

MORE WOMEN, BETTER SCIENCE

To develop an innovation culture, we need to bring more women into science and engineering. To do that, we must look at policy and culture in new ways.

 by Alice Abreu



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What will the world look like in 30 years? What are the challenges of developing countries to achieve sustainable and prosperous development? In 30 years' time, no country will have achieved sustainable development if it did not include science and technology in the equation.

Countries are slowly beginning to understand this and many invest in science, technology and innovation as a central element of their strategies for the future. However, no country will be able to fully develop its potential without including women – half of the population – in this process.

More women in science leads to better

science. They bring diversity and different perspectives to the research effort, and therefore they contribute to the construction of more reliable and effective knowledge.

But to attain these advantages, we must also overcome challenges. We have to make sure women are well-represented in science, innovation, technology and engineering. We have to make sure they are given equal opportunities in the making of excellence. And we have to identify and remove any hidden obstacles to the highest positions of decision-making and policy development.

One also must have a gender lens when looking at sustainability, since men and women use and act upon our environment in very different ways. Not being able to identify how to better support and promote the different requirements of women and men will lead to ineffective solutions and to technologies that will not work to their full potential. Innovations, then, will not be able to have a wider impact.

To confront these challenges, we need reliable information and data. The systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data on science, innovation technology and engineering, and its analysis and dissemination, is central to inform policymakers and support future policy and programme formulation.

Facing these challenges will ensure the effective contribution of women in the knowledge economy and prove the huge economic potential of making a clear place for women in our vision of the future. ■



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