to reflect on the progress of women in science, technology, engineering, and medicine (STEM) over the past decade. This milestone aligns with Women's History Month, spotlighting achievements and ongoing challenges to women's equality.
In 2023, a UN report found that women made up only 35% of STEM graduates and 22% of the STEM workforce in the G20 countries. Despite progress, women still remain underrepresented in many STEM fields, especially in senior and leadership roles. This disparity raises questions about the barriers women face in their careers and how representation varies across regions.

Breaking Down Barriers for Women in STEM Worldwide

The gender gap in STEM persists into the 21st century, but understanding the gap is complicated by a lack of data.A combination of literal, social, artistic, profitable, and institutional factors each contribute to the challenges women face throughout their scientific careers. These include societal pressures, artistic

impulses, and a lack of representation. A recent UNESCO report, Changing the Equation Securing STEM Futures for Women (2024) exhumed an intimidating statistic, stating that over a third of women reported sexism, importunity, or gender grounded violence as being a top challenge. This semi-circular illustration illustrates this complexity and the multitudinous influences on girls' and women's participation, achievement and progression in STEM Women remain underrepresented encyclopedically – however the extent of this varies by region, country, field and career stage.

The Leaky Pipeline

In some scientific areas, gender equality is close, at least for undergraduates. For illustration, in natural lores, mathematics, and statistics, women earn 54 of the postgraduate degrees in OECD countries with indeed advanced rates — nearly 70 — in several Global South nations — Algeria, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Qatar, Thailand, Tunisia, and Uruguay(WorldBank, 2020). But how does representation change after scale? Worldwide, women still only make up 35 of the world's experimenters, a figure that has not really shifted in a decade. After completing their degrees, women face significant trials in entering and staying in the pool compared to their manly peers. This miracle, known as the " dense channel, " refers to the gradational loss of women from STEM careers at colorful stages — this loss of diversity, gift, and invention eventually hinders progress. Women are more likely to leave STEM professions within the first 10 times of their careers compared to men(National Center for Women & Information Technology, 2016). In some countries, women do remain in STEM longer and make up a significant portion of experimenters. For illustration, in Central Asia the chance of womanish experimenters ranges from 37.5 in Tajikistan to 52.8 in Kazakhstan. In other Asian countries, similar as Azerbaijan, Tunisia, and Thailand and several Latin American countries, including Bolivia and Venezuela women dominate the R&D field. Further disquisition is needed to uncover the factors that drive gender equality, and to also understand how these successes can be replicated away.

A recent Nature Reviews Psychology article examined the reasons behind global gender disparities in STEM and found that where women have access to education

and job opportunities, “masculine cultures” — shaped by both masculine defaults and differential treatment – often hinder women’s success. The defaults, for example, could be valuing innate brilliance (often linked with masculinity), rewarding self-promotion and reinforcing stereotypes that women don’t belong in STEM. They also cited differential treatment as often being part of this culture, for example, in denying women promotional opportunities and ignoring workplace harassment.

VARIOUS INITIATIVE (CASE STUDIES)

Women's Leadership and Political Participation (WLPP)

The United Republic of Tanzania (URT) has made significant progress in advancing women’s leadership and political participation. The 1977 Constitution provides for a quota system where 30% of parliamentary seats are reserved for women. After the 2015 general elections, the government increased the quota from 30% to 40%, leading to women holding 37% of parliamentary seats—a positive step toward achieving the Southern African Development Community’s (SADC) 50% representation benchmark. Women also represent 37% of cabinet ministers, 18% of deputy ministers, and 38% of judges. However, gaps remain in achieving gender parity in leadership and decision-making, particularly in elected positions.

UN Women Tanzania works with key partners at both national and local levels to ensure that all women and girls can fully and equally participate in leadership and decision-making, benefiting from gender-responsive laws, policies, budgets, services, and accountable institutions. Through the ongoing project "Strengthening Women and Girls’ Meaningful Participation, Leadership, and Economic Rights at the Local Level" (WLER), we are active in 18 administrative districts, implementing strategies focused on enhancing the collection and use of sex- and disability-disaggregated data, strengthening supportive environments, promoting gender-responsive norms, behaviors, and practices, and building the capacities of women leaders.

The project also advances women’s economic rights as a key enabler for leadership, including piloting innovative measures such as care services, in line with the Government of Tanzania’s commitments under Generation Equality.

