

Press Note

Biocon Foundation, in partnership with BeST Cluster and NCBS, onboards first BioWISE cohort of Postgraduate Women Students

Empowering 15 Women in STEM (Life Sciences) with scholarship, internship and mentorship

Bengaluru, Karnataka, India | April 3, 2026

Biocon Foundation, the Corporate Social Responsibility arm of **Biocon**, in collaboration with the **Bengaluru Science and Technology Cluster** (BeST Cluster) and the **National Centre for Biological Sciences** (NCBS), formally onboarded the first cohort of the BioWISE (Women in STEM Empowered) program at the Biocon Park, Bengaluru.

The first BioWISE cohort comprises 15 postgraduate women students selected through a rigorous, multi-stage process from over 350 applicants across Karnataka for a six-month internship program, including scholarship and mentorship.

As part of the BioWISE program, 25 women students - 15 postgraduates and 10 undergraduates - from tier 2 and tier 3 universities across Karnataka will be supported with academic training spanning biotechnology, life sciences, microbiology, bioinformatics and allied disciplines, enabling them to build sustainable careers in STEM.

The 15 participants onboarded in the first phase have been placed with leading academic and industry partners, including the National Centre for Biological Sciences (1), Institute of Bioinformatics and Applied Biotechnology (2), Indian Institute of Science (5) and Biocon (7), where they are working alongside scientists and industry professionals on live research and development programs.

The formal onboarding event was graced by **Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw**, Chairperson, Biocon; **R. Anantharaman**, CEO, BeST Cluster; **Dr Anupama Shetty**, Mission Director, Biocon Foundation, **Naveen Narayanan**, Chief Human Resources Officer, Biocon and representatives from NCBS along with leaders from academia, research institutions and industry. **Dr Parvinder Maini**, Scientific Secretary, Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser (OPSA), addressed the gathering through a virtual message.

Speaking at the event, **Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Chairperson, Biocon Group**, said: *“India does not have a pipeline problem in science; it has a transition problem. While women enter STEM education in large numbers, too many drop out at the stage of entering professional roles in industry. BioWISE is a strategic intervention at precisely this moment, where talent must meet opportunity. This program by Biocon Foundation, BeST Cluster, and NCBS is about building confidence and ecosystems of support so women not only stay in science, but lead, innovate, and shape the future of India’s scientific enterprise.”*

Dr Parvinder Maini, Scientific Secretary, Office of PSA, commented, *“The future of science and innovation will depend on how inclusively we nurture and strengthen our talent pipeline. When women are given equal access to opportunities, supported in their growth, and empowered to lead, the entire ecosystem benefits. Initiatives like BioWISE reflect this vision by bringing together academia, industry, and government to bridge the gap between education and workforce readiness, while enabling women from diverse backgrounds to contribute meaningfully to the future of science and innovation.”*

R. Anantharaman, CEO, BeST Cluster, commented *“Bengaluru Science and Technology (BeST) Cluster is grateful to Biocon Foundation, National Center for Biological Sciences (NCBS), and other leading institutions for backing BioWISE 25-26 (Women in STEM Empowered) - Cohort 1, a six-month internship giving 15 postgraduate women students or from Tier-2 and Tier-3 colleges learning opportunities, structured mentorship, and guidance to empower women in STEM, focusing on life sciences.”*

Prof. L.S. Shashidhara, Director, NCBS, commented *“The BioWise program is a significant and timely initiative aimed at empowering women in STEM. The entire STEM community is indebted to Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw and the Biocon Foundation. The BeST Cluster has played a catalytic role in bringing together a strong network of collaborators and mentors from leading institutions such as IISc, IBAB, NCBS, CBR, and other organizations thereby fostering a truly collaborative and enabling ecosystem. Such multi-institutional efforts are essential to nurture talent, build confidence, and support the long-term growth of women scientists.”*

