

Report on Indo-French ‘Women in Science’ Seminar

24-25 September, 2018

Background

The second edition of the Women in Science seminar, was jointly organized by CEFIPRA and CNRS in Paris in September 2018. It was scheduled as a combination of scientific presentations with several panels on different topics. In addition to the scientific talks delivered by leading practicing female scientists, three panel discussions with two moderators (1 each from India and France) and four panelists (2 from each side) were arranged. Seminar was attended by about 60 participants (~30 from each country).

The primary focus of the meeting was:

- How to increase the number of women in science careers? How to train the pool, which means that actions have to be done before the high school education?
- How to bring young girls from minority and disadvantaged social classes to the scientific profession? Can we share common actions valuable to both countries?
- How to support financial mobility grants specific to the women community? What about entrepreneurship education supports for women? How to stimulate and promote the mobility, and the subsequent reintegration?

Outcome of the meeting

Following are the points that emerged out of the 2-day seminar. Some of these suggestions need to be carried forward.

1: How to attract young women to scientific careers?

The career-choices of young girls are influenced by the society, family, friends and school atmosphere. Need to sensitize all the players involved.

- Need for institutional actions to support the aim of equal opportunities between men and women. Encourage school management bodies to introduce training of the teacher awareness to stereotypes.
- Need inputs and insights from social scientists, psychologists, educators to effectively implement these society-linked issues that influence career of girls and women.
- Importance of mentorship for young women (PhD students, university students, or even earlier).
- Programs exist in different universities, not yet open everywhere. To make it easy for dissemination and to make it stimulating and inspiring, and to have generalized actions in high schools, following is suggested:

- (i) Testimonials of women scientists, in social media, prints, You Tube and variety of communication channels.
- (ii) Publish portraits of women scientists

(iii) Raise the visibility of women scientists-both historical figures and living scientists, so that women and girls can see the extent of possibility for women in science.

- Avoid stereotyping of careers in science and of girls/women roles.
- Industry funds and participation to give young students an immersion/ shadow experience in science or industry R and D.
- For depth of the outreach and the continued, sustained efforts; participation from both men and women at various levels in their career in science and technology is NECESSARY.
- Institutions need to valorise time given by Professors, Scientists, Post-doctoral and doctoral students for engaging in outreach activities.

2: How to eliminate gender inequality in the scientific profession ?

The gender data are not always communicated to the public and very different situations are encountered. Gender data are available at some institution, but not in all universities. Data/statistics are rarely communicated after grants and recruitments procedures

- Importance that gender data is available for every institution and committee, for grants and recruitments, in order to raise awareness of the grim situation. Need for proper data collection mechanism. Percentage of women at the candidate level and the success level should always be analyzed in recruitment committee and grant committees.
- Need for Equality advisor in institutions
- Institutions should put into place a code of conduct to install gender neutrality in recruitment committees, for example by excluding questions about marital status or details of family.
- Specific training for self-evaluation of unconscious bias should be compulsory for all committees.
- The priority should not be given to the quantity of publications. Women tend to publish less papers but with higher quality.
- Need for mentorship and career development programs.

All disciplines show a large fraction of women leaving science after the PhD studies, ending up in low numbers of full professors or equivalent positions ("leaky pipeline"). In STEM disciplines this trend is even more severe.

- Steps have to be taken in order to ensure a gender-neutral work environment and to exclude all sexual and gender harassment (Gender based violence/harassment: distinct from sexual harassment)
- Women scientists have to be given increased visibility in order to serve as role models. This has to be complemented by organized mentorship.
- Other positive measures concern an increased flexibility in the working environment, in particular for mothers, in order to successfully juggle with family and career time. It is agreed that this should not be the role of women alone, and that society at large has to promote a more equal share of family tasks between men and women.
- Need to sensitize and involve high level decision makers in institutions.
- Complexity of the gender issue should be considered while making policies.