African Girls Can Code Initiative (AGCCI)

In the rural Rwandan village where Chantal Niyonkuru grew up, access to digital technology was basically non-existent.
Everything changed for Sizolwethu when she attended a coding camp run by the African Girls Can Code Initiative (AGCCI). There, she says, her passion for tech grew as the camp “opened my eyes to the game changing innovations that can impact Africa. I learned that with little to no resources, I can make a huge difference if passion and determination are there.”
Launched in 2018 by UN Women and the African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), AGCCI is working to empower girls across Africa by helping them build digital literacy and computer skills and placing them on the path to tech careers.

Problems and Issues Faced

Unequal Entry into STEM

Despite decades of effort, women remain underrepresented across STEM pathways. Globally, about one in three researchers is a woman, a ratio that has barely shifted in a decade, and representation falls further in engineering, computer science, and senior research ranks. These patterns reflect cumulative effects of gender stereotypes, lack of role models, social penalties for ’unconventional’ choices. It also highlights the "Leaky Pipeline" Phenomenon where sttudies have shown that women are not only leaving STEM fields at a higher rate than men but are also being pushed out due to systemic issues like bias and lack of support.

Case study: Experiences of women in India, where societal expectations often push them towards family and domestic roles, hinders their pursuit of careers in STEM. Studies conducted in Indian universities showed that both female faculty and students showed a reluctance to engage in discussions about gender-related issues. The lack of female role models in senior positions within STEM institutions further contributes to the issue.

Research Careers and Innovation

Women’s participation shrinks at the point of knowledge production and IP. The share of women listed as inventors on international patent applications was approximately 18% in 2023, with parity not projected until well after 2070. Women are exclusive inventors on only a tiny fraction of filings, reflecting structural obstacles in lab leadership, mentorship and commercialization pathways.

Case study: Universities with strong tech-transfer offices often still lack gender-responsive patenting support (e.g., disclosure coaching, IP crediting norms, spinout matchmaking). A notable example of this disparity is Hedy Lamarr, a Hollywood actress, who co-invented a frequency-hopping technology that laid the foundation for modern wireless communication. Despite her significant contribution, Lamarr faced decades of delayed recognition and financial compensation for her invention. This reflects legal limitations of women owning property.

The Leadership Cliff

Women hold around 30% of managerial roles globally, and their presence thins out at each rung toward C-suite and board leadership. The result is a representation-power gap: even where women are present in STEM workplaces, they rarely control budgets, research agendas, or product roadmaps. Women occupy just 14–17% of senior roles in STEM organizations, despite forming one-third of the workforce. Women in AI represent just 22% of professionals, even though demand in AI continues soaring. Leadership across corporate and political arenas remains bleak: globally, only 26.7% of parliamentary seats, 28.2% of management positions, and negligible representation in Cabinet-level and STEM-specific policy portfolios.

Case Study: In the EU, female scientists and engineers make up 41% of employment in the sector, though this share falls sharply in manufacturing (22%) versus service sectors (46%). In US S&P 500 companies, women hold 29.2% of senior positions, but only 8.2% are CEOs. Firms with at least 30% female leadership saw 15% higher net margins, highlighting a performance-linked benefit. Repeatedly, women have been negatively evaluated in hiring and promotion decisions, just because of their gender. The issue is deeply rooted into socio-cultural beliefs. Culture, sponsorship, and mid-career mobility programs determine whether any change cascades.

Money and Funding

Start-up formation, scale-up, and research commercialization are capital-intensive. But> capital flows remain gender-inclined. While deals that include at least one female founder captured a larger share of US VC value in 2023, women-only founding teams continue to receive a very small fraction of total capital. Investor composition (the vast majority of which are men), risk perception biases, network effects, and pitch framing norms hinder women's access to growth capital.

Case study: Ecosystems that combined public co-investment saw measurable improvements in women-led scaleups. Conversely, relying on "more pitch training" alone does little without investor-side reforms, such as increasing LP accountability and promoting transparent evaluation criteria.

Pay, Care, and Culture

Gender pay gaps are widest in high-growth tech roles; women also face "motherhood penalties," limited flexible work in laboratories, and disproportionate unpaid care burden are key drivers of attrition at mid-career. Major workplace culture issues like harassment, exclusion from high-visibility projects, sponsorship gaps, ultimately compound these pressures. Statistical series show care responsibilities significantly push women out of the labor force or into part-time work, especially in STEM roles that prize long, inflexible hours.

