



The 2024

WEEMPOWER Challenge

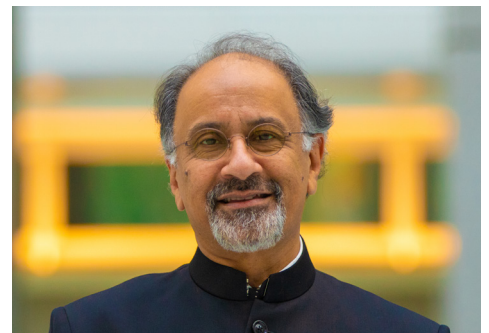
Messages from our co-chairs

The Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory at Arizona State University was founded to help create sustainable, just and regenerative global futures for all through multistakeholder engagement, radical collaboration and a transdisciplinary approach. Women entrepreneurs and innovators are essential in translating that vision into reality. The Global Futures Lab is delighted to support and showcase the incredible women from across 193 UN member countries who participate in the annual WE Empower UN SDG Challenge. Amplifying their solutions can help change the world!



Julie Ann Wrigley
Founding Benefactor
ASU Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory

With slowing economic growth, rising food insecurity, and increasing extreme-weather events, it takes a global economy firing on all cylinders to ward off threats to development. That won't happen without gender equality and economic inclusion: sidelining the talents of half of humanity is an awful game plan. The World Bank's research for the Women, Business and the Law project shows that women enjoy barely two-thirds of the legal rights of their male counterparts globally. The WE Empower UN SDG Challenge awardees are proof of the contributions that women entrepreneurs are making toward innovation, job creation, and economic prosperity. Now imagine a world in which work like theirs is less the exception and more the norm.



Indermit Gill
Chief Economist
The World Bank

Messages from our co-chairs

Vital Voices joined ASU eight years ago to launch the WE Empower Global Challenge because we have seen in our 27 years of supporting more than 20,000 women leaders across 186 countries that our world will only achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals by tapping the power and ingenuity of women entrepreneurs. Time and time again we have seen women come up with innovative solutions to our world's toughest problems. From the climate crisis to gender-based violence, economic inequity and beyond - women are disproportionately impacted, deeply understand the challenges and are thus best positioned to solve them. The WE Empower Awardees are a true testament to this power, leadership, and innovation. Their transformational work will change the world and inspire others to follow suit.



Alyse Nelson
President and CEO
Vital Voices Global Partnership

A role model can literally change your life. Julie Ann Wrigley was that role model for me, introducing me to the powerful intersect between sustainability and business. As New Zealand's Permanent Representative and Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva in 2015 I was privileged to help negotiate the UN Sustainable Development Goals where we fought hard to ensure both a stand alone goal on gender equality and integration across all of the 17 Goals. I am so inspired by both the amazing WE Empower UN SDG Challenge awardees and entrants, and the many generous partners who support our "Sustainability Solutionaries" providing role models that literally change life trajectories - just as Julie did for me.



Amanda Ellis
Senior Director
Global Partnerships and Networks
ASU Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory

Thank you to our co-chair and host of Pitch Night



Diane von Fürstenberg
Fashion Designer, author and philanthropist

About WE Empower

Launched by the UN Secretary General, President of the World Bank and the Council of Women World Leaders at the UN General Assembly in 2018, the WE (women entrepreneurs) Empower UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Challenge is the first-of-its-kind global competition for women social entrepreneurs who are advancing the UN SDGs and inspiring entire communities to create the world we want by 2030.

The opportunity recognizes their innovative work and provides Awardees with capacity-building training sessions and opportunities to connect with an unparalleled global network to advance their enterprises.

In 2024, the WE Empower Challenge Awardees will participate in events surrounding the 79th UN General Assembly and connect with renowned business experts from around the world.

The **WEEMPOWER** Challenge
2024 AWARDEES

Tatiana Estevez (United Arab Emirates)
Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Permalution

Dr. Edda Aradottir (Iceland)
Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Carbfix

Lachmi Baniya (Myanmar)
Co-Founder & Chief Marketing Officer
Icarus Media Group

Teresa Njoroge (Kenya)
Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Clean Start Africa

Lina Maria Useche Kempf (Brazil)
Co-Founder & Head of Institutional Relations
Aliança Empreendedora

Program Objectives

- Honor innovative women entrepreneurs who are supporting and achieving the SDGs through sustainable business practices and inspiration for others to follow suit
- Invest in the most inspiring and transformational women entrepreneurs – providing access to seed capital, unique trainings, capacity building, a network of their peers, visibility and credibility for their work.
- Ignite awareness and catalyze change among policy makers and financiers, of the contributions women entrepreneurs make in contributing to the SDGs and the legislative and the obstacles they still face, from legal discrimination to access to capital.

