

WEI FORWARD

Women's Economic Imperative



International Conference

Royal Bank of Scotland
Gogarburn Business School
Edinburgh, SCOTLAND
November 24 - 26, 2019

**Opportunities and
Challenges for
Equity,
Inclusive Growth
and
Sustainability**





**Women's
Economic
Empowerment**

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Opportunities and Challenges for Equity, Inclusive Growth, and Sustainability



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**SUNDAY NOV 24 / TUESDAY NOV 26 / 2019 / AT THE ROYAL BANK OF SCOTLAND
GOGARBURN BUSINESS SCHOOL EDINBURGH**

WEE Welcome

International Conference on

Women's Economic Empowerment: Opportunities and Challenges for Equity, Inclusive Growth, and Sustainability

PRESENTED BY



WEI FORWARD
Women's Economic Imperative

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



The timing of this conference is right. We know the key issues and drivers of women's economic empowerment. We now need to craft solutions, define specific actions, and secure the commitment of our participants, partners and networks to act. I am delighted that WEI has organized this conference, in collaboration with the host organization - WES, to bring together thought leaders and partners representing civil society, the private sector, public sector, and academia. With our WEI Board, specialists and wider team, WEI is leveraging its global networks, affiliations, and expertise to share knowledge and engage participants in active dialog and action to advance the women's economic empowerment agenda for the benefit of all.

Margo Thomas

WEIForward, Founder and President

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Founder and President
Women's Economic Imperative



« The goal of this conference is to craft solutions, define specific actions, and secure the commitment of our participants, partners and networks to act. The Conference will feature thought leaders representing civil society, the private sector, public sector, and academia to share knowledge and engage participants in active dialog and problem-solving to advance the women's economic empowerment agenda for the benefit of all. »

Carolyn Currie

Chief Executive
Women's Enterprise Scotland



« As a catalyst for economic growth and inclusion, WES works to create an environment where women can start up in business and thrive. The simple fact is that more women-owned businesses in Scotland means more money for the economy. Research shows that women-owned businesses already contribute a staggering £8.8bn into the economy every year and have created over 230,000 jobs in local communities across Scotland. »

Conference Overview

Women's Economic Imperative (WEI) and Women's Enterprise Scotland (WES) partnered to host the 2019 Women's Economic Empowerment conference on 24-26 November 2019 in Edinburgh, Scotland.

The conference convened over 100 international speakers, thought leaders and changemakers and was hosted at the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) Gogarburn Business School. RBS, Mastercard and Standard Life Aberdeen were platinum sponsors of the conference.



The core objectives of the conference included sharing knowledge, engaging participants in active dialog, and catalysing concrete actions to help advance women's economic empowerment. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a particular focus on the cross-cutting SDG- Goal 5 – women's economic empowerment was a central theme of the conference. The framing of the conference also drew on the work of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment and Think 20 2018 Taskforce on Gender Economic Equity.

WEI played a pivotal role as the convener of thought leaders and leading policy makers and was intentional in the crafting a dynamic conference agenda. The agenda was structured to facilitate dialogue between groups that are often siloed in order to produce concrete solutions and actions on critical social and economic issues impacting women. The conference successfully convened participants representing civil society, academia, private sector and public sector. WEI also focused on elevating the voice of youth leaders and emerging scholars who are making important contributions within their communities and beyond. The objective of the conference was to ensure as robust a gathering that also cut across generations, cultures as well as expertise.



Conference speakers and notable attendees included technology evangelist **Professor Sue Black** – Durham University; **Captain Irene Koki Mutungi** – Kenyan Airways Captain and first woman African Dreamliner pilot, the **Hon. Luis Guillermo Solis Rivera** – Former President of Costa Rica and Co-Chair of the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, as well as prominent Scottish and global industry leaders such as **Susan Fouquier** – Royal Bank of Scotland Regional Managing Director, Business Banking; **Keith Skeoch** – CEO Standard Life Aberdeen, the **Rt Hon. Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale**, and **Ann Cairns** – Executive Vice Chair, Mastercard.

Welcome Reception at Edinburgh City Chambers

Councillor Frank Ross, Lord Provost of Edinburgh, welcomed participants during a reception at the Edinburgh City Chambers on Sunday, November 24.



Susan Fouquier – Royal Bank of Scotland Regional Managing Director, Business Banking greeted participants and extended the welcome to the Business School at the RBS Gogarburn Campus.

