

Report on Women in Physics session at APPC12

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The topical session on Women in Physics (WIP) at APPC12 was held on the afternoon of July 18, 2013 at Makuhari Messe, Chiba, Japan, as a joint meeting of the 3rd AAPPS Workshop on WIP. This session was organized by the Liaison Association Committee for Promotion of Equal Participation of Men and Women in Physics, in cooperation with the committees of the Physical Society of Japan (JPS) and the Japan Society of Applied Physics (JSAP). The 1st Workshop was originally organized by Youngah Park, Chair of WIP in Asia. This meeting was attended by 55 participants representing nine countries and territories.

The main subjects of the meeting were “affirmative action” and “networking of WIP in the Asia Pacific region”. Although the Asia Pacific region has generally been relatively backward in terms of promoting the activities of women scientists, certain countries and organizations have enhanced opportunities for women scientists by their positive initiatives and effective networking. These instances of success illuminate a path forward for the Asia Pacific region, from backwardness to enlightenment.

Following the opening address by Konagai, Chair of the Japan Society of Applied Physics, Watanabe explained the history of WIP in the Asia Pacific region and the objectives of the meeting. The session was devoted to five talks by invited speakers. From Korea, Youngah Park spoke about the current status and activities of WIP in the Korean Physical Society, including their local networking and affirmative action, and also referred to her experience in the leadership role as Chair of the WIP in the Asia Pacific region. From China, Wu focused on the “leaky pipeline” phenomenon, i.e., the higher the level in the scientific hierarchy, the lower the ratio of women scientists, and commented on WIP’s international activities and the importance of networking. From the Philippines, Lim spoke about the initiatives in that country and the resulting mechanisms established to secure greater opportunities for women in science and technology. Jotaki, one of two representatives from Japan, referred to the case of Kyushu University where only women have been recruited for certain academic posts.

Kyushu University introduced a quota system in 2009 to increase opportunities for female researchers and cultivate their talents. Iga, the former president of Tokyo Institute of Technology, presented an overview of WIP and Women in Technology in Japan, concluding that what is most important is to change the attitudes of men.

There were also presentations by Ubale, Ho, Nguyen and Foley from India, Taipei, Vietnam and Australia, respectively, introducing affirmative action and networking of WIP. From Japan, Torikai and Nemoto presented the activities of WIP in JPS and JSAP.

The discussion was active in this session, reflecting the diverse cultural and professional backgrounds of the participants from across the variegated Asia Pacific region, and the wide-ranging issues related to WIP. For example, in China and Vietnam the retirement age for women is 5 years younger than that for men, which is inimical to the appointment of women to senior positions. In Korea, the introduction of a research funding system specifically for female researchers has had the unfortunate consequence of making it more difficult for them to secure funding from conventional sources.

Common issues and common circumstances relevant to the mission of the WIP were identified. Although the ratio of female researchers and managers is generally increasing throughout the Asia Pacific region, the rate at which the ratio is increasing is slow compared with certain other regions of the world. Various initiatives are being undertaken, whether countrywide or narrower in scope, resulting in the promotion of WIP activities, but it tends to take a long time for substantial progress to be achieved. Across the Asia Pacific region, the policies and measures being pursued to encourage female high school students to gravitate toward science and technology have several features in common. The committees of female physicists are raising their profile and gaining traction throughout the Asia Pacific region, and playing an increasingly important role in the networking among WIP. More vigorous networking of WIP could help transform the Asia Pacific region from a laggard to a much more opportunity-rich environment for women physicists.

In his closing remarks, Nagamiya, Chair of AAPPC12, urged us to advance toward WIP's quantitative target of a 30% female ratio. The AAPPS Working Group meeting on WIP took place on the next day.

The meeting was supported by JPS, JSAP, and three companies: Almado, Thorlabs and

Toshiba in Japan.



Fig.1. WIP meeting in APCC12.



Fig.2. Group Photo at WIP meeting.