

IFS STRATEGY ANNEX 3 Gender Strategy

GENDER EQUITY IN SCIENCE: WHY IT MATTERS

Global statistics indicate that women are not only unequally represented in science but also less likely than men to be involved in its planning, research, development or application. This persistent underrepresentation of women (see Figure 1), which increases in senior roles, perpetuates restrictive gender norms and stereotypes in the role models and mentors available to girls and women, while also limiting the influence of women on policy and decision-making processes.

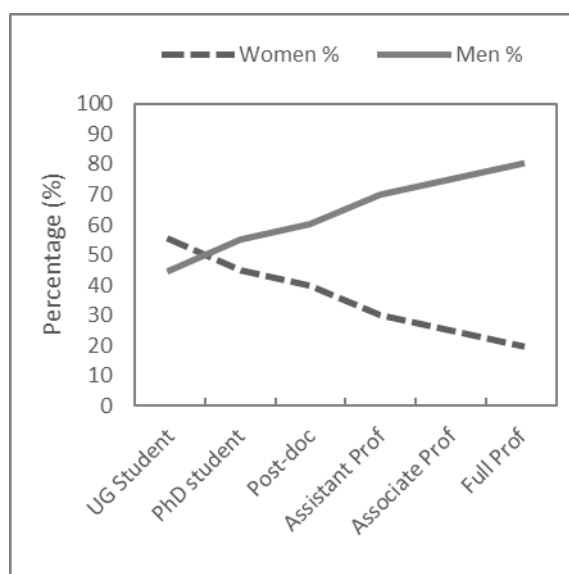


Figure 1. The ‘scissor curve’ - a common trend seen in science and academia. The scissor curve is generally used to depict the common trend of a decreasing number of women at higher seniority levels.¹ In some subjects, the percentage of women can be higher than men at undergraduate (UG) level, with the typical downward trend seen after this career stage.

Achieving gender equity has been a top priority in recent decades, with the UN recognising gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as one of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union declaring 2010-2020 the African Women’s Decade. Closing the gender gap is a key factor in promoting sustainable development, economic growth and stability, and improving the state of the world.²

¹ van Vlooten, D. (2005). Cutting the Gender Scissors. Science.

² Hausmann, R., Tyson, L.D., Bekhouche, Y. and Zahidi, S. (2013). The Global Gender Gap Report 2013. World Economic Forum.

IFS believes in the importance of equality, diversity, inclusion and the right to freedom from discrimination. In addition to the ethical reasons to promote gender equity, it has become increasingly recognized that promoting gender-diverse research teams leads to the production of stronger research output.

IFS AND ITS CURRENT GENDER PROFILE

Since 2014, the percentage of women obtaining IFS grants has stayed above 30% (Figure 2). By using a gender-sensitive evaluation approach, the percentage of women grantees was boosted to 45% in 2020.