MONDAY – NOVEMBER 26, 2019

The official conference opened on 25 November with welcome addresses from **Criona Courtney** – Royal Bank of Scotland Board Member, **Carolyn Currie** – CEO, Women's Enterprise Scotland and **Amadou Mahtar Ba**, Co-Founder and Executive Chairman, AllAfrica and Board Chair, Women's Economic Imperative (WEI).

Keith Skeoch – CEO, Standard Life Aberdeen delivered the opening keynote.



Drivers of Women's Economic Empowerment: The Intersection of Culture, Politics and Economics

Panelists discussed the important role that businesses can play a key role in driving women's economic empowerment. The panelists noted that businesses can and should exert influence, for example, as role models and working in collaboration with charity partners to increase their impact. Global investors can channel capital and influence companies towards a better future. This was noted as a key area to share good practice. Having men involved in the debate was also a salient theme of the discussion so as to dispel the prevailing notion that women's economic empowerment is only a 'women's agenda' and rather to demonstrate that it is a human rights agenda. Thus, to enable progress, it is important for everyone to contribute.

Hon. Luis Guillermo Solis Rivera succinctly outlined the 7 drivers of women's economic empowerment as follows:

- Tackling adverse norm positive role models
- Ensuring legal protection: Enhance women
- Recognizing unpaid work and care:
- Building digital financial assets: credit accessibility for women
- Changing practice behavior: Be decision maker of high corporate responsibility
- Improving public sector spec. Procurement; instrument to direct budget
- Collective voices and representation: give visibility to these issue

This session framed the discussion for the subsequent plenary sessions and workshops.



In Conversation with Ann Cairns



WEI Founder and President – Dr. **Margo Thomas** and Executive Vice Chair of Mastercard – **Ann Cairns** discussed the need to disrupt the way the market operates; to make changes based on evidence. To do this better quality data must be systematically collected. By 2025, it is predicted that half the world's wealth will be in the hands of women. Women already make 80% of the purchasing decisions, so they need to be more involved in the development of financial products and services.

Ms. Cairns noted that currently, only 2.2% of global investment capital flows to women-owned firms. In terms of bank loans, in many countries, higher interest rates are demanded for loans to women. Mastercard is working to help women by partnering with the World Bank, national governments, NGOs, tech entrepreneurs, as well as local people in communities across the world. Since 2015, Mastercard has connected half a million people into the financial system and continues to pursue the financial inclusion of women to close the financial gap. Cairns called for all organizations, whether private or public, to assess how they are contributing towards creating solutions for women entrepreneurs and to commit to taking action on these issues.

“You can’t have the internet of everything if you don’t have the inclusion of everyone.”

Ann Cairns,
Executive Vice
Chair,
Mastercard.

Women's Assets: Leveraging Financial and Digital Access for Entrepreneurship

Access to finance and digital resources for women's entrepreneurship have been identified among the systemic constraints of women's economic empowerment. Action to tackle these constraints is critical to unlock the power of women entrepreneurs. Often across countries there are policies to support women entrepreneurs, but no programmes to fully support or implement these individual policies. There is a need for more women-focused market interventions, to close the gaps between these policies and programmes, and to monitor budgets to ensure the implementation of policies addressing diversity and inclusion in financing entrepreneurs.

The keynote for this session was delivered by **Professor Barbara Orser**, Telfer School of Management, University of Ottawa.



Digital Technology: Women in the Changing World of Work

During this session, panelists tackled several issues pertaining to the impact that technological developments are having on women's contributions to the global economy. Discussions focused on unpacking the digital divide to understand how it has developed and how changes in digital policies can increase access to digital resources that specifically target women, girls, and other under-represented groups. The consequences of the digital divide on the progress of women entrepreneurs are significant. Without adapting to the demand for increased digital skills, women entrepreneurs run the risk of being financially exploited for their work, creating inefficient working environments, and lacking the ability to promote their products more widely.

Some key take-aways from the discussions included the need for:

- Increased and targeted digital skills training particularly for women entrepreneurs who would benefit from digitalization to keep up with the technological advancements rapidly taking place.
- Multidisciplinary frameworks that could integrate the experiences of women, girls and other marginalized groups to facilitate the development of solutions for addressing the widening digital divide.



