

Women in Science: African Great Lakes

ACARE Annual Meeting
December 10, 2020



**Tech-focused young women
scientists from Kenya**



Where We're Going

- Current Status
- ACARE's New Program



What We Know

- 1. Scientific research is more accurate when gender is considered.**
- 2. Women bring unique perspectives to research and scientific conversation.**
- 3. We need more STEM professionals. And they need to be women.**

~ Alison Bert, DMA at Elsevier

This is a global issue. There's room for improvement.

Globally, women are:

- **53%** of the world's bachelor's and master's degree graduates
- **43%** of PhD graduates

~ UNESCO

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BUT

- ONLY **28%** of researchers in all fields
- ONLY **30%** in higher education move into STEM-related fields

Sub-Saharan African women:

- ONLY **30%** of sub-Saharan researchers in all subject areas

~ UNESCO

When we strengthen women in science,
we radically change the world – for the better.

The future depends on women.

“Africa’s ability to harness scientific and technological knowledge is crucial for its socioeconomic development and competitiveness.

This potential cannot be fully realised without the **inclusion and advancement** of women.”

- Barbara Tiedeu, The Conversation, 2020

“African women scientists face several complex intersecting issues that include **individual, socio-cultural and at institutional and policy levels.**”

- Millicent Liani (Kenyan Scientist), The Herald, 2019



Barriers for African Women in Science

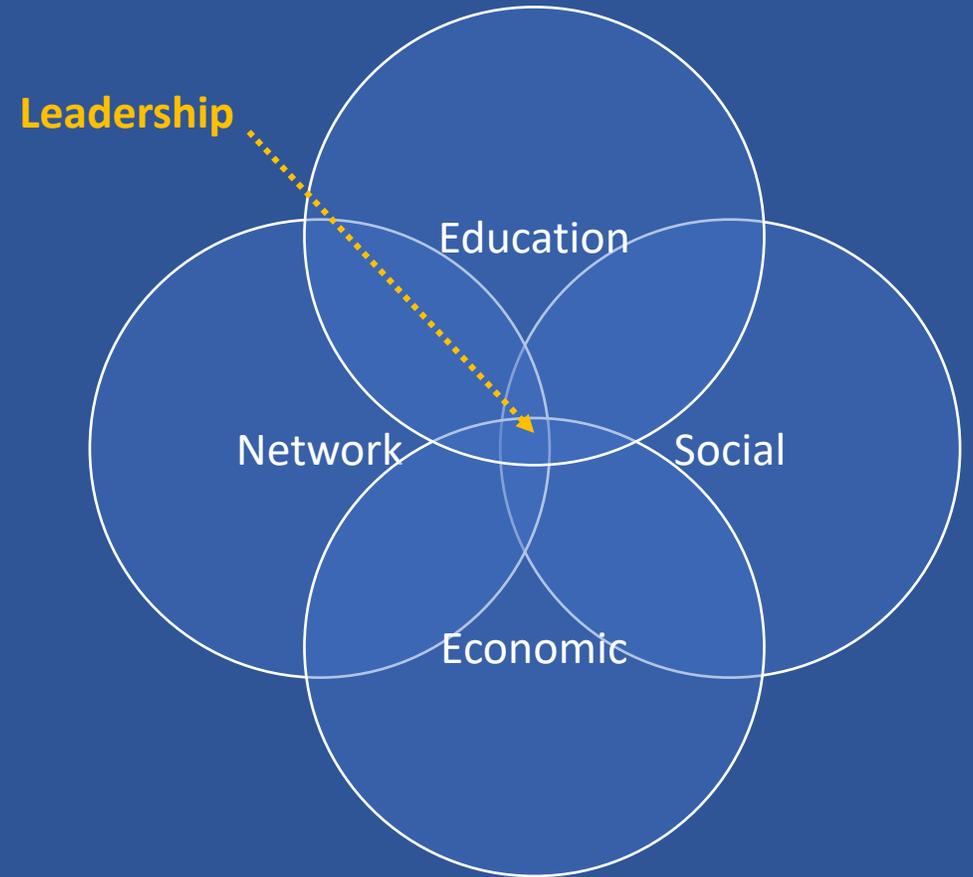
- Lack of mentorship and active female role models.
- Societal stereotypes
- Cultural assumptions: women can't be as effective as men
- Unequal opportunities and gender bias
- Career advancement is hindered by family responsibilities.
- Lack of funds
- Missing exposure to new ideas

~ List from women scientists in Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda

These are Interconnected Systemic Problems

- Societal preconceptions
- Educational opportunities
- Fragmented networks
- Economic issues

Barriers to leadership



What other areas are connected to this system of issues?

Tebello
Nyokong,
South African
Scientist

**Inclusion of women in science is vital.
*Can we do it so well that it becomes about **leadership?*****

Fisheries and aquaculture are *critical* for food and income. Women are *critical* for these fields.



Photo credit: CGIAR

*So, how can we build
capacity for African
women scientists to
become **leaders**?*

Solutions for African Women in Science

- **Platforms for women scientists to share experiences + ideas**
- **More scientific conferences + opportunities for women**
- **Scientific research expeditions**
- **Mentorship programs**
- **Establish excellent laboratory facilities**
- **Grant funds to African women in science to conduct research**
- **Link great women scientists to each other**

~ List from women scientists in Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda

ACARE: Build capacity for emerging African women scientists

How?

A 10 month-long leadership and mentoring program for a cohort of 10-15 African women

Where?

African Great Lakes and globally

Develop Networks

- Amongst each other as a cohort
- Connect within global scientific community

Build Skills

- Foster participation in online events
- Mentoring, targeted discussions, training/skill-building

African Women in Science Initiative: *What We're Thinking About*

Currently in a planning phase.

Launch in early 2021.

- Learn from and/or partner with others doing this work
- Be responsive to societal context and needs
- Listen to early-career women: what are THEIR goals/needs?
- Initially remote, building in-person components (for later)

Big Questions

How can we...

- partner with employers to ensure a pipeline to jobs AND to leadership roles?
- improve remote experiences that facilitate real human to human interaction and growth?
- better understand and meet local professional needs with African-centric programs?

UN-SDGs



By creating a strong network, ACARE and its partners can work together to address many of the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**

“Although gender equality remains an issue, we need to understand that only inclusive science can lead to an inclusive society.”

~ Janvière Tuyisenge, Rwanda



“In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground...That time is now.” – Wangari Maathai



Thank you!

Stephanie Smith

ssmith@zephyrmangata.com

Twitter: @stripedarmsox

www.linkedin.com/in/stephanieliannsmith/

www.agl-acare.org