



BUILDING FOR RESILIENCE, INNOVATION, COOPERATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

BRICS WBA

Compendium of Positive Stories

2026



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BRICS WBA

Compendium of Positive Stories

———— 2026 ————

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FOREWORD



When women have the opportunity to lead, societies become more resilient, economies more dynamic, and communities more inclusive. Across BRICS, women are driving innovation, building enterprises, creating employment, strengthening communities, and contributing to the development of more inclusive and sustainable economies. Their leadership is shaping not only businesses and institutions, but also the communities and generations that follow.

As the BRICS partnership evolves and expands, our shared commitment to advancing women's economic participation and leadership remains central to our collective agenda. The BRICS Women's Business Alliance (WBA) provides an important platform for this endeavour-bringing together women leaders and business communities across member countries to exchange experiences, foster partnerships, and advance practical solutions that support women's economic empowerment.

It is in this spirit that, under India's BRICS Presidency, I am pleased to present the 2026 edition of the Compendium of Positive Stories on Women.

This Compendium brings together stories of women leaders, women-owned enterprises, and organisations across BRICS that are creating meaningful impact across communities, industries, and economies. Collectively, these stories reflect the progress being made across our nations and demonstrate the many ways in which women's leadership contributes to innovation, resilience, employment, and inclusive growth.

These are more than stories of achievement; they are stories of possibility. They show what can be achieved when women are able to access opportunity, exercise leadership, and translate their ideas and aspirations into impact. From entrepreneurship and manufacturing to finance, technology, agriculture, healthcare, education, and community leadership, the stories featured here reflect the creativity, determination, and resilience of women across BRICS.

I extend my appreciation to the national chapters of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance for their partnership in identifying and sharing these stories. Their collective contribution has helped make this Compendium a truly collaborative BRICS endeavour and a reflection of the diversity of experiences across our member countries.

I also acknowledge the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Secretariat for the BRICS Women's Business Alliance 2026, for its coordination and stewardship in bringing this publication together.

I hope these stories serve not only as a celebration of progress, but also as an invitation to action—encouraging governments, businesses, institutions, and communities to create greater opportunities for women to participate, lead, and contribute to shared prosperity.

May this Compendium inspire further exchange, collaboration, and collective action across BRICS towards a future in which women can realise their aspirations and contribute fully to the growth and development of our economies and societies.

It is my privilege to present this Compendium as a collective reflection of the progress, potential, and promise of women across BRICS.

Avarna Jain

Global Chairperson

BRICS Women's Business Alliance 2026





BRAZIL

BRAZIL





Alessandra Perusin Miotto

CEO
Perozin Industria Metalurgica

Alessandra Perusin Miotto leads one of Brazil's long-established agricultural machinery manufacturers, continuing a family legacy while driving innovation in equipment designed for small and medium-sized rural properties. As CEO of Perozin Industria Metalurgica, she has combined industrial leadership with active participation in business associations, innovation ecosystems, and initiatives that encourage women's entrepreneurship. Her professional journey reflects the evolution of a family enterprise into a business that serves domestic and international markets while advancing technology for the agricultural sector.

“

*The possible is the
perception of the horizon of
our actions.*

”



Professional Journey

Alessandra Perusin Miotto's association with Perozin Industria Metalurgica began long before she formally joined the company. Growing up in a family business environment, she developed an early interest in understanding its operations, interacting with employees, and observing the day-to-day functioning of the enterprise. At the age of 14, she officially began working in the company, marking the start of her professional career.

Her professional path was shaped by a family legacy spanning three generations. She is the granddaughter of the company's founder, Antônio Perusin, who left his family's farm at the age of 13 to learn the tinsmith trade in another city. The next chapter was led by her father, Harry Perusin, who served as the company's second director for three decades. Known for his inventive approach, he played a significant role in shaping both the company's development and Alessandra's professional outlook. Alongside this family influence, she pursued continuous learning through formal education, professional training, and practical experience.

Alessandra holds a degree in Business Administration from UNOESC, a specialization in Productivity and Total Quality from UNC, a Master Practitioner certification in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), and a Master of Business Administration in Corporate Strategic Management from SENAC in partnership with Ashland University in the United States. She also served for five years as an instructor for Empretec, an entrepreneurship workshop organized by the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (SEBRAE) under a United Nations-supported initiative. She became the first woman in the Brazilian state of Santa Catarina accredited by SEBRAE to facilitate the programme.

A defining moment in her career came when she succeeded her father after his 30 years of leadership. Although she had prepared for the role, the transition required building confidence in her own decision-making while leading a company in the traditionally male-dominated metal-mechanical sector serving agribusiness. She frequently found herself as the only woman in professional meetings. With the support of the company's team and experienced advisers, she established her own leadership approach while continuing the organisation's long-standing commitment to technological development and innovation.

Recognising that similar challenges are experienced by many women, Alessandra shares her professional experiences through lectures and discussions with women entrepreneurs. These engagements focus on providing encouragement and practical support during different stages of business leadership. Alongside expanding the company's presence in international markets and participating in business associations that strengthen the broader business ecosystem, her leadership was recognised with the 2024 Businesswoman of the Year Award presented by the Business Association of Concórdia, Santa Catarina.

About Perozin Industria Metalurgica

Perozin Industria Metalurgica develops machinery and equipment for agribusiness, with a particular focus on the needs of small and medium-sized rural properties. Established in 1964, the company manufactures grain dryers, storage silos, feed mills, grain crushers, feed mixers, grain and bran conveyors, ecological drinkers for swine, swine carcass shredders, feed silos for cattle, and other agricultural equipment designed to improve operational efficiency.

The company's vision is "To Be the Ideal Business Partner," which motivates them to continuously innovate solutions for their clients, listen carefully to their needs, contribute to improving production processes on farms, and provide technical assistance in their daily operations.

Perozin serves customers across Brazil, from the northern to the southern regions, while also exporting products to Mercosur countries and Africa on selected occasions. Its operations are supported by 40



direct employees together with partner companies that contribute to product delivery and customer support. The company also maintains a focus on continuous improvement, aiming to develop at least two new products each year. During 2025, it recorded an absenteeism rate of 2.1 percent, an employee turnover rate of 12.5 percent, reduced production batch lead times by 9.64 percent, and achieved a Net Promoter Score (NPS) customer satisfaction rating of 96 percent.

Impact Created

Under Alessandra Perusin Miotto's leadership, Perozin Industria Metalurgica has continued to strengthen agricultural productivity through machinery and equipment designed for small and medium-sized rural properties. The company's solutions help reduce labour requirements, increase operational efficiency, minimise physical effort, and improve workplace safety through equipment that complies with applicable Regulatory Standards. These improvements contribute to both the economic sustainability of rural enterprises and safer working conditions for agricultural producers.

The adoption of technology on rural properties also supports family succession in agriculture. Modern equipment encourages younger generations to remain engaged in farming by introducing innovation into traditional agricultural practices. Beyond the direct benefits created through its products, the company contributes to broader industry development through active participation in representative organisations and collaborative initiatives that strengthen the agricultural and manufacturing sectors.

Alongside her corporate responsibilities, Alessandra serves as Vice President of the Grain Storage Chamber at the Brazilian Association of Machinery and Equipment Industry (ABIMAQ). In this role, she works with manufacturers to support the Brazilian Association of Technical Standards (ABNT) in developing activity and safety standards while contributing information that supports public policy and improves industry quality. She also coordinates the Metal-Mechanical Centre of the Concórdia Innovation Ecosystem (Nexcon), where she promotes training programmes, technical visits, and partnerships with educational and research institutions.

Her contribution to international trade and business development extends beyond the company. After serving for four consecutive years as Coordinator of the Foreign Trade Centre, she now serves as Director of Export and Import Affairs at the Business Association of Concórdia (ACIC). She is also a member of the Internationalization Board of EEN Brazil. These responsibilities support initiatives that strengthen international business connections and encourage export development.

Alessandra also participates in initiatives that encourage women's entrepreneurship and leadership. She is a Founding Ambassador of the Mulherar Movement and supports the Women Entrepreneurs Centre at ACIC, where she contributes to lectures on entrepreneurship, management, innovation, and family succession. In addition, she is a member of the Brazilian Organization of Women Entrepreneurs (OBME), helping strengthen national and international networks that create opportunities for women in business.

Innovation & Leadership

Innovation has remained a central element of Perozin Industria Metalurgica development for more than three decades. The company has maintained a dedicated budget for research, product improvement, and innovation. In 2015, after assuming the company's leadership, Alessandra restructured the innovation process by replacing a dedicated department with a committee that encouraged broader collaboration and greater participation from external professionals and organisations.

The company currently participates in its third Brasil + Produtivo programme. The first project focused on product improvement, the second on process improvement, and the third concentrates on digitalisation, with completion expected by the end of 2026. Perozin also has two innovation projects approved by the



Funding Authority for Studies and Projects (FINEP): a Swine and Poultry Carcass Incinerator and a Smart Feed Factory, both of which remain under development.

Its innovation portfolio includes small-scale threshers for rural properties, feed mixing and crushing units, vertical feed mixers with internal piping, granulometers for measuring feed particle size, swine and poultry carcass incinerators for biological risk disposal, ecological drinkers for swine, feed silos for cattle, and swine carcass shredders. These developments reflect the company's continuing focus on practical solutions that address the operational requirements of agricultural producers.

Awards & Recognitions

The company's contributions to industry and innovation have received recognition through several awards and certifications. Harry Perusin received the Regional Industrial Merit award from the Federation of Industries of Santa Catarina (FIESC) in 2014. The company also received Gerdau's Best of the Land Award for its Granulometer equipment.

Alessandra Perusin Miotto was recognised with the Jacob Biezus Award, receiving the Businessperson of the Year 2024 title from the Business Association of Concórdia (ACIC). In 2025, she also received the Woman Award presented by the City Council of Concórdia, Santa Catarina. During the same year, Perozin received the Company Friend of the New Paths Program 2025 certificate, awarded jointly by the Federation of Industries of Santa Catarina (FIESC), the Association of Magistrates of Santa Catarina (AMC), and the Court of Justice of Santa Catarina (TJSC). The company also achieved an A+ Classification in the Brazilian Federal Revenue Service's Sintonia Program.





Elisangela Colodino

Owner, Director, CEO,
A Sustentável Reciclagem Indústria
e Comércio de Borrachas Ltda.
– JJ Borrachas

Elisangela Colodino is a Brazilian entrepreneur leading a manufacturing company that transforms rubber waste into automotive components through circular economy practices. Since establishing JJ Borrachas in 2014, she has combined industrial innovation, environmental responsibility, and resilient leadership to build a sustainable business in Brazil's automotive sector. Her journey reflects the transformation of operational challenges into long-term industrial and social impact.

“

*I believe that work, truth,
and courage can transform
lives, businesses, and the
impact we leave on the
world.*

”



Professional Journey

Elisangela Colodino's entrepreneurial journey began long before she established her own company. Before entering business ownership, she spent 17 years working for a service company associated with the National Association of the Tire Industry (ANIP) and Reciclanip, the organisation responsible for reverse logistics and the environmentally appropriate disposal of unusable tyres in Brazil. This experience provided extensive technical knowledge of rubber waste reuse, raw materials derived from recycled rubber, and industrial sustainability. More importantly, it revealed the environmental and economic value of transforming industrial waste into products with commercial applications.

In 2014, at the age of 33, she acquired an existing business that faced significant operational and financial difficulties. The company lacked effective management, carried substantial debt, and required complete organisational restructuring. She relocated the operation to Abadia de Goiás and restarted production from a modest facility located behind a residence. Although resources were limited, the objective was to build a sustainable industrial business with long-term growth potential.

As she gained a deeper understanding of the business, she recognised opportunities to improve its operations through stronger organisation, disciplined management, and strategic planning. However, the company's challenges proved greater than initially anticipated.

During the first year of operations, the business lost one of its partners. Two years later, Elisangela assumed sole responsibility for leading the company while taking on debts exceeding R\$500,000, an amount that significantly exceeded the company's financial capacity at the time. Even the sale of all her personal assets would not have covered the outstanding liabilities. Despite these circumstances, support from her family and encouragement from people she encountered throughout the journey helped sustain her determination.

Rather than abandoning the business, she continued to rebuild the company. During one of her first commercial visits after assuming full responsibility, she summarised her approach in a statement that later became closely associated with her entrepreneurial journey: "I only have the truth and the courage to work." The statement reflected the principles that guided the company's recovery and future growth. Alongside these professional responsibilities, she also experienced the challenges of atypical motherhood. That personal experience strengthened her perspective on leadership and management by deepening her empathy, resilience, and capacity to make decisions under complex circumstances. It also reinforced her commitment to creating positive social impact through responsible business leadership.

About A Sustentável Reciclagem Indústria e Comércio de Borrachas Ltda.,

A Sustentável Reciclagem Indústria e Comércio de Borrachas Ltda., operating as JJ Borrachas, is a Brazilian manufacturing company specialising in automotive rubber components for suspension systems. Established in 2014 and headquartered in Abadia de Goiás, the company serves major distributors within Brazil's automotive sector through its own production facilities and internally developed manufacturing processes.

The company produces components including cabin mounts, shackle bushings, and other automotive parts manufactured from rubber waste that would otherwise have been discarded or sent for incineration. By converting discarded materials into products that meet industrial quality standards, JJ Borrachas integrates sustainability directly into its manufacturing model.

Its operations are based on circular economy principles. Every month, the company reintroduces more than 40 tonnes of rubber waste into the production chain, reducing environmental impact while creating commercially viable automotive products.

Today, JJ Borrachas supplies approximately 28 clients across several Brazilian states, including Goiás, Bahia, Mato Grosso do Sul, São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul, Minas Gerais, and Tocantins. The company operates with 13 direct employees supported by outsourced professionals and has established itself as a regional example of sustainable manufacturing that combines industrial development, employment generation, and environmental responsibility.

In 2024, JJ Borrachas participated in the Brasil Mais Produtivo Programme, a national productivity initiative that enabled the company to increase productivity by 66.67 percent while reducing lead time by 19.63 percent. The programme also marked the beginning of the company's technological development partnership with SENAI Goiás, the National Service for Industrial Training in the state of Goiás, enabling participation in additional initiatives such as the Mover programme.

Impact Created

JJ Borrachas generates economic, environmental, and social value within Brazil's Midwest region and across the country's automotive supply chain. The company's operations support regional industrial development while strengthening sustainable manufacturing practices in the automotive sector.

Economically, the company contributes to job creation through direct employment and outsourced professional opportunities. Its operations also strengthen regional industry by supplying distributors across multiple Brazilian states, expanding the presence of manufacturing from Goiás in national markets.

Environmental impact is central to the company's business model. Every month, JJ Borrachas processes more than 40 tonnes of rubber waste that might otherwise be discarded into the environment or sent for incineration. These materials are transformed into durable automotive components that meet industrial technical standards. By returning discarded rubber to productive use, the company demonstrates how circular economy practices can reduce waste while supporting industrial production.

The company's social contribution extends beyond manufacturing. It values local labour, creates employment opportunities in a region experiencing industrial growth, and demonstrates that environmental responsibility and industrial competitiveness can coexist. Elisangela Colodino's leadership journey has also become a source of inspiration for other women entrepreneurs, particularly those seeking to establish careers in the traditionally male-dominated automotive industry.

Through its operations, JJ Borrachas illustrates that sustainable manufacturing can generate measurable economic value while reducing environmental impacts and supporting regional development.

Innovation & Leadership

Innovation at JJ Borrachas has been driven by the continuous improvement of industrial processes and the practical application of sustainable manufacturing principles. Since the company's establishment, Elisangela Colodino has focused on building an organisational culture centred on operational discipline, productivity, quality, and long-term growth.

As the business evolved, the company invested in developing its own production line, adapting equipment to operational needs, and strengthening internal manufacturing processes.

The company's business model is based on transforming rubber waste into automotive products with high technical standards. This approach demonstrates that sustainability and profitability can complement one another within the manufacturing industry. Rather than viewing waste as a disposal challenge, the company treats it as a valuable industrial resource capable of generating products with commercial and environmental value.



Elisangela's leadership style has remained closely connected to day-to-day operations. She has emphasised transparency in commercial relationships while maintaining focus during periods of financial, operational, and structural difficulty. Throughout the company's development, she has prioritised responsibility, trust, collective commitment, and continuity of operations.

Her professional journey has also contributed to strengthening the visibility of women in industrial leadership. By building and leading a manufacturing enterprise in a sector historically dominated by men, she has demonstrated the importance of greater female representation in industry. Her experience highlights how inclusive leadership can contribute to organisational development while expanding opportunities for future generations of women entrepreneurs.

Today, the combination of strategic vision, practical innovation, sustainability, and entrepreneurial resilience distinguishes JJ Borrachas within Brazil's manufacturing sector. These qualities have supported the company's position as a regional reference in sustainable industrial transformation.

Awards & Recognitions

In 2023, Elisangela Sheila Colodino Feitosa received national recognition through the Prêmio Sebrae Mulher de Negócios, one of Brazil's leading awards recognising women's entrepreneurship and business leadership.

Leading JJ Borrachas, she won First Place at the State Level in Goiás in the Small Businesses category. The recognition acknowledged her business performance, innovation, and contribution to sustainable industrial development.

She subsequently achieved Second Place Nationally in the 2023 Prêmio Sebrae Mulher de Negócios. The national recognition highlighted her entrepreneurial journey, strategic management, resilient leadership, and contribution to sustainable industrial transformation. It also recognised the economic and social impact created through the company's operations within Brazil's manufacturing sector.





Évny Sendeski

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
of Operations
Dal Esquadrias

Évny Sendeski is a Brazilian entrepreneur in the construction sector who transformed years of practical industry experience into a successful enterprise. After building her expertise in a family-owned business, she established Dal Esquadrias in Rio Branco, Acre, where she has focused on technical excellence, people-centred leadership, and sustainable construction solutions.

“
*With God leading the way,
no challenge is greater than
the strength and faith in
hard work.*
”



Professional Journey

Évny Sendeski began her career in the construction industry during the 1990s, working in a family-owned business. Over the years, she developed broad practical expertise by taking responsibility for multiple aspects of the business. Her work extended across sales, procurement of primary materials, and operations management, making her a central figure in the company's day-to-day functioning. This hands-on experience became the foundation of her professional development and shaped her approach to leadership and business management.

Alongside her professional responsibilities, she began pursuing higher education. However, balancing academic studies with family responsibilities proved difficult. She chose to pause her college education to focus on motherhood, recognising the challenge of simultaneously meeting the demands of being a professional, a mother, and a wife. Rather than viewing this decision as a setback, she invested even more deeply in practical learning and industry experience.

Although her formal education was interrupted, her commitment to learning remained constant. She continued to expand her technical knowledge through professional development programmes and technical courses. She also travelled extensively across Brazil, treating these experiences as opportunities for practical learning that complemented her industry experience. This continuous investment in knowledge strengthened her technical expertise and prepared her for future entrepreneurial challenges. A defining moment in her professional journey came when she decided to leave the family business. Management challenges within the organisation, led by family members, were affecting the company's performance. After gaining confidence in her own abilities and preparing herself professionally, she made the decision to establish an independent business. She embraced this great challenge with determination, even though she was in a state where she had no other family members. She was guided by the certainty that "God and I can do it."

About Dal Esquadrias

Dal Esquadrias operates in the manufacture and installation of aluminium window and door frames. The company provides a broad portfolio of products and services that includes the fabrication and assembly of doors, windows, aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding, gates, railings, stair structures, shower enclosures, and balcony enclosures. Its work spans projects ranging from standard residential requirements to high-end construction developments. Over the course of its operations, the company has completed more than 100 projects.

The company's approach is built around technical expertise and customer support throughout the project lifecycle. From the initial consultation to after-sales service, Dal Esquadrias provides technical guidance designed to help clients make informed decisions. The organisation also works within established technical standards and assigns specialised professionals to support budgeting and project planning. This emphasis on technical quality and customer engagement has become a defining feature of its operations.

Impact Created

Dal Esquadrias has contributed to both economic activity and employment in Rio Branco, Acre. The company currently employs 20 people directly and supports approximately 10 additional indirect jobs through outsourced services. This employment generation reflects the company's continued growth and its contribution to the local construction ecosystem.

Women also play an important role within the organisation. Four women currently serve on the company's team, each holding leadership responsibilities. The organisation recognises that increasing women's participation in operational roles requires additional investment in technical training and



professional development. Expanding these opportunities has therefore been identified as one of its future development priorities.

Environmental sustainability forms another important aspect of the company's work. Dal Esquadrias primarily uses aluminium, a material that is infinitely recyclable, reducing the environmental impact associated with construction materials. The company has also introduced high-standard architectural concepts to Rio Branco, contributing to the evolution of the local construction market and encouraging higher technical and design standards within the sector.

Innovation & Leadership

Évny Sendeski's leadership philosophy centres on a human-focused management approach. She has developed an organisational culture that emphasises teamwork, mutual respect, productivity, and empathy. This management style supports collaboration while helping employees address the practical challenges associated with manual work in the construction industry.

One of the company's most significant operational improvements was the implementation of the 5S methodology, a workplace organisation and management system designed to improve efficiency, standardisation, and workplace discipline. Its introduction marked a major organisational turning point by strengthening operational processes and creating lasting cultural change across the company.

The shortage of qualified labour remains one of the construction sector's most significant challenges. To address this issue, Dal Esquadrias established a strong internal training culture based on developing talent within the organisation. Experienced professionals are expected to train newer employees, creating a continuous cycle of knowledge sharing. This approach supports workforce development while helping the company maintain consistent technical standards and work quality.





Lilian Guthron Koslowski Luiz

CEO
Pietra Confecções Ltda.

Lilian Guthron Koslowski Luiz is the CEO of Pietra Confecções Ltda., a textile manufacturing company based in Agrolândia, Santa Catarina, Brazil. Over nearly two decades, she has transformed a small sewing operation into a trusted manufacturing partner for major textile brands while creating employment opportunities and investing in workforce development. Her leadership combines operational discipline with a people-focused approach, demonstrating how sustainable business growth can generate long-term social impact.

“
Seek results-driven management without giving up the human side. Build partnerships while creating outcomes that benefit everyone involved.
”



Professional Journey

Lilian Guthron Koslowski Luiz began her entrepreneurial journey out of necessity. Faced with the responsibility of supporting herself and her son, she embraced an opportunity that offered the possibility of improving not only their lives but also of her family. Her business started modestly in the garage of her brother's house, where she worked alongside four other people using a limited number of basic sewing machines.

The creation of Pietra Confecções was inspired by the opportunity available at the time and by the workforce present in the local community.