Updates from the 2023 Awardees

Diana Mbogo (Tanzania)
Founder and Managing Director
[Millennium Engineers Enterprises Ltd](#)
World region: Sub-Saharan Africa

Since the WE Empower award, my journey has been incredibly enriching. Millennium Engineers received the Young Talent of the Year Award hosted by Res4Africa and we are currently exploring opportunities for further expansion into new regions. Attending Climate Week in New York, I engaged in transformative experiences like Goalkeepers, the Project Dandelion launch, and pitching at DVF. The coaching I received for pitching was instrumental in refining my approach, and the community of powerful women I met has been invaluable. This network has opened doors to platforms like GroYourBiz, features in Forbes and Vital Voices, and connections with the World. The funding I received has further propelled my initiatives, but most the sisterhood I've found continues to be a source of strength and inspiration. To the 2024 Awardees: Embrace every moment, and leverage the connections and opportunities that come your way. Your journey is just beginning, and the impact you can make is limitless.



Andrea 'Andy' Blair (New Zealand)
Co-Founder and Director of Business and Innovation
[Upflow](#)
World region: Asia-Pacific

At Upflow, we are feeding carbon dioxide and methane from geothermal power stations to indigenous microorganisms that convert the gases into a protein-rich biomass. The microbes come from geothermal ecosystems located on Tauhara North No. 2 Trust (TN2T) lands, a Māori organisation with >11,000 owners and descendants. With recently secured funding of \$5 million from TN2T and the New Zealand governments Ministry for Primary Industries, which has allowed us to go to the next phase of commercialisation – a techno-economic feasibility study and building a pilot facility to optimise and understand scaling for large scale commercial deployment. We're recruiting an expert team and looking forward to disrupting and decarbonising food production! Watch out world here we come! I was also recently honored with the New Zealand Order of Merit. My advice to the 2024 Awardees is that they should be brave and ask for what they need, build and maintain connections with those that can lift them up, and think even bigger!

Updates from the 2023 Awardees

Karin Sempf (Panama)

CEO and Founder

Innova Nation

World region: Latin American and the Caribbean

Since joining the WE Empower program, I've achieved several milestones that highlight both personal and professional growth. Key partnerships with Peace Boat US and Blue Planet Alliance have allowed three students to gain global sustainability experiences in Patagonia and on the Mexico-Alaska route. I've contributed to high-level climate discussions at COP28 in Dubai through the Vital Voices and Rockefeller Foundation Climate Convening Fellowship and received recognition in a Forbes article. Additionally, I was selected as Panama's representative in the first Dialogue for Sustainable Development of Latin America, enhancing my presence in significant regional initiatives. I've expanded our programs at Innova Nation to include climate change and AI, extending our impact to Mexico, Paraguay, and Honduras. Networking efforts during NYC Climate Week paved the way for incorporating Innova Nation as a nonprofit in the US, broadening our funding opportunities. To the new Awardees: Being recognized as a WE Empower Awardee is not only a recognition of your hard work and impact, but it's also the beginning of an exciting journey filled with opportunities, growth, and new connections. Enjoy your time in New York City in one of the busiest weeks of the year, take time to connect with everyone you meet!



Susan Blanchet (Canada)

CEO and Founder

Origen Air

World region: Europe, North America and Other

Since WE Empower, I've had the incredible opportunity to participate in a range of impactful events. I attended a Trade Mission to Thailand and South Korea organized by the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, and I was honoured to join a Vital Voices delegation, representing Origen Air as one of 15 Female Climate Leaders at COP28 in Dubai. Additionally, I had the privilege of speaking at a curated round table discussion with Foreign Policy Magazine, where Origen Air was featured. I was also selected as one of five climate leaders to pitch at CIAC in Singapore. Another recent milestone for Origen Air is the development of our new desktop air purifier, The Eliza and an invite to speak at TEDx in the Philippines this November. To this

year's Awardees, I encourage you to follow your passion for creating a better world and to embrace every opportunity that presents itself along your journey.

Updates from the 2023 Awardees

Menna Farouk (Egypt)

Co-Founder

[Dosy](#)

World region: Greater Middle East and North Africa

Participating in the WE Empower program has been a transformative experience that significantly impacted both my personal and professional growth. The program opened up numerous opportunities, from enhancing our business strategies to gaining international recognition. One of the key highlights was being featured in prominent global media outlets such as Forbes and having the privilege to speak at the World Bank during Women's Day, which amplified our voice on a global platform. Post-program, we witnessed tangible results in our business. We successfully expanded our team, launched a cutting-edge app that includes a ride-hailing service, and saw our customer base triple. This growth was a direct result of the skills, connections, and confidence gained through WE Empower. To this year's WE Empower Awardees, I offer my heartfelt congratulations - embrace every opportunity the program presents. The connections you make, the knowledge you gain, and the doors that open can transform your business and your life in ways you can't yet imagine.



