UNITED NATIONS
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

World Entrepreneurs Investment Forum

6th World Entrepreneurs Investment Forum 2026: Achieving the SDGs through Empowering Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Mobilizing Capital for Resilient Communities

Manama Feb 10 and 11, 2026

Background

Building on the legacy of previous editions and aligned with the outcomes of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) and the Sevilla Commitment, WEIF 2026 responds to the urgent call to close the $4 trillion annual financing gap for the SDGs. It will bring together global leaders, entrepreneurs, investors, and development partners to co-create solutions that empower communities and build resilience in the face of global disruptions.

With a renewed emphasis on entrepreneurship as a catalyst for innovation and economic resilience, WEIF 2026 will host high-level panels, targeted matchmaking sessions, and impactful side events. The Forum will also reinforce its dedication to inclusive and sustainable development, highlighting initiatives that empower youth, women, persons with disabilities, and promote social protection systems. Special attention will be given to the Arab and African regions, showcasing regional success stories and fostering cross-border collaboration.

WEIF 2026 is not just a forum—it is a movement to forge partnerships, mobilize resources, and shape a future where innovation and investment converge to create a more equitable and sustainable world.

WEIF 2026 topics and panels

Aligned with the overarching theme of the Forum, WEIF will address key topics with special emphasis on the Arab World and Sub-Saharan Africa, while maintaining a global outlook.

In addition to promoting gender parity and encouraging the participation of entrepreneurs, each proposed panel will feature a lead technical organizing partner and ensure a balanced representation of speakers from both the Arab Region and Sub-Saharan Africa.

1. Fostering Entrepreneurship and Innovation through Enabling Ecosystems — Where Ideas Take Shape and Social Protection Ensures Inclusive Growth

Creating vibrant ecosystems that support entrepreneurship, and innovation is key to driving sustainable economic growth. These ecosystems thrive on access to finance, mentorship, infrastructure, and supportive policies that help ideas evolve into impactful ventures. However, innovation must be inclusive. Social protection systems—like healthcare, education, and income security—empower individuals from all backgrounds to participate and take risks. Together, these elements ensure that growth is not only dynamic but also equitable, where no one is left behind. This synergy fuels resilient economies and inclusive societies.

2. The Tri-Economy Advantage: Leveraging Green, Blue, and Orange Innovation for Sustainable Growth

As the world seeks new pathways to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the convergence of three dynamic economic spheres—the Green Economy (environmental sustainability), the Blue Economy (marine and water-based innovation), and the Orange Economy (creative and cultural industries)—offers a transformative model for inclusive and resilient development. This panel explores how entrepreneurs, investors, and policymakers can harness the synergies between these economies to unlock new markets, empower communities, and build a future rooted in creativity, sustainability, and innovation.

3. Rebuilding Futures: Empowering Women and Youth in Post-Conflict Economies

In post-conflict regions, women and youth often bear the brunt of economic disruption, displacement, and social fragmentation. Yet, they also hold the key to rebuilding resilient communities and driving inclusive growth. This panel explores how entrepreneurship, innovation, and targeted investment can empower women and youth to become agents of recovery and transformation.

4. Islamic Finance as a New Frontier for Global Development

This panel will focus on the outcomes and follow-up actions of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4), held in Sevilla, Spain. Drawing from the Sevilla Commitment and the Sevilla Platform for Action, the panel will explore how Islamic finance—through instruments such as sukuk, risk-sharing models, and ethical investment frameworks—can contribute to closing the global $4 trillion annual financing gap for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It will examine the role of Islamic finance in blended finance structures, its alignment with ESG principles, and its potential to strengthen domestic financial markets, support SMEs, and promote financial inclusion through digital innovation. The session will also address the importance of regulatory coherence, international cooperation, and the catalytic role of multilateral development banks and national institutions in scaling Islamic finance for sustainable global impact.

5. Innovation at the Source: Empowering Entrepreneurship Education, Research, and Capacity Building

Universities, technical institutes, business hubs and research centers are more than just places of learning—they are engines of innovation and entrepreneurship. By fostering a culture of creativity, experimentation, and applied research, educational institutions can play a transformative role in shaping the next generation of entrepreneurs and startups. This panel explores how academia can bridge the gap between research and commercialization, and how partnerships with industry and government can accelerate entrepreneurial ecosystems.

6. AI for Development: Bridging the Digital Divide

Artificial intelligence holds the potential to address critical development challenges in underserved regions, offering new tools for growth and inclusion. This panel will examine both the ethical and practical implications of deploying AI in emerging economies, and explore how micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), as well as startups, can leverage artificial intelligence to drive innovation, bridge the digital divide, and foster sustainable development.