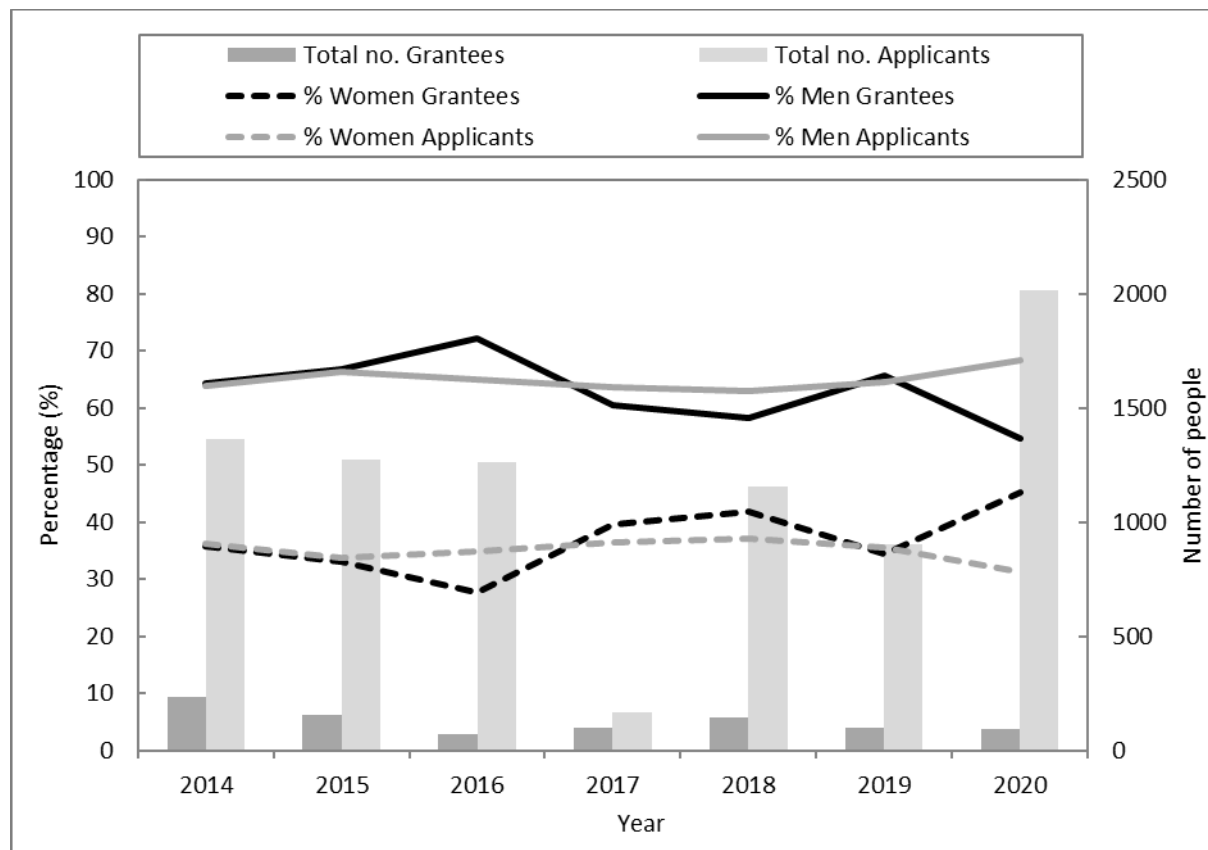


Figure 2. Gender distribution of grantees and applicants for individual/basic grants from 2014 to 2020 for all regions combined. The 2017 call was closed (i.e., by invitation only), which explains the low numbers of applicants and grantees in that year. Solid and dashed lines represent the percentage of men and women, respectively (left y-axis). Bars represent the number of grantees (right y-axis).

A gender-sensitive evaluation process in 2020 ultimately led to a higher success rate of women at different evaluation stages (Figure 3). IFS was able to achieve this through a series of interventions during the evaluation process (e.g., raising awareness of unconscious bias among reviewers and advisors, and prioritising women applicants at the final Director’s Decision stage).

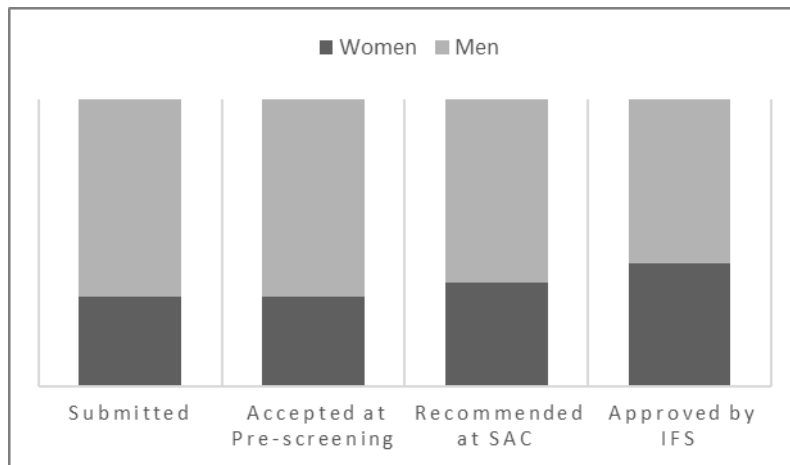


Figure 3. Proportion of women and men for basic and renewal grants in 2020 for all regions combined. The four bars represent different stages of the evaluation process: 1) Applications submitted, 2) Application accepted at pre-screening, 3) Applications Recommended at SAC, and 4) Applications approved by IFS at Director’s Decision.