2024 Awardee

Tatiana Estevez (United Arab Emirates)

Founder and CEO

Permalution

World region: Greater Middle East and North Africa

Tatiana Estevez is an entrepreneur dedicated to combating the climate crisis through an innovative water solution. Her journey was sparked by a profound realization during a backpacking trip in California, where she witnessed the devastating impacts of drought firsthand. Shocked by the economic and human toll, she envisioned a novel solution to address water scarcity, marking the inception of [Permalution](#). As Founder and CEO, she now spearheads a company focused on cloud and fog water collection technology, providing solutions for both water access and climate adaptation.

Permalution's Solution

Permalution develops advanced biomimicry-based systems to harness horizontal precipitation, offering a more efficient alternative to desalination and groundwater extraction. Permalution's technology includes three core components: the Fog Atlas, a predictive model for optimal project locations based on fog and cloud patterns; the Water Radar, a set of sensors analyzing clouds and fog for water yields and quality; and the Fog Collectors, passive devices capturing water droplets from the air, collecting between 150 - 400 liters per day per unit. To date, they have mapped 25% of the world's cloud and water hotspots and collected over 900,000 minutes of data to support climate strategies globally. Permalution is concentrating its efforts on the Middle East, where the demand for sustainable water solutions is high due to urgent water scarcity issues. These solutions are more affordable and sustainable than desalination plants, more efficient than rain, and safer than groundwater extraction, contributing to the sustainable use and conservation of terrestrial ecosystems.

Empowering Women in Leadership

As a predominantly women-owned company, Permalution empowers women in leadership, with about 70% of executive roles held by women. Estevez prioritizes safety and mental health support for her workforce, fostering a secure and innovative environment. Partnerships with research institutions further bolster Permalution's role in addressing climate change through dedicated observatories and climate variability studies.

Tatiana Estevez's entrepreneurial story is a testament to her dedication to innovation, social impact, and environmental sustainability. Through Permalution, she continues to drive positive change, embodying a mission to improve lives and protect the planet. [Read and share Tatiana's full story here.](#)



Tatiana's business supports the following SDGs:



2024 Awardee

Edda Aradottir (Iceland)

Co-Founder and CEO

Carbfix

World region: Europe and North America

Dr. Edda Aradottir is the Co-Founder and CEO of [Carbfix](#), an Icelandic company focused on significantly contributing to climate recovery through proprietary technology that permanently turns captured CO₂ into stone underground. As a trained Chemical Engineer accustomed to a male-dominated industry, Aradottir is also dedicated to highlighting the critical role women play in climate action, particularly in the face of regressive trends in women's rights globally and the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and girls.

Carbfix: Innovative Climate Solutions

Carbfix's technology is scientifically proven to speed up natural processes that already store over 99% of all carbon that exists on Earth. Under Aradottir's leadership, Carbfix aims to scale this technology globally, particularly targeting hard-to-abate sectors such as cement, steel, and chemicals. This innovative approach not only reduces emissions but also contributes to permanent carbon removal, aligning with global climate targets.

Carbfix's mission extends beyond climate technology development; the company actively engages with various stakeholders, including policymakers, businesses, and NGOs, to accelerate the implementation of carbon capture and storage solutions. Carbfix collaborates with partners worldwide, including Europe, North America, and parts of Asia and Africa, to scale its technology in areas with favorable geology, regulatory frameworks, and market incentives.

Dedication to Gender Equality is evident in Carbfix's workforce composition, where women constitute 52% of the overall team, 50% of the Executive Team, and 60% of the Board of Directors. This achievement is rare in the deep tech industry and demonstrates that gender balance is attainable even in male-dominated sectors.

Educational and Community Engagement

Carbfix is committed to educating and engaging the next generation of scientists and the broader community. The company collaborates with academic institutions to train scientists and engineers, supports youth education through exhibitions, and maintains transparency through public communication. These efforts aim to raise awareness and foster public discourse on climate issues. [Read and share Edda's full story here.](#)



Edda's business supports the following SDGs:



2024 Awardee

Lachmi Baniya (Myanmar) Founder and Chief Marketing Officer Icarus Media Group World region: Asia-Pacific

Lachmi 'Lach' Baniya, an impact-driven media entrepreneur, began her journey in 2013 at the age of 21, driven by vision and determination. Growing up under Myanmar's censored public education system, she understood the transformative power of information. When the country welcomed its first-ever democratic government and telecom access surged, Baniya saw an opportunity to harness this newfound connectivity. She set out to build digital media products on a bootstrapped budget to inspire change and empower communities.