Financing & Financial Services for Women Entrepreneurs

Panelists focused on unpacking the critical barriers to access on both the supply and demand side of financing and financial services, recognizing the limited access that women entrepreneurs have to capital. Their discussion led to the assertion that financial support alone cannot add the necessary value to women entrepreneurs and rather a whole package of aligned financial and non-financial support is required to effectively move the needle of change. To realize this goal, changing the landscape of how banks and investors respond to women entrepreneurs seeking capital is a key priority.

The panelists and participants called for an improved understanding of women's entrepreneurship and a move away from binary female to male and female businesses that could allow for an expanded ecosystem that promotes diversity and inclusion. Without fundamental data-driven policy changes in the largely male-dominated finance sector, panelists concluded that the support for women entrepreneurs would continue to be ineffective. The panel was rounded out with several key recommendations, including:

- A call for greater knowledge sharing between nations regarding creating more opportunities for women entrepreneurs to generate best practices.

- Developing policies that reduce the barriers to capital access and inspire women on the entrepreneurial journeys.
- An increased focus and prioritization of disaggregated data that can support with a more robust understanding of the financial and non-financial support that women entrepreneurs require.



Women's Entrepreneurship: Policies and Practices

Speakers presented on the barriers that women in enterprise continue to face. These include: prevailing limited definitions about the role of women; cultural norms; discrimination; and a range of country-specific issues such as regulatory frameworks, constitutional provisions, and laws that disproportionately hinder women's economic and social rights.

Additionally, speakers discussed the negative responses that women entrepreneurs receive while attempting to overcome the barriers towards their economic success which were comprised of gender-based violence, domestic abuse, physical and sexual assault at the hands of law enforcement and those in positions of power while at work and a host of other issues. Thus, while there are countries that have implemented policy changes in support of women entrepreneurs, the consensus among speakers was that even where policies exist, they often do not take women's lived realities into account. As a result, these barriers persist. The key recommendations from this discussion included:

- Greater prioritization on empirical research and data collection that can help inform policies that are aligned with the issues that women entrepreneurs face.

- Engaging women early on through educational institutes and equipping them with entrepreneurial tools and skills
- Removing impediments that further inhibit women's ability to identify and capitalize on opportunities in the market.



Communities as Engines of Inclusive Growth

The focus of this session was to engage in discussions around inclusive and sustainable development at the intersection of geography, politics, economics, social well-being, and health. The destruction of communities has happened globally as the dialogue of individualism is replacing the concept of community. Existing approaches to enterprise are governed by social norms that create division. In community building today, women as a group lack engagement. The social structure of power remains and can exclude all women. Yet women themselves are creating this landscape where they are excluded - and unfortunately, accepting what is currently in place will not achieve progress. Creating safe spaces for women in communities is important and a project in San Salvador has addressed this by creating an agreed time of day where women can go about their business free of harassment and gender-based violence. Migration and trafficking are challenges, as are the hidden forms of violence against women. Climate change is a global issue, and women and children are disproportionately affected. Greater gender disaggregated data is needed to bring these community-based issues into sharper focus to aid policy development and progress.



Key takeaways from Day 1 – Monday, November 25

- Without data, policy implementation runs the risk of being ineffective or further deepen existing inequities
- Women face a variety of obstacles and this requires a variety of country and context specific solutions
- While there has been progress in increasing women's economic and social rights, there is much more that needs to be done to effect lasting change.

Salon: Gender Equity and The Role of the Media in Influencing Perceptions, Voice, Norms and Representation

To close-out a robust and diverse range of conversations throughout the day, **Amadou Mahtar Ba** moderated an engaging fireside discussion on the role of media in framing and amplifying women's voices. Panelists shared their experiences and views on how to increase the opportunities for women to act as advocates and changemakers as a pathway for shaping their own unique narratives. While it was acknowledged that progress has been made in creating a narrative on women's empowerment that is now widely accessible via varying media forms, it was noted that there is still much work that needs to be done. It was further concluded that to achieve social transformation, there needs to be more opportunities given to women to tell their own stories using various modes of media. As a result, while discussing the role of male champions in creating more opportunities for women's narratives to be told, it was noted that male champions, alone, cannot take on the work and rather need to be willing to collaborate with women in order to effect real and sustainable change. Furthermore, panelists shared their weariness of the term "male champions" as it assumed that men need to be celebrated or heralded for supporting gender equity. The discussion left participants with much to reflect on and enabled a successful close out of the first conference day.