When looking at patterns of gender distribution by region for individual (basic) grants, we find that Sub-Saharan Africa mirrors the trend seen in Figure 1 because most of our applicants and grantees come from this region. In contrast, in South and Southeast Asia and the Pacific, in 2018 and 2020, there were more women grantees than men from this region (Figure 4). Patterns for Middle East and North Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean are more variable because of the low number of grantees from those regions (less than ten per region per year for 2014 to 2019 and no basic grant grantees for 2020). This highlights the need for concrete interventions to increase the number of applications from the Middle East and North Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

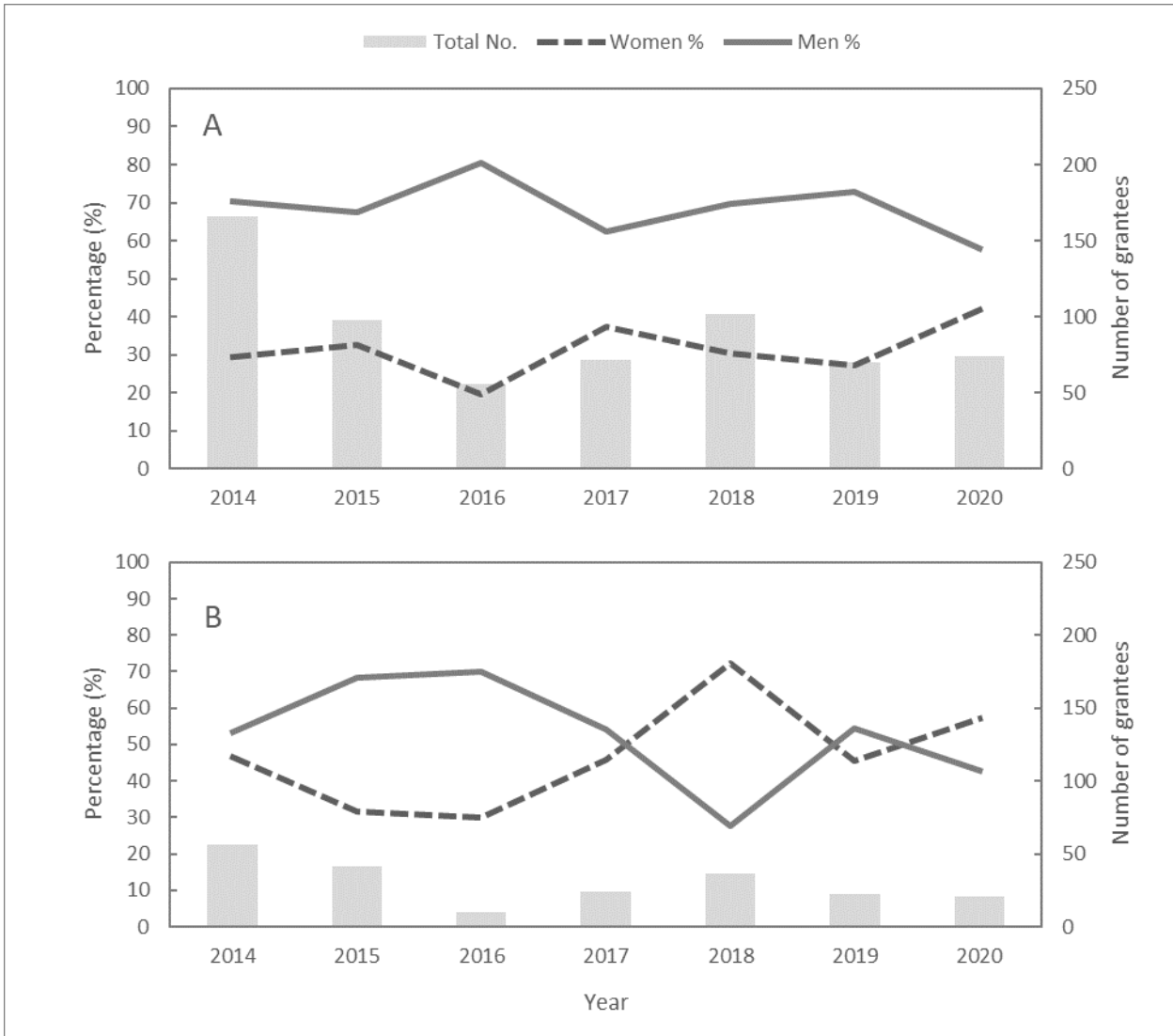


Figure 4. Gender distribution of individual/basic grantees from *Sub-Saharan Africa (A)* and *South and Southeast Asia and the Pacific (B)* from 2014-2020. Solid and dashed lines represent the percentage of men and women, respectively (left y-axis). Bars represent the number of grantees (right y-axis). Data not shown for the other regions supported by IFS (Middle East and North Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean) as grantee numbers are low (<10 per year), therefore skewing the data.

