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ASIA EDITION

Lâ??OrÃ©al-UNESCO For Women in Science awards emerging Singapore researchers shaping the future of science

November 6, 2026 | News

The programme marks 17 years in Singapore, recognising women researchers advancing scientific discovery and innovation



The L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science programme has announced its 2026 Singapore grantees, recognising three emerging women researchers based in Singapore. The award ceremony, attended by Guests of Honour His Excellency Stephen Marchisio, Ambassador of France to Singapore, and Ms Tin Pei Ling, Member of Parliament for Marine Parade-Braddell Heights GRC (MacPherson Division), celebrated their research spanning coastal and environmental resilience, sustainable materials innovation, and women's health—addressing issues of growing relevance to Singapore and the wider region.

Founded in 1998, the L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science programme is a global initiative that advances women's contribution to science by recognising promising researchers and helping them pursue impactful work. In Singapore, the programme is now in its 17th year and has recognised 36 Singapore-based women scientists, awarding S$360,000 in research grants, as of 2026.

Its mission is especially timely as Singapore continues to cultivate the high-calibre research talent and capabilities needed to drive its next chapter of innovation, resilience and growth. According to the UNESCO Status and Trends of Women in Science 2025 Factsheet, women remain underrepresented in Singapore's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) ecosystem, making up just 31.5% of graduates and 31.8% of researchers.

The gap is even more pronounced at senior decision-making levels: a 2024 report by Ipsos and Fondation L'Oréal found that women hold only 12% of C-suite positions in STEM, underscoring the importance of creating pathways that enable women researchers to build visibility, access opportunities and progress throughout their careers.

"Singapore's future depends not only on scientific breakthroughs, but on the people and ideas behind them," said Manashi Guha, Managing Director, L'Oréal Malaysia-Singapore. "For 17 years, the L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science

programme has helped promising women researchers in Singapore take their work further through funding, visibility, and access to wider networks. We are proud to recognise this year's grantees, whose work shows how science can address challenges that matter to society, while encouraging more young women to see a future for themselves in the field."

Research addressing real-world challenges in Singapore and beyond

The 2026 Singapore grantees are:

- **Dr Maxine Lam, Senior Scientist at A*STAR**
  Research project: A Novel Patient-Centric Treatment for Stress Urinary Incontinence
- Dr Maxine Lam is developing a novel, patient-centred treatment for stress urinary incontinence, a condition that affects around 15% of women in Singapore and can significantly affect confidence, daily activities and quality of life, yet remains under-discussed. Her work aims to advance a treatment option that prioritises efficacy, longer-term safety and patients' needs.
- **Assistant Professor Yuzhu Pearl Li, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, National University of Singapore**
  Research project: Where Do Microplastics Go? Modelling Their Transport and Fate in Tropical Coastal Waters
- Prof Pearl Li's research examines how microplastics move through tropical coastal waters. By deepening understanding of their pathways and eventual distribution after entering the marine environment, her work may contribute to wider knowledge of marine pollution and environmental resilience, complementing national efforts to tackle marine litter through research, innovation and the prevention of land-based waste from entering the sea.
- **Assistant Professor Ronghui Wu, School of Materials Science and Engineering, Nanyang Technological University**
  Research project: Smart Textiles for Health, Energy and Sustainability
- Prof Ronghui Wu is researching smart textiles that could serve applications across health, energy and sustainability. Her project explores how advances in materials science may support more functional, responsive and resource-conscious solutions for the future, particularly as Singapore braces for the rising threat of heat stress.

Each grantee will receive a S$10,000 research grant to support the next stage of her work.

The Singapore grantees were selected by a jury comprising experts across materials science, nanotechnology, biomedical research, sustainable manufacturing and bioprocess engineering, from institutions including the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR), the National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University, Singtel, the Singapore Institute of Technology, and the Singapore University of Technology and Design.

Professor Andy Hor, Deputy Chief Executive (Research) of A*STAR and President of this year's jury panel, said: "This year's grantees stood out not only for the rigour of their science, but also for the potential of their work to address issues with clear local and regional relevance, from understanding tropical coastal environments and advancing sustainable materials, to meeting unmet needs in women's health. We are pleased to recognise these promising researchers and look forward to seeing them take their science further and create real-world impact."

The 2026 award ceremony also recognised three grantees from Malaysia, whose research spans sustainable bioplastics, green hydrogen and clean energy, and natural products and translational health innovation. Over 20 years in Malaysia, the L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science programme has supported 60 women in science and awarded more than RM1.5 million (approximately S$472,176) in research grants. Together, the six grantees reflect the breadth of scientific talent across both markets.

Scientific progress is strongest when diverse talent has the opportunity to thrive. Through the L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science programme, Fondation L'Oréal supports women researchers at an important stage in their careers, helping to widen the pipeline of scientific leadership so that the people developing solutions for the future better reflect the communities they serve.