As the business expanded, the company encountered several challenges that included financial and human resource management. The garment subcontracting sector operates at the end of the production chain, where profit margins are comparatively lower and businesses often have limited negotiating power over prices. These conditions are further influenced by high labour costs, taxation and union-related obligations, making operational efficiency essential for long-term sustainability.

Instead of allowing these constraints to limit growth, Lilian concentrated on strengthening management practices while steadily expanding the company's capabilities. Her leadership enabled Pietra Confecções to establish itself as a reliable manufacturing partner serving recognised textile brands across the region. The company's evolution reflects persistence, disciplined management and the ability to respond to industry challenges through continuous improvement rather than rapid expansion alone.

About Pietra Confecções

Founded in 2006, Pietra Confecções Ltda. operates as a sewing and garment manufacturing company within Brazil's textile industry. The company specialises in providing sewing services to large textile brands, producing garments made from woven fabrics and tailored clothing. The company's operations are built around flexibility, attention to detail, punctual delivery and respect for work, colleagues and teamwork. Today, Pietra Confecções serves customers throughout the Vale do Itajaí region, which comprises 53 municipalities, and the Alto Vale do Itajaí region, which includes 28 municipalities. In addition to its regional presence, the company also serves a client based in São Paulo, extending its reach beyond its immediate operating area. The organisation currently employs approximately 55 to 60 people

Impact Created

The growth of Pietra Confecções has generated both economic and social impact within its region. The company contributes to the local economy through job creation. Beyond recruitment, the organisation trains individuals with the skills necessary for textile sector, hence providing them with practical skills that benefit not only the company but also the wider labour market and the community.

Women represent the majority of the company's workforce, making female participation a defining characteristic of its organisational culture. The company complements employment opportunities with initiatives that support employee wellbeing and personal development. These include lectures and educational programmes focused on workers' health, women's health, nutrition, pharmaceutical guidance and financial management. Pietra Confecções also seeks to understand employees' individual needs and provide support where possible within their daily routines.

The company's approach extends beyond the workplace by seeking to create a positive impact on the families of its employees. It encourages healthy habits, employee engagement and individual prosperity through initiatives designed to strengthen both professional and personal wellbeing. The long-term impact of these investments is reflected in the professional achievements of former employees. Many



have progressed to hold important positions within the industry, while others have established their own businesses as entrepreneurs.

Innovation & Leadership

The main innovations implemented in the company were visual management, defect control, climate surveys, layout design, leadership training, ABVTEX (Brazilian Textile Retail Association) certification, and the implementation of a real time production control system, facilitating management and self-management. Their leadership style is more focused on materialism, female leaders' participation, seeking results, but with respect for people.

Awards & Recognitions

Over nearly 20 years of operation, Pietra Confecções has received several important recognitions that reflect its commitment to quality and responsible business practices. These include certification by Great Place to Work (GPTW), ABVTEX certification and the ABRA Award as a distinguished supplier for Cia Hering. These recognitions acknowledge the company's operational standards and its long-standing contribution to Brazil's textile manufacturing sector.





Mariane Alves Nunes

Commercial Director
Grupo Pajucara Alimentos

Mariane Alves Nunes is the Commercial Director of Grupo Pajucara Alimentos, a Brazilian food company with more than five decades of history. Her career reflects resilience, adaptability and leadership, combining a background in law and academia with the responsibility of helping lead a long-established family business. She has supported the company's commercial growth while contributing to its international expansion.

“

*I did not win every time I
fought, but I lost every time
I failed to fight.*

”



Professional Journey

Mariane Alves Nunes was born in Arapiraca, in the Agreste region of the Brazilian state of Alagoas, the birthplace of Zumbi dos Palmares, a historic symbol of resistance. She is a lawyer, is married and is the mother of a son born in November 2019. Raised as the only daughter among three siblings, she attributes her early values of responsibility, ethics, hard work and commitment to the example set by her parents.

Her mother a psychologist, left the countryside of Alagoas at a young age to study in Recife when roads in the region were still unpaved. While working and raising three children she achieved second place in a public examination. From her, Mariane learned determination and emotional discipline. Her father, one of nine children, graduated in Engineering from a public university in Pernambuco and joined the Pajuçara industry in 1979. The company had begun operations in 1975 as a coffee-roasting business before entering the pasta and biscuit segment in 1979.

Throughout her childhood, Mariane observed the demands of a family-owned business. Her father consistently encouraged her to build an independent career before considering a role in the company. Following that advice, she studied Law, qualified as a lawyer and later prepared for admission to the Rio Branco Institute with the ambition of becoming a diplomat. After marrying, she remained in Alagoas when her husband became a state prosecutor.

She redirected her professional path, taught English for nearly ten years, completed a Master's degree in Law at Jean Monnet University, validated by the University of São Paulo in Brazil, and began a PhD in the History of Commercial Law at the University of Lille in France. When planning to start a family, she considered postponing motherhood because of her doctoral studies. Her academic adviser encouraged her to prioritise having a child, telling her that a PhD could wait.

Shortly after the birth of her son, pandemic began. During that period, the family lost her younger brother, who had been expected to succeed their father in the business. Faced with uncertainty, Mariane supported her family through the loss. She had not planned to join the company, but when her father considered selling the business, she recognised that its value extended beyond its financial worth. Her father invited her to join because of her ability to manage people. She accepted the opportunity, entering the company after preparing herself in business management. She began in production before moving into the commercial area.

In less than a year, the company started exporting to two countries despite expectations that the process would take years. It has continued expanding responsibly into international markets. As the only woman working in a predominantly male environment, Mariane believes leadership should be defined by capability rather than gender. She has represented the family business in international initiatives in India, South Korea, Mexico, Iran, Rwanda, Kenya, Peru and other countries while pursuing the goal of establishing the company as a global reference in pasta and biscuits and preserving its family legacy across generations.

About Grupo Pajuçara Alimentos

Founded in 1975, Grupo Pajuçara Alimentos began as a coffee-roasting business before entering the pasta and biscuit segment in 1979. In 2007, the company acquired the AFA brand, which has a history of more than 100 years, strengthening its market identity. In 2012, it launched its wafer range, which became a significant commercial success. Today, the company offers more than 50 products. It combines traditional manufacturing with modern production processes, provides gluten-free and lactose-free options, and continues to optimise operations to reduce waste and environmental impact.

Impact Created

From an original group of thirteen industries operating in the state, Grupo Pajuçara Alimentos is the only one that remains after 50 years. Although Alagoas represents only 0.4 per cent of Brazil's industrial output, the company has continued to grow despite regional and economic challenges. Its workforce has expanded from 16 employees to more than 200, supporting hundreds of families and contributing to local economic development. International exports have strengthened the presence of both the company and the state of Alagoas in overseas markets.

Innovation & Leadership

The company's continued presence in the Brazilian food industry over five decades reflects sustained adaptation, practical innovation and long-term planning. Throughout its history, it has navigated economic instability, inflation, tax complexity, logistical challenges, economic recessions and the pandemic. It has responded by modernising operations, expanding its product portfolio, strengthening people management and entering new markets.

Awards & Recognition

The company received a Motion of Applause from the Maceió City Council in recognition of its support for job creation initiatives under Law No. 11110025/2025. It has also been recognised for 32 years of partnership with ALGÁS (Alagoas Gas Company), acknowledging its contribution to innovation and industrial growth.





Micheli Formentin

Chief Commercial Officer (CCO)
Grupo Amapá Telhas

Micheli Formentin is a Brazilian entrepreneur and business leader in the civil construction sector whose career has been shaped by resilience, determination, and long-term vision. Over more than two decades, she has contributed to building Grupo Amapá Telhas into a recognised manufacturer in northern Brazil while creating employment opportunities and supporting regional industrial development. Her journey reflects the role of entrepreneurship in transforming challenges into sustainable growth.

“

Every successful business is born first from a dream, but it is the courage to believe and act that transforms dreams into reality.

”

Professional Trajectory

Micheli Formentin, aged 45, was born in the state of Santa Catarina, Brazil. She holds a degree in accounting and is the mother of two sons. Her entrepreneurial journey began at an early age, driven by the need to create opportunities despite growing up in an unstable family environment. Those early experiences instilled a strong sense of responsibility, resilience and commitment to hard work, qualities that would later define her professional path.

At the age of 16, she entered the ceramic industry alongside her brother. During that period, access to information and business resources was limited, requiring the family to travel extensively in search of markets with growth potential. Their first venture was established in a rented brickyard in Lages, Santa Catarina, in 1997. In 2000, they relocated to Palmas, in the state of Tocantins, where rapid regional development presented new business opportunities. There, they built their first small artisanal brickyard. Although the business faced strong competition and operational challenges, the search for a sustainable market continued.

A significant turning point came in 2002 when the family decided to invest in the state of Amapá. They identified an opportunity in a market where many believed it was impossible to manufacture quality ceramic roof tiles because of the characteristics of the local clay. Despite these perceptions, they participated in establishing the first ceramic roof tile manufacturing facility in the state.

The move to Macapá presented both professional and personal challenges. Micheli entered an unfamiliar environment at a young age and faced the demands of building a business far from the reality she had previously known. Although the journey was emotionally demanding, she remained focused on the long-term objective of creating a business capable of generating opportunities, contributing to regional development and positively influencing the lives of the people connected with the enterprise.

Today, after 23 years of history, Grupo Amapá Telhas has developed into a well-established company recognised for the quality of its ceramic products and its organisational culture. The business currently provides direct employment to nearly 200 people, supporting hundreds of families through its operations. Three years ago, the company expanded its portfolio with the launch of the Terrazon brand, created to take products manufactured in Amapá to other regions of Brazil. The company continues to expand across northern Brazil while promoting the strength of manufacturing from the Amazon region.

Building a career in the construction industry, particularly within the ceramic manufacturing sector, presented additional challenges because the field has traditionally been dominated by men. Over the course of her career, Micheli has demonstrated that leadership extends beyond business management to include building strong relationships and fostering a positive working environment. Her journey has contributed to creating space for more women to assume leadership positions within the company while working alongside experienced male professionals. Her professional path reflects the broader contribution women can make in transforming industries, generating development and strengthening regional economies.

About Grupo Amapá Telhas

Grupo Amapá Telhas is an industrial ecosystem operating within Brazil's civil construction sector. Founded in 2003, the company plays a strategic role in supplying construction solutions for residential, commercial and industrial projects in the state of Amapá and throughout the northern region of Brazil. Its principal activity is the manufacture of ceramic products and construction materials, combining production efficiency, technology and quality standards.

The group consists of several specialised businesses. Amapá Telhas manufactures ceramic roof tiles, bricks and ceramic construction materials. Amapá Blocos produces structural ceramic blocks, while



Amapá Tubos manufactures cement-based construction products. Terrazon complements the group's operations by providing products focused on high-standard finishing and enhancing the visual quality of construction projects.

The organisation distinguishes itself through its industrial capacity, quality control processes and continued investment in innovation. Its products are certified, traceable and developed to meet the evolving requirements of the construction industry. Ongoing investment in production processes and logistics further supports the company's operations and market expansion.

Grupo Amapá Telhas serves construction companies, retailers, construction professionals and end consumers. Through its expanding operations, the company contributes to employment generation, regional economic activity and the growth of an industrial sector rooted in the Amazon region.

Impact Created

Over 23 years of operations in the state of Amapá, Grupo Amapá Telhas has established itself as a recognised reference in the ceramic sector across northern Brazil. The company's development has combined industrial growth with employment generation and regional economic contribution.

Today, the organisation directly employs nearly 200 people, creating opportunities that positively affect hundreds of families. Its continued expansion has strengthened local manufacturing capacity while increasing the presence of construction products produced in Amapá within other regions of Brazil. Through the Terrazon brand, the company has also expanded the reach of products manufactured in the Amazon region to a broader national market.

Awards & Recognition

Grupo Amapá Telhas holds certification under the Sectoral Quality Programme (PSQ) and certification from the National Institute of Metrology, Quality and Technology (INMETRO). These certifications recognise the company's adherence to established quality standards within Brazil's construction materials industry.





Milene Aparecida Fortkamp Gartner

Co-Owner | Mechanical Engineer
Occupational Safety Engineer

Milene Aparecida Fortkamp Gartner has combined technical expertise, engineering knowledge and entrepreneurial leadership to help sustain a family-owned manufacturing business in Brazil for five decades. Working in a traditionally male-dominated industry, she has strengthened the business through resilience, continuous professional development and a strong commitment to operational safety. Her leadership reflects the integration of engineering, responsible management and long-term industrial continuity.

“

Leadership means honoring a legacy, transforming adversity into growth, and proving that competence, innovation, and courage can open new paths for women in industry.

”



Professional Journey

Milene Aparecida Fortkamp Gartner's entrepreneurial journey is rooted in her family's business, where she learned the value of discipline, resilience, courage and daily commitment from an early age. Growing up within the enterprise shaped her understanding that entrepreneurship extends beyond business management. It also involves preserving purpose, creating meaningful impact and responding to challenges with perseverance.

Her academic path began in Systems Analysis. As she recognised her responsibility to continue and strengthen the family enterprise, she invested in continuous professional development. She completed a Master of Business Administration in Business Management, participated in programmes offered by the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (Sebrae) and the National Service for Industrial Training (SENAI), and earned degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Occupational Safety Engineering. These qualifications strengthened her technical knowledge while expanding her understanding of industrial operations, regulatory compliance and workplace safety.

Throughout her career, she encountered challenges common to industrial manufacturing, including economic crises, labour shortages, increasing competition and the ongoing need for modernisation. The most significant turning point, however, was deeply personal. When her son was two and a half years old, he suffered a serious accident after activating a machine within the business premises, resulting in the loss of his hand. The incident profoundly changed her perspective on leadership, responsibility and safety. Despite the emotional impact, she continued leading the company, supporting its workforce and sustaining her family.

About Fábrica de Carrocerias Jardim Aeroporto Ltda.

Fábrica de Carrocerias Jardim Aeroporto Ltda., based in Guarapuava, Paraná, Brazil, has operated since 1976 and now marks 50 years in truck body manufacturing, refurbishment, chassis adaptation and mobile kitchen solutions for transport applications. The company serves sectors that are essential to Brazil's economy, particularly logistics, freight transportation and agribusiness.

The enterprise combines traditional industrial expertise with engineering-led management and close operational oversight. Milene personally supervises production activities, applying her expertise as a Mechanical Engineer and Occupational Safety Engineer to maintain technical quality, regulatory compliance and structural safety. Products comply with the requirements of SENATRAN, Brazil's National Traffic Secretariat, providing customers with technical reliability, legal compliance and operational safety.

Operating with a team of seven employees, the company serves farmers, truck drivers, logistics operators and transportation companies across several regions of Brazil. Its strategic priorities include production modernisation, improved operational efficiency and initiatives designed to enhance customers' experience during service waiting periods.

Impact Created

The company's contribution extends beyond manufacturing. By supporting logistics, transportation and agribusiness, it contributes to the safe movement of goods throughout Brazil. Maintaining a family-owned industrial business for 50 years has supported employment, tax contributions, regional supply chains and local economic activity.

Its workforce includes migrant employees, reflecting an approach that promotes inclusion and diversity. Milene's leadership also represents the growing presence of women within an industry traditionally dominated by men.

Safety remains central to the organisation's operations through engineering oversight focused on structural integrity, operational safety and risk reduction for employees, drivers, transported goods and road users. Environmental responsibility includes sourcing only legally certified timber, ensuring proper industrial waste disposal through specialised providers, reducing waste and promoting durable products that help minimise unnecessary resource consumption over time.

Innovation & Leadership

Milene views innovation as continuous improvement rather than technology alone. The company strengthens its competitiveness by improving processes, adapting solutions to customer needs and integrating engineering expertise into day-to-day operational leadership.

Professional development through specialised consultancy, institutional support programmes and continued learning, including initiatives delivered by SENAI and Sebrae, has contributed to organisational growth. Her leadership is based on presence, practical involvement and mutual respect. She believes effective leadership requires understanding operational realities, making responsible decisions and building trust through consistent actions.

Her experience of managing a family tragedy while continuing to lead the business reinforced her commitment to resilience, emotional discipline, safety and responsible leadership. She continues to focus on sustainable business growth that creates economic value alongside positive social impact.

Awards & Recognitions

SENATRA regulatory homologation for compliant truck body manufacturing.





Mônica Ribeiro de Oliveira

Partner Owner and Commercial Manager
Mônica Cortinas LTDA

Mônica Ribeiro de Oliveira is a Brazilian entrepreneur in the textile and garment industry with more than three decades of experience. As Partner Owner and Commercial Manager of Mônica Cortinas LTDA, she has built a business specializing in customized curtains, interior decoration, and personalized consulting services. Her entrepreneurial journey reflects resilience, long-term vision, and the transformation of family tradition into a sustainable enterprise.

“

*It is necessary to harden,
but never lose tenderness.*

”



Professional Journey

Mônica Ribeiro de Oliveira's entrepreneurial journey began with a family tradition in sewing and textile work. Her sister-in-law, who worked in the curtains and decoration sector in Rio Grande do Sul, inspired her to enter the business. Soon afterward, the company where her husband worked ceased operations, and he joined her in building the enterprise. Together, they established the business through perseverance, dedication, and sustained effort.

The early years presented significant challenges. Limited access to market credit made it difficult to establish the initial inventory required for a fabric-based business, which demands substantial upfront investment. At the same time, the company needed to earn the confidence of suppliers, build operational capacity, and gain the trust of customers. These challenges required persistence and a long-term approach to business development.

Over time, each obstacle strengthened the company and reinforced the importance of resilience, adaptability, and continuous learning. The experience shaped Mônica's leadership style and strengthened her commitment to maintaining quality while responding to changing business conditions.

One of the defining milestones in her professional journey was the construction of the company's own headquarters. The facility integrates an industrial production area, storage facilities, a sewing workshop, and a separate retail store designed to provide customers with a welcoming and personalized experience. More than an expansion of physical infrastructure, the headquarters represents the realization of a vision built through decades of dedication and consistent effort.

As a woman entrepreneur, Mônica also encountered challenges related to leadership and credibility within the business environment. Rather than discouraging progress, these experiences became opportunities for professional growth and reinforced her determination to build a lasting enterprise.

Looking back, she regards every challenge as an essential part of the company's development. The business represents not only commercial success but also a legacy built on perseverance and the ability to transform adversity into sustainable achievement.

About Mônica Cortinas LTDA

Established in 1992, Mônica Cortinas LTDA operates in Brazil's textile and garment industry, specializing in customized curtains, decoration solutions, and interior harmonization services.

The company focuses on transforming residential and commercial spaces into environments that combine comfort, functionality, aesthetics, and well-being. Alongside its products, it provides personalized consulting services that help customers select solutions aligned with their individual needs, preferences, and style.

Quality has remained the foundation of the business since its establishment. This consistent focus has enabled the company to build long-term relationships with customers and establish a reputation developed over more than three decades of operation. Its consultative approach emphasizes complete solutions that integrate aesthetics, functionality, and personalized service.

Today, the company operates from an integrated facility that includes industrial production, storage, and a dedicated retail store designed to deliver a personalized customer experience. It employs 12 professionals who contribute to maintaining quality standards and supporting daily operations.

Over its history, the enterprise has served more than 30,000 customers and records annual revenues exceeding two million Brazilian reais. These results reflect the consistency of its business model and the credibility established over the years.

After more than 30 years of operation, Mônica Cortinas LTDA continues to evolve while maintaining its



emphasis on quality, customer relationships, sustainability, personalization, and trusted service.

Impact Created

The company's impact extends beyond textile production and interior decoration. Through customized products and consulting services, it has helped transform homes and commercial spaces into more welcoming, functional, and harmonious environments. Its personalized approach enables customers to create spaces that reflect their individual preferences while enhancing comfort and everyday well-being.

The enterprise has also generated measurable economic value. More than three decades of continuous operation, annual revenues exceeding two million Brazilian reais, and service to more than 30,000 customers demonstrate the sustainability of its business model. Its operations contribute to employment generation, strengthen the regional textile supply chain, and support local economic development.

The company's social impact is reflected in the long-term relationships it has built with both customers and employees. Personalized service, close engagement, and solutions tailored to individual needs have established relationships based on trust, care, and continuity rather than transactional sales.

Environmental responsibility also forms part of its operations. The company has implemented sustainability measures that include solar panels, rainwater collection systems with cisterns, LED lighting, and energy-efficient equipment. These initiatives reduce resource consumption while supporting more sustainable business practices.

Mônica's entrepreneurial journey also highlights the significance of female leadership in business. Her experience demonstrates how persistence, discipline, sensitivity, and courage can contribute to building a sustainable enterprise while encouraging other women to pursue entrepreneurial and leadership opportunities.

Innovation & Leadership

Mônica's leadership has developed through consistency, discipline, and a willingness to address complex business challenges. Building a company from the ground up in a competitive industry with significant operational costs required commercial vision, management capability, and strategic decision-making to ensure long-term sustainability.

Her leadership philosophy centers on quality, customer relationships, and consistent service. Rather than focusing solely on product sales, the company emphasizes delivering comprehensive solutions and positive customer experiences. This consultative approach has become one of its principal differentiators.

For Mônica, innovation extends beyond technological advancement. It includes the ability to evolve continuously while preserving the company's core values. The construction of an integrated headquarters that combines production, retail, and workshop facilities marked an important stage in the company's modernization. Investments in solar energy, rainwater harvesting, LED lighting, and energy-efficient equipment further strengthened operational efficiency and environmental responsibility.

Entrepreneurship has required balancing multiple personal and professional responsibilities, including the roles of entrepreneur, mother, friend, and wife. Throughout this journey, maintaining resilience, balance, and sound decision-making has remained essential to leading both the business and its people.

Her experience has reinforced the belief that enduring enterprises are built through long-term vision, commitment to people, and the ability to adapt while preserving their fundamental purpose.





Renata Daflon

Operation Director
Holográfica and Mulheres de Impressão

Renata Daflon is a Brazilian business leader who transformed her family's printing company into a recognised specialist in packaging, sustainability, and high-value graphic solutions. She also founded Mulheres de Impressão (Women in Printing), a national initiative dedicated to strengthening women's participation in the printing industry. Her work combines business transformation with professional development and industry-wide collaboration.

Renata Daflon received the Women's Leadership Award in the Printing Industry in 2025 and the Innovative Movement Award through Mulheres de Impressão. She has also received two honorary recognitions from the City Council for her contribution as a woman, business leader, and mother of an autistic child who promotes social transformation and women's empowerment.



Professional Journey

Renata Daflon graduated in Marketing and later completed a postgraduate qualification in Business Management and Entrepreneurship. She joined her family's printing company at the age of 17 during a school break and continued working while pursuing her studies. Over the following decade, she led a major restructuring of the business repositioning it from promotional printing to packaging and special projects.

