

Global Power Women Forum Cambridge 2026

Official Proceedings & Post-Event Report

POST-EVENT REPORT

Women-Powered Economies: Capital, Trade & the Future of Economic Governance

8–9 June 2026

Wolfson College, University of Cambridge

Prepared by

Centre for Economic & Leadership Development (CELD), UK

 Centre for Economic and Leadership Development (CELD)

IN COLLABORATION WITH THE
WOLFSON COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Presents
GLOBAL POWER WOMEN FORUM

Theme: Women-Powered Economies: Capital, Trade, and the Future of Economic Governance

 Dr. Ibifuro Ken-Giami Executive Director, CELD Host	 Hon. Dr. Harini Amarasuriya Prime Minister of Sri Lanka	 H.E. Diana Nausėdienė First Lady of Lithuania	 H.E. Ambassador Prof. Olufolake AbdulRazaq First Lady, Rivers State, Nigeria
 SCAN TO REGISTER	 Hon. Dr. Emma Kantema (MP) Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, Republic of Tanzania	 Baroness Sandy Verma Member, UK House of Lords	 Solange Amichia Managing Director & CEO, CEPICI Côte d'Ivoire
	 Rachel Blackburn MBE Founder & CEO, US20 Consulting Ltd	 Sharold Palmer Founder Seven Palms Consultancy SAC	AND MORE...

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Global Power Women Forum (GPWF) Cambridge 2026 convened an extraordinary assembly of distinguished women leaders, policymakers, diplomats, academics, investors, entrepreneurs, development practitioners and institutional partners from across Africa, Europe and beyond to explore one of the defining questions of our time: **how can women shape the future of economic governance?**

Held on **8–9 June 2026** at **Wolfson College, University of Cambridge**, and organised by the **Centre for Economic & Leadership Development (CELD), UK**, the Forum was convened under the theme "**Women-Powered Economies: Capital, Trade & the Future of Economic Governance.**" The programme was intentionally designed to move beyond conversations about women's representation towards practical discussions on the systems, institutions and partnerships required to build resilient, inclusive and sustainable economies.

The Forum commenced with a private **Networking Mixer and Partnerships Dinner**, providing senior government representatives, diplomats, investors, academics and enterprise leaders with an opportunity to establish strategic relationships and identify areas for future collaboration. These engagements set the tone for a Forum that prioritised practical partnerships alongside intellectual dialogue.

The second day opened with the plenary session, "**Women, Power & the Architecture of Global Economies,**" where keynote speakers explored how women are influencing national development through governance, education, social protection, diplomacy, investment and enterprise. Throughout the day, delegates participated in thematic sessions on women as economic architects, responsible investment, evidence-based policymaking, national development strategies and international trade. These discussions highlighted the critical role of women in designing economic systems that deliver productivity, resilience and long-term prosperity.

The Forum featured contributions from distinguished leaders including **H.E. Hon. Harini Amarasuriya**, Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka; **H.E. Diana Nausėdienė**, First Lady of the Republic of Lithuania; **H.E. Ambassador Prof. Olufolake AbdulRazaq**, First Lady of Kwara State, Nigeria; **H.E. Mrs. Sara Amani**, Ambassador of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Kingdom; **Hon. Dr. Emma Kantema (MP)**, Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare of Namibia; **Ann Cotton OBE**, Founder and Chair Emerita of CAMFED; **Dr. Renuka Thakore**, Founder and CEO of Global Sustainable Futures Network CIC; **Baroness Sandy Verma**, Member of the UK House of Lords; **Prof. Tolullah Oni**, Clinical Professor at the University of Cambridge; **Prof. Ronita Bardhan**, **Prof. Fawzia Rasheed**, **Prof. Elizabeth Garnsey**, **Tililenji Phiri**, **Nanna Sylla Coulibaly**, **Mrs. Zeinabou Sidibé**, **Mrs. Oghogho Gwabin Musa**, **Madam Hawa Sally Samai**, **Rachel Blackburn MBE**, and **Joan Asante**, among other distinguished participants.

A defining feature of GPWF Cambridge 2026 was its emphasis on implementation. Rather than limiting discussions to policy aspirations, the Forum examined how governments, development institutions, investors, academia and the private sector can collaborate to mobilise capital, strengthen institutions, expand market opportunities and accelerate women's economic participation.

The Forum concluded with the **Global Power Impact & Legacy Honours**, recognising outstanding leaders whose work has strengthened governance, public service, education, diplomacy, peacebuilding and women's empowerment. The ceremony reinforced the Forum's commitment to celebrating leadership that creates measurable and lasting impact.

Beyond the presentations and policy discussions, GPWF Cambridge 2026 strengthened international networks, initiated new conversations on cross-border collaboration and reaffirmed the importance of women-centred leadership in shaping the future of global economic governance. The Forum concluded with a shared commitment to transform dialogue into action through strategic partnerships, investment pathways and collaborative initiatives capable of delivering sustainable economic growth across nations.



