



PRESS RELEASE

UNCTAD/PRESS/PR/2026/017

Original: English

Women entrepreneurs honoured at World Investment Forum

The 2026 Women in Business Awards celebrate entrepreneurs driving innovation and growth, and highlight the support needed to scale their enterprises.

Doha, 26 October 2026 - Women entrepreneurs building fast-growing businesses were recognized at the [Empretec Women in Business Awards 2026](#), held during the [9th World Investment Forum](#) in Doha, Qatar.

Organized under the theme "[Women-led businesses and the art of scale](#)", the awards honour women entrepreneurs in four categories: Leadership, sustainability, innovation and technology.

The awards attracted 52 entrepreneurs nominated by [Empretec](#) centres, which had provided them with training and business development services. See the full list of finalists [here](#).

The ceremony brought together entrepreneurs, investors, policymakers and business leaders to celebrate their achievements and connect them with the finance, markets, expertise and networks they need to grow.

2026 award winners

Leadership Award

- **Sandra Letio (Uganda)**, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Pelere Group Limited, was recognized for building a successful agribusiness that works with more than 5,000 smallholder farmers and creates opportunities across the shea and oilseed value chain.

Sustainability Award

- **Paula Gianserra (Argentina)**, Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer of Reforest Latam, was recognized for advancing forest restoration through artificial intelligence, biotechnology and drone seeding.

Innovation Award

- **Aisha Albinali (Qatar)**, Co-Founder of Wafir, was recognized for turning traditional savings practices into an innovative financial technology solution.
- **Adriana Fernandes (Brazil)**, Chief Executive Officer of Mátrika Special Foods, was also recognized in this category, for building an innovative food business that makes safe, high-quality food accessible to people with food allergies and dietary restrictions.

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Technology Award

- **Biobele Oyibo (Nigeria)**, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Earlybean, was recognized for using technology to promote financial literacy and inclusion among young people.

What's needed for women-led businesses to scale

Women entrepreneurs are creating jobs, introducing new technologies and developing solutions to economic, social and environmental challenges. Yet starting a business is often only the first hurdle. Expanding it can be even more difficult.

Growth requires access to finance, investment, new markets, skilled workers, mentors and business networks. These resources can help entrepreneurs move from local success to opportunities in regional and global markets.

The Women in Business Awards recognize entrepreneurs who have demonstrated the ability to build and grow their businesses. They also help connect women founders with investors, venture capital firms, mentors and organizations that support entrepreneurship.

Accelerating women's economic empowerment

The awards formed part of a broader World Investment Forum [agenda](#) to foster women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment.

During the forum, UNCTAD and the Qatari Businesswomen Association signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen cooperation in support of women entrepreneurs and women's economic empowerment.

The Forum also hosted the session "[Women who invest: Mobilizing female capital for the future](#)", bringing together ministers, investors, family offices, business leaders and other stakeholders to discuss how greater participation by women in investment can create opportunities for entrepreneurship, innovation and growth.

Together, these initiatives highlighted a wider shift from supporting women entrepreneurs as beneficiaries to recognizing them as founders, innovators, investors and builders of the future economy.

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UNCTAD helps developing countries make trade, finance, investment, and the digital economy work for inclusive and sustainable development.