The gender distribution within the primary research areas also differed according to gender and between applicants and grantees (Figure 5). With the surge in applications in 2020, the numbers of applications for basic and renewal grants exceeded 1000 for all areas, with the highest number of applications in crop science (with more than 400 applications) and secondly, natural products (with more than 360 applications). There was a lower proportion of women applicants than men across all research areas, with varying proportions of women grantees depending on research area. This can indicate where gender-based support might be most needed for research area-based interventions.

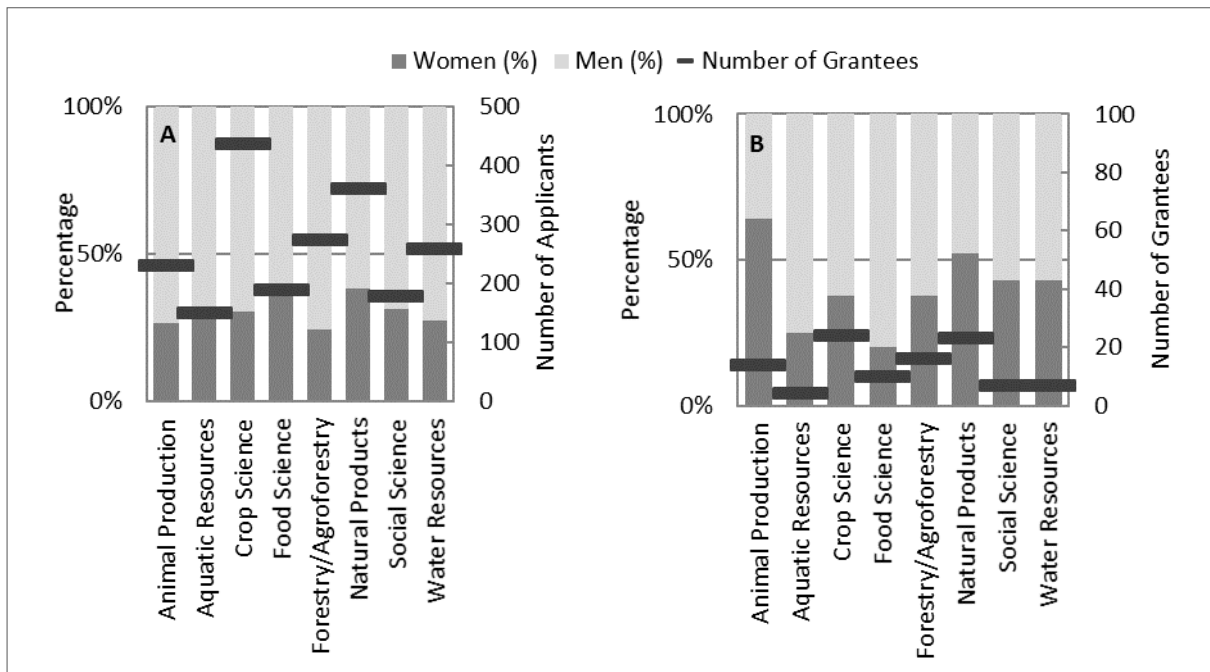


Figure 5. Gender distribution of applicants (A) and grantees (B) for basic and renewal grants combined by primary research area for 2020 for all regions combined. Light and dark bars represent the percentage of men and women, respectively (left y-axis). White circles represent the number of grantees within each primary research area (right y-axis).