ABOUT THE GLOBAL POWER WOMEN FORUM

The **Global Power Women Forum (GPWF)** is a flagship international leadership platform of the **Centre for Economic & Leadership Development (CELD)**, UK, established to convene influential women leaders, policymakers, diplomats, academics, investors, entrepreneurs and development practitioners committed to shaping more inclusive and resilient economies. More than a conference, GPWF serves as a strategic platform for dialogue, collaboration and action, bringing together decision-makers from across sectors to address the economic, institutional and leadership challenges facing nations and communities.

The 2026 Cambridge edition was convened under the theme "**Women-Powered Economies: Capital, Trade & the Future of Economic Governance,**" reflecting a deliberate shift in global conversations about women's leadership. Rather than focusing solely on representation, the Forum examined the critical role of women in designing the systems that drive economic growth, shape investment decisions, strengthen governance, expand international trade and build resilient institutions. The programme was carefully structured to explore how leadership, capital, education, innovation, diplomacy and evidence-based policymaking intersect to create sustainable national development.

Hosted in strategic collaboration with **Wolfson College, University of Cambridge**, GPWF 2026 brought together an exceptional community of leaders from government, academia, diplomacy, business and civil society. Participants included a Prime Minister, First Ladies, Ministers, Ambassadors, Members of the UK House of Lords, University of Cambridge professors, international development experts, investors and business executives, creating a unique environment where global experience, academic excellence and practical leadership converged to address shared economic priorities.

Unlike many leadership forums that conclude with dialogue alone, GPWF Cambridge 2026 was intentionally designed to encourage practical collaboration. Through plenary discussions, policy dialogues, investment-focused sessions, academic roundtables, national showcases and structured networking opportunities, delegates examined innovative approaches to financing women-led development, strengthening institutional capacity, promoting market access and accelerating sustainable economic transformation. Every session was designed to encourage the exchange of ideas while fostering partnerships capable of generating measurable impact beyond the Forum itself.

At its core, GPWF recognises that the future of economic governance depends on the meaningful inclusion of women's leadership at every level of decision-making. By creating a platform where governments, investors, researchers, entrepreneurs and development partners engage directly with one another, the Forum continues to advance practical solutions that strengthen economies, expand opportunities and contribute to a more equitable and prosperous global future.



FORUM AT A GLANCE

Forum Information	Details
Forum	Global Power Women Forum Cambridge 2026
Theme	<i>Women-Powered Economies: Capital, Trade & the Future of Economic Governance</i>
Dates	8–9 June 2026
Venue	Wolfson College, University of Cambridge
Host Organisation	Centre for Economic & Leadership Development (CELD), UK
Strategic Partner	Wolfson College, University of Cambridge
Attendance	99 Delegates
Programme Format	Private Networking Dinner, Opening Plenary, Policy Dialogues, Academic Roundtable, National Showcase, Trade & Investment Session, Global Honours Ceremony
Countries Represented	Sri Lanka, Côte d'Ivoire, Lithuania, Nigeria, Namibia, Sierra Leone, United Kingdom and other international delegations
Participants	Prime Minister, First Ladies, Ministers, Ambassadors, Members of the UK House of Lords, University of Cambridge Academics, Investors, Entrepreneurs, Development Partners and Business Leaders
Key Focus Areas	Economic Governance, Capital, Trade, Women's Leadership, Sustainable Investment, Human Capital Development, Education, Climate Finance, Market Access, Public Policy and Institutional Reform



OPENING REMARKS

The formal opening of the Global Power Women Forum Cambridge 2026 was delivered by **Dr. Mrs. Ibifuro Ken-Giami**, Executive Director of the Centre for Economic & Leadership Development (CELD), UK, whose address established the intellectual and strategic foundation for the Forum. Welcoming delegates from across government, diplomacy, academia, business and development institutions, she challenged participants to view the gathering not simply as another international conference, but as a platform deliberately convened to influence policy, strengthen partnerships and shape the future of economic governance.

Drawing on the story of a group of women in a rural community whose conversations about education, healthcare, market access and financial inclusion reflected the realities of economic development, Dr. Ken-Giami demonstrated that the challenges women face are not isolated social issues but fundamental economic questions. She argued that when girls are unable to remain in school, when women are excluded from financial systems, when communities lack access to infrastructure or when health inequalities remain unaddressed, nations lose productivity, innovation and long-term resilience.

Building on this narrative, she introduced the Forum's central theme—**"Women-Powered Economies: Capital, Trade & the Future of Economic Governance."** She emphasised that the conversation must move beyond celebrating women in leadership positions to recognising women as architects of economic systems. According to Dr. Ken-Giami, women must not only participate in economies but actively shape how economies are designed, financed, governed, measured and sustained.

She explained that GPWF Cambridge 2026 had intentionally brought together leaders from government, investment, academia, diplomacy, enterprise and development because meaningful economic transformation occurs when diverse expertise converges around shared objectives. The Forum, she noted, was designed to connect policy with capital, research with implementation, enterprise with markets and leadership with measurable outcomes.

Dr. Ken-Giami also outlined the breadth of the discussions that would follow throughout the day, including national resilience, investment, trade, sustainable finance, education, public health, institutional reform and women's entrepreneurship. She encouraged participants to listen beyond individual presentations and identify opportunities for collaboration, innovation and long-term partnerships capable of driving economic transformation across countries and sectors.