Throughout her career, she worked in an industry where leadership opportunities for women were limited. Until 2010, succession within the family business was expected to pass to her older brother. Through consistent performance and leadership, she demonstrated her capability to lead the company.

A defining moment came in 2024 after a business trip to Texas, where she experienced gender discrimination. The experience inspired the creation of Mulheres de Impressão (Women in Printing) a movement established in 2024 and formally registered as a non-profit association in 2025. The initiative focuses on empowering women's careers, creating opportunities, and strengthening female participation in Brazil's printing industry through online content, working groups, and in-person events.

About Holográfica

Holográfica specialises in packaging, gift packaging, shopping bags, and high-value graphic materials. The company has received multiple quality awards, international certifications, and sustainability-related recognitions within the printing industry. Sustainability practices include the use of soy-based inks, paper from traceable managed forests, recycling processes, and waste reduction initiatives.

The company employs 24 people and primarily serves the luxury and cosmetics sectors in south-eastern Brazil. It also invests in employee training, professional development, well-being, and workplace belonging. In 2017, Holográfica was recognised as the outstanding company of the State of Rio de Janeiro in the 'Development of Rio' category.

Alongside this role, Renata serves as President of Mulheres de Impressão. The association promotes lectures, working groups, and online and in-person training programmes. It has directly impacted more than 2,000 women while extending its reach to thousands more across the Brazilian printing sector.

Impact Created

Holográfica continues expanding into new markets, including the luxury stationery segment, while investing in modern production technologies, automation, and upgraded printing facilities. The company supports 24 direct jobs and contributes to hundreds of indirect jobs through its production network.

Women occupy 75 per cent of leadership positions within the company, and many employees come from communities across Rio de Janeiro. Continuous investment in education and professional development contributes to both organisational growth and employee advancement.

Through Mulheres de Impressão, women receive opportunities for leadership development, business management training, networking, and professional growth. The initiative also strengthens collaboration among printing companies, suppliers, and sponsors, supporting sustainable development across the Brazilian printing industry.

Innovation & Leadership

Holográfica places significant emphasis on research, development, and special packaging projects. International references and new production solutions support the development of products that combine creativity, functionality, quality, and sustainability.



Renata's leadership approach centres on people, recognising employees as the foundation of organisational success. Her experience of overcoming prejudice within a traditionally male-dominated industry shaped her management philosophy and strengthened her commitment to creating inclusive workplaces.

Her experience as the mother of an autistic child together with the establishment of Mulheres de Impressão further influenced her perspective on empathy, resilience, active listening, and social impact. These experiences reinforced her focus on creating environments where people can develop professionally and feel a sense of belonging.

Awards & Recognitions

Holográfica has received more than 30 national quality awards, including 12 recognitions as Best Printing Supplier by L'Oréal. The company also holds the EcoVadis Bronze Medal and the A+ Certification from the Brazilian Federal Revenue Service.





Tatiane Gai

Director
Fenix Comunicação Visual

Tatiane Gai is the Director of Fenix Comunicação Visual, a Brazilian visual communication company that has grown from a period of severe financial adversity into an expanding enterprise with international operations. After unexpectedly assuming leadership during a personal and business crisis, she rebuilt the company, preserved employment, and guided its expansion across more than thirty-five cities and into Argentina. Her journey reflects resilience, adaptive leadership, and the impact of women leading and transforming businesses in traditionally male-dominated industries.

“When life took away my foundation, I chose to become the foundation. I transformed pain into strength, fear into courage, and challenges into opportunities to rebuild not only a company, but also lives.”

Professional Journey

Tatiane Gai graduated in Physical Education and did not initially envisage a career in the visual communication industry. Her professional direction changed when her husband who was also her business partner was unexpectedly hospitalized for treatment related to substance abuse addiction. She suddenly became responsible for a heavily indebted company in an unfamiliar sector while raising two children aged sixteen and nine. Faced with these circumstances she assumed responsibility for leading the business because her family depended on its survival.

The early period was exceptionally demanding. She had to learn every aspect of the business while managing accumulated debts and urgent financial commitments. As the company was being reorganised, the Covid-19 pandemic created additional uncertainty and operational pressure. Despite these obstacles, she continued leading the enterprise.

One of the most significant achievements during this period was the full repayment of the outstanding FGTS obligations owed to employees who remained with the company through its most difficult phase. Their loyalty strengthened a culture of trust, resilience, unity, and shared commitment. She also established herself in a sector traditionally dominated by male labour, earning respect through consistent leadership and decision-making. Looking back, she considers the greatest achievement to be transforming adversity into strength while becoming the foundation for her children, her team, and the company's future.

About Fenix Comunicação Visual

Fenix Comunicação Visual operates in the visual communication sector, specialising in the development, manufacture, and installation of commercial facades that strengthen brand identity and market presence. The company regards a facade as more than a physical structure, recognising it as an expression of purpose, credibility, and business identity.

The enterprise has installed more than one thousand commercial facades across more than thirty-five cities and has applied more than twenty-eight thousand kilograms of ACM in commercial projects. Supported by a team of fourteen employees, it continues to invest in expansion and modernisation. Its international operations include the supply and installation of commercial facades in Misiones Province, Argentina. Planned investments include the acquisition of a munck truck and a three-dimensional lettering production machine to improve operational autonomy, productivity, and innovation.

Impact Created

The company contributes to entrepreneurship by helping businesses establish stronger identities through commercial facades. It has rebuilt operations after a critical period, preserved jobs, expanded to more than thirty-five cities, installed more than one thousand facades, applied more than twenty-eight thousand kilograms of ACM, and completed projects in Argentina.

Its workplace culture is founded on partnership, trust, and shared commitment. Tatiane Gai's leadership also demonstrates the contribution of women in a predominantly male sector. The company further supports sustainability through responsible recycling of metals, paper, canvas materials, and other operational waste.

Innovation & Leadership

Tatiane Gai developed her leadership through practical experience and necessity. She learned production, operations, finance, commercial services, and team leadership while rebuilding the business. Her experience demonstrates that innovation often comes through adaptation and practical solutions.



The company continues to modernise through planned investments in a munck truck and a three-dimensional lettering production machine. Her leadership philosophy is based on courage, resilience, responsibility, and close collaboration with employees. She believes leadership is demonstrated by moving forward despite fear and by building organisations founded on trust, committed people, shared purpose, and continuous improvement.

Awards & Recognitions

Received multiple industry recognitions and distinction awards for excellence in visual communication solutions, including categories related to adhesive communication, panels, illuminated signage, and plotter applications, reinforcing the company's reputation for quality and technical excellence.







CHINA





Dong Mingzhu

Chairperson
Gree Electric Appliances
Inc. of Zhuhai

Dong Mingzhu has spent decades shaping the global home appliance manufacturing industry through sustained leadership, innovation, and enterprise management. Rising from a frontline sales role to the Chairperson and Legal Representative of Gree Electric Appliances, Inc. of Zhuhai, she has overseen the company's transformation into a technology-driven global manufacturing group while maintaining a strong focus on quality, research, and industrial development.

*Consumer satisfaction is
our enterprise's standard.*

*China's manufacturing
industry going global relies
on self-criticism and reform.*

Professional Journey

Dong Mingzhu, a native of Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, holds a Master's degree in Business Administration. She began her career at the Wuhu Chemical Laboratory and the Wuhu Electron Tube Factory in Anhui Province from March 1975 to January 1990. Between 1987 and 1989, she pursued management education at the Wuhu Municipal Party School, strengthening the leadership foundation that would later define her career.

Product quality is a matter of two lives: the life of the consumer and the life of the enterprise.

A turning point came in 1990 when she joined Gree Electric Appliances as Sales Manager for the Jiangsu-Anhui region. Strong performance led to successive appointments as Deputy Director and Director of the Business Department from 1994 onward. By 1997, she had become Vice General Manager while completing studies in Market Economy at the Graduate School of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

From 2001 to 2012, she served as Vice Chairperson and President of Gree Electric Appliances while also serving as a Director of Gree Group. During this period she earned an Executive Master of Business Administration from Zhongnan University of Economics and Law and assumed full responsibility for corporate operations. In 2012, she became Chairperson and President of both Gree Electric Appliances and Gree Group. Between 2016 and 2025, she focused exclusively on leading Gree Electric Appliances. Since April 2025, she has continued as Chairperson and Legal Representative. Her progression from frontline salesperson to global manufacturing leader has guided Gree's steady growth and innovation-driven transformation.

About Gree Electric Appliances

Established in 1991 and listed in 1996, Gree Electric Appliances, Inc. of Zhuhai is a diversified global industrial manufacturing group operating across consumer home appliances and industrial equipment. Its products reach more than 190 countries and regions.

The company emphasizes innovation-driven development and quality-first manufacturing through sustained research and development investment. It reports 50 technologies recognised as World Leading, while its central air-conditioning business has held the leading market share in China for 14 consecutive years.

Gree operates 77 production bases and 16 institutes and employs nearly 80,000 people, including 50,000 researchers and skilled technicians. During the first quarter of 2026, it reported operating revenue of 43.08 billion RMB and net profit attributable to shareholders of 6.082 billion RMB. Beyond HVAC, it has expanded into intelligent equipment, communication devices, and moulds.

Impact Created

Under Dong Mingzhu's leadership, Gree expanded domestically and internationally through 77 production bases, six recycling centres, and three global brands-GREE, KINGHOME, and TOSOT. Products are sold in more than 190 countries and regions. By 2025, self-owned brands accounted for 70 percent of exports, with 85 percent reaching Belt and Road Initiative markets. In 2025, the company recruited 6,514 graduates while maintaining a workforce of nearly 80,000, including 50,000 technical staff.

Her influence extends beyond business leadership. She has promoted the principle that merit outweighs gender and served as Messenger for the Sustainable Urban Development Project presented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and as the first rotating Chairperson of the UNDP Sustainable Development Committee. The company's photovoltaic air-conditioner technology has

reached 35 countries. The rate of good fruits (lychee) under fruit preservation within 10 days exceeds 98.4%. Mingzhu Charity Foundation has donated to education and livelihood initiatives. As a National People's Congress delegate, she has advocated workers' rights, tax reform, and a healthier digital environment.

Gree leads global residential air-conditioner sales, while its central air-conditioning business has ranked first in China for 14 consecutive years. The company has accumulated 140,200 patents, including 78,346 invention patents, and holds 50 World Leading technologies alongside multiple international innovation and design awards. Customer satisfaction for Gree air conditioners has ranked first in the industry for 17 consecutive years.

Innovation & Leadership

Dong Mingzhu has consistently promoted independent innovation through original technology, management reform, and quality control. She pioneered a regional sales company model centred on quality, customer focus, honest operations, and collaboration. In management, she introduced the Three Principles of Fairness and Three Guidelines of Conduct while promoting independent talent development and innovation-driven growth.

Her emphasis on unrestricted research investment has contributed to National Science and Technology Progress Awards, National Technology Invention Awards, China Patent Gold Awards, China Design Gold Awards, Geneva International Exhibition of Inventions Gold Medals, and Nuremberg International Exhibition of Inventions Gold Awards. The patented Photovoltaic Direct-Driven System and Its Control Method received the China Patent Gold Award.

She also led the development of Gree's T9 Management System, D-CTFP Quality Innovation Drive Ring, PQAM Perfect Quality Assurance Model, and the company's Perfect Quality management model. These initiatives received recognition through national quality and management awards, including the Third China Quality Award and the Fourth China Quality Award Nomination Award.

Awards & Recognitions

Dong Mingzhu and the initiatives she has led have received numerous honours, including National Model Worker, National May 1st Labor Medal, March 8 Red Banner Pacesetter Model of China, China Patent Gold Award, Third China Quality Award, Liu Yuanzhang Quality and Technology Contribution Award, Fudan University Outstanding Contribution to Enterprise Management Award, Outstanding Quality Person in China, Fourth China Quality Award Nomination Award, Outstanding Contribution Award for China Standard Innovation, and the ISHIKAWA KANO Award presented by the Asian Network for Quality Congress in 2012.

She was named CCTV China Economic Person of the Year three times, ranked first on the TopBrand China Top 500 Female list from 2021 to 2025, recognised under the Manufacturing Talent Support Program in 2025, received the 2025 SSE Eagle Gold Quality Excellence Entrepreneur Award, featured among Guangdong's advanced manufacturing collectives, included in the 2025 GYBrand Top 100 Chinese Overseas Brand Figures of the Year and TAOTIE China Business Elite Women List, and appeared on Forbes' China's 100 Most Outstanding Business Women list in 2026.



For an enterprise to survive in the long term, the key lies in continuous challenge and innovation.





Zhao Yan

Chairperson and CEO, Bloomage
Biotechnology Corporation Limited

Chairperson, Bloomage International
Investment Group Co., Ltd.

Member, Beijing Municipal Committee of the
Chinese People's Political Consultative

Conference Representative, Haidian District
People's Congress

Executive Committee Member, All-China
Federation of Industry and Commerce

Executive Vice President, Women
Entrepreneurs Chamber of the All-China
Federation of Industry and Commerce

Vice Chairperson, Beijing Federation of
Industry and Commerce

Vice Chairperson, Chaoyang District
Federation of Industry and Commerce

Zhao Yan is a biotechnology entrepreneur and business leader whose work spans biomanufacturing, culture and sports industries. She founded Bloomage International Investment Group in 1989 and launched Bloomage Biotechnology in 2000, guided by the belief that advances in life sciences could translate scientific innovation into practical health solutions. Her leadership has combined scientific research, industrial development and long-term investment in biotechnology.

“

*Respect every life; make every
life vibrant.*

*“Though the road is long,
going will carry us there;
though the task is difficult,
doing will see it through.*

”

Professional Journey

Zhao Yan holds a Bachelor's degree in Biology, a Master of Business Administration and a doctorate degree. She founded Bloomage International Investment Group in 1989. In 2000, recognising the potential of life sciences and bioactive substances, she established Bloomage Biotechnology to advance the industrial application of hyaluronic acid. In 2008, she led the investment and construction of Beijing Wukesong Arena, China's first dual-Olympic venue invested in, owned and operated by private capital, while also leading Bloomage Biotechnology's listing in Hong Kong. In 2011, her team achieved the world's first industrial-scale application of enzymatic cleavage technology capable of precisely controlling glycan molecular weight. In 2019, Bloomage Biotechnology listed on the Shanghai Stock Exchange STAR Market. Building on a 2020 investment of RMB 3 billion in a synthetic biology pilot-scale transformation platform in Tianjin, she entered 2026 leading an AI-native organisational transformation designed to strengthen long-term competitiveness.

About Bloomage Biotechnology & Bloomage International

Bloomage Biotechnology is a biotechnology and biomanufacturing enterprise with full industrial chain capabilities in synthetic biology. Guided by its mission of "making every life vibrant," the company focuses on glycobiology and cell biology, with two major areas of focus: aging intervention and tissue regeneration. Its business covers integrated solutions ranging from core biological raw materials and medical devices to medical aesthetic products, functional skincare products, and nutritional foods.

The company follows a long-term approach that connects science and technology, products, and brands. Through synthetic biotechnology, it promotes the democratization of biotechnology by transforming originally scarce and expensive life substances into inclusive and accessible health solutions. Having established a strong foundation in the synthetic biology sector, the company advocates the principle that "prevention is better than cure, treat disease before it occurs."

Bloomage Biotechnology employs more than 3,600 people, with over 25 percent of its workforce engaged in research and development. The company ranks first globally in both hyaluronic acid production capacity and market share. It leads the formulation of various industry standards, with products exported to more than 70 countries and regions and serving over 4,000 corporate clients. Centered on hyaluronic acid, Bloomage Biotechnology has driven the comprehensive upgrade of the entire biomanufacturing industry chain, establishing significant international influence in the global field of bioactive substances and helping propel the industry toward the trillion-yuan mark. Today, the company has evolved from a leader in hyaluronic acid to a globally leading provider of life health system solutions. Through an open empowerment platform built on three core capabilities-research and development innovation, technology translation, and market application-it supports the high-quality development of the industry.

Bloomage International is a diversified group focused on culture and sports. It aims to bring people a beautiful life experience of "health, happiness and beauty" and adheres to the values of "persistence, perseverance, innovation and responsibility." The group created the Bloomage LIVE model. Taking the Wukesong Sports Center as its template, it has developed an immersive vitality block integrating five major formats: culture and sports, culture and entertainment, culture and art, culture and education, and cultural life. The model has become an example of the post-event utilization of large venues and the integrated development of culture, commerce, tourism, sports, and exhibitions. It has been successfully replicated in multiple locations across China.

Impact Created

Zhao Yan's work has generated economic and social impact through technological innovation and public initiatives. Bloomage Biotechnology supports more than 40 percent of the global hyaluronic acid market supply, while the Beijing Wukesong project attracts more than 20 million visitors annually. During the 2025-2026 New Year's Eve event, the venue recorded a single-day passenger flow of 500,000. As Executive Vice President of the Women Entrepreneurs Chamber of the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce,



she has supported women's career development and health through the Runzhi Dream Program and other public welfare projects. The Tianjin pilot platform has been recognised as a national five-star platform. Bloomage's factories in Jinan and Tianjin serve as carbon-neutral demonstration benchmarks. She has also supported the Yunzhong Public Welfare project for 15 consecutive years and the Healthy China Bright Trip initiative for 13 years, with cumulative public welfare investment of nearly RMB 1 billion.

Innovation & Leadership

In leading Bloomage Biotechnology, Ms. Zhao Yan has demonstrated consistent strategic determination and a forward-looking vision in a fast-changing market.

She proposed the "three chains co-construction, five forces integration" model which integrates the industrial chain, supply chain, and value chain. The model establishes that technological power creates product power, product power shapes brand power, and together they build competitiveness and give enterprises the ability to withstand market cycles. In 2026, she advanced the "double growth drive" strategy, using artificial intelligence to reshape business logic, drive business growth, and improve organizational efficiency.

Ms. Zhao Yan believes that "the original aspiration sets the highest standard" and leads enterprise development with a mission-driven approach. Bloomage Biotechnology's mission is "to make every life vibrant." She emphasizes that entrepreneurs should assume social responsibility, contribute to society, adhere to long-termism, and persist in doing "the difficult but right things." She also believes that leading enterprises should serve as leaders within their value chains, enabling the healthy development of businesses across the ecosystem. She is committed to building an ecosystem based on co-construction, co-creation, sharing, and win-win collaboration rather than zero-sum or excessive competition.

Amid fierce global competition in biomanufacturing and an uncertain external environment, during 2025, Ms. Zhao Yan further strengthened the company's mission-driven and innovation-led development, making continuous innovation its strongest foundation. Recognizing pilot-scale testing as a key stage in biomanufacturing, she invested in building a pilot platform to bridge the "valley of death." This investment addressed the industry's challenge of translating scientific research from 0 to 1, supporting the transformation of scientific achievements into industrial applications and strengthening the company's capacity for sustained original innovation.

Awards & Recognitions

Her recognitions include Outstanding Builder of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for Non-public Economic Personages in Beijing, Top 10 Chinese Philanthropic Figures 2020, National March 8th Red Banner Holder 2021, China Economic Person of the Year 2021, Chinese Philanthropic Figure of the Year 2023, one of the 30 Most Influential Business Women in China, Meritorious Figure of the 40th Anniversary of the Cosmetics and Fragrance Industry, Top 10 News Figures of China's Cosmetics Industry 2023, Entrepreneurial Spirit Award at the 18th Golden Round Table Award for Boards of Directors of Chinese Listed Companies, Best Chairman in the China Listed Companies Reputation Ranking, Leading Figure of STAR Market Listed Companies, Influential Business Mulan 2024 and Forbes China Top 100 Outstanding Business Women 2024. Bloomage Biotechnology has received the Second-Class Prize of the National Science and Technology Progress Award, the China Patent Gold Award, National Green Factory recognition, National Enterprise Technology Center status, Manufacturing Single Champion recognition and other national honours.

We are dedicated to reshaping how essential materials are produced on Earth. Through the democratization of biotechnology, we aim to enable every person to enjoy a vibrant, high-quality life through the age of 120.

**LIU Wenjing**

Chairwoman
Bluesail Medical Co., Ltd.

LIU Wenjing is the Chairwoman of Bluesail Medical Co., Ltd., a global medical device enterprise headquartered in Shandong, China. She has played a central role in transforming the company from a medical glove manufacturer into a diversified global healthcare platform. Her leadership has focused on innovation, international expansion, and strengthening China's high-end medical device industry.

“Every enterprise is an indispensable microeconomic unit of the global economy, and truly great enterprises are often born in winter.”



Professional Journey

LIU Wenjing graduated from university in 1993 and joined Shandong Qilu Plasticizers Company, where she worked for six years on the production front line as an operator. In 1999, following the Chinese government's policy encouraging employees of state-owned enterprises to establish private businesses, she joined Li Zhenping, the controlling shareholder of Bluesail Medical, as a key technical expert. Together with employees, they raised funds of RMB 7 million and began an entrepreneurial journey. After extensive feasibility studies, they chose to enter the medical glove industry by leveraging the industrial chain advantages of Qilu Plasticizers as an upstream petrochemical enterprise with downstream opportunities in medical products.

Bluesail Medical Co., Ltd. was established at the end of 2002. Within less than seven years the company was listed on the Shenzhen Stock Exchange in 2010, becoming the first listed company in China's medical glove industry. The listing supported sustained growth in its core business, and within a decade the company became the global leader in medical polyvinyl chloride (PVC) gloves, holding a 22 percent market share.

A defining turning point came in 2017 when LIU Wenjing led the company's transformation through the acquisition of Biosensors International Group, headquartered in Singapore. In 2018, she successfully completed the acquisition, which at the time was the largest cross-border merger and acquisition by a Chinese medical device company. Biosensors was then the world's fourth-largest manufacturer of coronary stents, with operations in research, manufacturing, and sales across more than 100 countries and regions. The acquisition marked Bluesail Medical's transition towards high-end medical devices.

Under her leadership, Bluesail Medical has evolved into a global platform-based medical device enterprise with a portfolio spanning both high-value and low-value medical consumables, serving international markets from its base in China.

About Bluesail Medical

Bluesail Medical has developed a diversified business structure that combines high-value and low-value medical consumables through continuous investment in transformation and upgrading. The company has expanded through independent research and development, acquisitions, and incubation, creating four major business segments: cardiovascular and neurovascular intervention, healthcare protection, emergency care, and minimally invasive surgery. It has established leading positions in niche markets including medical gloves, coronary stents, and heart valves.

The company employs nearly 9,000 people and provides products and services in more than 130 countries and regions. Manufacturing facilities operate across China, Singapore, Germany, and other locations. Research and development platforms in Shanghai, Weihai, Germany, and Singapore support a 24-hour global R&D system. More than 600 R&D professionals contribute to innovation, supported by nearly 500 patents.