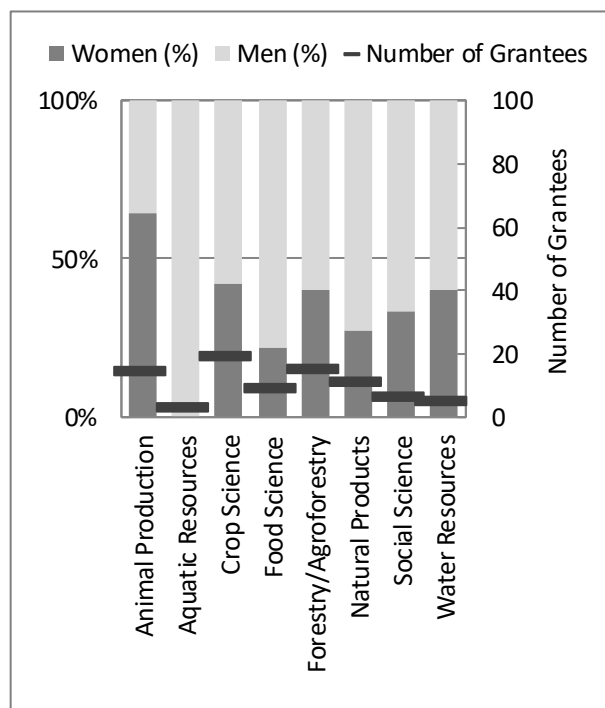


Figure 6. Gender distribution of grantees for basic and renewal grants combined by primary research area for 2020 in Sub-Saharan Africa. Light and dark bars represent the percentage of men and women, respectively (left y-axis). The number of grantees within each primary research area is on the right y-axis.

A closer look at the data for grantees in 2020 showed a similar trend again for Sub-Saharan Africa (Figure 6). There were more women grantees than men from Sub-Saharan Africa in Animal Production, but there were more men than women in other research areas. The trends were not more erratic in other regions due to the low number of applicants and grantees in each research area from those regions.

It is worth noting that the piloted collaborative grants in 2014, 2015, and 2016 attracted more women applicants with a more equal gender distribution between applicants and grantees in this approach. There were also more women than men taking on leadership roles in 2015.

HOW IFS HAS PROMOTED GENDER EQUITY

As IFS targets early career scientists, our grants and capacity enhancing activities provide valuable support during a critical time in the career of women scientists before the gender balance disparity is at its most extreme (Figure 1). The previous 2011-2020 IFS Strategy attempted to mainstream a gender perspective in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI). Actions to improve gender balance included assignment of gender-based eligibility criteria to address the issue that early career women scientists often experience delays in their research as child-bearers and primary caregivers, having a women-only grant call, providing babysitting opportunities at workshops, incorporating positive statements to encourage women applicants, and championing women grantees. An age limit of 40 for women and 35 for men (and other incentives) were implemented to aim for at least 30% by 2015 and 50% by 2030.

Strategic partners were sought to implement the IFS 2011-2020 Strategy and a number of activities were performed together with, for example, Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation (CTA) and the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM).

The 2021-2030 strategy will continue to mainstreaming gender into policy and practice and aims to close the gender gap in IFS grantees and applicants through the implementation of evidence-based, gender-responsive actions using a regionally tailored approach, whilst also addressing universal barriers to women in science.

The 2021-2030 strategy has objectives to:

1. Achieve a target of 50% women grantees and applicants by 2030
2. Increase the proportion of women grantees at senior levels and in leadership positions
3. Improve the visibility of women scientists beyond academia
4. Increase research excellence and impact by IFS grantees by ensuring they consider the gender dimension in their own research and that they are equipped with tools to promote gender equity in their own research teams and institutions
5. Increase the support of equality, diversity and inclusion within our research network, and
6. Ensure the IFS review process is unbiased.

The objectives will be achieved using a combination of capacity-enhancing activities, through workshops, mentoring programmes and online tools, and by implementing changes in our work processes to promote inclusion. Many of the changes and actions implemented have interconnected effects enabling work towards other objectives as well.

OBJECTIVE 1: ACHIEVE A TARGET OF 50% WOMEN GRANTEES AND APPLICANTS BY 2030

To attract more women applicants, and hence grantees, IFS will ensure the visibility of opportunities, the work we do, and our values. Childbearing and caregiving are significant factors affecting women's progression and retention in science.³ Inclusive IFS policies for primary caregivers, such as offering babysitting opportunities at conferences and workshops, have been provided before but on an ad hoc basis. These policies will instead be highlighted on our website and incorporated into grant agreements. We will also be considering maternity leave (and other forms of leave) as eligibility exceptions for IFS grants. IFS will continue to use positive statements to encourage women applicants during grant calls. We plan to include equity as a core value of IFS.

3 Shannon, G, et al. (2019). Gender equality in science, medicine, and global health: where are we at and why does it matter? *The Lancet*, 393: 560-569.