TUESDAY – NOVEMBER 26, 2019

Women's Health as an Economic Value: The Role of Health Technologies



This session explored the prevailing issues and potential solutions for addressing the link between health and population dynamics, and how positive outcomes can be advanced through health technologies and partnerships.

As it stands, the importance of women's health is largely undervalued and often relegated to a lower priority in policy and practice. Consequently, women's health accounts for only 4% of the overall funding for research and development (Forbes, 2018). Thus, there is a critical need for greater inclusion of women in health care innovation.

Joel Ugborogho, CenHealth, delivered the keynote and the panel of experts discussed how addressing the gender inequities that exist in health and strategies for unleashing the triple gender dividend:

- Health: bring quality, accessible health to more people
- Gender: recognize, reward and facilitate the integral role of women in the care economy as health professionals, and unpaid care provided by women and girls in households, and the underpaid services provided by women in the informal sector
- Economic dividend: bring more jobs and increase productivity to increase contributions to economic growth



"Ensuring that women have improved access to quality health care is directly correlated to their ability to contribute to the economy. In Sub-Saharan Africa alone, the untapped potential contribution to the global economy by women is estimated at \$300 billion."
Dr. Yonette Thomas

In addition, the panelists noted that leveraging health technologies to improve women's health can play a critical role in realizing the true economic value of women. Thus, they called for a paradigm shift in the technology space that can tap into the potential of health technologies. To realize this goal there would also need to be a pivot from



organizational-centric product design to patient-centric solutions. Furthermore, improving the technological literacy of health workers will be vital for the success of health technologies. The panel concluded that without an intentional investment in women-centric health ecosystems, the full economic contributions of women cannot be realized.

The Changing World of Work: Economic and Social Issues

During this session, panelists discussed how women are currently limited by the accumulative effects of disadvantage including domestic violence, childbirth, workplace harassment and the menopause, with many women leaving work as a result.

Many organizations and societies are still geared up for the industrial age and the pattern of work, eat and then sleep for eight hours. Yet we are now in a knowledge revolution where we use our brains and creativity and rarely make a physical product. There is recognition that the world of work is changing in many ways.

Other notable changes include precarious employment contracts, and job types changing across the labour market. Flexible working policies create individualised working options such as compressed hours or term time working.

For women at work, many issues remain the same with gendered occupational segregation; discrimination at work (including pregnancy and maternity discrimination); glass ceiling and sticky floors.



Disabled women experience significant issues. Data from the UN shows unemployment rates of 50%-70% in the developed world and 80%-90% in the undeveloped world. Self-employment and entrepreneurship can provide different opportunities and help tackle issues including negative past work experience; poor wages; discrimination; poor career opportunities; adjustments to work practices and mental health issues such as anxiety.

Setting up a business venture creates space and flexibility for people with disability. Starting a business provides an opportunity to become self-sufficient, to gain a better income and quality of life and thrive. Creating more work opportunities for disabled women requires policy help.

Panelists and participants concluded that developing an inclusive work culture needs values and behavior which accept impairment as a fact of life.

Town and Country, the importance of sustainable communities: Opportunities and Challenges for Women

During this session, panelists and participants gave their perspectives on the future of urban and rural communities within the context of gender, inclusive growth and resilience. The areas of discussion included the ability of women living urban, peri-urban and rural to have access to infrastructure. The panel also discussed the changing demographics that are shaping rural economies as well as the impact of agriculture and extractives on rural economies and the rights of under-represented groups.

Spatializing Health Research and Practice: Implications for the Health of Women and Girls





Panelists advocated for the need to leverage recent advances in geospatial technologies to enhance understanding of health environments and populations to jumpstart improvements in health outcomes for women and girls. Understanding the lived realities that women face is critical to creating solutions and panelists also noted the disempowering effects that issues such as immigration and gender-based-violence have on women. It was widely agreed that it is vital that women and girls are empowered to be agents of change and that they are included in developing the necessary solutions that promote their health and wellbeing.

Empower a Girl, Transform a Community. The Role of Education: Challenging Culture and Norms



Panelists tackled the varying challenges and opportunities that girls face within their communities and the role that education can play to challenge and rethink prevailing cultures

and norms. The discussions also focused on identifying the methods by which communities and thought leaders can be engaged and ensuring that all stakeholders regardless of age and gender could be included. Finally, panelists also discussed the role of innovations in education systems that could empower girls with work-ready and STEM skills that would prepare them for the ever-changing world of work.