7. **Women-Led Innovation: Scaling Impact Across Borders**

This segment focuses on highlighting women entrepreneurs who are driving innovation across sectors such as health, education, and sustainability. It raises key questions, including what specific barriers women encounter when attempting to scale their ventures, and how regional policies can be improved to offer stronger support for women-led startups.

8. **Creative Economy 2030: Pioneering Growth for the Next Decade**

As nations look toward the transformative goals of Vision 2030, the creative economy stands out as a central pillar for sustainable growth, job creation, and global competitiveness. This panel will explore how investing in creative sectors—ranging from the arts and media to design, technology, and cultural industries—can accelerate economic diversification and foster resilient, innovative societies. Discussion will focus on the policies and urban strategies that can unlock the full potential of the creative economy, and how cross-sector partnerships can drive inclusive prosperity across Africa, the Arab world, and beyond.

9. **Panel: Inclusive Enterprise: Empowering Productive Families and Persons with Disabilities**

Inclusive entrepreneurship is a key driver of sustainable development, especially when it empowers people with disabilities and productive families. Over 1.3 billion people, 16% of the global population, live with a disability, yet face persistent barriers to employment and enterprise. Meanwhile, family-based businesses contribute significantly to GDP and employment, particularly in developing economies. This panel highlights how inclusive investment, accessible technologies, and supportive policies can unlock the potential of these groups and build more resilient, equitable economies.

10. **Panel: Voices of the Future — Youth Speak Out**

Youth are driving innovation and social change across the globe, yet many still face barriers to entrepreneurship. In 2024, over 365,000 young people launched or expanded businesses, creating more than 328,000 jobs. However, nearly 1 in 2 youth cite fear of failure as a major obstacle to starting a business. This panel gives young entrepreneurs a platform to share their stories, challenge assumptions, and shape the future of inclusive economic policy through direct dialogue with global leaders to unlock the full potential of youth-led innovation.

Parallel Conferences and Side Events

1. *18th Annual Conference of the International Women's Entrepreneurial Challenge Foundation*

The IWEC Foundation will host its 18th Annual Conference in Manama, Bahrain from February 8 to 10, 2026. This landmark event will bring together global women entrepreneurs, business leaders, and representatives from chambers of commerce across more than 40 countries. The conference serves as a platform to celebrate the achievements of women-owned businesses, foster international collaboration, and promote inclusive economic growth.

Over the course of three days, attendees will participate in award ceremonies honoring new IWEC Awardees, engage in high-level panel discussions, and attend workshops focused on innovation, leadership, and sustainability. The event will also feature networking sessions designed to build cross-border partnerships and open new markets for women-led enterprises.

Hosting the conference in Bahrain reflects the region's growing commitment to empowering women in business and highlights its strategic role in global entrepreneurship. The IWEC Foundation continues to expand its reach, and this 18th edition promises to be a dynamic convergence of ideas, cultures, and opportunities for women entrepreneurs worldwide.

What is IWEC?

The International Women's Entrepreneurial Challenge (IWEC) is a global initiative founded to connect and empower successful women business owners. Headquartered in New York City, IWEC works with over 48 international chambers of commerce and women's business organizations to support female entrepreneurs who are already active in global markets or are ready to expand internationally. Through annual conferences, awards, and networking opportunities, IWEC fosters collaboration, innovation, and leadership among women from diverse industries and regions. The foundation celebrates outstanding *women entrepreneurs each year and provides a platform for sharing knowledge, building partnerships, and driving inclusive economic growth worldwide*

2. Entrepreneurs Smart Zone

Entrepreneurs Smart Zone. This dynamic zone will serve as a vibrant platform for showcasing innovative case studies and entrepreneurial products across key sectors including the green economy, blue economy, creative industries, digital technologies, others. It will highlight the ingenuity and impact of startups and MSMEs that are driving sustainable development through smart solutions, eco-conscious innovations, and cutting-edge digital tools. The Smart Zone aims to foster collaboration, inspire new ideas, and connect entrepreneurs with potential partners, investors, and global markets.

3. Entrepreneur to Entrepreneur bilateral meetings and matchmaking

In order to promote bankable investment opportunities and foster trade connections between entrepreneurs, investors, innovators, and MSMEs from the pool of participating nations, particularly from the Arab and African Region, WEIF seeks to act as a hybrid platform for networking and matching.

Proposed Main Organizers and Partners

- UNIDO ITPO Bahrain
- League of Arab States
- Union of Arab Chambers
- Union of Arab Banks
- International Women Entrepreneurial Challenge
- Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions
- Arab Organization for Agricultural Development
- Regional CSR Network
- Creative Business Network
- Annual Investment Meeting Congress
- Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- United Nations Media, New York
- Catalytic Finance Foundation
- AltaSea