OBJECTIVE 2: INCREASE THE PROPORTION OF WOMEN GRANTEES AT SENIOR LEVELS AND IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Increasing the proportion of women at higher levels of seniority will be largely done through capacity enhancement workshops, creating an internal support network for women scientists, and providing mentorship opportunities in partnership with other organisations. IFS will also promote ways in which to create an inclusive research environment, encouraging all grantees, regardless of gender, to consider this in their current and future research career.

The capacity enhancement programme will provide workshops on leadership and provide tools to build the confidence of grantees and alumni, enabling them to progress in their careers. These can include workshops on applying for large grants, salary negotiation and obtaining promotions. The programme is flexible and can be adapted to deliver workshops on other needs identified by our women grantees and alumni which will be determined through yearly monitoring and evaluation. Any online material will be shared on the IFS website and through social media, making it available to anyone who visits the website.

OBJECTIVE 3: IMPROVE THE VISIBILITY OF WOMEN SCIENTISTS WITHIN AND BEYOND ACADEMIA

Increasing the visibility of women role models can improve the uptake of women in science at school and university levels. In Sub-Saharan Africa, women are underrepresented in several research areas, especially in agricultural science.⁴ We can improve the visibility of women role models through public outreach, thereby impacting recruitment of women in higher education and increasing the pool of women that are eligible for IFS grants. IFS will promote public outreach initiatives that increase the visibility of grantees regionally and globally.

4 Beintema, N. (2017) An assessment of the gender gap in African agricultural research capacities. *Journal of Gender, Agriculture and Food Security*. 2: 1-13.

OBJECTIVE 4: INCREASE RESEARCH EXCELLENCE AND IMPACT BY IFS GRANTEES BY ENSURING THEY CONSIDER THE GENDER DIMENSION IN THEIR OWN RESEARCH AND THAT THEY ARE EQUIPPED WITH TOOLS TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUITY IN THEIR OWN RESEARCH TEAMS AND INSTITUTIONS

As the role of women in sustainable development is increasingly recognised, we ask our grantees to specify the gender dimension of their research. This is done by categorising research with gender markers similar to those identified by the Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa (CCARDESA)⁵ (i.e., categorised according to whether the research 1. in no way explores issues relating to women; 2. mentions issues relating to women; 3. issues relating to gender are a key theme; and 4. targeted directly towards women).

Equipping grantees with tools to promote gender equity will primarily be done through capacity-enhancing workshops and online material. These will explore how to foster diversity and inclusion in research, recognising implicit bias, and other subjects surrounding gender equity and diversity in science.

OBJECTIVE 5: INCREASE THE SUPPORT OF EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WITHIN OUR RESEARCH NETWORK

We will mainstream gender equality at all levels within IFS and use our role as funder to promote equality, diversity and inclusion at institutional and governmental levels. We will promote a positive research culture, and support policies that are inclusive and supportive of women scientists.⁶

OBJECTIVE 6: ENSURE THE IFS REVIEW PROCESS IS UNBIASED

There is a growing body of evidence that subtle unconscious and implicit biases exist that affect women in science negatively.⁷ To ensure that we minimise the effect of bias on our review processes, we will incorporate interventions targeted at those involved in the review process (IFS staff, reviewers and SAC members).

⁵ CCARDESA (2019) Gender and Youth. <http://www.ccardesa.org/gender-and-youth>

⁶ Roca, A, *et al.* (2018). African women working in global health: closing the gender gap in Africa? *The Lancet Global Health*, e369.

⁷ Asplund, M & Welle, CG (2018). Advancing Science: How bias holds us back. *Cell*, **99**: 635-639.

MONITORING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERVENTIONS

Due to the complexity of gender issues, regular monitoring and analysis of gender disaggregated data is needed to assess the effectiveness of implemented interventions and ensure gender-responsive, evidence-based actions are prioritised.⁸ An annual evaluation will be undertaken to provide a detailed needs assessment for guiding future programmes of IFS capacity enhancement and to ensure that the interventions are effective. These areas should be monitored through data analysis, feedback, and case studies, by region where appropriate:

- Gender distribution of the following groups: applicants, grantees, workshops, additional grants (travel or publication), research output and SAC members
- Uptake of inclusive policies by gender
- Monitoring alumni progress and involvement

⁸ UN (2016, May 18) Flagship programme: Making Every Woman and Girl Count. Retrieved from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/flagship-programmes/making-every-woman-and-girl-count>

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