Menstrual poverty was noted as a critical barrier to accessing education for girls as a result many girls are often forced to drop out of school or to miss several days due to the fear of the stigma that is attached to menstruation. The pressures of poverty in many communities also results in child marriages, early pregnancy and other situations that leave girls in precarious and disempowered situations. Owing to these and many other confounding issues, panelists called for interventions that focus on empowering girls to find their voice and to sensitize communities on the value that empowered women and girls bring.

Women's Entrepreneurship in Non-traditional Sectors – Agri-Business, Construction, Logistics, Supply Chains, Extractives



This panel discussion focused on highlighting the opportunities and challenges for female entrepreneurs competing in non-traditional sectors while making the case for a gender focus in extractives policy frameworks. Panelists also shared their perspectives on the methods for women entrepreneurs to tap into the procurement market and in regional and global supply chains.

Ensuring safe working environments was highlighted as an important consideration for increasing women's representation in non-traditional sectors. Furthermore, women are often not encouraged to pursue these sectors due to the lacking coaching and mentorship that is available to their male counterparts who are also armoured with the networks that help create opportunities and avenues to enter these sectors. Panelists also called for leaders within these sectors to place more emphasis and focus on creating opportunities for women to level the playing field.

Strengthening Voice and Agency: Youth and Women



There is a real need for better listening of young people in our communities to understand why policies are not working. Structures need to be challenged, especially around the barriers that are specific to women of colour. For example, in one inner city locality, young people met with senior managers and politicians in the local authority so that both sides could hear what the other had to say, and to be able to voice their key issues.

The initiative of giving young people 100 hours of meaningful work experience is now live for young people in Hackney and supported by the local authority. Businesses were pulled in to participate by the local authority with incentives such as a reduction in business rates in return for giving a young person a work experience opportunity. In another example of successful engagement, when there were issues about the gentrification of communities, planning applications had to also go through a youth panel. This was to ensure that what mattered to young people in communities was not lost. It was agreed that youth boards are very important, and the Scottish Youth Parliament was highlighted as another example.

Encouraging young girls and women to consider careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects continues to be a challenge and requires an ongoing focus.

Mapping Issues and Hacking Disruptive Solutions



During this interactive and closing session, the panel and conference participants identified and highlighted key themes and issues discussed in previous sessions. The goal of this session was to provide participants with the chance to reflect on the discussions and measure the progress achieved across the conference against the aims and objectives that had been recorded throughout. Participants were then organized into small groups to discuss and hack solutions and report back during the plenary.

Participants were given the opportunity to share their personal next steps, commitments, and actions that they would take away from the conference by responding to the following questions:

- What are the critical action steps?
- What can you do personally?
- What can your organization do?
- What can you do within your professional framework?
- Who can you influence through your personal and professional networks?

"If we don't have a common present, how can we develop a common future?"

Jermain Jackman,
Youth Activist, United Kingdom.

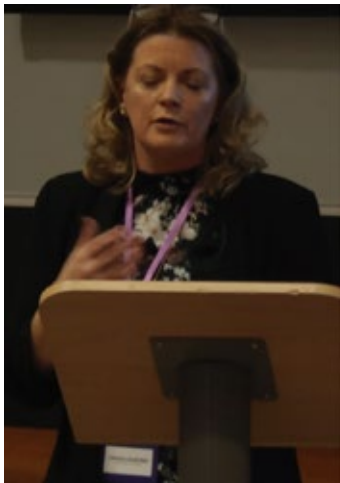


The conference discussions served to renew the focus of participants on the importance of achieving SDG-5 as an essential and cross-cutting element of the sustainable development goals. Every participating individual and organization was challenged to take action. By continuing to leverage collective strengths, skills and expertise we can sustain the progress started and play our **part in achieving SDG-5**.



The word cloud below captures keywords used by participants in committing to moving the needle on women's economic empowerment through various avenues. The commitments highlighted the power of convening stakeholders from diverse sectors to inspire new ideas and approaches for creating sustainable change.









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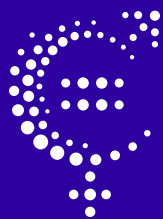
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