The Story of Icarus Media Group

In the last 11 years, under Baniya's leadership, [Icarus Media Group](#) has evolved into a multifaceted organization with three key pillars:

1. **Icarus Media:** A social enterprise focusing on media development that comprises 5 digital media products – each embodying a social-first ethos, reaching 11 million monthly in Myanmar. GandaWin Magazine and GandaWin Telly educate, empower and provide insights for girls to transition into self-leading women, while GandaWin Learn™ is an e-learning platform to promote career advancement and holistic wellbeing courses. Parenting Labs supports emotional well-being for parents, children, and educators, and Bar Nyar Tha YaKar focuses on men's mental health, fostering an equitable community through mutual respect and understanding.
2. **Icarus Marketing:** A Social Media Marketing firm providing tailored strategies for companies' media and marketing success.
3. **Icarus Collective:** A 2024 initiative designed to steer creators toward ethical content creation and sustainable business models, amidst the lawless social media landscape of Myanmar where digital crimes are prevalent.

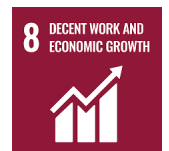
Commitment to Holistic Well-being

Lachmi Baniya's leadership at Icarus Media Group emphasizes holistic well-being, reflected in her passion for progressive policies, including paid parental leave, career development, and upskilling opportunities.

Icarus Media prioritizes supporting their employees without losing sight of productivity, staying true to values of integrity, creativity, and impact. This approach allows them to drive innovation and contribute to Myanmar's future, investing in both their team, Myanmar community and beyond. [Read and share Lachmi's full story here.](#)



Lachmi's business supports the following SDGs:



2024 Awardee

Teresa Njoroge (Kenya)

Founder and CEO
Clean Start Africa

World region: Sub-Saharan Africa

Teresa Njoroge's entrepreneurial journey exemplifies resilience and a deep commitment to social justice. Her personal mission, shaped by the harrowing experience of serving a wrongful prison sentence at Langata Women Maximum Security Prison from 2009 to 2011 with her infant daughter, ignited a desire to effect meaningful change. This prompted her to establish and lead [Clean Start Africa](#) as CEO in 2015—a social enterprise committed to helping formerly incarcerated women in Kenya successfully reintegrate into society.

Clean Start Africa's Mission

Clean Start Africa offers comprehensive support including employment training, psychosocial support, entrepreneurship, and vocational training, enabling women to find sustainable livelihoods post-release. Clean Start Africa provides training and job placements across six tracks: construction and interior design, culinary skills and catering, beauty and hair-dressing, clean energy, fish farming and fashion design and production. The organization works to alleviate the stigma, isolation, and economic barriers faced by women leaving prison. Through its initiatives, Clean Start Africa amplifies stories of resilience and advocates for systemic reforms to support policy changes and prison reforms. To date, they have supported over 4000 women and their families in Kenya with successful reintegration.

Currently, Clean Start Africa is focused on several key opportunities for expansion and impact. These include establishing the Clean Start Center, integrating a Safe House for women and girls transitioning from prison, replicating Clean Start Africa's successful model in other African countries, and enhancing partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations to amplify advocacy efforts. This Safe House will be the first of its kind in Kenya for women transitioning from prison. Through these endeavors, Clean Start Africa aims to address the criminalization of poverty and advocate for pro-women sentencing policies.

Championing Social and Economic Justice

Njoroge has been an advocate for marginalized communities, particularly women, girls, and children affected by the criminal justice system. Clean Start Africa is unique as it is led by a formerly incarcerated woman and focuses on restoring dignity, hope, and self-confidence to imprisoned and formerly imprisoned women and girls, while breaking the cycles of poverty, crime, and recidivism. [Read and share Theresa's full story here.](#)



Teresa's business supports the following SDGs:



2024 Awardee

Lina Maria Useche Kempf (Brazil)

Co-Founder and Head of International Relations

Aliança Empreendedor

World region: Latin America and Caribbean

Growing up with parents who were Christian missionaries, Lina Maria Useche Kempf understood from an early age the significance of living with a sense of purpose. This principle has led to her becoming Co-Founder and Head of Institutional Relations at Aliança Empreendedor in Brazil. Kempf has made significant contributions to the entrepreneurial landscape by empowering, training, and connecting low-income micro-entrepreneurs to help them succeed.