Dr Anupama Shetty, Mission Director, Biocon Foundation, commented *“BioWISE is designed as a long-term intervention to support women at critical transition points in their scientific journeys. In addition to the 15 postgraduate interns currently onboarded, the program will also support 10 undergraduate students through scholarships, short-term internships and mentorship modules during the year, creating early exposure and continuity into STEM careers.”*

Naveen Narayanan, Chief Human Resources Officer, Biocon commented *“BioWISE reflects our belief that inclusion must translate into opportunity. And for that, we need to support talent not as a one-time intervention, but as a sustained commitment. Programs like BioWISE represent a more deliberate approach where inclusion is not episodic, but built through consistency.”*

BioWISE, launched in June 2025, is designed to enhance access, participation, and retention of women from underserved communities in STEM. The program addresses the gap many women face in transitioning from academic training to sustained scientific careers by offering a structured support ecosystem. Participants receive exposure to real-life industry environments and opportunities to engage with leaders from industry. In addition, BioWISE provides stipends, technical and soft-skills training, and career guidance, helping participants build confidence, professional networks, and workplace readiness.

About Biocon Foundation:

Biocon Foundation, the Corporate Social Responsibility arm of Biocon, Biocon Biologics and Syngene International, has been working to empower marginalized communities since 2005. Biocon Foundation partners with society to promote social and economic inclusion.

It has thus made significant investments in enhancing access to quality healthcare, education, and civic infrastructure along with environmental sustainability projects. Combined with field initiatives, these programs create momentum to elevate the marginalized sections of society.

Over the years, Biocon Foundation has built a strong reputation for the quality of its programs and their impact in addressing the social, humanitarian, and environmental challenges facing India. To make a more meaningful impact, the Foundation regularly partners with government agencies and like-minded organizations for program delivery. Besides addressing critical national and state level challenges in primary healthcare, education and rural development, the Foundation is also augmenting environmental sustainability through the lake revival mission in Bengaluru. Visit: <http://www.bioconfoundation.org>

About BeST:

The Bengaluru Science and Technology Cluster (BeST) is an initiative under the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, established to foster innovation, collaboration, and societal impact through science and technology. BeST leverages Bengaluru's vibrant ecosystem of academic institutions, industry leaders, startups, civil society organizations, and government bodies to address critical challenges in public health, sustainability, and urban development. Coordinated by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and supported by over 20 partner organizations, BeST began with seed funding sanctioned in September 2022. Its establishment was led by the Director of IISc, Professor Govindan Rangarajan (Principal Investigator), with Professor Ambarish Ghosh of IISc and Dr. Taslimarif Saiyed, CEO of C-CAMP, as Co-PIs. On May 14, 2024, BeST transitioned into a Section 8 Company under the name Foundation for Bengaluru Science and Technology. This non-profit organization was co-founded by four leading institutions: IISc, the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), and the International Centre for Theoretical Sciences (ICTS). Through its multidisciplinary approach, BeST aims to create scalable, technology-driven solutions that enhance quality of life and promote inclusive growth in Bengaluru and beyond. Visit: <https://www.bestkc.in/>

About NCBS

National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), a Centre of Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, an autonomous institute of Department of Atomic Energy, Govt. of India, is a premier research institution dedicated to fundamental research at all levels of biology covering a diverse set of subjects spanning from molecules to ecosystems and from nanosecond to evolutionary time. The mission of NCBS is to amplify boundaries of biological knowledge, create scientific human capital and deploy contemporary tools and technologies for capabilities in science. At the NCBS scientific culture encourages interdisciplinarity, collegiality, collaboration, non-hierarchical engagement, objective oriented and unbiased approaches. NCBS is committed to building bridges across disciplines, institutions, and borders. It actively nurtures collaborations with scientists both within India and internationally, catalysing the creation of new programs, innovative institutions, and transdisciplinary initiatives. The Centre also plays a pivotal role in connecting the history of science to contemporary challenges, and in linking scientific discovery to societal needs. Visit: <https://www.ncbs.res.in/>

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