In one of the defining statements of the Forum, she reminded delegates:

"We are not here to speak about women's leadership as ceremony. We are here to speak about women's leadership as economic architecture."

She concluded by inviting participants to build enduring collaborations across academia, business and government, encouraging them to redesign systems that have historically excluded women and to create institutions capable of delivering inclusive prosperity for future generations. Her address set an ambitious tone for the day's proceedings and established the Forum's commitment to transforming dialogue into practical action.



OPENING PLENARY

Women, Power & the Architecture of Global Economies

Designing Systems That Deliver Growth, Stability & Resilience

Time: 9:30 AM – 11:15 AM

Venue: Wolfson College, University of Cambridge



The Global Power Women Forum Cambridge 2026 officially commenced with its Opening Plenary, themed ***"Women, Power & the Architecture of Global Economies."*** Designed as the intellectual cornerstone of the Forum, the plenary challenged conventional thinking about women's leadership by positioning women not merely as participants in economic systems but as architects of the policies, institutions and investment frameworks that determine national prosperity. Bringing together heads of government, First Ladies, diplomats, policymakers, social entrepreneurs and development leaders, the session explored how women are shaping economic resilience through governance, human capital development, sustainable investment and inclusive public policy.

Opening the Forum, **Dr. Mrs. Ibifuro Ken-Giami**, Executive Director of the Centre for Economic & Leadership Development (CELD), welcomed delegates from across continents and reaffirmed the Forum's commitment to advancing practical solutions that strengthen women-powered economies. Her address challenged participants to rethink leadership as a mechanism for systems transformation, emphasising that sustainable economies are built when women influence how capital is allocated, policies are formulated, institutions are governed and opportunities are created. She encouraged delegates to use the Forum as a platform for collaboration, reminding participants that meaningful economic

transformation occurs when government, business, academia and development partners work together towards common goals.

Women as Economic Architecture

How Female Leadership Shapes Growth Models, Productivity, and National Performance

The first thematic session explored how women's leadership contributes directly to national economic performance. Through country experiences and institutional perspectives, speakers demonstrated that investments in human capital, education, social protection, diplomacy and inclusive governance are fundamental components of economic resilience rather than peripheral social concerns.

H.E. Hon. Harini Amarasuriya

Prime Minister, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka



Presentation:

"Governing the Future: Economic Recovery, Digital Transformation and Women's Participation in a Knowledge-Based Economy" (Pre-recorded Keynote)

The Opening Plenary commenced with a keynote address from **H.E. Hon. Harini Amarasuriya**, Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, who reflected on the relationship between governance, innovation and inclusive economic recovery. Her presentation examined how countries can position themselves for long-term competitiveness by investing in knowledge economies, embracing digital transformation and expanding opportunities for women's participation across emerging sectors.

The keynote reinforced the importance of responsive public institutions capable of supporting innovation while ensuring that women remain central to national development strategies. By highlighting the connections between digital transformation, education and economic resilience, the address established a forward-looking framework for the Forum's subsequent discussions on capital, investment and governance.

First Ladies' Interventions

Women as Economic Architecture

One of the defining moments of the Opening Plenary was the special session featuring distinguished First Ladies whose experiences illustrated how leadership beyond elected office can influence national development through strategic social investments, education, health, community resilience and institutional partnerships.

H.E. Diana Nausėdienė

First Lady of the Republic of Lithuania



Presentation:

Human Capital as Economic Infrastructure: Wellbeing, Education, STEM and the Architecture of Resilient Prosperity

Drawing upon Lithuania's national experience, **H.E. Diana Nausėdienė** presented a compelling case for recognising human capital as one of the most important drivers of economic development. She examined the interconnected roles of wellbeing, quality education, STEM advancement and lifelong learning in building resilient societies capable of adapting to rapidly changing global realities.

Her presentation highlighted the importance of investing in people as a national economic strategy, demonstrating how policies that strengthen education and innovation also enhance productivity, competitiveness and long-term prosperity.

H.E. Ambassador Prof. Olufolake AbdulRazaq

First Lady, Kwara State, Nigeria | Chairperson, Nigeria Governors' Spouses' Forum (NGSF)



Presentation:**"Building Resilient Communities: Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Social Protection and Subnational Economic Transformation"**

Representing Nigeria, **H.E. Ambassador Prof. Olufolake AbdulRazaq** examined how community-centred leadership can contribute to broader economic transformation. Using Kwara State as a practical case study, she demonstrated how investments in women's empowerment, social protection, education and community development strengthen local economies while improving resilience among vulnerable populations.

Her presentation emphasised that sustainable national growth is often driven by effective subnational leadership, where targeted interventions at community level generate measurable improvements in livelihoods, productivity and social inclusion.

H.E. Mrs. Sara Amani**Ambassador of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Kingdom****Presentation:****Goodwill Address**

Delivering a goodwill address, **H.E. Mrs. Sara Amani** welcomed the Forum's emphasis on international cooperation and highlighted the value of sustained partnerships between governments, diplomatic institutions and development organisations. She acknowledged

the importance of creating platforms where countries can exchange experiences, strengthen bilateral relationships and explore collaborative approaches to economic development.

