



YOUR GUIDE TO

FACILITATING A SESSION ON WOMEN IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS (STEM) FOCUSED CAREERS



Share what you have learned from #Africa4Her with members of your community! Using the YALI Network online course, “Understanding the Rights of Women and Girls” and this guide, you can facilitate a discussion on the importance of women’s participation in STEM careers with members of your community.

What is STEM?

STEM is an acronym for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. These four academic disciplines and their related career fields require innovative thinking, discipline, and attention to detail. Example professions in STEM include, but are not limited to, biologists, computer programmers, doctors, veterinarians, electrical engineers, and statisticians. Workers in STEM careers are in high demand, but women are grossly underrepresented in these fields.

Why is it Important for Women to Participate in STEM Career Fields ?

According to UIS-UNESCO data, only 30% of the world’s scientific researchers are women despite women making up half of the world’s population. In Sub-Saharan Africa, women account for only 18% to 31% of science researchers. This stark gender imbalance is detrimental to human rights, economic prosperity for women, and diversity in educational institutions and the workplace. As stated in Lesson 1: [Supporting a Girl’s Right to Learn](#), society prospers when women and girls are educated. Educated women often live healthier lives, earn higher incomes, and raise their families from poverty. These benefits are passed on to their children and the generations that follow.

Organize a Discussion on Women in STEM Focused Careers

You can inspire and educate others on career possibilities in STEM by facilitating a virtual or in-person discussion with a professional woman in a STEM-focused career field.

Here are some things you should consider:

- **Decide if you’ll organize an in-person or virtual discussion:** If in-person, confirm a location and consider local health guidelines. If virtual, decide on your platform.
- **Confirm your speaker:** Who do you know in your community working in a STEM field? You can reach out to [Mandela Washington Fellowship alumni](#), young professionals, teachers or professors at your school or university, leaders you follow online, or YALI Network members from the [LinkedIn group](#).
- **Invite participants to join:** Invite two to eight additional participants to join your discussion. Are there individuals that would benefit most from this conversation? For example, girls at a local school, science or math teachers, a group of parents? Keep the participant list small enough to allow time for each individual to ask the expert questions and contribute to the discussion.
- **Have an agenda:** Make sure you have a program to follow and set expectations for the discussion at the beginning. Have time for introductions or an ice breaker, let the speaker make a presentation, and then leave plenty of time for questions. Finish the discussion by allowing each participant to present a key takeaway they learned.

Things to Remember:

- Review the “[Understanding the Rights of Women and Girls](#)” facilitation guide for ice breaker activities and discussion questions that may be relevant for your STEM focused event.
- Make sure to send your agenda to the expert before your event.
- Prepare additional discussion questions in case the conversation moves faster than planned or participants don’t have questions.
- Be mindful of time. Stick to your agenda so you don’t keep participants over the allotted time.
- Thank your participants for joining the discussion, and send a thank-you note to your industry STEM expert.

Sources:

1. Women in science. UNESCO UIS. (2020, February 18). <http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/women-science>
2. Ekine, A., & Aremu, A. (n.d.). Foresight Africa - [brookings.edu](https://www.brookings.edu). From https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/foresightafrica2022_fullreport.pdf 58