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

BACKGROUND

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.

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 in the region and improve the well-being of ASEAN citizens, while ensuring that the perspective and needs of women are better addressed.

PRIORITIES

BOLSTER IMPACT OF WOMEN SCIENTISTS IN STEM

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.

- Applicants must: demonstrate strong academic expertise, identify specifically how their research has a profound, positive impact in the community.
- A total of \$35,000 is available for Science Prize winners. In the Senior Scientist category, the competition winner receives \$12,500 in prize money, with \$12,500 also going to the winner in the Mid-career category. Both categories have an “Honorable Mention” finalist, each of whom receives \$5,000.

THEMES

First launched in 2014, the Science Prize competition features relevant, cutting-edge STEM themes that address pressing needs in the region and support USAID’s development goals. Themes include: Sustainable Energy Research (2016); Rapid Urbanization (2017); Precision Agriculture (2018); Circular Economy (2019); Preventive Healthcare (2020); Clean Air & Clean Water (2021); Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Health & Safety (2022); and Electrification (2023).

PARTICIPATION

Since 2014, the Science Prize for Women has attracted more than 360 participants from all ten ASEAN member states. In 2019, USAID’s 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.

KEY RESULTS

- Past winners 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 more than 300 eligible applications since 2016. Of those eligible applications, the Prize awarded 18 women winners and honorable mentions, raising their profiles as successful scientists and inspiring young women across the ASEAN region. Since the Prize’s inception in 2014, the competition has awarded a total of \$205,000 in cash prizes.

CONTACT Desy Fatimah USAID/RDMA ASEAN Office dfatimah@usaid.gov