Aliança Empreendedor's Story

In 2004, Kempf began working at a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting young entrepreneurs in low-income communities. It was during this time that she faced a profound challenge. After assisting ten young entrepreneurs in developing their business models, they were suddenly left without promised credit due to the shutdown of a governmental program, the Social Bank. This experience drove Kempf and her colleagues to radically change their approach.

The Power of Entrepreneurship

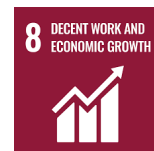
Over the past 19 years, Aliança Empreendedora has supported over 200,000 entrepreneurs, influencing public policy to strengthen the ecosystem that supports micro-entrepreneurs, who represent 27% of the country's GDP. Aliança Empreendedora operates on the belief that inclusive entrepreneurship is a powerful tool for lifting people out of poverty and building prosperity. The organization offers free online and onsite courses and training, financial assistance, mentorships, and access to supportive networks. Their solutions are tailored to the specific needs of micro-entrepreneurs.

The organization connects corporate partners with microentrepreneurs by either supporting those already in their value chains or creating programs to incorporate microentrepreneurs into these value chains. They also consult on paid developing content for their corporate partners' platforms to deliver training for their entrepreneurs. Their work highlights women through targeted support programs, gender-inclusive policies, capacity building, and research-driven advocacy to advance gender equity.

Aliança Empreendedora's efforts contribute to economic and social inclusion, improving working conditions and living standards for entrepreneurs. The organization promotes inclusive and sustainable economic growth, job creation, and decent work for all. [Read and share Lina's full story here.](#)



Lina's business supports the following SDGs:



2024 Finalists Asia-Pacific

Salinee Hurley (Thailand) **Founder & CEO of SunSawang Company Limited**

Salinee Hurley's entrepreneurial journey began with a passion for engineering, despite opposition. In 2013, Hurley launched SunSawang, a social enterprise bringing solar-powered products to rural Thailand. The company empowers local communities by training village technicians and salespeople, improving income opportunities, and enhancing living conditions. SunSawang has provided electricity to over 600 households, 50 schools, and 200 medical clinics across Thailand and Burma. The enterprise aligns with SDG 7 (Affordable & Clean Energy), SDG 8 (Decent Work & Clean Energy), and SDG 3 (Good Health & Well-Being). Hurley's leadership has fostered gender inclusivity and sustained innovation through financing options for solar systems. Her work exemplifies resilience, innovation, and social impact, transforming lives and promoting sustainable development.



Rishita Changede (India) **Founder & CEO of TeOra Private Limited,**

Rishita Changede's efforts focus on revolutionizing disease management in aquaculture while also empowering communities, particularly women. Growing up in coastal India, where crop failures devastated farmers, and being raised in a conservative household that discouraged women from pursuing careers, Dr. Changede became determined to break societal barriers and address the environmental and nutritional challenges in aquaculture. TeOra's mission centers on creating sustainable, scalable solutions for fish and shrimp health, particularly tropical species. Using a bioinformatics and synthetic biology platform, TeOra develops oral vaccinations and antivirals, reducing the need for harmful chemicals and antibiotics. TeOra actively contributes to several SDGs, including SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption & Production), Life Below Water (SDG 14). Beyond its scientific innovations, TeOra promotes social change by training and employing women leaders, advancing female economic independence. promoting sustainable development.

2024 Finalists Asia-Pacific

Robyn McLean (New Zealand) **Co-Founder & CEO of Hello Period**

Robyn McLean launched her entrepreneurial journey in 2017 after experiencing years of frustration with unreliable period products. Motivated by personal challenges and a desire for better options for her daughter, she partnered with her best friend, a nurse, to create high-quality, reusable menstrual care products. Hello Period offers a range of sustainable items, including menstrual cups, discs, period underwear, and reusable pads, all designed to reduce waste and environmental impact. The company has diverted over 500 million single-use products from landfills and is a certified B Corporation and holds Climate Positive status by offsetting 120% of its emissions. McLean's mission extends beyond product innovation, tackling period poverty through the Hello Kindness program, which donates reusable products to those in need, aligning with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption & Production), SDG 3 (Good Health & Wellbeing), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).