Impact Created

Bluesail Medical supplies products to countries representing 75 percent of the population of Belt and Road Initiative partner nations and serves more than 70 Belt and Road Initiative and BRICS countries. The company has achieved cumulative import and export volumes of USD 5.76 billion, including USD 570 million in imports and USD 5.19 billion in exports, while contributing more than RMB 2.51 billion in taxes.

In 2025, the company created more than 1,000 new jobs and welcomed nearly 2,000 new employees. Women represent more than two-thirds of the global workforce and 60 percent of management positions. Employees are based in more than 20 countries.



Career development pathways in technical and management streams provide employees with multiple opportunities for growth. During 2025, the company invested more than RMB 1 million in developing high-performance and high-potential interdisciplinary talent, delivering 59,000 training participations. It also invested nearly RMB 1.5 million in rural revitalisation initiatives and social welfare programmes.

Innovation & Leadership

Bluesail Medical aligns its innovation strategy with China's Healthy China strategy and the development of new quality productive forces. Over the past five years, the company has invested RMB 2 billion in innovation and research and development. Revenue from independently developed products now contributes more than 50 percent of total revenue. Its product portfolio covers coronary intervention, structural heart disease, neurovascular intervention, peripheral intervention, healthcare protection, and emergency care.

LIU Wenjing leadership focuses on building Bluesail Medical as a platform-based enterprise. At the transition between China's Fourteenth and Fifteenth Five-Year Plans, she has emphasised strengthening supply chain capabilities while expanding globally. Her approach also supports the development of localised industrial chains in Belt and Road Initiative and BRICS countries, with the objective of improving patient access to advanced medical technologies.

Awards & Recognitions

LIU Wenjing serves as a delegate to the 13th National Women's Congress of China. She has received numerous honours, including Outstanding Communist Party Member of Shandong Province, March 8th Red Banner Pacesetter of Shandong Province, Outstanding Contributor to the High-Quality Development of Shandong's Private Economy, Advanced Individual Award for Tackling Difficult Challenges in Shandong Province, and Leading Female Entrepreneur in Shandong Province.

Her recognitions include Forbes China Top 100 Businesswomen (2014 and 2015), Top Ten Entrepreneurial Leaders of Chinese Listed Companies and the China Business Women Mulan Award (2017), China's Most Influential Businesswoman of the Year and Top Ten Business Leaders of China's Economy (2019), Forbes China Top 50 Women in Tech and EY Asia-Pacific Successful Women Entrepreneurs Business Leader (2021), China Brand Women Top 500 and Leading Female Entrepreneur in Shandong Province (2023), March 8th Red Banner Pacesetter of Shandong Province (2024), and Outstanding Contributor to the High-Quality Development of Shandong's Private Economy (2025). She has also been selected six times as one of China's 30 Most Influential Businesswomen by China Entrepreneur magazine.





Xiangwen Liu

Vice President of Alibaba Cloud; President,
Marketing Department of Alibaba Cloud

Xiangwen Liu is a technology leader whose career has focused on making advanced technologies more accessible to students, entrepreneurs, rural communities, and women in technology. Over more than two decades, she has combined industry leadership with initiatives that expand access to artificial intelligence, cloud computing, research, and innovation. Her work reflects a consistent belief that technology creates greater value when it reaches a broader section of society.

“
*Technology, make everyone
become a better one.*

”

Professional Journey

For Xiangwen Liu, the belief that technology should serve people began during her years at Nankai University. As a campus journalist and an active member of the Microsoft Student Club, she developed the conviction that the true value of technology lies not in its complexity but in its ability to empower people. After graduating in 2003, she joined Microsoft Research Asia, where she led industry-academia collaboration. The role enabled talented Chinese students to access frontier technologies and global research networks. Watching these students move from classrooms into the international technology community reinforced her belief that opportunity in technology can transform lives.

In 2010, Xiangwen Liu joined Alibaba Cloud during its early entrepreneurial stage. She contributed to building the company's brand and technology ecosystem and later served in several leadership positions, including Manager of the Technology Development Department, Secretary-General of DAMO Academy, and President of the Marketing Department. Beyond Alibaba Cloud, she also serves as a Standing Director of the China Computer Federation and Vice Chairman of the OpenAtom Foundation. As Alibaba Cloud evolved into one of the world's leading cloud computing and artificial intelligence platforms, her work remained guided by the principle that technology should enable ordinary people to achieve extraordinary things.

A defining feature of her career has been expanding access to technology beyond the technology sector. She co-initiated the Alibaba Cloud Youth Program, which supported the establishment of 403 AI classrooms in rural primary schools across 28 provinces in China and benefited more than 400,000 teachers and students. She also launched the Creation Beyond Cloud Program, which provides free cloud computing resources so that students can experiment with artificial intelligence and develop practical skills. More than 1.2 million university students have gained hands-on experience through the initiative.

Working with China Central Television (CCTV), she helped create the national innovation television programme Win in AI+, bringing more than 2,000 AI start-ups into the public spotlight and helping many connect with investors. In Lixian County, Gansu Province, she worked with local farmers to introduce AI tools such as OpenClaw, supporting agricultural productivity and orchard management. For three consecutive years, she has led the Women in Tech Forum at the Apsara Conference, creating a platform that highlights women's leadership in the artificial intelligence era.

About Alibaba Cloud

Founded in 2009, Alibaba Cloud is a cloud computing and artificial intelligence company. Built on its proprietary Apsara Cloud operating system, the company provides Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS), Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS), and Model-as-a-Service (MaaS) offerings to customers worldwide. Alibaba Cloud is the largest provider of public cloud services in China and the Asia-Pacific region.

Its infrastructure supports large-scale model training, fine-tuning, and inference while providing enterprises with computing resources and platform services. Alibaba Cloud has developed the large language model Qwen, which has been open-sourced in different sizes and multimodal versions to support enterprise artificial intelligence innovation.

Impact Created

More than two decades of work have helped extend technology to communities beyond traditional technology centres. Children in Kham Tibetan areas have interacted with artificial intelligence in classrooms nearly 4,000 metres above sea level. Humanities students at the Communication University of China have written code for the first time. Young farmers in the orchards of Lixian County manage more than 610,000 acres of farmland with AI assistants.



The Alibaba Research Intern Program has supported more than 1,700 master's and doctoral students through research collaboration. Through the Creation Beyond Cloud Program, Alibaba Cloud has invested approximately RMB 300 million in computing resources, enabling more than 1.2 million students from over 3,100 universities to gain practical artificial intelligence experience. Both programmes were initiated and driven by Xiangwen Liu.

She also initiated and co-produced the national television series Win in AI+ with China Central Television. The programme generated more than 240 million online video views and facilitated 17 investment agreements worth RMB 1 billion, helping emerging AI entrepreneurs gain visibility and access to capital. Within Alibaba Cloud, she helped establish Women's Spaces for female employees and has led the Women's Forum at the Apsara Conference for three consecutive years.

Innovation & Leadership

Xiangwen Liu's leadership centres on the principle that technology should adapt to people. Throughout more than two decades, she has worked to build an inclusive technology ecosystem that reaches rural primary schools, universities, agricultural communities, and entrepreneurial networks. Through strategic programmes and partnerships, technologies once limited to specialised research institutions have become accessible to students, farmers, and first-generation learners.

One of the recurring challenges in her career has been balancing commercial priorities with long-term social investment. She addressed this by building partnerships with organisations including the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, China Central Television, and the China Computer Federation. These collaborations strengthened the continuity and scale of programmes that extended beyond individual funding cycles.

Her work demonstrates that broader access to technology can strengthen innovation while creating long-term social value. By expanding opportunities for learning, entrepreneurship, and practical artificial intelligence adoption, her initiatives have connected technological advancement with wider public benefit.



Awards & Recognitions

National/International awards

Xiangwen Liu received the Outstanding Women's Achievement Award from the Women's Federation of Zhejiang Province in 2025. In 2023, she was awarded the Second Prize of the Science and Technology Progress Award by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. She received the Second Prize of the Science and Technology Progress Award from the Department of Science and Technology of Zhejiang Province in 2022, followed by the Second Prize of the Science and Technology Progress Award from the China Institute of Communications in 2020. She has also served as the Principal Investigator of five national-level research programmes supported by the Ministry of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology of the People's Republic of China, and the National Development and Reform Commission.

Recognitions/Certifications

Xiangwen Liu serves as a Committee Member of the National Graduate Education Steering Committee for Professional Engineering Degree of the People's Republic of China and the National Vocational Education Steering Committee of Industry and Information Technology of the People's Republic of China. She is also a Standing Director of the China Computer Federation (CCF), a Standing Committee Member of the Zhejiang Association for Science and Technology, and Vice Chairman of the OpenAtom Foundation.

“

Technology, at its best, is not a tool for the few - it is a bridge for everyone. My life's work has been building that bridge, one person, one community, one possibility at a time.

”





Gina Qiao

Senior Vice President,
Chief Strategy Officer and
Chief Marketing Officer
Lenovo Group

Gina Qiao is a senior executive who has played a central role in Lenovo Group's global growth, strategic transformation, and brand development over more than three decades. As a member of the Lenovo Executive Committee, she has led initiatives spanning corporate strategy, marketing, human resources, and artificial intelligence (AI). Her work has contributed to Lenovo's evolution into a global AI leader while advancing responsible, human-centric AI and leadership development.

“
*The distance between where
we are and where we can be
is bridged by something
infinitesimally small yet
infinitely powerful: the
choice to embrace a positive
attitude over a negative
shadow.*

”



Professional Journey

Gina Qiao currently serves as Senior Vice President, Chief Strategy Officer, and Chief Marketing Officer of Lenovo Group. She is a core member of the Lenovo Executive Committee (LEC) and has held leadership roles across corporate strategy, marketing and branding, and human resources management. Throughout her career she has contributed to Lenovo's development into a global technology brand including BrandZ recognition among the Top 30 Chinese Global Brand Builders and its position as a Fortune Global 500 company.

She joined Lenovo in 1990 and established the company's marketing system in 1995. In 2002, she moved into human resources management and played an important role in integrating Lenovo's acquisition of IBM's personal computer business in 2004. While leading global strategy planning in 2009, she contributed to Lenovo's turnaround. In 2016, she drove the integration of the Motorola brand and supported the growth of the smartphone business.

Since becoming Chief Strategy Officer and Chief Marketing Officer in 2018, Gina has helped shape Lenovo's intelligent transformation strategy, particularly its AI strategy, while strengthening the company's global brand influence. She helped define Lenovo's AI vision, "Smarter AI for All," with the objective of accelerating the democratization of AI and making its benefits accessible to enterprises and individuals.

Gina champions a human-centric AI philosophy that positions technology as a tool to empower people and create lasting value for society. Her approach promotes responsible AI innovation that enables businesses to transform, helps individuals unlock new possibilities, and ensures that the benefits of AI are shared more broadly. This philosophy underpins Lenovo's commitment to advancing smarter technology for all.

Gina Qiao holds a Bachelor's degree in Management from Fudan University and an Executive MBA from China Europe International Business School. She is also a Professional Certified Coach (PCC) accredited by the International Coaching Federation (ICF) and has completed hundreds of hours of executive coaching.

About Lenovo Group

Lenovo is a US\$83 billion global technology company ranked No. 153 in the Fortune Global 500 and serving customers in 180 markets. Guided by its vision of "Smarter Technology for All," the company is implementing a Hybrid AI strategy covering Personal AI and Enterprise AI. Its portfolio includes personal devices, infrastructure solutions, software, solutions, and services.

The company operates through 21 research and development locations across 11 markets and a global supply chain with more than 30 manufacturing sites in 10 markets. Lenovo has been recognized for operational excellence, including ranking fifth in the Gartner Supply Chain Top 25, and is listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange as Lenovo Group Limited (HKSE: 992) (ADR: LNVGY).

Impact Created

As one of the leaders behind Lenovo's globalization and intelligent transformation, Gina Qiao has contributed to the company's international expansion, AI transformation, and inclusive growth. She supported the cultural integration following Lenovo's acquisition of IBM's PC business and strengthened the company's international operating model and management capabilities.

Gina has also championed diversity and inclusion by supporting initiatives such as the Women's Leadership Development Program (WLDP) and Women in Lenovo Leadership (WILL). Under her leadership, Lenovo reported record profitability in FY2025/2026, with adjusted net profit increasing by



42.1 percent year on year. Women represent 36.5 percent of Lenovo's global workforce and 29 percent of technical roles. She has also been recognized for multiple years in Fortune's list of China's Most Powerful Business Women.

Innovation & Leadership

Gina Qiao has led Lenovo's global strategy and brand transformation in response to the challenges of international expansion, including cultural differences, local market responsiveness, and trust across markets. She designed the "Global Might, Local Fight" (GMLF) operating model for marketing, which integrates Lenovo's three business groups and nine key markets.

The framework combines global coordination with local execution. It aligns global strategic assets and partnerships, including Formula 1 and the FIFA World Cup, while integrating AI into marketing. At the same time, it gives regional teams greater authority to adapt brand narratives to local markets and cultural contexts.

After five years of implementation, the GMLF model contributed to a 2.8-point increase in Lenovo's 3S Tech Solutions Index, a 2.8-point rise in the Innovation Index, and a 3.4-point improvement in the AI Perception Index from FY2024/2025 to FY2025/2026. Gina's leadership emphasizes clear global direction, local empowerment, and disciplined execution.

Awards & Recognitions

Her book, *The Lenovo Way: Managing a Diverse Global Company for Optimal Performance*, was selected by Amazon as one of the "Best Books for CEOs." She has been recognized among Fortune China's Top 25 Most Powerful Businesswomen in China and China Entrepreneur Magazine's annual list of the Most Powerful Businesswomen in China. In 2024, she received the title "2024 Influential Businesswoman · Diamond Mulan," the highest honour.



**Shi Xian**

General Manager
Guizhou Zhimei Cultural Industry Co. Ltd.

Shi Xian is the General Manager of Guizhou Zhimei Cultural Industry Co., Ltd. and a Dong ethnic entrepreneur from Guizhou Province, China. She has dedicated her work to preserving intangible cultural heritage (ICH) handicrafts while creating livelihood opportunities for rural women. Her work combines traditional craftsmanship with modern design to expand market access and strengthen cultural heritage preservation.

“

See the vast beauty of the world, and stay true to the heart of our heritage.

”



Professional Journey

Shi Xian grew up in Congjiang County, Guizhou Province, and became the first university graduate from her hometown to return and launch her own venture. As a Dong ethnic woman born in the 1990s, she chose to address the decline of local intangible cultural heritage caused by ageing practitioners and a shortage of young inheritors. She began by conducting free ICH skills training in her community reaching more than 1,200 rural women and helping develop skilled artisans.

She later organised cultural exchange visits for folk craftswomen to Jiangsu, Sichuan, Guangdong, and Macao, broadening their exposure and supporting ethnic minority women in improving their livelihoods. She established the first Guizhou ICH flagship stores in the Yangtze River Delta, attracting about 400,000 visitors annually, creating employment for more than 200 embroiderers, and helping 20 local enterprises expand sales beyond the province. Her company's supply-chain services and growing reputation led to its recognition as an approved supplier for China Media Group Cultural and Creative Products, Guilin Airport, and Guizhou Tourism Group.

While building the business, Shi Xian studied traditional embroidery and batik and developed a double-sided Miao embroidery technique from the traditional single-sided approach. Her company now manages three cultural brands and holds copyrights for more than 200 ICH product designs.

Her achievements include the National Excellence Award for summer social practice, the Jiangsu Bronze Award in the 'Creative Youth' entrepreneurship competition, the National Award for Outstanding Grassroots Employment of College Graduates from the Ministry of Education, recognition as an Outstanding Hope Project Student by the China Youth Development Foundation, Most Beautiful Worker of Guizhou Province, and Model Worker of Congjiang County. In 2023, she became a member of the Guizhou Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

About Guizhou Zhimei Cultural Industry Co., Ltd.

Guizhou Zhimei Cultural Industry Co., Ltd., established in 2021, focuses on the design and sale of intangible cultural heritage handicrafts. Its offerings include retail, wholesale, franchising, and customised embroidery, dyeing, weaving, silverwork, and ICH study tours.

The company reinterprets traditional craftsmanship through modern design while supporting women artisans in rural communities. It has a core team of 10 members and works with more than 200 rural embroiderers. Its flagship store receives about 400,000 visitors annually and has helped facilitate outbound sales for products from 20 Guizhou enterprises.

Impact Created

The enterprise has created sustained paid work for more than 200 rural embroiderers, enabling them to generate reliable income through traditional crafts. It has also helped 20 Guizhou-based companies expand into markets outside the province. The Guizhou Provincial Department of Commerce invited the company to participate in the Argentine Intangible Cultural Heritage Fine Works Exchange Exhibition.

Through free ICH skills training, the organisation has reached more than 1,200 rural women and mentored five young female artisans until they achieved certification as recognised inheritors of ICH.

The organisation has been recognised as one of the first Guizhou Province ICH Poverty Alleviation Employment Workshops, an Advanced Collective under Guizhou's Double Training initiative, and an Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritance Base of Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture. It is also recognised in Congjiang County as both a Women's Entrepreneurship and Employment Demonstration Base and a Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment Demonstration Base.



Innovation & Leadership

The organisation introduced the 'Designer + Artisan' Hand-in-Hand Program, connecting designers with a digital archive of ICH patterns, local cultural guidance, and master artisans to preserve authenticity while supporting collaborative design.

Shi Xian's leadership philosophy is: 'Let every single partner have their moment to shine.' One of the organisation's main challenges has been declining interest among young people in traditional crafts. To address this, it established a design studio in Guiyang and partnered with universities and industry designers to create co-creation opportunities.

Awards & Recognitions

National Award for Outstanding Grassroots Employment of College Graduates, conferred by China's Ministry of Education.

Outstanding Hope Project Student, awarded by the China Youth Development Foundation.

Member, Guizhou Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

Most Beautiful Worker of Guizhou Province.

Model Worker of Congjiang County.





Ailian Chen

Chairwoman
Wanfeng Auto Holding
Group Co., Ltd.

Ailian Chen is Chairwoman of Wanfeng Auto Holding Group Co., Ltd. She has led the company's transformation from a small enterprise into a global high-end manufacturing group through a focus on quality, technological innovation, and industrial development. Her leadership spans advanced manufacturing, industrial automation, and general aviation while supporting workforce development and public welfare initiatives.

“

*Happy work, happy life.
Either don't do it, or do it to
the best.*

”



Professional Journey

Ailian Chen holds a postgraduate degree and is a Senior Economist. Her career is rooted in China's strategy of building a manufacturing powerhouse. She expanded into automotive parts and high-end machinery manufacturing while advancing new industrialization. Her long-held belief that automobiles would become as popular as bicycles, together with her philosophy that a team's strength exceeds that of any individual, shaped her leadership. By overcoming traditional gender barriers, she has worked toward building a technologically independent Chinese brand in high-end equipment.

Wanfeng Auto Holding Group began as a small enterprise. Under her leadership, it developed the largest aluminum alloy wheel production base in Asia and the second largest in the world. On 28 November 2006, she led the listing of Wanfeng Auto Wheel (002085) on the Shenzhen Stock Exchange, making it the first A-share listed company in China's aluminum wheel industry. This marked the company's transition from traditional manufacturing to intelligent manufacturing.

A defining moment came during the Chinese Lunar New Year in 1995 when a batch of aluminum wheels met market standards but failed the company's internal quality benchmarks. She ordered the entire batch to be remelted and reprocessed and personally led a year-long 'Quality Journey'. That decision established 'Quality is Life' as the company's core value, strengthened quality awareness across the workforce, and laid the foundation for a global supply chain built on quality and integrity.

She has served as a Delegate to the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and as a Deputy to the 12th and 13th National People's Congress. Her recognitions include the National Outstanding Builder of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, the National May Day Labor Medal, the National March 8th Red-Banner Pacesetter, one of China's Top Ten Outstanding Women, the National Outstanding Entrepreneur, the China Business Master, the Special Contribution Award of China's Guangcai Program, and the Global Zhejiang Businessman Gold Award.

About Wanfeng Auto Holding Group

Wanfeng Auto Holding Group is an international high-end manufacturing group serving the integrated transportation sector. Its business covers automotive parts, industrial automation system integration, intelligent thermal processing equipment, lightweight precision manufacturing, and the research, production, sales, and technology import and export of general aviation aircraft, including general airplanes and eVTOLs.

The company pursues technological innovation, promotes green development, and delivers lightweight mobility solutions. It employs more than 15,000 people and operates across China, the United States, Germany, France, South Korea, and Japan. Its customers include General Motors, Ford, Tesla, BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Porsche, Audi, Volkswagen, Hyundai, Toyota, Honda, BYD, Li Auto, NIO, XPeng, Great Wall, and Changan. It also serves ZF and Magna in industrial automation, while its general aviation business reaches Europe, the Americas, Asia, Africa, and Oceania.

Impact Created

The Group provides employment through advanced manufacturing bases and research and development centres across 13 countries and regions, with an average annual salary increase of approximately 10 percent. As one of China's first designated automotive parts export bases, it continues expanding the global presence of products manufactured in China. The Group also pays an average of RMB 6 billion in taxes each year, supporting regional industrial development.

Under Chen's leadership, the company has invested more than RMB 300 million in charitable and public welfare initiatives supporting culture, education, sports, healthcare, and rural development. It invests more than RMB 30 million annually in talent development and has trained over 500 senior managers and



technical specialists. Chen has also donated RMB 16 million to establish the Xinchang Ailian Beautiful Countryside Fund, Zhejiang Province's first non-public foundation dedicated to new countryside construction. The Fund has invested more than RMB 10 million in village infrastructure, safe drinking water, school buildings, cultural halls, and grants including Longevity Grants, Excellence Scholarships, and Happiness Grants.

Innovation & Leadership

The Group established a training system combining the 'Wild Horse Special Training Camp' with MBA executive education programmes while implementing a Zero-Defect quality management system across its operations. Chen's leadership philosophy centres on balancing shareholder returns, sustainable corporate development, lawful tax compliance, employee welfare, and social responsibility.

Facing global competition and rapid technological change, she benchmarked the company against world-class standards. Through sustained investment in research and development and carefully planned international mergers and acquisitions, she overcame technological barriers, strengthened global brand recognition, and positioned Wanfeng as a global industry benchmark.