Case study: Organizations that focused only on recruitment (e.g., hiring bootcamps) without fixing promotion criteria, meeting times, travel expectations, and misconduct reporting saw no durable gains in women's share of senior technical roles. The Matilda Effect is a prime example of how undervalued women's contributions feel as compared to their actual significance.

Intersectionality: Not All Women Face the Same Barriers

Outcomes differ substantially by race, class, disability, migration status, rurality, and age. Programs that treat "women in STEM" as a single category risk reproducing advantage for already-privileged groups. Community colleges, open universities, and bridging programs often have the highest concentration of first-generation and low-income women. This calls for inclusive policies, targeted initiatives and programs for the under-represented.

Case study: Nonprofits and public-private partnerships that target historically under-represented groups show stronger persistence and wage outcomes. For e.g., black women are often directly discouraged from pursuing careers in STEM with the most notable case being that of Ashley Walker.

Safety, Harassment, and Trust

Laboratory fieldwork, late-night shifts at data centers, and male-dominated teams raise safety and harassment risks, which directly depress persistence. Underreporting is common where complaint mechanisms are opaque or retaliation is feared. In digital spaces, targeted abuse of women scientists and leaders constrains voice and public engagement.

Case study: A large percentage of women in STEM report experiencing sexual harassment, with some studies indicating that one in two female scientists have experienced it in the workplace. hostile or offensive behavior based on gender, such as sexist jokes, derogatory remarks, and exclusion from social or professional activities, directly impacts mental health and leads to a lack of belonging.

Here is a greatly expanded and richly detailed "Problems and Issues" section complete with robust data, statistics, and accompanying case studies—perfect for a UN Women background guide on "Bridging the Gender Gap in STEM and Leadership." Citations from reputable organizations are included throughout.

Global Underrepresentation in STEM

Only 33.3% of researchers worldwide are women, a ratio that has barely budged over the past decade. In 2022, only 31.1% of global R&D personnel were women, rising slowly from 29.4% in 2012. Gender imbalance varies markedly by region: Central Asia (50.8%), Latin America & Caribbean (45.3%) vs South & West Asia (26.9%) and East Asia & the Pacific (26.3%). Among G20 nations, many OECD countries fare poorly: for example, Japan and Korea each have under 20% women researchers, and France and Germany hover around 28%, well below the global average. In engineering, women make up only 28% of graduates in many developed countries like Canada 19.7%, US 20.4%, UK 17.6%. India has a somewhat higher 29.7%.

Case Study: Bolivia stands out, with 63% of researchers female, while France trails at 26% and Ethiopia at only 8%. Sweden sees 60% of bachelor-level students female, yet only 36% of researchers are women. This imbalance causes reduced innovation and creativity within the field, a higher risk of biased research outcomes, a lack of diverse perspectives in problem-solving

Innovation & Patents

Women account for just 17% of international patent inventors in 2022; mechanical engineering sees only 5% female inventors, while chemistry is highest at 18%. Estimates show gender parity in patenting won't be reached until 2061 at current trends. A 2019 UK study found women were less than 13% of patent applicants,

with higher rejection rates and lower appeal likelihoods. According to the UN, Only 17% of inventors holding international patents were women in 2022.

Case Study: Women are steadily increasing in STEM education, but this doesn't translate to innovation leadership or patenting. "Inventorship credit" often ties to lab PIs (mostly male), meaning women's contributions are structurally under-attributed. Innovation leadership lags not because women don't research, but because systems undervalue/under-credit contributions, stalling their economic power.

The Digital and Automation Divide

Women are around four times less likely than men to have advanced ICT skills such as programming. Despite this clear advantage in skill, across the G20 countries, just 2% of inventors in ICT are women. UNESCO reports 122 million girls are out of school; only 15% of female graduates choose STEM compared to 35% of male graduates. Women are concentrated in roles highly at risk of automation, and their 22% share in AI is significantly lower than in other sectors.

Economic Impact Note:

Doubling women's participation in the technology workforce by 2027 could inject €600 billion into the global economy, per World Economic Forum estimates.

Early Bias and Cultural Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes emerge early: by age 6, girls are less likely to identify with the concept of "brilliance." Only 12% of STEM characters in film are female. Though educational parity may seem near, persistence in STEM lags: GEM 2025 reports women are less likely to stay in STEM despite majority enrollment in many countries.