Her remarks underscored diplomacy as an important enabler of trade, investment and sustainable international cooperation, affirming that women leaders continue to play a significant role in strengthening relationships that contribute to regional and global prosperity.

Ann Cotton OBE

Founder & Chair Emerita, CAMFED (Campaign for Female Education) | Social Entrepreneur in Residence, Cambridge Judge Business School



Presentation:
"Girls' Education as Economic Architecture: How Investing in Female Human Capital Builds Nations."

Concluding the first subtheme, **Ann Cotton OBE** presented a powerful argument for recognising girls' education as one of the highest-return investments any nation can make. Drawing on decades of experience leading CAMFED, she demonstrated how expanding educational opportunities for girls creates lasting economic benefits through improved workforce participation, stronger leadership pipelines, increased household incomes and enhanced national productivity.

Her presentation reinforced one of the Forum's recurring messages—that human capital development is not simply a social investment but a fundamental pillar of economic architecture. By connecting education with national competitiveness, institutional resilience and intergenerational prosperity, she illustrated why investing in girls remains central to building inclusive and sustainable economies.

Capital with Consequence

Financing Women-Powered Economies for Sustainable Growth

Following the discussions on women as architects of economic transformation, the Forum transitioned to its second thematic session, "**Capital with Consequence.**" This session shifted attention from leadership and governance to the financial systems that underpin inclusive economic growth. Participants examined how investment capital, climate finance and sustainable financing mechanisms can be intentionally structured to deliver economic prosperity while strengthening social resilience, environmental sustainability and institutional development.

The discussions challenged traditional investment models that measure success solely through financial returns, encouraging delegates to consider how capital can simultaneously generate economic value, strengthen communities and improve long-term national competitiveness. The session reflected the Forum's overarching conviction that the future of economic governance depends not only on who leads but also on how financial resources are mobilised, allocated and managed.

Dr. Renuka Thakore

Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Global Sustainable Futures Network CIC



Presentation

"Consequence Capital: Climate Finance, Regenerative Economies and the New Architecture of Long-Term Sustainable Investment."

Opening the session, **Dr. Renuka Thakore** explored the evolving relationship between investment, environmental sustainability and economic resilience. Her presentation examined how climate finance is reshaping global investment priorities and why governments, financial institutions and private investors must increasingly adopt long-term approaches that balance profitability with environmental responsibility.

She argued that future economic competitiveness will depend upon investment models capable of supporting regenerative economies—economic systems designed to restore natural resources, strengthen communities and create sustainable prosperity rather than simply extracting value. She encouraged delegates to recognise climate finance as both an environmental necessity and an economic opportunity capable of driving innovation, expanding employment and improving long-term investment outcomes.

Dr. Thakore further emphasised that women entrepreneurs, community leaders and innovators have a critical role to play in advancing regenerative economic models. She highlighted the importance of improving access to finance, strengthening institutional

partnerships and creating investment ecosystems that enable women-led enterprises to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development.

Her presentation reinforced the Forum's broader message that finance should serve as a catalyst for inclusive growth, ensuring that investment decisions generate measurable economic, environmental and social impact simultaneously.

Baroness Sandy Verma

Member, House of Lords, United Kingdom



Presentation

"From Voice to Architecture: What Women's Leadership Must Now Build."

Building upon the discussion on sustainable investment, **Baroness Sandy Verma** challenged participants to consider how women's leadership must evolve to influence the structures that shape national and global economies.

Reflecting on decades of leadership across government, business and international development, she observed that significant progress has been made in amplifying women's voices within public life. However, she argued that representation alone is no

longer sufficient. The next phase of leadership requires women to actively design the policies, institutions, governance systems and economic frameworks that determine future prosperity.

Baroness Verma encouraged participants to move beyond advocacy towards institution-building, emphasising that lasting change is achieved when women influence legislation, investment strategies, regulatory frameworks and public policy. She highlighted the importance of intergenerational leadership, mentoring future women leaders and strengthening collaboration across governments, academia, enterprise and civil society.

Her presentation resonated strongly with the Forum's central theme, reinforcing that leadership should not simply seek inclusion within existing systems but should contribute to redesigning those systems to become more equitable, innovative and economically resilient.

Together, the presentations by **Dr. Renuka Thakore** and **Baroness Sandy Verma** underscored a common conclusion: women-powered economies require investment strategies that prioritise sustainability, leadership that shapes institutions rather than merely participating within them, and collaborative partnerships capable of transforming ideas into long-term economic outcomes.

Insight-to-Action Roundtable

Connecting Research, Policy and Practice

Moderator: Professor Tolullah Oni



One of the most intellectually engaging sessions of the Forum was the **Insight-to-Action Roundtable**, which brought together leading academics, researchers and development practitioners to examine how evidence-based research can inform policy, investment and institutional reform. Moderated by **Baroness Sandy Verma**, the roundtable reinforced the importance of ensuring that academic knowledge does not remain confined to research institutions but contributes directly to addressing real-world economic and governance challenges.