Awards & Recognitions

Wanfeng Auto Holding Group has received honours including China's Top 500 Private Enterprises, China's Top 30 Automobile Industry Enterprises, Zhejiang Province's Top 100 Enterprises, National Key High-tech Enterprise, National Intellectual Property Demonstration Enterprise, National Enterprise with Contract Abiding and Trustworthiness, National Civilized Unit, National Model Enterprise for Harmonious Labor Relations, National Advanced Unit for Independent Innovation, National Quality Award, National Achievement Award for Innovation Capability Building, and China Export Brand. International recognitions include chairing ASTM International and European General Aviation Standards Committees, inclusion in the Global Unicorn List, and multiple magnesium alloy industry awards, including the International Die Casting Award, American Foundry Award, International Application Award, and European Product Design Award.





Jessica Huang

Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer
MINISO Group

Jessica Huang is a human resources leader with two decades of experience who has played a central role in MINISO Group's growth from a startup to a global company. Over the past 12 years, she has aligned talent strategy with business expansion, supported the company's international growth, and helped build organizational capabilities across global markets.

“
*Love enriches life;
responsibility defines
purpose*
”



Professional Journey

With 20 years of experience in human resources management, Jessica Huang has contributed to MINISO's transformation from a startup into a global cultural and creative company with dual primary listings on the U.S. and Hong Kong stock exchanges. She participated in incubating the Group's two core sub-brands, TOP TOY and beauty, and serves as a core executive and decision-maker within MINISO Group.

Over the past 12 years she transformed the human resources function from a traditional support department into a strategic business function aligned with the company's global development. She led the creation of a global organizational capability system that supported the Group's expansion across 112 countries and regions. She also established a talent development matrix spanning product, channel, marketing, and operations, supporting the efficient operation of more than 8,500 stores worldwide.

Her flagship talent initiatives, including the Lion King Program, Eagle Leader Program, and Dark Horse Project, developed hundreds of business professionals to support the Group's global expansion. In 2018, she received MINISO's highest individual honor, the Corporate Responsibility Excellence of the Year award, in recognition of her integrity, dedication, and contributions. In 2025, she launched the IP Genius Youth Program and established an end-to-end organizational capability system for proprietary intellectual properties (IPs), supporting the Group's mission of bringing 100 Chinese IPs to the world.

About MINISO Group

Founded in 2013, MINISO is an IP ecosystem operator and trend culture company. Guided by its Happy Philosophy business concept, it develops creative, high-quality products for consumers across international markets.

In 2020, the company introduced its interest-driven consumption model and built a global IP ecosystem through licensed and proprietary IPs. It has partnerships with more than 180 IPs, including Disney, Sanrio, and Chiikawa, while also developing proprietary IPs such as YOYO and expanding TOP TOY.

MINISO holds dual primary listings on the U.S. and Hong Kong stock exchanges. As of March 2026, it operated more than 8,500 stores across 112 countries and regions. It also became the first Chinese brand to establish a presence in Times Square, New York, and the Champs-Élysées in Paris.

Impact Created

The global talent system led by Jessica Huang supported MINISO's international expansion. As of 31 December 2025, it had created 8,329 direct jobs worldwide and contributed to more than 20,000 terminal jobs in China while supporting operations across more than 8,500 stores in 112 countries and regions. She also established a global design innovation network spanning China, Japan, South Korea, and the United States.

She also advanced employee development and women's career progression through equity incentive plans and an initial RMB 10 million marriage and maternity fund, alongside employee group wedding initiatives. Women currently represent 65.3 percent of MINISO's global full-time workforce, 55.0 percent of management positions, and 58 percent of equity incentive recipients.

Innovation & Leadership

Anchored in MINISO's globalization and IP strategy, Jessica Huang introduced several human resources innovations. She developed a talent development matrix covering business functions and organizational levels while launching the Dragon Voyage Program, Lion King Program, Dark Horse Project, and IP Genius Youth Program.



She also strengthened agile organizational capabilities by building creative product teams supported by a flexible supply chain and digital middle platform. She introduced an overseas team model that integrated headquarters and local talent and established a three-stage talent supply chain of headquarters-driven, local innovation, and deep localization. She further developed the Clarify-Activate-Consolidate global culture system by embedding core values throughout the talent lifecycle.

Awards & Recognitions

Jessica Huang received the HRA China HR Leader of the Year 2025 award and the Guangdong Human Resources Management Association HR Leader of the Year 2025 award. MINISO also received the Harvard Business Review High-Energy Team 2025 Globalization Special Award, the Guangdong Provincial Advanced Collective for Employment and Entrepreneurship honor, HR Asia Best Companies to Work for in Asia 2025, Forbes China Best Employer 2024 - Most Popular Employer Among Employees, and the DEI Employer Award 2024.



*Guided by the founding mission, the organization
builds platforms through expertise, shares joy
through dedication, and seeks to unite people
through shared value. Let Chinese creativity takes
root and bloom across the globe*





Kiki Gao

Founder & Editor-in-Chief
TOPHER

Kiki Gao is a Chinese media strategist, business journalist, and independent art curator with nearly two decades of experience in financial media. As the founder of TOPHER, she has focused on documenting the evolution of women in business while expanding the platform's international presence. Her work spans business journalism, brand consulting, and art curation, with an emphasis on connecting Chinese women entrepreneurs with global opportunities.

“
Women continue to navigate structural limitations that require support across family, corporate culture, psychological health, and institutional policy. A woman's growth accelerates by solving increasingly complex challenges. TOPHER's mission is to dismantle these barriers and unlock the imagination of self-actualisation and global economic value.
”

Professional Journey

With nearly two decades of experience in mainstream business journalism, Kiki Gao has served as a reporter, editor, and Editor-in-Chief for leading international and domestic financial media, including Harvard Business Review (China edition). She is recognised as one of contemporary China's influential female media strategists and business leaders. Since founding TOPHER in 2015, she has focused on documenting Chinese women in business, specialising in macro-consumption trends and milestone brand development. Over the past decade, she has chronicled the commercial evolution of the "She-Era", highlighted women's economic contribution while expanding TOPHER's presence across Europe, North America, and the Middle East. Transitioning from financial journalism to art curation, she advocates moving beyond limiting labels and has participated in international platforms that explore the role of the modern Chinese woman in business. Under her leadership, TOPHER has evolved into an ecosystem that combines business journalism, strategic brand consulting, and international art exhibitions. Beyond reporting, she studies international financial trends, consumer data, and pathways for women's global advancement to support internationally minded female leaders. As an independent art curator, she has explored the integration of ancient artistic heritage with modern industrial technology, encouraging discussion on sustainable development and technological reflection. In 2026, she authored the non-fiction anthology *She is Any*, documenting the experiences of globalised Chinese women entrepreneurs.

About TOPHER

Founded in 2015, TOPHER is a business media platform and global think tank dedicated to women in business. Guided by the principles of global perspective, female empowerment, and business for good, the organisation focuses on female leadership across macroeconomics, frontier technology, capital markets, and cross-disciplinary innovation. Over the past decade, it has developed an ecosystem that includes the TOPHER Channel on Jiemian News, a social media network, the Global Women's Innovation Summit, and international art exhibitions. As of 2026, the platform connected more than 390,000 active female leaders across the technology, finance, and cross-border consumer sectors. It also supports Chinese enterprises expanding internationally through brand strategy and global partnerships.

Impact Created

Under Kiki Gao's leadership, TOPHER has supported female-led Chinese enterprises and consumer brands in expanding internationally. Through initiatives including the Global Women's Innovation Summit, it has facilitated cross-border business cooperation and venture capital matchmaking for more than 3,000 female-led enterprises, contributing to commercial trade valued at hundreds of millions of yuan. The platform has also organised executive development programmes, masterclasses, and international forums while incorporating sustainability into its art exhibitions. For 10 consecutive years, it has provided complimentary weekly professional advisory services to women. As of June 2026, TOPHER served 390,000 high-net-worth professional women and executives, while its wider media network generated more than 100 million daily digital impressions. Female managers and corporate decision-makers accounted for more than 85 percent of participants at its annual events. The platform has also supported female founders in receiving recognition within United Nations and BRICS business frameworks.

Innovation & Leadership

Kiki Gao's leadership is guided by the principles of high-dimensional perspective, long-term thinking, and cross-disciplinary collaboration. She introduced a model combining business media with a global think tank by integrating financial journalism with international business strategy, brand trends, and commercial forecasting. She also explored the integration of ancient cultural imagery with industrial



technology, including repurposed silicon microchips, to create new approaches to brand storytelling. Organisationally, she promotes a culture centred on candid communication, self-driven leadership, and women's leadership narratives. Using digital management systems, she has built an international content and art network spanning Beijing, Hong Kong, London, and New York, strengthening organisational resilience during industry change.

Awards & Recognitions

Kiki Gao was named to the Global Green Woman Power 100 in 2021. In 2022, she received the BGI National Female Medical Workers Healthcare Welfare Public Welfare Award and the CIBE "She Power" Outstanding Entrepreneur Award. From 2021 to 2023, she served as Grand Juror of the China Golden Goods Awards Committee.





INDIA





Alina Alam

Founder and CEO
Mitti Cafe

Alina Alam founded Mitti Cafe in 2017 at the age of 23, with no startup capital, building the first outlet from donated equipment and a table under an umbrella. It has since grown into the world's largest chain of cafes run entirely by people with physical, intellectual and psychiatric disabilities. Operated under the Mitti Social Initiatives Foundation, the chain now spans nearly 70+ locations across India and has created more than 6500+ livelihoods.

“
Inclusion is not charity — it is opportunity, dignity, and equal participation. When we create spaces where people are seen for their abilities, we build a stronger and more compassionate society.
”





Professional Journey

Alina Alam founded Mitti Café in 2017 at the age of 23, driven by a deeply personal understanding of disability. She was raised largely by her Dadi, who had a disability and needed support to move. But to Alina, she was never defined by it. She was simply Dadi, the woman who adored the colour gulaabi, relished Indian food, loved animals, and loved her granddaughter. Growing up with her made Alina wonder why, in the real world, disability was often the first and only thing people noticed about a person.

While in college, instead of pursuing a conventional career path, Alina began volunteering with disability centres. Her experiences there led to a simple but powerful realisation: people with

disabilities did not need charity as much as they needed opportunity, dignity and the chance to prove what they could do. That belief became the foundation of Mitti Café, a social enterprise built not around charity, but around meaningful employment and financial independence.

Starting with no startup capital, Alina built Mitti Café's first outlet with a borrowed table, a borrowed umbrella and second-hand equipment donated by strangers. The journey was far from easy. Every incubator she approached said no. But she continued going door to door until someone gave the idea a chance.

One of the earliest people to join Mitti Café was Kirti, who came to her interview crawling because her family could not afford a wheelchair. On the café's first day, no customers arrived. The team stayed for 12 hours anyway and returned the next day, and the day after that. Slowly, people began to notice not just the café, but the confidence and capability of the people running it.

Today, Mitti Café has grown to more than 60 locations across India, including spaces such as the Supreme Court of India, Rashtrapati Bhavan, Rashtrapati Nilayam, airports, hospitals, universities and corporate institutions. The organisation has employed more than 600 persons with disabilities and skilled over 6,500 people. Its teams have served more than 21.8 million

meals and beverages, including over 8.8 million Karuna Meals provided free or at subsidised cost to vulnerable communities.



For Alina, every number represents a person who was once underestimated. Bhairappa, for instance, was rejected from more than 80 jobs and repeatedly told that he would not be enough. Today, he is a team lead at an international airport café.

Alina's work has been recognised with the National Award for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, the Forbes 30 Under 30 Asia, and recognition from institutions including the United Nations, NITI Aayog and UNESCO. Yet, she sees Mitti Café not as her achievement, but as something built by its people, the individuals who were once told they would never amount to anything.

Her vision remains simple: to create a world where disability is not the first thing people see, and where every individual is recognised for their abilities, dignity and potential.

About Mitti Café

Mitti Café is an inclusive hospitality and social enterprise creating sustainable livelihoods for persons with disabilities and individuals from marginalised communities. It operates cafes, corporate food courts, pantry services, and institutional and event catering across multiple Indian cities, alongside experiential skilling programmes that train people in food preparation, customer service, communication and workplace readiness.

Its model departs from charity-driven approaches by creating visible, customer-facing roles rather than back-office placements. This exposure helps break social stigma and normalise inclusion, while delivering commercial hospitality services. Through partnerships with corporates, educational institutions, hospitals,



airports and public spaces, Mitti Cafe has trained

and employed hundreds of persons with disabilities and individuals from underserved communities across India.

Impact Created

Under Alina's leadership, Mitti Cafe has served more than 21.8 million meals and provided 8.8 million "Karuna Meals" — meals offered free or at subsidised cost to vulnerable communities, karuna meaning compassion — to date. For Alina, Mitti Cafe is more than a cafe chain: it is a movement for dignity, empowerment and inclusion that aims to transform a billion lives. By integrating inclusive hiring into mainstream hospitality operations, the enterprise has shown that social impact and commercial sustainability can coexist, encouraging corporations and institutions to adopt more inclusive employment practices of their own.

Socially, the experiential training in hospitality, customer service and communication has built confidence, independence and long-term employability among participants. Creating visible customer-facing roles for persons with disabilities has challenged stigma and increased awareness of accessibility and dignity-led employment within workplaces and society more broadly.

Innovation & Leadership

Mitti Cafe's central innovation has been shifting disability inclusion from a charity-based model to a dignity-led enterprise, integrating inclusive hiring into everyday hospitality operations across cafes, corporate food courts, hospitals, educational institutions, airports and public spaces. Alina's leadership philosophy is rooted in empathy, visibility and empowerment: inclusion, she believes, should not sit on the sidelines but be normalised within everyday workplaces and

society, with individuals valued for their abilities and potential rather than defined by their limitations.

The path included persistent scepticism over whether persons with disabilities could manage customer-facing hospitality roles, and building trust with institutions required sustained advocacy. Consistent delivery, growing partnerships and the visible success of its workforce allowed Mitti Cafe to overcome that resistance and establish itself as a leading social enterprise in India.

Awards & Recognitions

Beyond the National Award for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities and her place on the Forbes 30 Under 30 Asia list, Alina and Mitti Cafe have been featured across leading media and business platforms for innovation in social enterprise and hospitality. The enterprise has been recognised for building scalable employment opportunities for persons with disabilities across India, through partnerships with corporates, institutions, hospitals, airports and public sector organisations.





Chetna Gala Sinha

Founder and Chairperson
Mann Deshi Bank and
Mann Deshi Foundation

Chetna Gala Sinha is an Indian social entrepreneur, activist, farmer and banker who has spent nearly three decades building institutions around the economic realities of rural women. Through Mann Deshi, she has helped transform the position of women in drought-prone rural Maharashtra from passive recipients of welfare into savers, borrowers, entrepreneurs, asset owners, employers, investors and local economic leaders.

Her work goes beyond financial inclusion. It connects finance with enterprise skills, digital literacy, market access, productive assets, local information, community networks and collective voice. This integrated approach has created one of India's most influential practical models for women's economic empowerment.



Professional Journey

Born in 1958, Chetna Gala Sinha was shaped early by people's movements. As a young woman, she worked in Mumbai's slums and traveled through rural Maharashtra, where she encountered land insecurity, farmer distress, gender inequality and rural poverty. Her engagement with the Jayaprakash Narayan movement and grassroots struggles led her away from an urban professional trajectory toward farming and community-based work in Mhaswad, in Maharashtra's Satara district.

Mhaswad lies in the drought-prone Mann region, marked by recurring water scarcity, uncertain agricultural incomes, seasonal migration and restricted livelihood opportunities. In many households, men migrated to cities for work while women remained responsible for children, homes, farms, livestock, agricultural labor and household survival. Women in nomadic and marginalized communities also generated income but often had little control over finance, land, productive assets, markets or formal institutions.

Sinha saw a central contradiction. Rural women already worked as farmers, livestock rearers, vendors, artisans, food producers and informal entrepreneurs, yet the formal economy often did not recognize them as legitimate economic actors. They had the discipline to save, the ability to run enterprises and the willingness to repay loans, but were often considered too poor, too remote, too illiterate or too risky for formal banking.

Their exclusion was structural. Seasonal incomes, small and irregular savings, lack of collateral, limited mobility, weak documentation, low literacy, distance from bank branches and gendered control over property created barriers that conventional financial systems were not designed to address.

In 1996, Sinha founded the Mann Deshi Foundation in Mhaswad to advance the social and economic empowerment of rural women. The Foundation later developed into a wider support ecosystem spanning financial capability, entrepreneurship, agriculture, digital access, markets, community leadership, health and resilience.

Mann Deshi Bank and Mann Deshi Foundation are also presented as pioneers in building institutions led by and for rural women, with the Foundation described as a first-of-its-kind civil society organization focused on this integrated approach.

In 1997, Sinha and a collective of rural women established Mann Deshi Mahila Sahakari Bank, widely described as India's first cooperative bank created for and by rural women. The bank was designed for women who had been excluded from, or inadequately served by, conventional banks.

The story of Kantabai Salunke, a blacksmith, illustrates the problem Mann Deshi sought to address. Salunke reportedly wanted to deposit her small daily savings in a bank but was refused because the amount was considered too insignificant. The denial exposed an institutional blind spot: women living on low and irregular incomes were assumed not to need, or not to deserve, safe and formal financial services.

The bank's creation was not easy. Accounts describe how the Reserve Bank of India initially objected to the women's use of thumb impressions rather than signatures during the licensing process. Rather than accept exclusion as inevitable, the women learned to sign their names and returned to apply again. The bank received its cooperative banking license in 1997.

About Mann Deshi

Mann Deshi began as a response to financial exclusion, but Sinha recognized that a loan alone cannot transform a woman's economic life. A woman may have access to credit but still lack the skills to price a product, manage cash flow, identify a market, use a smartphone, maintain accounts, negotiate with buyers, protect her assets or expand beyond subsistence work.

Her central innovation was therefore to build an integrated ecosystem.



Mann Deshi Bank developed daily, weekly and monthly savings products that corresponded to rural women's actual cash flows. A vegetable vendor who earns cash daily, an agricultural worker who is paid weekly and a small farmer with seasonal income cannot be served effectively through one standard product.

The bank also used doorstep banking and women field agents to reduce the cost of access. For many rural women, traveling to a bank branch can mean lost wages, time away from care work, transport expenses and, in some contexts, restrictions on mobility. By taking services closer to women's homes and workplaces, Mann Deshi treated access as a design challenge rather than a personal failure of the poor.

In 2006, Mann Deshi launched the Udyogini Business School, described by the organization as India's first business school for rural women. It was based on the idea that a woman running a dairy activity, tailoring unit, small shop, goat-rearing enterprise, snack business or farm is a businesswoman and deserves access to practical business education.

Mann Deshi Bank and Mann Deshi Foundation pioneered digital financial literacy, and Mann Deshi Bank was the first rural women's bank in India to start mobile banking. In 2015, women who had never been to school began using mobile banking. Mann Deshi Bank has been a pioneer in setting up digital banking for rural women.

Mann Deshi's mobile business-school buses brought this training into villages. This last-mile approach addresses barriers created by women's time poverty, travel costs, safety considerations and care responsibilities. The Foundation also uses "Digital Didis," women facilitators who help rural women develop digital confidence and apply technology to their enterprises.

Mann Deshi's Chambers of Commerce extend the model beyond training and credit. They support women micro-entrepreneurs through financial and marketing advice, legal and compliance support, mentoring, peer networks, supplier and customer connections, exposure visits, technology assistance and market platforms.

Mann Deshi Tarang Vahini, the organization's community radio platform, adds another layer of empowerment. Its programs cover financial and digital literacy, education, business advertising, local culture and entertainment. Mann Deshi reported that the platform had more than 100,000 regular listeners and that Radio Shaala reached more than 20,000 students daily during the COVID-19 period.

Impact Created

Mann Deshi's 2021-22 annual report presents significant cumulative and program-level results. These figures are organization-reported and are not independently verified causal outcomes.

Mann Deshi reports that more than one million women have graduated from its business schools. The impact spans multiple areas, including agriculture, where women have not only benefited from the programmes but have also become owners of businesses.

Among women participants, 76% reported increased income, with an average reported income increase of 50% among women whose incomes increased. In addition, 55% reported business expansion, 30% reported starting a new business, 66% reported increased asset ownership and 32% reported hiring additional staff.

Mann Deshi's rural-resilience and livestock programs also reflect the practical realities of women's rural livelihoods. **Mann Deshi's paravet programme supports women's livelihoods and strengthens rural resilience through livestock services.**

These figures show how Sinha's model connects women's entrepreneurship to agriculture, livestock, climate adaptation and household resilience, rather than limiting the approach to non-farm microenterprise.



Innovation & Leadership

Sinha's approach differs from conventional financial-inclusion models in several ways. Instead of treating women as welfare beneficiaries, it positions them as bankers, investors, entrepreneurs and asset owners. Instead of focusing only on loans, it combines savings, loans, insurance, pensions, skills and market access.

During COVID-19, Mann Deshi worked with the government to run hospitals in Satara district to address the needs of the community. It subsequently started a health centre, which continues to serve the community. With young girls, Mann Deshi has also started the Young Girls Bank, through which girls save towards their further education. Other initiatives include a soil centre for farmers and a sports academy for nomadic children.

The model also takes banking and training to women through doorstep services and mobile schools rather than expecting women to reach institutions. It looks beyond income to assets, property, confidence, networks and leadership. Business schools and Chambers of Commerce recognize rural enterprises as legitimate businesses.

Her model shows that women's financial exclusion is rarely caused by a lack of ambition. More often, it results from institutions built around assumptions of stable income, formal collateral, literacy, mobility, documentation and male ownership of assets. Mann Deshi changed the institution rather than asking excluded women to fit into it.

For India, Sinha has demonstrated that rural women's entrepreneurship is not a peripheral welfare issue. It is connected to inclusive growth, local employment creation, financial inclusion and rural resilience, particularly in districts affected by drought, migration, informal work and agricultural risk.

Her work also demonstrates that meaningful financial inclusion must go beyond bank-account access. It requires usable products, trustworthy delivery, financial capability, enterprise support, market connectivity, women-led local agents, secure asset ownership and collective institutions. Mann Deshi's work also extends to panchayat training and dialogue on women's property rights, linking economic empowerment with voice in local governance.

Globally, the model offers a practical framework for gender-responsive finance and inclusive enterprise development. It is relevant to development agencies, banks, fintech companies, philanthropy and governments working across the Global South.

Awards & Recognitions

Chetna Gala Sinha has received wide recognition for this institution-building work. She is a Yale Fellow, Ashoka Fellow and Schwab Fellow. She was one of the seven Co-Chairs of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos in January 2018, alongside leaders including Christine Lagarde, Erna Solberg and Ginni Rometty.

