

WOS scheme eases glide from motherhood to agri-scientist

Dr. Ratna Prabha was pursuing her post-doc as a SERB National Post Doctoral Fellow when motherhood led to a career break.

The WOS fellow since 2018 cracked the Agricultural Research Services (ARS) exam of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) recently. She secured AIR-1 in Bioinformatics subject, which has been included first time in ARS.

“After motherhood, pursuing a research career seemed tough, but DST Women Scientist Scheme (WOS) came to rescue and restructure me. It allowed me not only to raise my hopes to fulfill my research passion but also made me an independent researcher. Because of this support, I became capable of cracking the ARS-2017 examination as First Ranker in Bioinformatics discipline,” Dr. Prabha pointed out.



The ‘Women Scientist Scheme’ WOS provides career opportunities to unemployed women scientists and technologists, especially those who had break in career, for pursuing research in frontier areas of Science and Engineering. There are three major components of the Women Scientist Scheme, namely, WOS-A, WOS-B and WOS-C.

“DST WOS has enabled me to access the funds for pursuing the research not only through the fellowship that minimized the burden of daily life but also by providing funds for supporting project activities for the beneficiaries. Timely disbursement of funds was also an important reason to handle the project smoothly,” Dr. Prabha elaborated.

“While working for the WOS project, I was exposed to fieldwork and worked for the research output and interaction with various stakeholders and beneficiaries, which were none other than the farmers, rural youth, and women. This has added to my confidence and developed me as an observational and analytical scientist. I am immensely satisfied that through the foundation of the

DST-WOS, I am now positioned to do my best for the betterment of the society through the emerging field of Bioinformatics.” she added.

“When I got a call from DST for presentation, I told myself that I should now do my best to grab the fellowship. The day I received an offer letter, I was in cloud nine. Research was my passion, and I was determined to pursue it, and this was the main driving force that insisted me to chase my dream,” Dr. Prabha recalled.

“Family or motherhood can't stop anyone from pursuing a research career if the interest level is intense. If we accept situations as they are and surrender, then we will not be able to live our dreams. There will be difficult situations, but it is in our hand to overcome them,” she added

“Women hold immense potential for all fields, including science and research. But they are not becoming available for research and development work due to various reasons, of which many are linked with the family responsibilities.” Dr. Prabha stressed.

She pointed out that women researchers must believe that they can strive for major research that matters in science and society in India. They need to create networks and find peer support through proper mentoring and should be open to accept challenges and extend help to others.

During her research career, she bagged the Young Scientist Award from Chhattisgarh Council of Science and Technology, GBPUAT, Pantnagar, and International Travel Grants from the University of Tokyo, Japan, and SERB, DST. Besides, she has edited and authored eight books from Springer Nature and has more than 35 research publications and 10 book chapters to her credit.