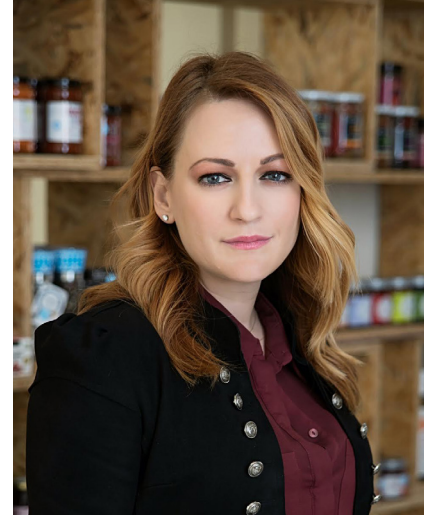
Lan Tao (Beijing) **Founder of Green Inclusive Science and Technology Co., Ltd**

Lan Tao's company focuses on promoting decarbonization through technological innovation, with the goal of reducing individual carbon footprints. Tao emphasizes that even small daily carbon reductions by China's 1.4 billion people can have a large collective impact. Her company's work aligns with several SDGs, including SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 12 (Sustainable Consumption and Production). Green Inclusive promotes digital platforms to help governments and enterprises encourage citizen engagement in carbon reduction. In addition to advancing decarbonization, Tao fosters SDG 5 (Gender Equality) by mentoring women leaders and promoting equal opportunities within her organization.

2024 Finalists Europe & North America

Melina Taprantzi (Greece) **Founder of Wise Greece**

Melina Taprantzi launched her social enterprise in response to Greece's financial crisis in 2013. Witnessing severe shortages at a grocery donation location inspired her to establish Wise Greece, which supports small Greek food producers and uses profits to purchase food for those in need. Wise Greece aligns with several SDGs, including SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 4 (Quality Education). The enterprise empowers vulnerable groups, particularly women, through mentorship and educational programs. Additionally, Wise Greece actively works to reduce CO2 emissions and promotes sustainable practices.



Yewande Adebowale (France) **Founder & COO of Salubata**

Yewande Adebowale is a visionary entrepreneur with a background in environmental law, she is committed to sustainability in the footwear industry. Under her leadership, Salubata has developed modular shoes made from plastic waste and carbon decomposition technology, addressing plastic pollution and reducing carbon emissions. The company aligns with UN SDGs 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and 13 (Climate Action), as well as SDG 5 (gender equality), allocating profits to empower women in affected communities. Salubata's achievements include \$840,000 in revenue and a partnership with Amazon.

Michal Nachmany (United Kingdom) **Founder and CEO of Climate Policy Radar**

Michal Nachmany has dedicated her career to advancing climate policy through the development of robust data tools. At Climate Policy Radar, she works to democratize access to climate law and policy data, helping stakeholders worldwide to make informed decisions toward a low-carbon, resilient, and just future. Nachmany's work aligns with several UN SDGs, particularly SDG 13 (Climate Action), by providing open-access data to improve climate policymaking and finance. Climate Policy Radar also supports SDG 10 (Reduced Inequality) by representing the needs of those most affected by the climate crisis and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) through its inclusive workplace practices.



2024 Finalists Europe & North America

Barbara Buades (Spain) **CEO & Co-Founder of Meetoptics**

Barbara Buades is a leader in the field of optics and photonics. She is committed to advancing accessibility and innovation in photonics technologies. Meetoptics offers an AI-powered search engine that simplifies sourcing for photonics components, helping over 90,000 engineers and researchers. The platform provides tools like a Ray Tracing Simulator, a Photonics Forum, and an Academy Page, supporting fields such as LIDAR, quantum computing, VR, AR, and medical imaging. Buades supports the SDGs, specifically SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and SDG 3 (Good Health & Well-Being).



2024 Finalists Latin America and Caribbean



Nuricel Aguilera (Brazil) **Founder & Director of Alpha Lumen Institute**

Nuricel Aguilera's work centers on promoting equality and empowering individuals, particularly through education. Her personal experiences with gender bias and lack of opportunities inspired her to create initiatives that nurture gifted individuals and foster leadership. At Alpha Lumen Institute, she developed the Mobile Maker Lab to provide STEM education to underserved communities, contributing to reduced inequalities. Her efforts align with multiple SDGs, including SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). Her dedication to holistic education and social change reflects her belief in education as a tool for creating sustainable solutions rooted in ethics and values.

2024 Finalists Latin America and Caribbean

Leigh Cassidy (Peru) **Founder & CEO of Nibeenabe Ltd**

Leigh Cassidy's dedication led to the invention of DRAM technology during her PhD in Environmental Toxicology at the University of Aberdeen. In 2018, she sold her intellectual property to SEM and worked as a lead scientist. Her passion for sustainable development deepened in 2022 after winning the Conservation X Amazon Challenge, sparking her commitment to empowering women in the Amazon. Nibeenabe Ltd focuses on revolutionizing artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) by using DRAM Filtration technology to recover valuable metals from mine tailings, reducing environmental pollution. Cassidy's mission aligns with the SDGs, promoting SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 6 (Clean Water & Sanitation), and SDG 13 (Climate Action).