She also served as Co-Chair for Financial Inclusion at the W20 Summit in Argentina in 2018. Her recognitions include the Social Entrepreneur of the Year-India award in 2013, Schwab Foundation recognition as a Social Entrepreneur of the Year, Forbes recognition among Social Entrepreneurs of the Year in 2017, and the Nari Shakti Puraskar, which she received in 2019 from the President of India for her contribution to women's empowerment.

The lasting lesson of her work is direct: rural women do not need to be included only after the economy has been designed. They must be included in the design of the economy itself. Her work positions them not as a marginal group requiring assistance, but as full economic citizens with the right to own, earn, invest, decide, lead and build resilient futures.





Dr. Jyotsna Suri

Chairperson and Managing Director
Bharat Hotels Limited

Dr Jyotsna Suri has led The LaLiT Suri Hospitality Group, one of India's leading privately owned hospitality brands, since taking charge in 2006. She moved the company away from international hotel affiliations and rebuilt it as an independent Indian luxury brand spanning 14 properties, while also shaping diversity hiring and tourism policy across India.

“*Hospitality is not only about service; it is about creating experiences with warmth, dignity and inclusion. My vision is to build destinations, empower people and showcase the best of India to the world,”*
Dr Suri said.”



Professional Journey

Lalit Suri and his family incorporated Bharat Hotels Limited in 1981, and Dr Suri has been associated with the company since its inception.

She was educated at The Lawrence School, Sanawar, and at Miranda House, University of Delhi, and later received an honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of Warwick. Her early exposure to hospitality, entrepreneurship and nation-building through tourism shaped her belief that hotels should develop destinations and create employment, not merely provide accommodation.

A turning point came in 2006, when Dr Suri took over as Chairperson and Managing Director following the death of Mr. Lalit Suri. She moved the Group away from international affiliations such as InterContinental Hotels Group, Holiday Inn and Hilton, and rebranded it as The LaLiT, an independent Indian luxury hospitality brand with its own identity and legacy. Under her leadership, the Group has grown from six hotels to 14 hotels, palaces and resorts across business and leisure destinations in India and abroad.

Dr Suri's contribution extends beyond the company. She is Past President of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI); Mentor to its Tourism & Culture Committee and its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee; Executive Member of the Hotel Association of India (HAI); Chair of the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) India Initiative for 2026-2028; and a member of the Boards of Governors of the National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology and the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs. She is recognised as one of the most influential women leaders in India's hospitality industry.

About Bharat Hotels Limited

Bharat Hotels Limited owns and operates The LaLiT Suri Hospitality Group, one of India's leading privately owned domestic hotel brands, focused on the luxury segment. It also runs The LaLiT Suri Hospitality School, contributing to hospitality education and skill development.

Luxury hotels, palaces and resorts operate under The LaLiT brand, while mid-market hotels operate under The LaLiT Traveller brand, offering accommodation, food and beverage, banqueting, destination weddings, conferences, wellness, spa, events and curated cultural experiences.

Each property draws inspiration from its location, combining Indian warmth, local culture and inclusive hospitality to create a strong sense of place for guests, while contributing to India's tourism, employment and skilling ecosystem.

Impact Created

Under Dr Suri's leadership, the Group has created economic and social impact across hospitality, tourism and community development, guided by the belief that hospitality should develop destinations and generate employment.

Its destination-led events, all under The LaLiT Suri name, include Polo in Drass, the Shikarathon in Srinagar, the Walk-a-Thon in Mumbai, Ice Hockey in Ladakh, the Caddies Tournament across New Delhi, Srinagar, Goa, Nainital and Bangalore, the Arts Festival, the Tipaiya-thon, the Chaupal, Chalo Chitrakoot in Khajuraho, the Cycle-on, the Kabaddi Championship, the Utsav in Bekal, the Festival of Canacona in Goa, and the Ponython in Gulmarg. These showcase local culture, sport and heritage while strengthening emerging tourist destinations.

The Group's presence across business and leisure locations has strengthened local supply chains and supported artisans, tourism partners and small enterprises, alongside plantation drives that have put more than two million trees in the ground nationwide.



The LaLiT is recognised for its leadership in diversity, equity and inclusion. With partners including the Keshav Suri Foundation and other non-governmental organisations, the Group has built one of India's most comprehensive inclusion ecosystems for skilling and livelihoods, organising 13 job fairs for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQIA+) candidates that reached more than 10,000 jobseekers and led to over 1,500 placements.

The Group employs more than 250 transgender persons across roles and functions, among the highest of any organisation in India, and has trained and employed more than 500 persons with disabilities, including neurodivergent individuals, through initiatives such as Apna Heera. It also supports Special Olympics Bharat. More than 3,000 LGBTQIA+ individuals have been trained through PrideKraft and other hospitality programmes, creating dignified, lasting employment for marginalised communities.

Innovation & Leadership

Dr Suri's leadership is defined by resilience, innovation and a long-term vision for Indian hospitality. During the COVID-19 pandemic, her leadership helped the Group steer the business with resilience and clarity.

Her most notable strategic contribution has been building a hospitality model that blends cultural authenticity, experiential travel and responsible growth, expanding The LaLiT across business and leisure markets in India and internationally and taking Indian hospitality to a wider global audience.

Her leadership philosophy is rooted in empathy, empowerment and people-centric practices, encouraging guest experiences and service standards that reflect Indian heritage while meeting global expectations. She has navigated changing traveller preferences, economic fluctuations and rising competition through brand differentiation, balancing tradition with modern practices to keep the organisation distinctive.

Awards & Recognitions

Dr Suri was conferred the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star, by the Government of Japan for strengthening India-Japan ties in the economic and tourism sectors, becoming the first Indian woman to receive this Imperial honour since it opened to foreign nationals in 1981. She has received more than 60 national and international awards, including Most Powerful Woman in the industry from the Travel & Hospitality Award, Outstanding Business Woman of the Year from the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Business Today's Most Powerful Women in Indian Business, Most Influential Woman in India from Business World, the Lifetime Achievement Award from Hotelier India Awards, and the Women Entrepreneur Award in Travel & Hospitality from the Indian Express Group.





Kisko Farmer Producer Company Limited (KFPCL)

Women-led Farmer Producer Company (FPC)
Jharkhand, India

Kisko Farmer Producer Company Limited, known as KFPCL, is a women-owned and women-run farmer producer company (FPC) — a member-owned rural business structure recognised under Indian company law — based in a tribal region of Jharkhand. Formed to move small and marginal women farmers from subsistence agriculture into collective enterprise, it has grown from 391 founding members to more than 1,383 shareholders in three years. Its processing units and in-house brands have turned rural women into entrepreneurs and community leaders.

Being part of KFPCL has changed how we see ourselves. Earlier, we worked individually with limited confidence, but today, we make decisions together and run our own enterprise. This journey has not only improved our livelihoods but also given us a voice and identity. As women, we are no longer just farmers, we are leaders and entrepreneurs shaping our community's future.
-Saraswati Devi, a member of KFPCL's Board of Directors, said

Background

KFPCL was established on 2 December 2022 in a remote, largely tribal part of Jharkhand, where most residents are small and marginal farmers from Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities, official Indian classifications for historically disadvantaged groups, particularly the Munda and Oraon tribes. Agriculture, livestock rearing and forest-based work are the main sources of livelihood, but farming depends heavily on rainfall, and poor irrigation leaves large areas uncultivated, affecting incomes and food security.

Before KFPCL, rural women in the region were largely confined to household roles, with little say in decisions or economic activity. Despite doing much of the agricultural work, they had limited access to markets, information or financial services, and relied on intermediaries who kept their returns low.

KFPCL was set up as a women-led collective to change that. Owned and run entirely by women, it organises collective farming and marketing so members can bypass intermediaries, gain bargaining power and secure better prices for their produce.

The company began with 391 women farmers and has since grown to 1,383 registered members, with around 1,000 more expressing interest. It has secured registrations including Goods and Services Tax (GST) registration, a seed licence, a fertiliser licence and certification from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), giving it access to formal markets.

Turnover grew from ₹3 million (₹30 lakh) in the 2023-24 financial year to a cumulative ₹26 million (₹2.6 crore) across the 2024-25 and 2025-26 financial years, while the company mobilised ₹1.5 million (₹15 lakh) in share capital, opening access to equity grants from central and state governments. To add value to its produce, KFPCL built a Bio Resource Centre and a Millet Processing Unit, creating local jobs, and launched two brands: Mridashakti for bio-inputs and PRAGI for millet products. Through these milestones, women who once had little say in decisions became the collective's confident entrepreneurs and leaders.

About Kisko (KFPCL)

KFPCL promotes sustainable agriculture, livelihood enhancement and rural entrepreneurship. It produces organic inputs such as super compost and bio-pesticides under the Mridashakti brand, and processes and markets millet-based products under PRAGI. It aggregates and markets members' produce, runs rural retail marts supplying farm inputs, and helps shareholders access government schemes, alongside livestock services such as vaccination.

Its 1,383 women shareholders, with around 1,000 more waiting to join, are supported by roughly 20 women employed in village-level processing units. Operations have expanded from village to block level and are extending into nearby towns and cities.



Impact Created

KFPCL's processing units provide direct employment to rural women, and collective marketing has let members secure better prices for their produce by cutting out intermediaries. Access to quality agricultural inputs and livestock vaccination services has reduced risk and helped stabilise household incomes across the region.

Socially, KFPCL has moved women from household roles into decision-making, business operations and leadership positions. It has strengthened community institutions by bringing women together on a shared platform, built financial awareness and skills, and included small and marginal farmers from tribal communities on equal terms. Beyond livelihoods, members describe a new sense of identity and agency within their communities.

Innovation & Leadership

KFPCL's **Mridashakti** brand of compost and bio-pesticides lets farmers move to organic and regenerative practices while cutting input costs and improving soil health. Its **PRAGI** brand has promoted millet cultivation and value-added products, supporting climate-resilient agriculture and nutrition. Village-level Bio Resource Centres and Millet Processing Units let women manage production, processing and packaging locally, while Rural Retail Marts connect producers directly with consumers.

Governance rests on collective decision-making, with women taking an active part in planning and operations, an approach designed to build ownership and turn members from beneficiaries into entrepreneurs.

KFPCL faced low awareness among women, initial resistance to collective action, weak infrastructure and limited market access. It addressed these through sustained community mobilisation, training and capacity-building, along with support from government schemes that helped close infrastructure and financing gaps and improve market linkages.





Naina Lal Kidwai

Chairperson
Rothschild & Co. India

Naina Lal Kidwai is a pioneering financial executive, public policy advisor, and sustainability advocate whose work spans corporate leadership, environmental governance, and economic reforms. A former Chairperson of HSBC India and the first female President of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), she continues to shape sustainable development and finance across national and international platforms.





Professional Journey

Naina Lal Kidwai built her career in the financial and corporate sectors at a time when few women held senior leadership positions. In 1982, she became the first Indian woman to graduate from Harvard Business School. Her international corporate engagement extended to serving on the global board of Nestlé as a Director from 2005, making her one of the first Indians appointed to a Fortune 100 company board.

Her banking career reached a landmark in 2006 when she became the Chief Executive Officer of HSBC India, making her the first woman to lead a bank in the country. Three years later, in 2009, she assumed the role of Chairperson of HSBC India. In this expanded role, she oversaw HSBC's entities across insurance, asset management, software development, business process outsourcing (BPO), and retail and commercial banking. Concurrently, she served as Executive Director on the board of HSBC Asia-Pacific. Under her tenure, HSBC's entities achieved record financial performance alongside industry recognitions for workplace practices.

In 2013, Kidwai achieved another institutional milestone by becoming the first female President of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) in the organization's 86-year history. As President, she led dialogues between corporate entities and government representatives, advocating for infrastructure expansion, systemic financial reforms, environmental sustainability, and increased economic participation for women.

Challenge and Policy Engagement

Navigating the complexities of rapid economic expansion alongside environmental degradation presented critical policy challenges. Kidwai addressed these intersections through policy bodies and governance committees. Over several decades, she served on several national advisory councils, including the Prime Minister's Trade and Industry Council, the National Manufacturing Competitiveness Council, the National Trade Council, and the Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission. Through these forums, she contributed to policy design covering banking operations, trade frameworks, corporate governance, and sustainable economic reforms.

Her diplomatic and trade involvement extended to the BRICS alliance (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). Kidwai served for five years as a member of the original five-member BRICS Business Council representing India. During her tenure on the council, she chaired the BRICS Financial Services Working Group, driving collaborative financial policy initiatives across member nations.

Building Sustainability Initiatives and Institutional Frameworks

Recognizing the need to mainstream Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles prior to their broad commercial adoption, Kidwai established dedicated institutions for resource management and public sanitation. She founded and currently chairs the India Sanitation Coalition and the FICCI Water Mission. Through these institutions, she organized frameworks connecting private sector enterprises, government policymakers, and civil society entities to address national water management and public sanitation infrastructure.

Her contributions to global environmental governance include her role as a Member of the International Advisory Council for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Inquiry into the Design of a Sustainable Financial System. Additionally, she served within the World Economic Forum (WEF) network as Co-Chair of the Global Agenda Council for Water and as a Member of the Global Agenda Council on Climate Change.

Kidwai has authored works on resource management, financial access, and leadership development. Her publication, *Survive Or Sink: An Action Agenda for Sanitation, Water, Pollution, and Green Finance*, outlines operational strategies for environmental protection and sustainable finance mechanisms. To promote gender inclusion and professional mentorship, she authored and edited *30 Women in Power: Their Voices, Their Stories*, documenting the career trajectories and institutional approaches of female executives in India.

Current Roles and Recognized Impact

Kidwai continues to hold leadership positions across global investment firms and corporate boards. She serves as Chairperson of Rothschild & Co. India, Senior Advisor to Advent International and TPG Rise Climate / TPG Rise Funds, and Venture Advisor to Lightspeed Venture Partners India. She also serves on the corporate boards of several Indian and multinational companies.

In recognition of her contributions to trade, industry, and financial governance, the Government of India awarded Kidwai the Padma Shri in 2007. She has also appeared on global corporate rankings, including Fortune magazine's lists of top international women in business. Through institutional building, policy formulation, and green finance advocacy, her work continues to impact economic governance and sustainable business practices.





Puja Garg

Co-Founder, Amara Fashion and Lifestyle Exhibition | Director, Tex India Group
National President
FICCI Ladies Organization (FICCI FLO)

Puja Garg is an entrepreneur and institution builder whose professional journey spans fashion and lifestyle, retail, distribution, logistics and women-led development. A commerce graduate from Christ Church College, Kanpur, she began her entrepreneurial journey in Lucknow in 1999 and co-founded Amara Fashion and Lifestyle Exhibition in 2010. She is the 43rd National President of FICCI Ladies Organisation (FICCI FLO) for 2026–27, bringing entrepreneurial experience, strategic perspective and grassroots understanding to women-led growth.

“
Women's empowerment is not about giving women a place at the table; it is about ensuring they have the opportunity, confidence and economic strength to build the table themselves.
”

Professional Journey

Puja Garg began her entrepreneurial journey in Lucknow in 1999 after graduating in commerce from Christ Church College, Kanpur. Her professional portfolio has since spanned fashion and lifestyle, retail, distribution, logistics and women-led development.

A defining milestone came in 2010, when she co-founded the Amara Fashion and Lifestyle Exhibition. The venture developed into a curated platform featuring more than 60 national and international designers, with editions in Lucknow, Varanasi and London. It connected designers, brands and consumers and contributed to the curated retail and lifestyle ecosystem.

Puja is also a Director with Tex India Group under the Distributors India Group, one of India's oldest and largest distribution and logistics houses. The group has cumulative annual revenue of more than ₹5,000 crores and a distribution footprint across more than 20 states. Tex India operates across Uttar Pradesh and the National Capital Region (NCR), with more than 250 dealers across 40 cities and more than 25 self-owned stores representing multiple fashion and clothing brands.

As Past Chairperson of FICCI FLO Lucknow, Puja led initiatives focused on women's economic empowerment and village development. During the COVID-19 period, she worked on initiatives to strengthen women's resilience and self-reliance. She later served as a National Initiative Head, spearheading village adoption and holistic development programmes across multiple FLO chapters.

These experiences shaped an approach focused on scalable models and measurable impact. As National President of FICCI FLO for 2026-27, Puja brings together entrepreneurial experience, strategic perspective and grassroots understanding to support women's participation in India's economic development.

About Amara Fashion and Lifestyle Exhibition

Amara Fashion and Lifestyle Exhibition, co-founded by Puja in 2010, brings together leading designers, brands and consumers. It has featured more than 60 national and international designers through editions in Lucknow, Varanasi and London. Its curated approach brings together established and emerging talent and creates opportunities for designers to showcase their creativity and expand their market presence.

About Tex India Group

Tex India Group operates under the Distributors India Group in pharmaceuticals and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) distribution and logistics, alongside interests in e-commerce and branded apparel retail. The group runs a pan-India supply network across more than 20 states. Tex India spans Uttar Pradesh and NCR through more than 250 dealers across 40 cities and more than 25 self-owned stores representing multiple brands. Puja's role reflects experience across supply chains, market access, consumer businesses and large-scale distribution.

Impact Created

Puja's work extends from entrepreneurship to women's economic empowerment, grassroots development and community transformation. Through Amara, she has helped designers and lifestyle brands access new markets and audiences. Since 2010, the platform has featured more than 60 national and international designers and expanded across Lucknow, Varanasi and London, increasing visibility and market opportunities within the fashion and lifestyle ecosystem.

As Past Chairperson of FICCI FLO Lucknow, Puja led initiatives to enable women to become economically self-reliant and support holistic village development. During the COVID-19 period, these efforts earned her the Aatmanirbhar Nari Award in 2021, conferred by Amar Ujala and presented by the



Minister of State for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME). As a National Initiative Head with FICCI FLO, she later spearheaded village adoption and holistic development programmes across multiple chapters, helping develop models that could be adapted and scaled across communities.

Her approach focuses on sustainable models that create capabilities, strengthen livelihoods and enable communities, particularly women, to participate more actively in economic development.

Innovation & Leadership

Puja's leadership combines strategic thinking, execution discipline and an understanding of people and impact. Her approach translates ideas into structured action and measurable outcomes. The evolution of Amara from its inception in 2010 into a platform featuring more than 60 national and international designers reflects her ability to identify an opportunity, build a differentiated proposition and scale it across markets.

Her leadership in FICCI FLO has strengthened this focus at the grassroots. As Past Chairperson of FICCI FLO Lucknow and later as a National Initiative Head, she worked on village adoption and holistic development programmes designed as scalable models for sustained community transformation.

A defining challenge in grassroots development is converting intent into lasting economic outcomes. Puja's approach has been to bring structure, accountability and measurable objectives to initiatives while keeping programmes responsive to local realities. Her leadership philosophy is rooted in clarity of purpose, disciplined execution and collective ownership, bringing teams together around common goals and moving initiatives from conception to implementation.

For Puja, leadership is about creating platforms that enable others to succeed, whether by giving designers access to markets, strengthening business networks or creating opportunities for women and communities to become more economically self-reliant.

Awards & Recognitions

Puja received the Aatmanirbhar Nari Award in 2021 for her work during the COVID-19 period. She was also felicitated in 2021 for International Women's Day under Mission Shakti by the Deputy Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, in collaboration with Femina India and The Times Group.





Dr. Sangita Reddy

Joint Managing Director
Apollo Hospitals Group

Dr Sangita Reddy is Joint Managing Director of Apollo Hospitals Group, Asia's Foremost integrated healthcare services provider, founded in 1983 by Dr Prathap C. Reddy as India's first private corporate hospital. Under her leadership, Apollo has added artificial intelligence-enabled clinical tools, tele-ICU networks and digital health platforms to its hospital, pharmacy and diagnostics network. She also holds leadership roles across Indian industry bodies and global health and women's business forums.

“
The greatest bottleneck to any progress isn't technology - it is the legacy mindset that limits who gets to build the future. When we empower women to lead at the intersection of AI, health, and scale, we unlock humanity's ultimate exponential asset,
”



Professional Journey

As Joint Managing Director of Apollo Hospitals, Dr Reddy has helped build an integrated healthcare system spanning hospitals, digital platforms, pharmacies, diagnostics, preventive health programmes and technology-enabled care networks that reach millions of patients.

Her leadership extends beyond the company into industry and policy roles. She has served as President of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Chairperson of G20 Empower - an initiative under India's 2023 G20 presidency to advance women's economic leadership - and Chairperson of the India chapter of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance. She has also joined the board of Joint Commission Resources, the international arm of the United States-based Joint Commission healthcare accreditation body, contributing to discussions on healthcare quality and patient safety.

Under her leadership, Apollo evolved from a hospital network into a system that combines artificial intelligence, preventive healthcare, remote monitoring and digital platforms with direct patient care. She has driven the rollout of AI-powered clinical intelligence tools, tele-ICU networks, precision oncology services, digital health platforms and personalised preventive care programmes.

Dr Reddy has advocated for healthcare systems that reduce the physical, economic, digital and systemic barriers between people and care, and for a shift from treating illness as it occurs toward continuous monitoring, prevention and personalised care. Her leadership philosophy centres on institutions that keep learning and evolving, pairing scientific advancement with patient-centred care, and scaling services with a clear purpose.

About Apollo Hospitals

Apollo Hospitals was established in 1983 by Dr Prathap C. Reddy as India's first private corporate hospital, changing the course of healthcare delivery in the country. It has since grown into Asia's largest integrated healthcare services provider and describes itself as the world's largest integrated healthcare platform.

The Apollo network includes 76 hospitals with more than 10,400 beds, more than 6,600 pharmacies, 264 clinics and 2,182 diagnostic centres. It operates more than 800 telemedicine centres and additional units in home health, healthcare consulting, medical education and insurance, alongside its Apollo 24/7 digital health portal.

Its cardiac programme has completed more than 300,000 angioplasties and 200,000 surgeries, and it operates South Asia's first Proton Therapy Centre, in Chennai. Drawing on decades of clinical data, Apollo has developed clinical artificial intelligence tools, including risk-scoring models for chronic conditions such as chronic kidney disease (CKD), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and liver fibrosis. It has treated more than 150 million patients from 140 countries.

Impact Created

Apollo's combined hospital, pharmacy, diagnostic and telemedicine network gives it reach across millions of patients in India and abroad, with more than 150 million patients treated from 140 countries to date. Its cardiac and oncology programmes, together with its AI-supported chronic disease tools, have extended advanced tertiary care to a broader patient base, while the Apollo 24/7 platform and telemedicine centres bring specialist consultation to areas with limited access to hospitals.

Beyond patient volumes, Apollo has driven a national agenda on preventive healthcare and wellness, placing early detection and continuous monitoring alongside hospital-based treatment. Dr Reddy's roles with FICCI, G20 Empower and the BRICS Women's Business Alliance have extended that agenda into policy discussions on women's economic leadership and cross-border collaboration on health systems.