The session reflected GPWF's commitment to bridging the gap between academia and decision-making by encouraging dialogue between scholars, policymakers, investors and practitioners. Throughout the discussion, panellists demonstrated how rigorous research can support governments in developing more effective public policies, strengthening resilience and improving long-term development outcomes.

Professor Tolullah Oni

Clinical Professor, University of Cambridge

Presentation

"Urban Systems, Climate Health and the Evidence Base for Women-Centred Economic Resilience."

Professor **Tolullah Oni** examined the relationship between urban development, public health and economic resilience. Her presentation demonstrated how cities, if intentionally designed, can improve health outcomes while strengthening productivity and reducing inequalities. She highlighted the importance of integrating scientific evidence into urban planning and policymaking, particularly when addressing the needs of women and vulnerable populations.

She encouraged governments to adopt evidence-driven approaches that recognise health, infrastructure and environmental sustainability as interconnected components of national economic development.

Professor Fawzia Rasheed

Professor **Fawzia Rasheed** highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in addressing complex development challenges. Her contribution emphasised that evidence-based policymaking requires sustained cooperation between researchers, governments and development institutions to ensure that academic knowledge translates into practical solutions capable of improving people's lives.

Tililenji Phiri

Development strategist **Tililenji Phiri** concluded the roundtable by reflecting on the practical application of research within international development programmes. She emphasised that evidence is most valuable when translated into actionable strategies that improve livelihoods, strengthen institutions and expand opportunities for women and young people. Her contribution reinforced the Forum's emphasis on moving from dialogue to implementation through collaborative partnerships and informed decision-making.

Roundtable Reflections

Collectively, the roundtable demonstrated that sustainable economic transformation depends upon strong connections between research, public policy and implementation. Participants agreed that governments, universities, investors and development organisations must continue to work collaboratively to ensure that evidence informs decision-making and that innovation contributes meaningfully to building more inclusive, resilient and prosperous economies.



National Showcase

Women-Powered Economies in Action

Country Perspectives on Inclusive Growth, Leadership and Economic Transformation



One of the defining features of the Global Power Women Forum Cambridge 2026 was the **National Showcase**, a session dedicated to presenting practical examples of how women are driving economic transformation within their respective countries and institutions. Moving beyond conceptual discussions, this session highlighted national experiences, innovative programmes and policy interventions that demonstrate the tangible impact of women's leadership on economic development, social inclusion and institutional resilience.

Representing diverse geographical and policy contexts, speakers examined how governments, civil society organisations and development institutions are addressing national priorities through investments in human capital, social protection, industrial development, peacebuilding and community resilience. Collectively, the presentations illustrated that while countries face different economic realities, many share a common understanding that sustainable development depends upon empowering women as leaders, decision-makers and agents of economic transformation.

Hon. Dr. Emma Kantema (MP)

Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, Republic of Namibia



Presentation

"Positioning Namibia's Women-Powered Economy: Gender Equality, Human Capital and Investment Pathways Across Strategic Growth Sectors."

Opening the National Showcase, **Hon. Dr. Emma Kantema** presented Namibia's vision for advancing inclusive economic growth through strategic investments in gender equality and human capital development. She highlighted the importance of integrating women into national economic planning, emphasising that gender-responsive governance strengthens productivity, expands workforce participation and enhances long-term national competitiveness.

Her presentation explored the role of education, skills development, entrepreneurship and institutional reforms in positioning women to participate more effectively across Namibia's priority economic sectors. She also underscored the importance of building partnerships between government, investors and development organisations to expand economic opportunities for women while strengthening the country's broader development agenda.

By positioning gender equality as an economic imperative rather than solely a social objective, Dr. Kantema reinforced the Forum's central message that women's leadership is fundamental to sustainable national development.

Mrs. Nanna Sylla Coulibaly

Vice President, WIC Côte d'Ivoire



National Perspective

Representing **Côte d'Ivoire**, **Mrs. Nanna Sylla Coulibaly** shared insights into women's leadership and economic participation within the country's evolving development landscape. Her contribution highlighted the importance of strengthening institutional collaboration, expanding opportunities for women entrepreneurs and encouraging partnerships that improve women's participation across strategic sectors of the economy.

Her remarks reflected the Forum's emphasis on cross-border cooperation and demonstrated how national leadership, supported by regional and international partnerships, can contribute to sustainable economic growth and inclusive development.

Mrs. Zeinabou Sidibé

Founder, CEO Afrisends Presentation



"Positioning Côte d'Ivoire for Global Capital: Priority Sectors, Policy Reform and Women-Powered Industrial Strategy."

Continuing the showcase, **Mrs. Zeinabou Sidibé** examined Côte d'Ivoire's efforts to position itself as an attractive destination for investment and industrial growth. Her presentation focused on the importance of policy reforms, strategic planning and investment-friendly environments in expanding access to global capital.

She emphasised that women have a critical role to play in industrial development, entrepreneurship and value-chain expansion, particularly when governments intentionally create enabling environments that support innovation, enterprise growth and international competitiveness.

Mrs. Sidibé encouraged greater collaboration between governments, investors and development institutions to accelerate industrial transformation while ensuring that women remain central participants in emerging economic opportunities.