Daniela Ancira (Mexico) **Founder of La Cana, Proyecto de Reinserción Social AC**

Daniela Ancira's work addresses the systemic lack of support for incarcerated women, often trapped in cycles of crime and violence. La Cana, Proyecto de Reinserción Social AC is a hybrid organization focused on empowering incarcerated women through training, employment, and reintegration programs. La Cana implements programs that provide psychosocial and occupational skills to help women reintegrate into society and reduce recidivism. Ancira's work also extends to improving emotional resilience and offering educational and recreational activities. La Cana's model aligns with multiple SDGs, focusing on SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and promoting SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth).

2024 Finalists Latin America and Caribbean

Victoria Orozco (Mexico) **Founder & Executive Director of Punto Labs**

Victoria Orozco's work focuses on creating economic opportunities for disadvantaged communities and addressing regional and demographic inequalities. Punto Labs, the consulting firm she leads, collaborates with governments to foster sustainable and inclusive development by using data-driven solutions. Their efforts support SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Orozco is also dedicated to tackling challenges related to inequality (SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities), helping communities transition to low-carbon economies, and supporting displaced workers. Beyond Punto Labs, Orozco co-founded Hacedoras, an NGO that empowers Latin American women in public policy, advocating for gender equality and providing leadership training.



2024 Finalists Middle East and North Africa



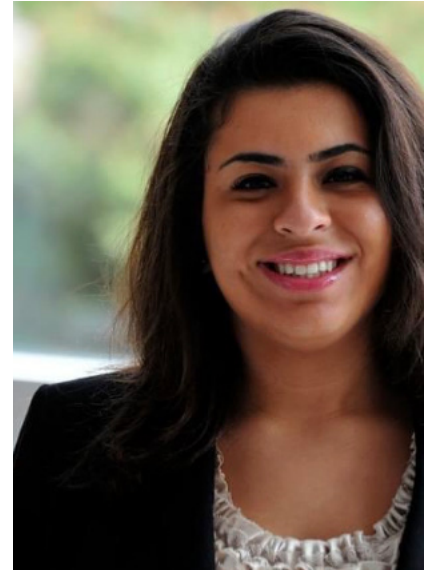
Inna Braverman (Israel) **Founder & CEO of Eco Wave Power**

Inna Braverman is a transformative clean energy entrepreneur who has harnessed the power of ocean and sea waves to generate green electricity. Her innovative technology attaches floaters to existing marine structures to produce cost-efficient, sustainable energy, contributing to the fight against climate change. EWP's achievements include developing a 404.7 MW project pipeline and listing on Nasdaq under the symbol "WAVE." Braverman's personal commitment to clean energy stems from surviving a near-fatal encounter with pollution from the Chernobyl disaster, which ignited her drive to revolutionize the energy industry. EWP contributes to multiple SDGs, including SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, & Infrastructure), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 7 (Affordable & Clean Energy), by providing scalable clean power solutions to coastal communities. Braverman is also a strong advocate for gender equality, ensuring that 50% of EWP's workforce are women and mentoring young female entrepreneurs.

2024 Finalists Middle East and North Africa

Lynn Malkawi (Jordan) **Founder & Director of Wasel for Awareness & Education**

Lynn Malkawi focuses on dismantling barriers and creating sustainable change via education and community programs. Wasel bridges gaps between youth from diverse backgrounds, using design thinking to promote social justice and eliminate hierarchical mindsets. Malkawi's programs bring students from public and private schools together to solve community issues, fostering skills in project management and leadership aligned with the SDGs, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequality), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Wasel partners with over 26 schools, financial entities, and incubators, helping students pitch projects and fostering entrepreneurial skills, with a strong focus on gender equality and disability inclusion.



Rudayna Abdo (Lebanon) **Founder & CEO of Stichting Thaki Nederland**

As the daughter of Palestinian refugees, Rudayna Abdo transformed her experiences into a mission to empower refugee and vulnerable children through education and technology. Leveraging her education from MIT and McGill, she created Thaki in 2015, which collects used laptops from companies and distributes them to refugee schools in the Middle East. Thaki has reached over 30,000 children by providing not just hardware, but also self-paced digital tools to address learning gaps. Abdo's work aligns with multiple SDGs, including SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption & Production), and SDG 17 (Partnerships to Achieve the Goals). She aims to reach 130,000 learners by 2025, while promoting digital literacy and reducing e-waste through circular economy practices. Abdo's vision and resilience exemplify her commitment to creating lasting, positive change for vulnerable children globally.