Innovation & Leadership

Dr Reddy treats technology as a means of widening access rather than an end in itself, arguing that innovation is meaningful only when it expands dignity, access and inclusion. Her approach draws on both public and private healthcare experience, connecting developments in artificial intelligence and telemedicine to patient-facing care standards and to reducing systemic barriers to treatment.

Her outlook bridges public systems and private enterprise, and combines technological advances with an emphasis on empathy in care delivery. She has described the future of healthcare as belonging to organisations that combine scientific advancement with humanity, and scale with purpose rather than growth alone.

Awards & Recognitions

In May 2019, the Indian Medical Association gave Dr Reddy its IMA Mediko Samman award for Best Female Healthcare Leader, recognising her role in expanding accessible healthcare through Apollo. Fortune India named her among its Most Powerful Women in Business in 2023 and 2024, listed jointly with her sisters as the "Reddy Sisters," and ranked them third in 2025. In January 2025, Network18's CNN-News18 named her Indian of the Year 2024 in Business, and in May 2025 The CEO Magazine gave her its Lifetime Achievement Award - India 2025.



Shweta Rai

Managing Director,
India & Country Division Head,
South Asia, Pharmaceuticals
Division of Bayer

Shweta Rai is a healthcare business executive with more than two decades of experience across pharmaceuticals, medical devices, healthcare consulting, and commercial leadership. She currently leads Bayer's Pharmaceuticals Division across India and South Asia. Her work spans commercial strategy, market development, , stakeholder engagement, and patient access to innovative healthcare solutions.

“
Leadership is not defined by the position we hold, but by the positive impact we create. When science, innovation, and purpose come together, we can transform healthcare and improve lives at scale.
”

Professional Journey

Shweta Rai is currently serving as Managing Director, India, and Country Division Head, South Asia, for Bayer's Pharmaceuticals Division. Her career spans more than two decades across pharmaceuticals, medical devices, healthcare consulting, and commercial leadership. She has worked across diverse therapeutic areas and healthcare ecosystems, developing expertise in commercial strategy, market development, access, stakeholder engagement, and healthcare innovation.

Rai earned a bachelor's degree (Honours) in Zoology from Miranda House and subsequently completed postgraduate studies in management. She further strengthened her leadership capabilities through a Strategic Management Program at the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta. Throughout her career, Rai has held leadership positions at Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer, MSD Pharmaceuticals, and IQVIA. Through these varied roles she gained extensive experience spanning multiple healthcare organizations and therapeutic areas.

Rai joined Bayer in 2019 and has since held several strategic leadership roles. Before becoming Managing Director, she led Bayer's diabetes care business, delivering growth while addressing the increasing burden of non-communicable diseases.

On 1 January 2024, Rai assumed responsibility for Bayer's pharmaceutical operations across India and South Asia. She also serves as an Executive Committee Member at the Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI) and as the South Asia sponsor for Bayer's Business Resource Group, GROW (Growing Representation & Opportunities for Women).

About Bayer

Bayer is a global enterprise with core competencies in life sciences, focused on healthcare and nutrition. Pharmaceuticals is one of the company's key divisions and develops and delivers treatments for some of the world's most pressing healthcare challenges. In India and South Asia, Bayer's Pharmaceuticals division works across cardiovascular diseases, oncology, women's healthcare, radiology, ophthalmology, and specialty medicines. The organization combines global scientific expertise with local partnerships to improve access to evidence-based healthcare solutions.

Bayer focuses on translating scientific advances into health outcomes for patients while supporting healthcare professionals, researchers, and policymakers in advancing healthcare delivery. Its work includes innovation, clinical research, responsible partnerships, and sustainable growth.

Bayer operates across the globe with a presence in more than 80 countries. It serves millions of patients worldwide and contributes to scientific advancement through research, development, and strategic collaborations. In India, Bayer continues to strengthen the healthcare ecosystem through investments in innovation, talent development, and partnerships that support improved access to modern therapies.

Impact Created

Throughout her career, Rai has focused on improving patient outcomes by bringing innovative healthcare solutions to those who need them. As a senior pharmaceutical industry leader, she has played a role in advancing access to breakthrough therapies across cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, vaccines, immunology, women's health issues, and other chronic illnesses carrying a significant public health burden.

Her work connects scientific innovation with healthcare delivery to help more patients benefit from evidence-based treatments addressing critical unmet medical needs. A defining aspect of her leadership has been the development of strategic partnerships across the healthcare ecosystem.

Under Rai's leadership, Bayer has strengthened collaborations with healthcare stakeholders across the public and private sectors to advance awareness, innovation, education, and patient-centered



healthcare solutions. In the recent past, Bayer partnered with leading Indian pharmaceutical companies to expand the reach of two innovative medicines, helping widen access for patients.

The company has also entered partnerships with a few state governments to address the occurrence of unnecessary hysterectomies through awareness, education, and capacity-building initiatives. Rai's focus also extends to the intersection of climate and health. She advocates greater awareness of emerging health challenges linked to climate change and the need for collaborative solutions to improve access to healthcare across South Asia.

Innovation & Leadership

Rai believes that sustainable business success is achieved when scientific advancement translates into meaningful improvements in patients' lives. She has led organizations through evolving healthcare needs, changing market dynamics, and increasing expectations around access and innovation. Her ability to navigate complexity while maintaining strategic clarity has supported business transformation and long-term growth.

Rai has fostered a culture of collaboration, agility, and customer centricity across teams. She has championed digital adoption and innovative approaches, including the use of artificial intelligence to help solve complex business challenges. She has also focused on simplifying and demystifying healthcare concepts, making them more accessible and relevant to everyday people.

Empowering people and building high-performing teams remain central to her leadership. Her leadership style emphasizes ownership, accountability, continuous learning, and inclusion. Through mentorship and talent development, she has helped cultivate future leaders while fostering resilience and adaptability. As Head of Bayer's Pharmaceuticals Division for India and South Asia, Rai continues to focus on building resilient organizations, accelerating innovation, and delivering sustainable impact for patients, healthcare systems, and society.

Awards & Recognitions

Rai has been featured in India's "A-List" of top marketing influencers and acknowledged among prominent women executives in the healthcare sector.





Sminu Jindal

Founder-Chairperson, Svayam;
Managing Director, Jindal SAW Ltd.

Sminu Jindal has built her professional journey around accessibility, enterprise leadership and institutional change. A spinal cord injury at the age of eleven made her a wheelchair user and gave her an early understanding of how inaccessible environments can restrict education, employment, travel and participation.

In 2000, she founded Svayam, an initiative of the Sminu Jindal Charitable Trust, and has since developed its work across accessibility, universal design and inclusion. Alongside this social mission, she leads Jindal SAW Ltd., bringing business leadership and implementation experience to her work on accessibility.

“
True infrastructure is not only what we build, but what it enables. When industry grows with responsibility and public systems become accessible, people gain the freedom to study, work, travel, participate and contribute with dignity.”



Professional Journey

Ms. Jindal's personal experience became the starting point for institution building. Through Svayam, she has worked to advance accessibility for people with reduced mobility, including persons with disabilities, older persons, pregnant women, children and people with temporary injuries. Her approach combines access audits, technical recommendations, implementation support, policy engagement, capacity building and public sensitisation. She has consistently treated an audit as the beginning of the process, translating recommendations into usable infrastructure, trained personnel and accountable service delivery.

Under her leadership, Svayam has worked at heritage monuments, public buildings, airports, metro systems, bus shelters, hospitals and sporting venues. She has helped bring accessibility into discussions on transport, heritage, tourism, healthcare, sanitation, sports and the built environment, engaging government ministries, public authorities, airports, transport agencies, educational and medical institutions, industry bodies and civil society organisations. Svayam's contributions have supported the Accessible India Campaign, the Harmonised Guidelines and Space Standards, the National Building Code and aviation provisions for passengers with reduced mobility. Its Accessible Kenya Mission has strengthened local capacity by training stakeholders and Basic Access Auditors.

Her individual leadership extends beyond Svayam. As Managing Director of Jindal SAW Ltd., established in 1984, Ms. Jindal leads an Indian manufacturing enterprise known for tubular products and infrastructure solutions. Her corporate leadership has focused on quality, innovation, responsible growth, operational accountability and greater participation of women in a traditionally male-dominated manufacturing sector.

Her leadership has been recognised nationally and internationally. Recognitions include Fortune India Most Powerful Women in Business in 2011, 2025 and 2026; Mahatma Award 2024 for Leadership in Inclusion and Accessibility; FICCI FLO Women Entrepreneur of the Year in 2009; L'Oréal Femina Women Award in 2014; World Economic Forum Young Global Leader in 2009; Asia-Pacific Enterprise Leadership Award in the Social Service category in 2012/2013; Africa CSR Leadership Award in 2012; and GAATES Award of Recognition in 2016. Other recognitions include the Alumni Award for Excellence from Shri Ram College of Commerce, Delhi University, the Global Youth Icon Award, Top Women Achievers of the Year



by Asia One Magazine, and the Award for Excellence as Top Woman Entrepreneur from the Institute of Marketing and Management, New Delhi.

Her work with Svayam has also been recognised through National Tourism Awards for accessibility at Qutub Minar, Red Fort and Fatehpur Sikri, jointly with the Archaeological Survey of India. These recognitions reflect the connection between her personal experience, her institutional leadership and her work to make accessibility part of public infrastructure and participation.

About Svayam

Svayam is an initiative of the Sminu Jindal Charitable Trust, established in 2000 by Ms. Jindal to create an accessible and equitable world for people with reduced mobility. It treats accessibility as a universal requirement that benefits persons with disabilities, older people, pregnant women, children, people recovering from injury and many others.

Its multidisciplinary teams conduct access audits, recommend practical solutions, support implementation, build institutional capacity and sensitise decision makers and frontline personnel. The organisation works across built infrastructure, transport, aviation, heritage, tourism, healthcare, sanitation, sports and digital interfaces. It has partnered with ministries, public bodies, airports, metro and bus agencies, educational institutions, hospitals, industry associations and civil society, while contributing technical inputs to national guidelines and standards and developing local capacity through its work in Kenya.

Impact Created

The scale of the work led by Ms. Jindal is reflected in Svayam's reported impact. Over more than twenty-five years, the organisation has undertaken 6,000+ access audits, with interventions and advisory work estimated to affect more than 195 million people. Its work includes public buildings, heritage sites, transport systems, airports, hospitals, educational campuses, sanitation facilities and sporting venues.

Svayam has contributed to inclusive conservation at Qutub Minar, Red Fort, Fatehpur Sikri, Ajanta and Ellora, Jallianwala Bagh and the National War Memorial, and to accessibility across 1,400+ Delhi bus queue shelters, metro and monorail systems and aviation services. Under the Accessible India Campaign, it audited more than 340 public buildings. Its Accessible Family Toilet programme enabled 1,008 families across 14 states and 138 districts to access finance for safer sanitation, with approximately 99 per cent repayment. During the pandemic, Svayam supported vaccination access for about 15,000 families in Delhi NCR. It has supported more than 2,500 para athletes from 36 states and Union Territories. In Kenya, it has trained over 600 stakeholders and helped develop 78 Basic Access Auditors, while its World Accessibility Day campaign has drawn pledges from participants in more than 100 countries, including 19 Paralympic committees.

Innovation & Leadership

Ms. Jindal's distinctive contribution is the way she connects personal experience with institutional action. Her approach positions accessibility as a design, governance and economic imperative rather than a welfare measure. Svayam translates lived experience into technical evidence, standards and implementation, moving from identifying barriers to proposing context-specific solutions, building institutional ownership, training frontline teams and reviewing results.

The Accessible Family Toilet programme linked accessibility with microfinance so families could create safer sanitation without depending on grants. The Accessible Kenya Mission focused on knowledge transfer and developing local Basic Access Auditors. World Accessibility Day, initiated on 27 March, turned awareness into a global pledge and participation platform. At Jindal SAW, Ms. Jindal applies the same principles of quality, systems thinking, accountability and scale in a manufacturing environment.



Her work connects empathy with execution and personal experience with system reform, with solutions designed to be practical, replicable and capable of improving participation.

Awards & Recognitions

Ms. Jindal's individual recognitions include Fortune India Most Powerful Women in Business 2011, 2025 and 2026; Mahatma Award 2024 - Leadership in Inclusion and Accessibility; FICCI FLO - Women Entrepreneur of the Year (2009); National Tourism Awards of Excellence for Qutub Minar (2009) and Red Fort, Delhi (2011), and the National Tourism Award 2011-12 for Fatehpur Sikri, jointly with the Archaeological Survey of India; Alumni Award for Excellence - Shri Ram College of Commerce, Delhi University (2011); L'Oréal Femina Women Award - 'Favourite Face of a Cause' (2014); Global Youth Icon Award (2014); Top Women Achievers of the Year - Asia One Magazine (2017); and the 'Veer' Campaign honour. She has also been featured in 'Corporate Divas', 'Why I Failed' and 'Indian Business through the Ages'.



Jindal SAW Ltd. has separately received national and international recognitions for export excellence, quality, mining practices, safety, operational performance and infrastructure contribution. These include the Best Performance Award in Line Pipe from GAIL for 2012-13, recognitions from the Indian Bureau of Mines and Directorate General of Mines Safety, FY 2024-25 quality awards, and recognitions from the Bureau of Indian Standards, GAIL (India) Limited and the Directorate of Factories & Boilers, Bellary.





INDONESIA

INDONESIA





Rinawati Prihatiningsih

President Commissioner and Co-Owner
PT INFINITIE Berkah Energi

Rinawati Prihatiningsih is an Indonesian entrepreneur and business leader whose work spans energy-sector enterprise, strategic management and women's economic empowerment. She co-founded PT INFINITIE Berkah Energi in 2019 and has helped develop the company into a women-owned and women-led energy trading and logistics enterprise serving customers across Indonesia. Her leadership also extends to business networks and initiatives focused on women's economic participation, youth mentoring and sustainable development.

“
Women do not need permission to lead. We earn trust by delivering, turn courage into enterprise, and use every success to open doors for others. When women build with integrity, we do not only change business—we change what the next generation believes is possible.
”



Professional Journey

Rinawati Prihatiningsih holds a master's degree in Gender Studies from Universitas Indonesia. Her leadership development has also included the National Resilience Institute of Indonesia (Lemhannas RI), where she joined PPSA 22 in 2019, and the UID-MIT IDEAS Asia Pacific programme in 2024. These experiences shaped her approach to business growth, national resilience, sustainability and inclusion.

In 2019, Rinawati co-founded PT INFINITIE Berkah Energi with business partner Yuniar Tri Damayanti, entering an energy sector in which women remain significantly underrepresented. Rinawati provides strategic leadership, networks and a focus on inclusive growth, while Yuniar serves as Co-Owner, President Director and Chief Executive Officer of PT INFINITIE Berkah Energi, overseeing day-to-day operations and commercial execution. Together, they developed INFINITIE from an entrepreneurial venture into a women-owned and women-led energy trading and logistics enterprise. The company became an authorised agent of Elnusa Petrofin, part of the Pertamina Group, and expanded its supply coverage across Java, Kalimantan, East Nusa Tenggara, Sulawesi, Aceh and Papua.

Rinawati also holds leadership roles across Indonesian and international business networks. She is Co-Chair of G20 EMPOWER Indonesia, Vice Chair for Energy and Mineral Resources at the Indonesian Women's Business Association (IWAPI), Chair of the Multilateral Committee at the Indonesian Employers Association (APINDO), and holds committee leadership roles engaging the Americas and OECD-BIAC at KADIN Indonesia. She is also a mentor in the BRICS+ International Youth Mentoring Program and Chair of the Grant Review Committee for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Tropical Landscapes Grant Fund.

A defining point in her leadership journey was recognising that women's empowerment could be integrated into business strategy rather than treated as a separate social programme. This principle guides INFINITIE's efforts to open technical energy roles to more women and connect commercial growth with responsible and inclusive development.

About PT INFINITIE Berkah Energi

PT INFINITIE Berkah Energi is a women-owned and women-led Indonesian energy company established in 2019 by Rinawati Prihatiningsih and Yuniar Tri Damayanti. Rinawati serves as President Commissioner and Co-Owner, providing strategic direction and stakeholder leadership, while Yuniar serves as Owner, President Director and Chief Executive Officer. The company specialises in industrial fuel trading, distribution and logistics for customers requiring reliable energy supplies across geographically dispersed and operationally demanding locations.

INFINITIE supplies and delivers industrial diesel and biodiesel blends and provides fuel logistics, fleet-based distribution and customer-specific supply arrangements. Its operations support mining, construction, infrastructure, marine and remote-area activities across Java, Kalimantan, East Nusa Tenggara, Sulawesi, Aceh and Papua. The company is also developing marine fuel logistics capacity through its own 250-kilolitre self-propelled oil barge.

The company's stated vision is to be a trusted partner in oil, gas and related industries while supporting a sustainable ecosystem through professionalism and integrity. Its mission is to market and trade energy supplies competitively and sustainably while delivering dependable value to partners. This approach is supported by stakeholder relationships, regulatory awareness and disciplined governance. In 2025, INFINITIE recorded revenue of IDR 60.11 billion, approximately USD 3.38 million, and a net profit margin of 6.46%. Revenue increased by approximately 86.5% between 2022 and 2025, with the strongest year-on-year growth of 31% recorded between 2023 and 2024.

Impact Created

INFINITIE supports energy access for industrial and infrastructure activities across Indonesia. Its

expansion into a multi-region fuel and logistics business has strengthened local supply chains and created opportunities for employees, drivers, operational partners and small businesses. Between 2022 and 2024, gross profit grew by more than 150%, while net profit increased more than ninefold.

Women's participation in energy is another focus of the company's work. Through SheMovesEnergy, INFINITIE is developing a six-month on-the-job training pathway for female vocational-school students and young women to enter technical roles traditionally dominated by men, including mechanics, quality control, operations and professional driving. Following Rinawati's presentation of the initiative at an IWAPI plenary meeting, IWAPI Chairwoman Nita Yudi confirmed her support. The Deputy for Gender Mainstreaming at Indonesia's Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPPA), with whom Rinawati has been working, also supports the initiative and facilitated an introduction to the vocational education directorate at the Ministry of Education. The Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection has also been informed. The initial ambition is to help 50-100 women progress towards relevant training or certification.

Rinawati extends this work through G20 EMPOWER, IWAPI, APINDO and KADIN by bringing women entrepreneurs' experiences into discussions on finance, trade, energy transition and inclusive growth. As a mentor in the BRICS+ International Youth Mentoring Program, she supports emerging leaders in developing ideas into sustainable enterprises.

Innovation & Leadership

INFINITIE links operational energy solutions with inclusive business practice. The company is strengthening its logistics model across land and marine distribution while exploring cleaner-energy and decarbonisation partnerships relevant to industrial zones, data centres, island grids and remote communities. SheMovesEnergy translates gender inclusion into a workforce strategy by creating a talent pipeline for mechanics, quality-control personnel, operators and professional drivers through a manageable pilot, measurable learning and partnerships supporting certification and scale.

Rinawati's leadership approach is grounded in integrity, respect, trust and consistent value creation. Her partnership with Yuniar combines strategic vision and external engagement with operational leadership and execution. Together, they have addressed high working-capital requirements, operational and regulatory complexity, geographically dispersed delivery and the challenge of establishing credibility in a male-dominated sector through risk management, strategic partnerships, close operational oversight and gradual expansion.

Awards & Recognitions

Rinawati's recognitions include the Executive Award - Inclusive Leader (2025), Eksekutif Magazine; Outstanding ASEAN Women Entrepreneur (2024), AWEN & CamWEN; Best Women Entrepreneur (2024), Lao Businesswomen Association; Global Women Empowerment Award (2023), YDIM & The Prodigy Global; Spirit & Resilience of Women Entrepreneurs in ASEAN (2023), AWEN Indonesia; Certificate of Appreciation for Outstanding Contribution as Co-Chair of G20 EMPOWER during Indonesia's G20 Presidency (2022), Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, Republic of Indonesia; Women of the Year (2022), Yayasan Indonesia Maju & Tatler Magazine; CEO Achievement Award (2022), Yayasan Duta Indonesia Maju & CEO Business Forum; and Top 10 Influential Women Award (2017), Kabare Magazine.

Her leadership roles include Co-Chair of G20 EMPOWER Indonesia, Chair of the Multilateral Committee at APINDO, Vice Chair for Energy and Mineral Resources at IWAPI, committee leadership roles for the Americas and OECD-BIAC at KADIN Indonesia, mentor of the BRICS+ International Youth Mentoring Program and Chair of the Grant Review Committee for the UNEP Tropical Landscapes Grant Fund. Her professional development includes Lemhannas RI PPSA 22 (2019) and UID-MIT IDEAS Asia Pacific (2024).





Yanty Melianty

BRICS WBA Indonesia –
Co-Chairman; Founder & CEO
PT MagFood Inovasi Pangan

Yanty Melianty is an Indonesian entrepreneur with more than 20 years of experience in brand management, product development and business development at multinational companies, alongside more than 30 years of experience in new business start-ups and entrepreneurship. Her work has focused on building businesses, developing entrepreneurs and expanding food and beverage opportunities in Indonesia and Malaysia.

As Founder and Chief Executive Officer of PT MagFood Inovasi Pangan, established in 2001, she has developed food and business models serving micro, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and the food and beverage sector. She also serves as Co-Chairman of BRICS WBA Indonesia and has worked through entrepreneur networks and women's business organisations to expand opportunities for SMEs and women entrepreneurs.

“Synergy and collaboration in building entrepreneurs networks will have huge impact on Economy and better Life.”

Professional Journey

Yanty holds a Master of Business Administration from the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), completed in 1994, and a degree in Environmental Engineering from ITB, completed in 1991. Her professional career included 20 years of experience in brand management, product development and business development at multinational companies in Indonesia.

Her corporate roles included Product Manager at PT American Standard Indonesia, Brand Manager at PT Nestlé Indonesia, Marketing Manager at PT Mustika Ratu Tbk, Business Unit Head for Biscuits at PT Mayora Indah Tbk and Marketing Director at PT Tupperware Indonesia. This experience provided the foundation for her transition from senior management roles into entrepreneurship.

In 2001, Yanty founded PT MagFood Inovasi Pangan. She later founded PT MagFood Amazy International in 2007. Her entrepreneurial experience also includes Griya Kasya butik, which operated from 2002 to 2018, and SMI/LMI Indonesia, where she was a licensee from 2005 to 2017.

