



Reykjavík Global Forum Launches Leading Edge Initiative

Five Leaders Celebrated for Paving the Way for Women Around the World

Press Release, Reykjavík, Iceland, June 24, 2021 – The Reykjavík Global Forum - Women Leaders [launches today Leading Edge](#), an initiative to celebrate and amplify the work of women who are fostering economic growth and social change. The initiative is one of the centerpieces of this year's Forum – a globally renowned convening where hundreds of leaders from all sectors, including politics, business, civil society, academia, the arts, and media, “Power Together” every year in Reykjavík to build a more resilient and equal society.

In launching Leading Edge, five global business leaders are showcased. Their stories exemplify the power and potential of female leadership in shaping economies across different sectors and regions of the world.

“These five impressive leaders have achieved tremendous success in their lives and careers. Their commitment to using their voices, platforms, and power to build successful businesses and contribute to the economy of their countries is outstanding,” said Silvana Koch-Mehrin, Founder & President of Women Political Leaders (WPL), co-host of the Reykjavík Global Forum - Women Leaders. “The Reykjavík Global Forum is an opportunity for leaders from all continents and all sectors to focus on solutions to advance society; and with creative, innovative women like these at the table, we can move forward faster towards more equitable workplaces, governments, economies, and communities.”

Videos highlighting the stories, setbacks, and successes of the Leading Edge ambassadors have been shared on social media, at WhatsYourEdge.org, and on the [initiatives section of the Forum website, reykjavikforum.global/initiatives/](https://reykjavikforum.global/initiatives/), with a call to action for changemakers to amplify these messages and contribute their own stories.

“We all have a story to tell, and our hope is that this cohort of inspiring Leading Edge women will start a global conversation on what is possible when more women lead,” said Hanna Birna Kristjansdottir, Chair of the Board of the Reykjavík Global Forum. “The global GDP could increase by \$28 trillion in 2025 if men and women participated in their economies equally. Particularly as we begin to envision our post-pandemic world and as we look to build forward equal, the full participation and leadership of women will be essential to a more sustainable recovery.”

Stories from the Leading Edge initiative will continue on social media during the Generation Equality Forum, a global gathering for gender equality convened by UN Women and co-hosted by the governments of Mexico and France, in partnership with youth and civil society.

Women worldwide, and those participating in Generation Equality, are invited to share their stories of female leadership, mentorship, and power on social media using the hashtags, #WhatsYourEdge and #WomenLeading. Stories will be amplified throughout the summer, culminating in the Reykjavík Global Forum 2021 from November 8 to 10. This year's event will



be a combination of virtual conversations and in-person sessions in Reykjavik, Iceland, a global leader in gender equality.

Meet the Women at the Leading Edge

The five women business leaders featured by Leading Edge are having significant impacts on their countries' economies, which have mixed records on gender equality, according to the [Reykjavik Index for Leadership](#) compiled by WPL and Kantar. The Index measures the perceptions of women's suitability for leadership in government and business.

There was very little improvement in the latest research in the way societies in the G7 view men and women's suitability to lead. An index score of 100 signals complete agreement that men and women are equally suited to leadership. In the 2020 report, Canada scored 81, United States 76, France 74, India 68, Kenya 53, and Nigeria 47.

To learn more about these women, [watch their Leading Edge videos](#).

Aur lie Jean, Ph.D., U.S. and France

CEO and Founder, In Silico Veritas; CAIO and Co-Founder, DPEEX

Dr. Aur lie Jean is a research scientist and an entrepreneur in computational sciences. Her consulting company, In Silico Veritas, builds algorithms and data strategies for a broad range of clients. Her AI deep tech startup DPEEX on precision medicine helps increase the survival rate of women with breast cancer by detecting and localizing the tumor up to two years before being visible on a mammography.

***In her words:** "We all have cognitive biases...We tend to transfer those biases to the things that we produce. Eventually, those become algorithm biases and that could lead to what we call technology discrimination."*

Chebet Lesan, Kenya

Founder and CEO, BrightGreen Renewable Energy

An industrial designer, environment enthusiast, and advocate for technology that uplifts underserved communities, Chebet Lesan's company, BrightGreen Energy manufactures economical fuel blocks that reduce deforestation and develop other women's entrepreneurship.

***In her words:** "Use what you have to do what you can. Most times, whatever you need to achieve something, you already have it in you and around you. Start where you are."*

Funkola Odeleye, Nigeria

Co-founder and CEO of DIYLaw Technologies, Ltd.

Passionate about developing the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Nigeria, Funkola Odeleye's company automated legal services for small and medium enterprises, including the process for business registrations. It has already contributed to the creation of 125,000 jobs by helping entrepreneurs scale their companies and become competitive. Odeleye's goal is to help reduce unemployment in Nigeria by 50 percent by 2030.



***In her words:** “Most importantly, I am motivated by my tribe. Africans say that it takes a village to raise a child. I’ve been raised by an amazing village. I have a four year old daughter and I don’t just want to be a nurturer and a carer for her. I want to be one of the first inspirations that she has.”*

Nivruti Rai, India

Country Head of Intel India and VP of Intel Foundry Services

A self-proclaimed risk taker, Nivruti Rai is a champion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML). She strongly believes in its power to create value for humanity. She is using her position at one of the world’s leading technology companies to promote India’s digitalization with the focus on creating “population scale” solutions with technology.

***In her words:** “If you don’t fit into the frame—especially for women—that people have in their minds, then you have to come and break that framework.”*

Eva Wong, Canada

Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer, Borrowell

Eva Wong wants to bust the myth that entrepreneurs are born. She co-founded the fintech firm Borrowell without technology or financial services experience and without having been part of a startup. In 2019, she and her co-founder, Andrew Graham, were EY’s Entrepreneur of the Year.

***In her words:** “Do something that scares you a little. Resilience and confidence are muscles that you can build over time.”*

For more information or to set up a one-on-one interview, please contact press@wpleaders.org or Meg Geoghegan at Meg@ClarendonCommunications.com

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About The Reykjavík Global Forum

The Reykjavík Global Forum, previously Women Leaders Global Forum, was launched in November 2018, in Reykjavík, Iceland. The Reykjavík Global Forum is where women leaders discuss and share ideas and solutions to further advance society. This year, the Forum gathers leaders from around the globe, including Presidents, Prime Ministers, and other public figures, as well as women leaders from business, academia, civil society, arts, media, and more. Participants take part in the conversations, hence they are Conversationists. They all are playing a vital role in their respective fields sharing ideas, insights, and experiences. The Forum is annually co-hosted by Women Political Leaders (WPL) and the Government and Parliament of Iceland, under the heading Power, Together.