Case Study: Yale study (2012) found identical CVs rated as more competent and "hireable" when assigned a male name. The faculty also offered 14% higher starting salaries to "male" applicants. Leadership scarcity is not a merit gap but a compound effect of biased mentoring and access asymmetries.

ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES

While in many countries women and girls are studying STEM majors in higher education in significant numbers, women who graduate from STEM courses in higher education face a lower return on their education investment when they start working compared to men. This acts as a disincentive for women to work in STEM fields. In addition, women, and girls in general face a barrier when accessing information on diverse STEM opportunities and jobs and face barriers when accessing non-academic STEM educational pathways which tend to be dominated by men.

Technical and Vocational Education

STEM educational pathways usually require a post-graduate degree, however, associate degrees, or technical education and vocational programs, offer a faster and more inclusive track towards a career in STEM. Careers in programming, application development and e-commerce provide a different career pathway than the more traditional post graduate courses. However, gender stereotypes limit girls' access to these courses. Similarly, researchers, laboratory technicians or engineering technicians are also increasingly hired in agriculture and manufacturing sectors. Women and girls may not be aware of alternative STEM pathways, such as vocational or apprenticeship programs, which could expand their opportunities for learning and accessing careers in STEM.

Economic Return on STEM Education

For some women pursuing higher degrees in STEM, the economic return on their education investment becomes a key consideration. In Malaysia, entry-level engineering or science jobs no longer attract high salaries, leading some women to start their own businesses or transition into different fields. Similarly,in China, research indicates a lower rate of return on women’s higher education. Despite outnumbering men across all levels of higher education, women tend to take longer

to land jobs after graduation and have lower starting salaries compared to their male peers.While higher education scholarships provide a solution for women wishing to study STEM, there are few scholarships that specifically target women candidates.

Scholarship programmes in countries like the Maldives and Malaysia, where women are well represented in STEM studies, can be tailored to target underrepresented groups, including older women, rural women, and ethnic minority women.

Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment

Although there are a lack of official statistics and evidence, sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment of women in higher education was highlighted by some as an issue facing women in male dominated fields such as STEM:

People who are affected (graduate students) do not want to complain. They do not want to be a black sheep. If they are complaining, they will miss out on certain chances. This is what happens in a male dominated culture. This culture sees feminism as aggressive. Women in STEM have had to fight to get where they are, now they are less inclined to speak up.

Despite high national statistics on the numbers of women studying STEM-related courses in higher edu-cation, these figures mask geographic gender gaps between rural and urban areas, and the potential barriers faced by specific groups of women, such as those living in rural and remote areas or those living with disabilities. Addressing the shared challenges facing women in STEM higher education will require a comprehensive approach that involves raising awareness of different STEM opportunities, providing alternative non-academic educational pathways, and continuing to challenge gender stereotypes.

Motherhood and Limited Work Flexibility

Cultural expectations of mothers to be intensive care takers while men are not, often stand in conflict with the intensive work culture in STEM sectors, creating challenges for mothers in STEM to be recognized as dedicated workers. This is particularly challenging for women in STEM who work in engineering or construction, and are required to travel for their work for extended periods. A renowned female scientist shared her firsthand experiences of being rejected for a promotion after having her first child, as her employer believed that she would need to spend more time on childcare. She was therefore considered to be unsuitable for leadership roles, despite her exceptional performance record.

Although she received the promotion the following year, she was surprised by some senior men around her perceiving her to be less than qualified because she took a career break to have a child. In addition,the work-life balance policies also played an important role in shaping the division of household labour.

Parameters of such policies, including eligibility criteria, duration and compensation levels of leave could help promote equal sharing of household labour to retain more women in the STEM sectors.

