

Women in STEM in the Asia Pacific: charting a gender transformative future

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As human beings search for innovative solutions for the most pressing issues of our time – climate change, rural development, urban expansion, food insecurity, poverty, governance, regional cooperation and gender inequality – we cannot afford to exclude the brain power, experiences and innovative energy of women and girls. While participation of half of Asia’s population in STEM fields is encouraging at secondary and tertiary levels of education, the overall picture does not show why women are under-represented certain fields and in certain countries. Compounding this reality, is the dearth of available data, and in particular, gender-related statistics and qualitative research in our region regarding women’s participation, representation and retention in STEM sectors. Underscoring this gap in data is the fact that women make-up a minority of the world’s researchers. Both research on and by women is urgently needed, as well as supportive action, policy reform and strengthening of STEM educational, research and professional institutions. The keynote overviews the critical challenges faced by women and girls in the STEM sector in Asia and the Pacific, as well as investments, technical assistance, strategic commitments and gender indicators undertaken by the Asian Development Bank and its member countries to bridge the divide. Experiences of the ADB are highlighted and shared as a possible path towards an inclusive, resilient, sustainable, prosperous and gender transformative world.

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