Mrs. Oghogho Gwabin Musa

Christopher Oghogho Foundation & Wife of the Minister of Defence, Nigeria



Presentation

"Foundations-Level Investments: Menstrual Health, Female Human Capital and the Economic Productivity Argument for Addressing Period Poverty."

One of the Forum's most thought-provoking presentations was delivered by **Mrs. Oghogho Gwabin Musa**, who challenged delegates to recognise menstrual health as a fundamental economic issue rather than merely a public health concern.

Her presentation demonstrated how inadequate menstrual health support contributes to educational disruption, reduced workforce participation and long-term economic losses. By investing in menstrual health, governments strengthen female human capital, improve educational outcomes and enhance national productivity.

Mrs. Musa argued that addressing period poverty should be recognised as an investment in economic resilience, particularly because healthier, educated and economically active women contribute directly to stronger families, communities and national economies.

Her presentation expanded the Forum's understanding of economic infrastructure by illustrating how investments traditionally categorised as social interventions generate measurable economic returns.

Madam Hawa Sally Samai

Presentation

"Peace as Economic Infrastructure: Women's Leadership, National Cohesion and the Foundations of Inclusive Growth – The Sierra Leone Case Study."

Concluding the National Showcase, **Madam Hawa Sally Samai** presented a compelling perspective on the relationship between peacebuilding, national cohesion and economic development.

Using Sierra Leone's experience, she demonstrated that sustainable economic growth cannot be achieved without peace, social stability and inclusive governance. Her presentation explored how women leaders contribute to conflict prevention, reconciliation, community engagement and institutional strengthening, thereby creating the stable environments required for investment, entrepreneurship and national development.

She highlighted women's unique capacity to build trust across communities, strengthen local governance and foster collaboration between government and citizens. Her presentation reinforced the understanding that peace is not simply a political objective but an essential component of economic infrastructure that enables countries to attract investment, create employment and improve the quality of life for their citizens.

National Showcase Reflections

The National Showcase demonstrated that although countries pursue different development strategies, they share common priorities: strengthening human capital, expanding economic opportunities for women, promoting inclusive governance and building resilient institutions capable of supporting long-term growth.

Through practical case studies from **Namibia, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Sierra Leone**, delegates gained valuable insights into how women's leadership is influencing national policy, strengthening communities and positioning countries for greater economic competitiveness. The session reinforced the Forum's central conviction that women-powered economies are built not only through high-level policy commitments but also through sustained investment in people, institutions and partnerships.



Market Access, Trade & Capital Pathways

Connecting Women-Led Enterprises to Global Markets

The Forum concluded its thematic discussions with **Market Access, Trade & Capital Pathways**, a practical session focused on helping women-led enterprises move beyond local success to regional and international competitiveness. Recognising that access to finance alone is insufficient, the session explored the broader ecosystem required for sustainable business growth, including export readiness, legal compliance, international partnerships and commercial strategy.

This closing discussion reflected GPWF Cambridge 2026's commitment to translating leadership into measurable economic outcomes by equipping women entrepreneurs with knowledge, networks and practical pathways for expanding into global markets.

Market Access, Trade & Capital Pathways

Building Competitive Women-Led Enterprises for Global Markets

The final thematic session of the Global Power Women Forum Cambridge 2026 focused on one of the most significant challenges facing women entrepreneurs and business leaders worldwide, transforming promising enterprises into globally competitive businesses. While previous sessions explored leadership, governance, investment and

policy, **"Market Access, Trade & Capital Pathways"** concentrated on the practical mechanisms required to connect women-led businesses with regional and international markets. The discussion recognised that sustainable economic growth depends not only on access to finance but also on the ability of enterprises to navigate export systems, comply with international regulations, establish strategic partnerships and compete confidently within global value chains.

The session highlighted the importance of creating enabling ecosystems where governments, financial institutions, trade organisations and the private sector collaborate to remove barriers limiting women's participation in international commerce. Speakers encouraged participants to view global trade not simply as an opportunity for business expansion but as a catalyst for innovation, investment, employment creation and long-term economic resilience.

Rachel Blackburn MBE

Founder and CEO, US2U Consulting Ltd



International Trade & Business Development Specialist

Presentation

"Building for Global Markets: Export Readiness, International Partnership Development and Long-Term Commercial Sustainability."

Opening the session, **Rachel Blackburn MBE** explored the practical foundations required for women-led businesses to compete successfully within international markets. She explained that sustainable commercial growth extends beyond developing quality products or services; it requires deliberate preparation, strategic planning and an understanding of global market expectations.

Her presentation focused on export readiness, emphasising the importance of developing strong organisational systems, maintaining high operational standards and building the capacity needed to meet international demand. She encouraged entrepreneurs to invest in long-term business resilience through strategic planning, innovation and continuous improvement rather than pursuing rapid but unsustainable expansion.

Rachel Blackburn also highlighted the critical role of partnerships in international business development. She noted that collaboration with governments, trade promotion agencies, investors and established private-sector organisations enables businesses to access new markets, strengthen credibility and identify commercial opportunities that may otherwise remain inaccessible.

Her presentation concluded by encouraging women entrepreneurs to adopt a global mindset, positioning their enterprises not merely to participate in international markets but to compete successfully within them.

