

GLOBAL PRESS RELEASE

Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator Partners with the WE Empower UN SDG Challenge to Maximize the Development Impact of Women Entrepreneurs

The WE Empower Challenge, a Programme co-led by Vital Voices & the Global Futures Laboratory at Arizona State University, is a First-of-its-Kind Competition for Women Social Entrepreneurs

NEW YORK – (November 20, 2021) –The Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator (WEA), a strategic multi-partnership convening five United Nations agencies and Mary Kay, Inc., in support of last week Global Entrepreneurship Week and Women's Entrepreneurship Day, announced a partnership with WE Empower UN SDG challenge, a first-of-its-kind competition for women social entrepreneurs across the world.

WEA is designed to maximize the development impact of women entrepreneurship in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by creating an enabling ecosystem for women entrepreneurs that fosters growth, sustainability, and resilience. UN Partners of WEA include International Labour Organization (ILO), International Trade Centre (ITC), UN Global Compact (UNGC), UN Development Programme (UNDP), and UN Women.

The [WE Empower UN SDG Challenge](#) is a global business competition for women entrepreneurs who are advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals and inspiring entire communities to act to create the world they want by 2030. The WE Empower UN SDG Challenge honors women entrepreneurs who are advancing the SDGs through their business practices. The opportunity recognizes their innovative work, ignites awareness about the valuable contribution women entrepreneurs can make toward the SDGs, and provides awardees with capacity-building training sessions and connections with business experts around the world.

The programme elevates and showcases the valuable contributions women entrepreneurs and business leaders can make toward the SDGs and solving the world's greatest challenges. WE Empower is co-led by Vital Voices and Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory at ASU and supported by partners at Bank of Montréal (BMO), Diane von Furstenberg, the G5 Collective, GroYourBiz, Hawaii Tropical Botanical Garden, Mary Kay, Inc., Oxford University Said Business School, Procter & Gamble, Salesforce, UN Foundation, and the World Bank.

"The WE Empower SDG Challenge powerfully showcases women entrepreneurs as ideal role models demonstrating positive business, social and environmental performance," said Deborah Gibbins, Chief Operating Officer at Mary Kay, Inc. "The Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator is honored to partner with WE Empower, a consortium of over 70 partners joining forces for an even greater multiplied impact."

"We are thrilled to celebrate our partnership with the Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator, co-founded by WE Empower lead partner Mary Kay, Inc.," said WE Empower UN SDG Challenge co-chair & ASU Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory's Amanda Ellis. "Women entrepreneurs are valuable solutionaries for the UN SDGs and the global 2030 agenda, and WEA unlocks a suite of valuable support tools to help amplify positive impact."

Globally, women already comprise one-third of all business owners, making critical economic and social contributions, despite the systemic barriers they face. Only five percent of countries legislate for full gender equality, making the support tools provided by the Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator even more important. In June 2021, WEA joined the Generation Equality Forum in Paris as well as the Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights, and committed to empower five million women entrepreneurs around the world by 2030 to accelerate progress for gender equality.

During UN General Assembly (UNGA 76), WEA announced the launch of a series of impactful initiatives and knowledge products - all shaped through a gender lens. WEA's impact work includes digital capacity building tools and training, entrepreneurship and policy research, and gender-responsive procurement (GRP) advocacy and training. In October, WEA also announced a milestone partnership with the Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network (CBWN) aiming at advancing women entrepreneurship in 54 countries of the Commonwealth.

About the Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator

The Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator (WEA) is a multi-partnership initiative on women's entrepreneurship convening 5 UN agencies, International Labour Organization (ILO), International Trade Centre (ITC), UN Global Compact (UNGC), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women and Mary Kay, Inc. to empower 5 million women entrepreneurs by 2030.

The ultimate goal of the initiative is to maximize the development impact of women entrepreneurship in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by creating an enabling ecosystem for women entrepreneurs around the world. The Accelerator exemplifies the transformational power of a multi-partnership of unique magnitude to harness the potential of women entrepreneurs.

Learn more at [we-accelerate](https://we-accelerate.org). Follow us: Twitter (@We_Accelerator), Instagram (@we_accelerator), Facebook (@womensentrepreneurshipaccelerator), LinkedIn (@womensentrepreneurshipaccelerator)

About WE Empower UN SDG Challenge

The WE Empower UN SDG Challenge is the first-of-its-kind global competition for women social entrepreneurs who are advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals and inspiring entire communities to act to create the world we want by 2030. The WE Empower Challenge honors innovative women leaders from around the world who are pushing the SDGs forward through sustainable business practices and inspiring others to follow suit. 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. This program elevates and showcases the valuable contribution women entrepreneurs and business leaders can make toward the SDGs and solving the world's greatest challenges.

About Vital Voices Global Partnership

Vital Voices Global Partnership is an international non-profit organization that identifies and partners with creative and fearless women leaders around the world. Vital Voices searches the world for women leaders with daring vision for change, then works with them to make that vision a reality. We are venture catalysts, who provide leaders with capacity building, skills training, grants, access to a network of their peers, mentorship, visibility, recognition, and guidance to accelerate change on a global scale. For more than 20 years, Vital Voices has invested in over 18,000 women leaders from 182 countries and territories, who have then gone on to create change affecting millions around the world. Vital Voices works with women who advance economic opportunity, increase political and public engagement, end gender-based violence and promote human rights through signature fellowships, individualized investments and meaningful, lifelong partnerships. Vital Voices connects women solving problems in their communities and equips them with the tools they need to incite global, positive change and accelerate shared progress for all. Visit www.vitalvoices.org to learn more.

About Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory at ASU

The Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory at Arizona State University represents the urgent belief that we can and must make a meaningful contribution to ensuring a habitable planet and a future in which well-being is attainable. The Global Futures Laboratory is the world's first laboratory dedicated to the health of the planet and its inhabitants. It is built upon the deep expertise of ASU and leveraging an extensive network of partners for an ongoing and wide-ranging exchange across all knowledge domains to address the complex social, economic and scientific challenges spawned by the current and future threats from environmental degradation. This platform positions a new world headquarters for an international array of scientists, scholars and innovators and lays the foundation to anticipate and respond to existing and emerging challenges and use innovation to purposefully shape and inform our future. For more information visit globalfutures.asu.edu.