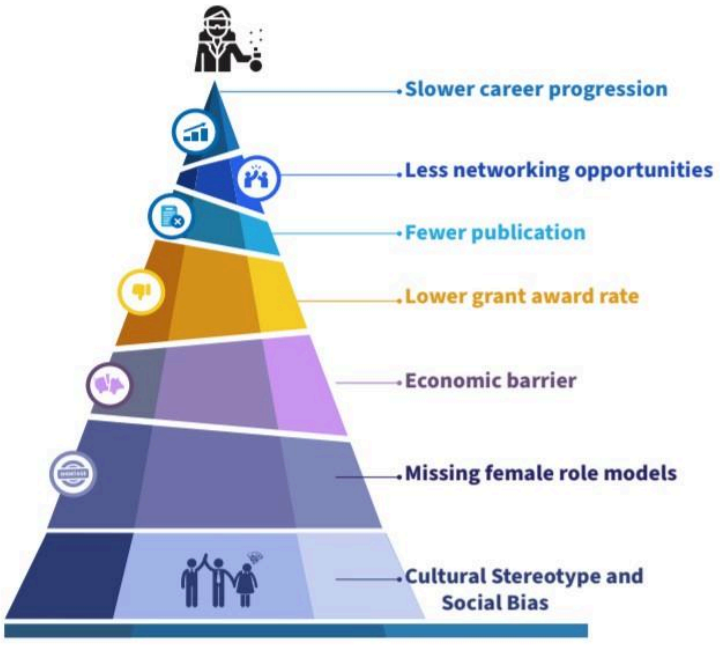

Figure 10. A mountain of invisible barriers for women in science

Timeline: Women in STEM Leadership, 1990–2023

1990–1995:

Post–Cold War R&D expanded, but women remained a small minority in senior STEM roles worldwide. During this time, early "pipeline" debates had started to crystallize. In 1995, Beijing Platform for Action put women's participation in decision-making (incl. science/technology) on the global agenda.

2000–2005:

At the turn of the century, the corporate tech boom consolidated at a rapid rate. Women's presence in senior technical and C-suite roles remained in low single digits, in most markets.

Growth in women's S&E doctorates begins to show in OECD/US data, but leadership conversion lagged.

2010:

Women's representation rose in science and engineering doctorates and early-career research roles, but senior academic ranks were still heavily dominated by males.

2012:

The EU made gender equality a formal European Research Area priority. Member states began adopting gender plans tied to research funding which is an early structural lever for leadership change.

2015:

UN SDGs (Goal 5) added political momentum. This directly led to more funders to start requiring gender policies in R&I.

2018–2019:

In the US, women earned 42% of S&E research doctorates, a near-parity inflow, yet senior leadership gaps persisted (department chairs, deans, lab heads).

2021:

By 2021, women held 26.2% of top academic posts (Grade A/full professor) in the EU, up from 24.1% in the prior edition. Clear progress, but far from parity in research leadership.

According to the WEF Global Gender Gap, the time to reach parity extended sharply, signalling risk of backsliding in leadership pipelines.

2022:

Women's share among listed inventors on international patent (PCT) filings continued a slow climb, reflecting underrepresentation in innovation leadership and commercialization pathways.

2023:

Women were 17.7% of inventors named on published PCT applications (up from 10.9% in 2009), showing steady but slow progress into IP leadership.

The share of women in leadership hiring stalled post-pandemic; the ladder narrowed from 50% at entry to 25% at C-suite, and in STEM leadership roles to 12%.

In the same year, women crossed 10% of Fortune 500 CEOs for the first time, marking symbolic progress. Despite this significant improvement, it is still a small fraction of corporate science/tech.

Questions to Consider

1. In order to ensure that equality measures benefit all women, how can policies guarantee the inclusion of women from marginalized groups (such as rural, indigenous, disabled, migrant, and low-income backgrounds)?

2. How can UNESCO, ECOSOC, UN-Women, and other international organizations help coordinate efforts, share best practices, and guarantee accurate sex-disaggregated data collection?

3. In order to promote women's involvement in STEM and leadership, should Member States enact laws implementing gender quotas, parental leave policies, and flexible work schedules?

4. How can Member States, particularly in underprivileged areas, guarantee women and girls equitable access to STEM education at the elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels?

5. What steps can be taken to stop women from leaving STEM fields in college and in their early to mid-career stages?

6. How can organizations and governments combat the discrimination, harassment, and hazardous working conditions that prevent women from pursuing STEM careers at a disproportionate rate?

7. What systems (quotas, leadership development, mentoring, etc.) can be put in place to boost the number of women in senior leadership roles in politics, STEM, and decision-making bodies?

8. In order to reduce the gender gap in intellectual property, how can women be better assisted in patenting, commercializing their research, and having their innovations recognized?

9. In accordance with the SDGs, what quantifiable benchmarks (for 2030 and beyond) should be established to monitor progress in closing the gender gap in STEM and leadership?

10. How can women-led startups, entrepreneurs, and research projects close the gender gap in funding and venture capital access?