



## EDITORIAL

# BUILDING A STRONGER TWAS COMMUNITY



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[interim]

**A**cross more than three decades, TWAS has worked with partners and allies to advance science in the developing world. Working together, we have contributed to a global transformation that is evident in the research strength of nations such as Brazil, China, India and South Africa.

But with success has come a new challenge: While a significant number of nations are making progress linked to investments in research and science education, for others progress is coming more slowly. The result: for at least a decade, we have seen a gap opening between the emerging nations and others that continue to lag.

This gap is troubling, and it has global implications for the health of human communities and the environment.

We see this gap in TWAS's membership, as well. Too many developing nations still have no TWAS Fellows; others have only a few. And despite strong efforts, women still count for only 12% of our Fellows. In recent years, we have taken steps to address the gap, but it remains central to TWAS's mission that we do everything possible to close it.

Following our General Meeting in Rwanda, TWAS is initiating a number of new efforts that will make the Academy more truly global and maintain our commitment to excellence.

First, the TWAS Council has advanced new initiatives to extend our membership, with a special focus on poorly represented countries, regions and groups, sub-Saharan Africa and the Least Developed Countries [LDCs] in particular. Our membership committees will give more balanced consideration to candidates from poorly represented countries and to women. At the same time, we will work with our regional offices and the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World [OWSD] to identify new candidates. We are asking current Fellows and Young Affiliates to help us in this campaign.

Second, we are adjusting some key programmes to focus more tightly on countries with the greatest needs. For example, over the past 10 years, our research grants and other programmes have been targeting 81 countries identified as science- and technology-lagging. We now have revised the list to 66 countries – including the LDCs and others with low income levels and specific needs for capacity building. OWSD, too, will adopt this list for its growing PhD fellowships programme.

These adjustments increase our focus on sub-Saharan Africa, where the needs – and the potential – are so great. Without intensive commitment from TWAS and its partners, Africa will struggle to catch up with other countries. We cannot afford a gradual approach.

At the same time, a number of TWAS members, partners and offices are already working to extend the TWAS community. The OWSD-Elsevier Awards for Early Career Women Scientists in the Developing World have quickly established a global reputation. And three new prizes named for our Fellows – the TWAS-Fayzah M. Al-Kharafi Prize, the TWAS-Abdool Karim Award and the TWAS-Samira Omar Prize – will help us to recognize and encourage women scientists in less-developed countries.

As with any science, our efforts must continually be tested, evaluated and improved. But with commitment and creativity – and sustained support from our community – we will strengthen our Academy and deepen our impact. Taken together, these initiatives are bound to produce benefits for scientists today, and in generations to come.

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