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# UNDERWRITERS LABORATORIES ASEAN-U.S. SCIENCE PRIZE FOR WOMEN

Increasing women’s representation and participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields in Southeast Asia requires concerted regional efforts and cooperation. The United States, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), partners with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Underwriters Laboratories to sponsor the annual Science Prize for Women. The prize showcases the work of talented women scientists in ASEAN and inspires women to pursue STEM careers.



A finalist from Lao PDR working in her laboratory. (Photo: IGNITE Project Nathan Associates)

In partnership with Underwriters Laboratories, a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing public safety through the application of scientific knowledge, and the ASEAN Committee of Science, Technology and Innovation (COSTI), USAID promotes the participation of women in STEM fields and strengthens ASEAN science and technical capacity through the annual Underwriters Laboratories-ASEAN-U.S. Science Prize for Women. In addition to inspiring young women to pursue STEM careers, the competition highlights researchers with potential to accelerate the pace of innovation growth in the region and improve the wellbeing of ASEAN citizens while ensuring that the perspective and needs of women are better addressed.

PHOTO CREDIT: Chan Yoke Fun, 2019 Science Prize Winner/ USAID-IGNITE

## KEY CRITERIA

- The competition emphasizes the role of women scientists who work to improve society in sustainable ways and serve as role models for women working in and pursuing STEM careers.
- The applicants must clearly demonstrate strong academic expertise, identify specifically how the presented research and technology has a profound, positive impact in the community, and promote greater female engagement in STEM activities.
- The winners of the two categories of scientists (Mid-Career and Senior Scientists) are eligible to receive combined cash awards totaling \$25,000 and the honorable mentions of the two categories of scientists are eligible to receive combined cash awards totaling \$10,000.

## THEMES

First launched in 2014, the Women's Science Prize competition features relevant, cutting-edge science & technology themes that address pressing needs in the region and support USAID's development goals. Themes include: Water Quality (2014); Sustainable Energy Research (2016); Rapid Urbanization (2017); Precision Agriculture (2018); Circular Economy (2019); Preventive Healthcare (2020); Clean Air & Clean Water (2021); and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Health & Safety (2022).



One of the finalists representing Malaysia in the 2019 competition. (Photo: IGNITE Project Nathan Associates)

## PARTICIPATION

Since 2014, the Science Prize for Women has attracted more than 336 participants hailing from all ASEAN member states. In 2019, USAID, through the ASEAN-USAID Inclusive Growth in ASEAN through Innovation, Trade and E-Commerce (IGNITE) project, launched the 'Science Prize 4 Women' website to promote the prize and keep the region informed about the progress of the prize. To learn more, visit: [scienceprize4women.asean.org](https://scienceprize4women.asean.org).

## RESULTS

***"The Prize competition offers a great opportunity to recognize women scientists' knowledge, experience and contributions in the region. At the same time, it provides encouragement for young women to pursue a research career," said the 2019 Prize winner, Dr. Zhou Yan, about the significance of the Prize.***

Past winners report that they have leveraged their success to expand research endeavors and support other women in STEM. For example, the 2017 Prize winner, Dr. Nguyen Thi Hiep said that she used prize funds to hire more women researchers and expand her research team.

The Prize competition has received 312 eligible applications since 2016. Of those eligible applications, the Prize awarded 14 women winners and honorable mentions, raising their profile as successful women scientists and inspiring young women across the ASEAN region. Since the Prize's inception in 2014, the competition has awarded a total of \$195,000 in cash prizes.

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