

A Short History of OWSD

From an idea in 1987 at a TWAS conference in Beijing, to the framework put in place in 1988 (at an international conference sponsored by TWAS and CIDA in Trieste, Italy), to an organization with a name and constitution in 1989, to the official launch four years later in 1993, OWSD has been working on behalf of women scientists in the developing world for over a quarter of a century.

Championing women

What is now OWSD first began as the seed of an idea at a conference on 'The Role of Women in the Development of Science and Technology in the Third World' in 1988. The conference was organised by TWAS, The World Academy of Science - for the advancement of science in developing countries - at their headquarters in Trieste, Italy, and sponsored by CIDA, the Canadian International Development Agency.

218 leading women scientists participated from 63 developing countries and a study group was set up to explore the possibility of creating an organization that would champion the experience, needs and skills of women scientists in the developing world. At a further meeting in Trieste the next year (20-22 March 1989) the Third World Organization for Women in Science (TWOWS) was established and a constitution agreed and adopted.

TWOWS becomes OWSD

TWOWS was officially launched four years later in Cairo, Egypt in 1993, at the First General Assembly, sponsored this time by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences. The TWOWS constitution was ratified at this event, and amendments made at subsequent General Assemblies.

On June 29 2010, members voted to adopt a new name - the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD) - at the Fourth General Assembly in Beijing, China.

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency has been supporting OWSD financially since 1997. With Sida's generous and continuous support, OWSD has fully funded 340 PhD fellowships for women from the South to study in the South. Of these over 200 have graduated and there are currently 103 OWSD fellows onsite.

Sida support

In 2012, Sida expressed huge confidence in OWSD's ability to make a direct impact on women's economic development in the South by doubling the number of awards for scholarships given annually - now up to 50 per year. These scholarships cover all costs related to undertaking research in a host country (that are not covered by the host institute), including travel, visa and health costs, tuition and bench fees as well as a monthly stipend for the awardees' board, accommodation and living expenses. In addition, Sida has identified specific activities that will ensure these women have a real chance at competing successfully in the international scientific arena - engaging in research of the highest quality which in turn will feed into the local economy. These include an annual regional workshop in science communication skills and additional funding for each PhD fellow to travel to international workshops and conferences of relevance.