

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)  
Enabling the Future - Developing the Space Workforce (5)

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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SPACE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN LATIN AMERICA:  
STORIES, CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

**Abstract**

The Central American Association for Aeronautics and Space (ACAE) is a non-profit organization, which leads the efforts to insert Central America in the world's technological paradigm of aerospace development.

With the lowering cost of technology and the trend of the global economy towards outsourcing, fields of a high level of scientific and technological complexity such as the aerospace field, monopolized for many years by developed nations, are becoming important niches for developing countries. From 2010, the Government of Costa Rica, made explicit its commitment to host a development model based on innovation, and to support the aerospace development; ACAE emerged within this context as a pioneer organization in a field that is still incipient in most of Latin America, and specially in Central America, where other efforts have also started to arise.

For a country and a region which are just recently discovering the potential and long term benefits from getting involved into Space activities, building the human capabilities that current and future professionals will require to succeed in this development is essential. Many angles are needed to be considered, but this paper intends to deal with one punctual matter, which is also part of a more general and relevant conversation: The involvement of women in science and technology; in this case, specifically in the field of Space Science and Technology.

The fields of this nature, have historically had a male conceptualization which prevents women from getting involved. According to CEPAL (2010), women represents only 25% of researchers and scientists in the World. In Latin America this problem is also a reality, women in engineering professions for example, represent only 22% in Brazil, 12% in Mexico, 27,4% in Uruguay, and 19% in Costa Rica. Those percentages keep reducing in every country as we refer to higher positions and more complex fields of specialization.

However, as this theme became a trend in global conversations and efforts for countries seeking equality and development, women all over the world have also become key players. The current paper intends to collect the stories of women from different countries of Latin America who have successfully got involved in Space Science and Technology, and to recall their processes in order to identify current trends, challenges, gaps, opportunities and required steps in the region to promote a more active participation and role of women in this field.