2024 Finalists Middle East and North Africa

Ayesha Zulfiqar (Pakistan) **Chief Medical Officer of Bioniks**

Ayesha Zulfiqar leads efforts to provide affordable, AI-powered, customizable bionic limbs that improve mobility and quality of life for individuals with limb differences. Dr. Zulfiqar advocates for preventive measures against limb amputations and supports women with limb differences through mentorship and partnerships with educational and corporate sectors. Bioniks also adopts a holistic approach to rehabilitation, addressing not only physical mobility but also mental and socio-economic well-being through comprehensive support for patients and their families. Her work aligns with several SDGs, including SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health & Well-Being), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).



2024 Finalists sub-Saharan Africa



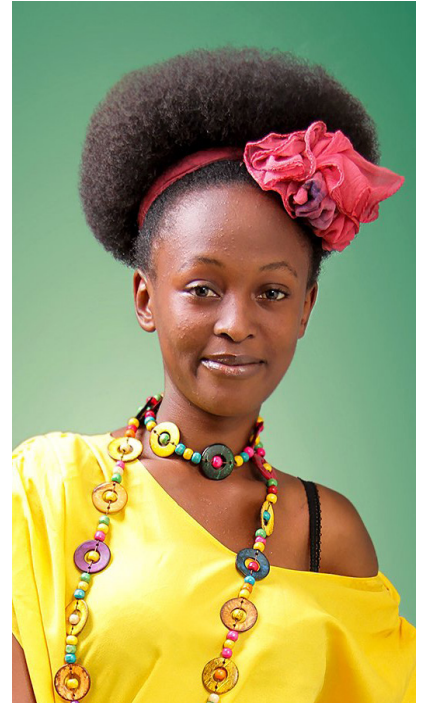
Esther Kimani (Kenya) **Founder & CEO of Farmer Lifeline Technologies**

Esther Kimani is a pioneering figure in Africa's agricultural sector. Raised in a farming community, Kimani has used her experience to address the challenges faced by small-scale farmers. Her company leverages AI technology to help marginalized communities, especially women, build resilience and sustainability in farming. Kimani's work aligns with several SDGs, including SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Farmer Lifeline's innovations have already detected over 1.4 million pests and diseases, helping 42,000 smallholder farmers protect their crops and livelihoods. The company aims to deploy technology to 300,000 farmers by the end of the year, reducing crop losses, boosting yields, and cutting emissions.

2024 Finalists sub-Saharan Africa

Blandine Umuziranenge (Rwanda) **Founder of Kosmotive**

Kosmotive aims to improve reproductive, maternal, and child health across Africa, with a focus on menstrual health. Inspired by her personal experiences, Blandine Umuziranenge's mission is to promote menstrual freedom for African women and girls. Kosmotive's comprehensive approach addresses menstrual stigma, economic empowerment, and sustainability. Its flagship product, KosmoPads—reusable sanitary pads—has improved menstrual health for over 250,000 women. KosmoPads are eco-friendly, affordable, and long-lasting, offering a cost-effective alternative to disposable pads, supporting SDG 3 (Good Health & Well-Being). Kosmotive has created numerous job opportunities for women while supporting education by ensuring girls don't miss school due to their periods, supporting SDG 4 (Quality Education). The company's dedication to sustainable practices aligns with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption & Production) by reducing environmental waste from disposable pads. Kosmotive's holistic strategy also includes an eHealth platform, maternity wear, and a magazine, all aimed at empowering women.



Janepher Matini (Uganda) **Founder of Kyuka Ventures Innovation Hub**



Growing up in Uganda, Janepher Matini witnessed the severe consequences of poor waste management, which almost claimed her life when she contracted cholera. This experience, along with inspiration from advanced waste management systems in countries, fueled her mission to combat Uganda's waste and environmental issues. Kyuka Ventures takes a circular economy approach, focusing on recycling plastic waste into clean energy solutions such as fuel and gas. Using soot-free reactive extraction technology, the company converts plastic waste into clean cooking fuel (LPG). This initiative has improved health outcomes for over 25,000 households, reducing hygiene-related diseases, child mortality by 35%, and enhancing maternal health by 65%. Kyuka Ventures advances several SDGs, notably SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities).

2024 Finalists Sub-Saharan Africa

Mago Hasfa (Uganda)

Founder & Literary Specialist of Read To Learn Foundation

Mago Hasfa's work is driven by a belief that every child should have access to quality education, inspiring her to create inclusive and diverse storybooks. Read To Learn foundation's AI-powered multilingual reading app and solar-powered production hubs promote literacy in underserved areas and contribute to environmental sustainability. Through its initiatives, the Read to Learn Foundation addresses SDGs, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 1 (Poverty Alleviation), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). The foundation fosters safe learning spaces for women and girls, combats discrimination, and promotes gender equality. Additionally, its use of renewable energy supports sustainable development.



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We also work with a wide range of partners to disseminate the competition. [You can see them here.](#)



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