Joan Asante

Managing Director, The Asante Group



Presentation

"From Agreement to Transaction: Cross-Border Contracts, Compliance Architecture, Market Entry and Commercial Pathways."

Continuing the discussion, **Joan Asante** addressed the legal and commercial frameworks that underpin successful international trade. Her presentation examined the importance of strong contractual arrangements, regulatory compliance and effective commercial planning in supporting cross-border business transactions.

She explained that expanding into international markets requires businesses to understand the legal obligations governing trade, investment and commercial partnerships across different jurisdictions. Robust compliance systems, transparent governance and carefully structured contractual agreements, she noted, are essential for building investor confidence and sustaining long-term business relationships.

Joan Asante further highlighted the importance of market-entry strategies that take account of local business environments, regulatory requirements and cultural considerations. She encouraged entrepreneurs to undertake thorough due diligence before entering new markets, recognising that informed decision-making reduces risk while increasing opportunities for sustainable commercial success.

Her presentation reinforced the Forum's broader emphasis on strengthening institutional capacity and ensuring that women-led enterprises possess not only the ambition to expand internationally but also the legal and strategic capabilities required to thrive within increasingly competitive global markets.

Session Reflections

The **Market Access, Trade & Capital Pathways** session provided a practical conclusion to the Forum's discussions by demonstrating that women's economic empowerment must ultimately translate into increased participation in national, regional and global markets. Participants recognised that while access to finance remains essential, sustainable business growth also depends upon strong governance, export readiness, strategic partnerships, regulatory compliance and market intelligence.

Throughout the discussion, delegates reflected on the importance of strengthening collaboration between governments, chambers of commerce, development finance institutions, universities and the private sector to create enabling environments where women-led enterprises can scale successfully. The session reinforced that women-powered economies are strengthened when entrepreneurs are equipped with the knowledge, networks and institutional support necessary to transform innovation into commercial success and local enterprises into internationally competitive businesses.

By concluding the thematic programme with a forward-looking discussion on trade and market access, the Forum reinforced its commitment to practical implementation. The conversations throughout the day had moved from leadership and governance to investment, research, national development and finally to enterprise growth, illustrating a comprehensive framework for building economies in which women are not only represented but are central to shaping future prosperity.

Global Power Impact & Legacy Honours

As the policy and thematic sessions concluded, delegates gathered for one of the most inspiring moments of the Forum, the **Global Power Impact & Legacy Honours Ceremony**. This prestigious segment celebrated distinguished women leaders whose service, innovation and commitment have strengthened governance, diplomacy, education, social development and economic transformation across their respective countries and sectors.

The honours reflected the Centre for Economic & Leadership Development's commitment to recognising leaders whose contributions extend beyond professional achievement to create measurable and lasting impact within communities, institutions and nations. The recipients represented diverse sectors, yet each embodied the Forum's central belief that transformative leadership is defined not by position alone but by the ability to inspire progress, strengthen institutions and improve lives.

The **Global Power Impact & Legacy Honours** were presented to:

- **H.E. Hon. Dr. Harini Amarasuriya** – Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.



- **H.E. Diana Nausėdienė** – First Lady of the Republic of Lithuania.



- **H.E. Ambassador Prof. Olufolake AbdulRazaq** – First Lady of Kwara State, Nigeria, and Chairperson of the Nigeria Governors' Spouses' Forum.



- **Hon. Dr. Emma Kantema (MP)** – Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, Republic of Namibia.



- **Mrs. Oghogho Gwabin Musa** – President, Defence and Police Officers' Wives Association (DEPOWA), Nigeria.



- **Madam Hawa Sally Samai** – Distinguished Peace and Development Leader, Sierra Leone.



Each recipient was recognised for demonstrating exceptional leadership in advancing inclusive development, strengthening institutions, championing women's empowerment and contributing to national and international progress. The ceremony served as a fitting conclusion to a Forum dedicated to celebrating women who are actively shaping the future of economic governance and sustainable development.

FORUM OUTCOMES

From Dialogue to Action

The Global Power Women Forum Cambridge 2026 concluded with a shared recognition that building women-powered economies requires sustained collaboration, visionary leadership and practical action. Throughout the two-day programme, participants reaffirmed that women are central to shaping economic governance—not only as contributors to national development but also as architects of policies, institutions, investment strategies and international partnerships that determine long-term prosperity.

The Forum successfully created a platform where government leaders, diplomats, academics, investors, entrepreneurs and development practitioners could engage in meaningful dialogue around common challenges and opportunities. By bringing together expertise from different sectors and countries, GPWF strengthened international

relationships while encouraging participants to identify practical areas for future cooperation in trade, investment, education, innovation and institutional development.

Several recurring themes emerged across the Forum's plenary sessions, thematic discussions and national showcases. Speakers consistently emphasised the importance of investing in human capital, particularly through education, healthcare and skills development, as the foundation for sustainable economic growth. There was broad agreement that economies become more resilient when women have equitable access to leadership opportunities, financial resources, markets and decision-making processes.

Delegates also highlighted the need for stronger partnerships between governments, academia, financial institutions and the private sector to accelerate innovation and improve access to investment for women-led enterprises. The discussions demonstrated that economic transformation depends upon collaboration across institutions and sectors, ensuring that policy decisions are informed by research, investment strategies support inclusive growth and entrepreneurship is strengthened through enabling regulatory environments.

The Forum further reinforced the importance of integrating sustainability into economic planning. Presentations on climate finance, regenerative economies, public health, urban systems and social protection illustrated that long-term prosperity requires investment approaches that balance economic growth with environmental stewardship and social wellbeing.

One of the Forum's defining achievements was its ability to connect strategic dialogue with practical implementation. Through the Private Networking Mixer, structured policy discussions and targeted networking opportunities, delegates established new professional relationships and identified opportunities for collaboration beyond the Forum. These interactions reflected GPWF's commitment to ensuring that conversations initiated in Cambridge continue to generate measurable outcomes within participating countries and institutions.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

The Global Power Women Forum Cambridge 2026 achieved several important milestones, including:

- Convening distinguished leaders from government, diplomacy, academia, business and development institutions under the shared theme of **"Women-Powered Economies: Capital, Trade & the Future of Economic Governance."**
- Strengthening dialogue on women's leadership as a driver of economic governance, institutional reform and sustainable development.
- Showcasing practical national experiences from **Sri Lanka, Lithuania, Nigeria, Namibia, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone**, demonstrating how women are

contributing to economic transformation through governance, education, investment, peacebuilding and social innovation.

- Promoting evidence-based policymaking through the participation of leading scholars from the University of Cambridge and other institutions.
- Advancing conversations on climate finance, sustainable investment and regenerative economic models.
- Exploring practical pathways for improving market access, export readiness and commercial sustainability for women-led enterprises.
- Celebrating exceptional leadership through the **Global Power Impact & Legacy Honours**, recognising distinguished women whose contributions continue to inspire positive change across nations.
- Strengthening international networks capable of supporting future partnerships, collaborative research, investment opportunities and leadership initiatives.

These achievements collectively reinforced the Forum's objective of positioning women not only as participants in economic systems but also as influential leaders shaping the future of national and global development.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Global Power Women Forum Cambridge 2026 represents an important milestone in an ongoing journey to strengthen women's leadership within the global economy. While the Forum concluded its formal programme in Cambridge, the conversations initiated during the event are intended to continue through sustained partnerships, collaborative projects and continued engagement among participating institutions and leaders.

Moving forward, the Centre for Economic & Leadership Development (CELD), UK, will continue to build on the momentum generated by the Forum by encouraging cross-sector collaboration, promoting knowledge exchange and supporting initiatives that advance women's participation in economic governance. The relationships established throughout the Forum provide a strong foundation for future cooperation across government, academia, business and international development.

The Forum also reaffirmed the importance of creating platforms where women leaders from different regions can exchange ideas, share successful practices and collectively address emerging global challenges. As economies continue to evolve in response to technological change, climate pressures and shifting geopolitical realities, the insights shared at GPWF Cambridge 2026 provide valuable guidance for policymakers, investors and development practitioners seeking inclusive and sustainable solutions.

Ultimately, the Forum demonstrated that women-powered economies are not an aspiration for the future, they are already taking shape through courageous leadership, strategic investment, innovative thinking and purposeful collaboration. GPWF Cambridge 2026 stands as a testament to what can be achieved when leaders come together with a

shared commitment to building stronger institutions, more resilient economies and greater opportunities for future generations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Centre for Economic & Leadership Development (CELD), UK, expresses its sincere appreciation to **Wolfson College, University of Cambridge**, for its valued collaboration in hosting the Global Power Women Forum Cambridge 2026.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all keynote speakers, distinguished guests, government representatives, ambassadors, First Ladies, ministers, Members of the House of Lords, academics, investors, entrepreneurs, development partners and delegates whose participation enriched the Forum through their knowledge, leadership and commitment.

Special appreciation is extended to the Forum's organising committee, volunteers, technical teams, protocol officers, media partners and support staff whose professionalism and dedication ensured the successful delivery of the event.

Finally, we acknowledge every participant whose contributions, questions, ideas and partnerships transformed the Forum into a meaningful platform for advancing women-powered economies and strengthening global collaboration.

CONCLUSION

The Global Power Women Forum Cambridge 2026 was more than an international gathering, it was a strategic call to action. Across two days of thoughtful dialogue, rigorous analysis and meaningful engagement, participants demonstrated that the future of economic governance depends on leadership that is inclusive, collaborative and visionary.

From discussions on governance, education and human capital to sustainable finance, climate resilience, market access and institutional reform, the Forum consistently reinforced one central message: ***when women shape economies, societies become stronger, more resilient and better prepared for the future.***

As delegates departed Cambridge, they carried with them not only new ideas but also strengthened partnerships and a renewed commitment to advancing the work begun during the Forum. The conversations, collaborations and commitments forged at GPWF Cambridge 2026 will continue to inform policy, inspire innovation and contribute to building economies that are more inclusive, equitable and sustainable for generations to come.

"Welcome to Cambridge. Welcome to the conversation. And welcome to the work of building women-powered economies." — *Dr. Mrs. Ibifuro Ken-Giami*