Her work in business development expanded into building entrepreneur networks, franchise opportunities and food and beverage businesses in Indonesia and Malaysia, with a focus on leveraging Indonesian spices. Between 2003 and 2007, MagFood Red Crispy developed 270 fried chicken stall business opportunities across Indonesia. From 2007 to 2019, Amazy Fried Chicken and Restaurant operated 160 outlets in Indonesia and Malaysia. MagFood has also served more than 1,000 food seasoning entrepreneur customers from 2001 to the present.

A defining transition in her career was the move from top management positions in multinational companies to entrepreneurship, with a focus on building other entrepreneurs and developing networks across Indonesia and Malaysia.

About PT MagFood Inovasi Pangan

PT MagFood Inovasi Pangan was founded in 2001 to focus on product and business development for the food and beverage industry. Its work centres on creating competitive advantages for SMEs and micro businesses to support Indonesia's economic growth.

The company initially developed customised food seasoning products designed to respond to consumer demand. In 2003, it launched the MagFood Red Crispy fried chicken food stall concept, which reached 270 outlets in Indonesia by 2007. The business was subsequently expanded into the Amazy restaurant concept, which operates in Indonesia and Malaysia through a franchise business model.

In 2013, MagFood introduced a home-industry starter-kit programme for micro and SME food businesses. The programme covers frozen food, meatballs, nuggets, yoghurt, snacks and ice cream, with options for training, products, equipment suited to affordable investment levels, packaging and other supporting tools. In 2015, the company introduced the POKAPOKI ice cream business opportunity concept. In 2018, it launched Amazy Frozen Food, which became important during the COVID-19 period when major Amazy outlets in malls, schools and other locations had to close.

The company's products are developed with a focus on differentiation and uniqueness. Its core competence is product and business development know-how. MagFood seasoning products are primarily developed and produced as customised solutions for individual customers, supported by flexible and responsive production and organisational systems.

Amazy's menu concept adapts Western-style chicken menus to Indonesian tastes, reflecting the importance of chicken in Indonesian meat consumption. The franchise model also focuses on efficient and competitive operations, including cooking methods, supply chain and logistics, inventory management, forecasting and human resources management. To reduce shipment costs, the company



developed an extract food seasoning that can be mixed with local flour to create a coating mix for fried chicken.

The company currently has 38 employees. The Amazy restaurant chain has approximately 300 crews working under the Amazy brand and its corporate culture. Before COVID-19, in 2019, the company had 190 employees and 160 internal and franchise outlets, with approximately 1,500 employees working across the Amazy Family Resto brand in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Impact Created

Yanty's work as SME Co-Chairman of the Indonesian Women Business Association (IWAPI) and BRICS WBA Indonesia, together with her role as founder of her company, includes developing SME and women entrepreneur programmes across Indonesia.

IWAPI has one million members across 38 provinces of Indonesia and Malaysia. Its SME development programmes include education and training, market access and networking, and financial and capital access. These activities involve cooperation with government institutions, including the Ministry of SMEs, Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Economic Affairs, National Standardization Agency (BSN), Food and Drug Authority (BPOM) and Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH).

Founded in 1975 by Indonesian women entrepreneurs Kemala Motik and Dewi Motik, IWAPI is described in the submission as the biggest women's association in Indonesia and ASEAN. Its current chairman is Ir. Nita Yudi, MBA (Dyah Anita Prihapsari).

Innovation & Leadership

Melianty's personal vision is to develop more entrepreneurs in Indonesia and other countries. Her entrepreneurial journey involved significant challenges, with more failures than successes during the process of establishing her companies. She describes the experience as one of continuous learning, progress and personal expansion.

Her leadership has focused on creating Indonesian brands with the potential to become global brands. She identifies Indonesia's large market as a significant opportunity and views business opportunities as something that can contribute to communities and improve the Indonesian economy.

Awards & Recognitions

Yanty has received national and international recognition across entrepreneurship, franchising, women's leadership, innovation and productivity. Her recognitions include The Best Start-up Entrepreneur, SWA Entrepreneur 50 (2005); Kartini Award - Women Entrepreneur Award (2007); The Best Start-up Franchisor, Franchise Award (2008 and 2009); Class Winner, Ernst & Young Winning Women (2010); Innovative Entrepreneur from the SME Ministry and IPKINDO (2010); The Best Franchisor - Franchise Award (2010); Indonesian Small Medium Business Entrepreneur Award (ISMBEA) from the Ministry of SMEs (2010); Women Leadership Awards (2012); Women Inspiration of Nova Tabloid (2012); ASEAN Business Award (2012); Franchise Awards (2012 and 2015); AWEN Award for Women Entrepreneur (2016); Australia Awards (2016), Australia Grants Scheme (2017) and Australia Awards CEPA (2021); Siddakarya Award (2020); Paramakarya Award (2021); and Indonesia Food Innovation (IFI) 2022 from the Ministry of Industry.





IRAN



**Dr. Azam Karami**

Founder
Vira Kavir

Dr. Azam Karami, Founder of Vira Kavir, is advancing the use of artificial intelligence, drones, and robotics to improve infrastructure inspection, mining operations, precision agriculture, and industrial safety. Combining scientific research with entrepreneurship, she has built one of Iran's leading women-led deep technology companies and is helping drive digital transformation across critical industries.

“
Innovation is not born in comfort—it takes flight when we dare to build what the world has never seen. I believe that when women lead at the frontier of deep technology, we do not merely participate in the future; we engineer it.
”



Professional Journey

In the rapidly evolving fields of artificial intelligence and advanced technologies, Dr. Azam Karami has built a career at the intersection of scientific research, industrial innovation, and entrepreneurship. An electrical engineer, researcher, academic, and technology entrepreneur, she has dedicated her work to transforming cutting-edge research into practical solutions that address real-world challenges.

Dr. Karami earned her PhD in Electrical Engineering with a specialization in Telecommunications Systems, focusing on hyperspectral image compression and denoising using tensor analysis. Her academic journey included visiting research positions at Ryerson University in Canada and Mississippi State University in the United States, followed by postdoctoral research at the University of Antwerp in Belgium and Purdue University. These experiences strengthened her expertise in machine learning, computer vision, remote sensing, and deep learning while exposing her to global research and innovation ecosystems.

Yet her ambitions extended beyond academia. In 2018, she founded Vira Kavir with a vision of applying artificial intelligence, drone technologies, robotics, and smart monitoring systems to industrial challenges. What began as a research-driven venture has grown into a multidisciplinary technology company providing intelligent solutions for infrastructure inspection, mining, environmental monitoring, precision agriculture, renewable energy, transportation systems, and industrial safety. Under her leadership, Vira Kavir has developed into one of Iran's leading deep-technology enterprises, employing more than 35 engineers and researchers, including women in key technical and leadership positions.

About Vira Kavir

At the core of Vira Kavir's work is the belief that artificial intelligence should solve practical problems. The company designs and deploys proprietary software platforms for power line inspection, solar farm monitoring, railway and bridge inspection, mine safety, and precision agriculture. These technologies are combined with custom-built industrial drones and patented hardware systems to provide real-time intelligence for infrastructure operators and industrial clients. Unlike many technology providers, Vira Kavir manages the entire innovation chain internally, from UAV design and AI algorithm development to manufacturing and field deployment, enabling highly customized solutions tailored to client needs.

Impact Created

The impact of these innovations has been significant. By replacing manual inspections with AI-powered autonomous systems, Vira Kavir has helped industries reduce inspection times by 60-80 percent while improving worker safety and lowering operational costs. The company's AFTL platform can detect more than 80 types of defects in power transmission lines with over 95 percent accuracy, helping prevent outages and strengthen infrastructure reliability. Other systems support railway safety, mine hazard detection, renewable energy optimization, and agricultural productivity. These technologies not only improve efficiency but also contribute to safer working environments and more resilient infrastructure systems.

Innovation & Leadership

Beyond commercial success, Dr. Karami has remained committed to education and talent development. As an Associate Professor at Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman, she has mentored more than 1,000 students in engineering and related disciplines. Her role as an educator has allowed her to encourage young people, particularly women, to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Through both academia and industry, she has worked to demonstrate that technical excellence and entrepreneurial leadership are attainable regardless of gender.

Operating a women-led deep technology company in a traditionally male-dominated sector has not been without challenges. Establishing credibility, accessing markets, and building trust required persistence and measurable results. Drawing on her international research experience and commitment to scientific rigor, Dr. Karami focused on developing indigenous technologies and demonstrating clear value through performance and client outcomes. Over time, these efforts transformed skepticism into recognition and established Vira Kavir as a trusted technology partner.

Awards & Recognitions

Her achievements have earned national and international recognition. In 2024, she secured first place in the BRICS Artificial Intelligence Competition and received the BRICS Women's Business Alliance Best AI Startup Award. Vira Kavir has also been recognized at GITEX Global in the UAE, the AI Competition of Ajman University, and numerous national technology and innovation forums in Iran. Alongside her entrepreneurial accomplishments, Dr. Karami remains an active member of professional bodies, including IEEE, and has contributed extensively to research through publications, peer review, and industrial projects.

Today, Dr. Azam Karami represents a new generation of women leaders in deep technology. By combining research, entrepreneurship, and industrial innovation, she has shown how artificial intelligence can strengthen infrastructure, improve safety, and support economic development. Her work reflects the growing role of women in shaping the future of advanced technologies and demonstrates how innovation can create both industrial and social impact.





Sarah Yaghmaee

Entrepreneur, Leadership & Business
Rassis

Sarah Yaghmaee is an entrepreneur and business leader from Karaj, Iran, who leads Rassis, an Iranian manufacturing enterprise specializing in elevator systems and elevator door manufacturing. Her professional journey has moved from language education and administration into industrial management, where she has focused on building stronger systems, developing people, and expanding business operations.

“
*Our greatest asset is not
what we already know. It is
the courage to learn what
we do not yet know*

”



Professional Journey

Yaghmaee was born in Karaj, Iran. Her early experiences included designing games and selling them to neighbors, renting out her bicycle, and finding solutions when resources were limited. These experiences became early lessons in entrepreneurship, responsibility, independence, and value creation.

She earned a Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature, followed by a Master's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from the University of Tehran. Her professional career began as a secretary at a language institute. She volunteered to teach students who needed additional support, which led to teaching and later to managing one of the institute's branches.

In 2015, Yaghmaee accepted an unexpected opportunity to become the Managing Director of an elevator door manufacturing company despite having no previous experience in the industry. She learned the full range of manufacturing and business functions, including product design, production planning, quality control, procurement, sales, after-sales services, human resources, finance, legal contracts, and customer negotiations.

The company then faced shareholder disagreements, economic instability, market fluctuations, the COVID-19 pandemic, global supply-chain disruptions, and the loss of her mother. Instead of stepping back, Yaghmaee stayed and rebuilt the organization. The management structure was redesigned, operational processes were standardized, roles and responsibilities were clarified, and the company moved from a traditional, people-dependent organization toward a system-driven one.

The experience shaped her view of leadership as a responsibility to keep learning and moving forward when the path is uncertain. It also established the foundation for a management approach centered on systems, knowledge, and people.

About Rassis

Rassis is an Iranian manufacturing enterprise operating in elevator systems and elevator door manufacturing. Its management and operational structure have undergone significant transformation, with a focus on strong processes, clear responsibilities, knowledge sharing, and continuous improvement.

Rassis has redesigned organizational processes, strengthened its management structure, and digitized a significant part of its operations. Traditional paper-based employee training has evolved into continuous digital learning, making learning, accountability, and improvement part of the organization's culture.

The enterprise has successfully completed more than 700 industrial projects, created direct employment opportunities for approximately 70 professionals, and expanded into international markets including Iraq, Oman, and Afghanistan. Rassis has also established an accredited training center and developed professional development programs focused on technical expertise, leadership, management, and personal growth.

Its long-term vision includes strengthening international collaboration, expanding manufacturing and assembly capabilities across the region, developing export markets, and building educational centers with global reach. For Rassis, sustainable growth is based not only on products and technology, but also on strong systems, knowledge, and empowered people.

Impact Created

The impact of Yaghmaee's professional journey spans business, organizational development, and human development. Rassis has completed more than 700 industrial projects, created direct employment opportunities for approximately 70 professionals, and expanded into Iraq, Oman, and Afghanistan. Each completed project represents a business achievement, customer trust, and the result of years of learning, perseverance, and relationship building.



At the organizational level, the transformation toward system-based management has included redesigned processes, strengthened management structures, clarified responsibilities, and the digitization of a significant part of operations. These changes improved decision-making, accelerated execution, and turned organizational knowledge into a shared asset rather than knowledge held by individual employees.

Alongside her executive responsibilities, Yaghmaee began working as a business consultant and mentor. Over the years, she has mentored hundreds of entrepreneurs, managers, and professionals in leadership, business development, entrepreneurship, organizational growth, and personal development.

Her mentoring work has focused on shortening learning curves, helping others avoid unnecessary mistakes, and giving entrepreneurs, managers, and professionals greater confidence to pursue opportunities they may not previously have imagined.

Innovation & Leadership

Yaghmaee's approach to innovation and leadership has been shaped by uncertainty and continuous learning. At Rassis, innovation has included restructuring organizational processes, standardizing operations, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and implementing digital transformation across significant parts of the business.

A key change was the shift from traditional paper-based employee training to continuous digital learning. The change was designed to make learning, accountability, and continuous improvement part of the organization's identity. It also made knowledge development a continuing part of the way the organization operates.

Periods of crisis also shaped Yaghmaee's leadership approach. She learned that crises do not create leaders; they reveal them. Her leadership philosophy emphasizes accepting responsibility before all the answers exist, taking the first step, and trusting the process of learning.

Developing other leaders is another part of this approach. Through mentoring and professional development, Yaghmaee has worked to help entrepreneurs, managers, and professionals become more confident and capable. Her leadership approach centers on organizations that continue to learn, adapt, and empower their people.

Awards & Recognitions

Rassis obtained an official license for an On-the-Job Training Centre, also described as a Workplace-Based Training Centre, from Iran's Technical and Vocational Training Organization (TVTO). The enterprise also established educational cooperation through formal Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the National University of Skills in Alborz Province, supporting professional training, skills development, and knowledge exchange.



Leadership is not about having all the answers. It is about accepting responsibility before all the answers exist.





Shahrzad Zoufan

Co-Founder & Director of
Education Planning

Shahrzad Zoufan is the Co-Founder and Director of Education Planning at Mehrpouyan Sabz Andisheh Non-Governmental Organization (MSANGO), an organization established in 2017 in Arzanan, Zeynabieh, Isfahan, Iran. Her work brings together education, adult learning, community development and the empowerment of disadvantaged women and children. Her professional journey moved from work with children, adolescents and teachers within Iran's Ministry of Education and Higher Education to further study in Adult Education and Community Development at the University of Toronto in Canada, followed by practical work with disadvantaged women in Toronto and Iran. This experience became the basis for community-focused work in marginalized areas of Isfahan.

“
*I truly believe we
can change the
world, if we dare to
dream and act....*”
”



Professional Journey

Zoufan had come to understand that meaningful social change required the participation of civil society and the meaningful engagement of people affected by and having a stake in that change. She also recognized that the idea of one individual bringing about change on behalf of others was no longer sufficient. Her education, training and professional experience with children, adolescents and teachers were not enough for the path she wanted to pursue, leading her to deepen her understanding of development and gain practical experience working with adults and within civil society.

She pursued further studies in Adult Education and Community Development at the University of Toronto in Canada. She then applied what she had learned through hands-on work with disadvantaged women, first in Toronto and later in Iran. Over time, women's development and empowerment, particularly among women in developing countries and deprived and marginalized communities, became a central focus of her work and a deeply personal concern.

Together with her husband, Loghman Najmedini, Zoufan began developing activities in popular education and local and community development. They held workshops and training courses on Peace and Sustainable Development in civil society organizations and for non-governmental organizations in Isfahan. This work drew them to poor and marginal districts of the city, where they relied on existing social capital and people's active collaboration to take steps toward empowering and developing deprived communities.

Zoufan, Najmedini, and a group of friends and colleagues who had joined through workshops and dialogue circles conducted research and field work in marginalized communities. They were directed toward Arzanan, a marginalized neighborhood in the Zeynabieh district, where they sought to put their ideas and aspirations into practice. Mehrpouyan Sabz Andisheh Non-Governmental Organization was born there, bringing together Zoufan's academic interests, professional experience and commitment to social change.

About Mehrpouyan Sabz Andisheh

Mehrpouyan Sabz Andisheh (MSANGO) was established for bottom-up movements, activism and the participation of civil society and responsible citizens in making changes and supporting human and local development in deprived and excluded areas through a community-based development approach. It also seeks to encourage a culture of peace and cooperation. The shared purpose of the group led to the formation of an active community in 2016, which was later officially registered as Mehrpouyan Sabz Andisheh NGO by the Provincial Governor's Office under the Ministry of Interior in 2017.

MSANGO's mission is to support vulnerable social groups and people living in deprived and marginal areas and help them develop their capacities and their communities. Its target community is disadvantaged mothers and women and children in excluded areas of the city who have little or no opportunity for education and for gaining professional, social and communication skills.

The population of Arzanan includes Afghan migrant families and villagers who moved from rural areas to the city in pursuit of a dignified life. This peripheral community faces inequality, poverty and discrimination. These challenges make the role of civil society organizations, particularly in supporting women and children in the neighborhood, important.

MSANGO's objectives include educating and empowering disadvantaged populations in deprived areas and villages; increasing women's and children's life skills; promoting and supporting voluntary and cooperative activities; organizing and training social activists, peace-builders and facilitators; holding seminars and workshops related to MSANGO's goals; and producing, compiling and publishing educational content related to those goals.



Impact Created

From the beginning, MSANGO has engaged in dialogue, collaboration and the exchange of ideas and experiences with other civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations. It has held regular meetings, training workshops and courses to enhance the knowledge and skills of members and train facilitators and volunteers.



MSANGO designs and runs educational and professional courses and classes for two semesters each year in areas including literacy, reading clubs, life skills, dressmaking and sewing, arts and crafts, cooking and nutrition, environmental issues, parenting, youth self-care, computer skills, English language, painting, children's programmes, drama and self-expression. These programmes are offered to women, children and youth in the excluded and marginal area of Arzanan, Isfahan.

The organization provides and equips MSANGO in Arzanan with necessary educational facilities. It also designs and directs educational, sports and recreational tours and events for mothers and children; supports and monitors children deprived of education to access the right and opportunity of education; and provides family, child and educational counselling services, as well as a community library for women, children and local residents.

MSANGO also builds connections and partnerships with government, the Technical and Vocational Training Organization and other non-governmental organizations with similar goals to conduct projects and training programmes collaboratively.

In the early years of its activities, from 2016 to 2018, MSANGO equipped 10 kindergartens in the deprived villages of Bazoft in Chahar-Mahal Bakhtiary province. During the same period, it designed and led training courses for 22 kindergarten staff in Bazoft in collaboration with the Office of Natural Resources and Water Preservation of Chahar-Mahal Bakhtiary province.

In the Arzanan neighborhood, MSANGO provides services weekly to about 300 to 400 women and children in each semester. Approximately 55 volunteers contribute their time, skills and expertise through different committees and working groups. Around 25 classes and courses are held weekly. The programmes are offered to both Iranian and Afghan populations living in the community without discrimination.

Basic to advanced sewing courses reach around 80 women through seven classes each semester. Many of these women have established home-based enterprises or been employed by garment production companies. Many women report that participation in life-skills, sewing and arts training has improved their self-confidence, emotional well-being, mental health and physical well-being. They have developed greater capacity to manage family and parenting responsibilities and to become active agents of positive change within their families and their own lives. Some have gradually taken on leadership roles and become role models within their communities, while others have contributed to household income through professional skills acquired through the programmes.

The Mehrpouyan Library has approximately 800 registered members. It provides book and magazine lending services, as well as cultural programmes and events in the neighborhood, benefiting families and the wider community.



Innovation

Throughout its journey, MSANGO has sought to research, identify and develop appropriate, creative and locally relevant solutions to community needs and challenges. It has involved local capacities, community assets and women who developed new skills through Mehrpouyan to co-manage and deliver classes and courses, with the aim of promoting sustainability, self-reliance and employment opportunities.

At present, 24 local capacities serving as trainers, assistants, librarians, administrative staff and mentors are trained and collaborating with Mehrpouyan. To ensure that educational content is appropriate to participants' levels and needs, supplementary learning materials are developed by the Planning and Education Committee in collaboration with relevant instructors. Supplementary booklets have been developed for literacy and sewing classes and are provided to participants.

To promote and strengthen literacy and reading among women in the neighborhood, MSANGO has trained local literacy instructors and established self-help groups in the neighborhood's Hosseiniyeh and mosque. This approach has enabled the organization to provide basic literacy education to a larger number of women because MSANGO did not have the capacity to meet the high demand for these services.

Currently, two self-help literacy groups, run by four trained local instructors, provide literacy education to 30 women who are either illiterate or have limited literacy skills at the neighborhood Hosseiniyeh under the supervision of Mehrpouyan. The community is expected to further develop these local self-help groups to provide education and support for children and older adults, while creating opportunities for collective businesses and community-based microfinance funds in the neighborhood.

Awards & Recognition

Mehrpouyan Sabz Andisheh, a non-governmental organization (NGO), obtained the "Afra Standard/Trust Certification" in May 2023 for its management infrastructure. The certification was awarded by Afra Innovative Supporters Institute.

At the Isfahan Commemoration Ceremony held on 27 November 2025, the Isfahan Lovers Association recognized Mehrpouyan Sabz Andisheh for its significant contributions and positive impact on the city of Isfahan and presented the organization with a commemorative plaque in recognition of its work.

Mehrpouyan is fundamentally supported by community donors, its members and volunteers. The organization has sought to develop and guide this grassroots civil movement from the bottom up with the support of engaged, responsible and caring citizens. Its activities and impact have been strengthened in two areas: civil society development and the empowerment of its target groups and beneficiaries.





Shiva Naseri Noshanagh

Founder & CEO, VPON
(Sanat Bondar Pars Fartak)
Alternate Inspector & Head of the
Public Relations Committee,
Association of Iranian
Entrepreneur Women (AIEW)

Shiva Naseri Noshanagh is an entrepreneur in Iran's field service management sector who transformed frontline operational experience into a technology-enabled business model. She founded VPON to address operational challenges in field service delivery through digital systems while strengthening technician networks and enterprise service execution. Her work combines operational expertise, technology adoption, and industry collaboration to improve service quality at scale.

“
Service execution is not merely a technical task; it is the physical architecture of customer trust. True innovation happens when real-world field experience meets technology to empower communities.
”



Professional Journey

Shiva Naseri Noshanagh began her entrepreneurial journey in 2008 by establishing a small electrical service shop in Iran's electrical services sector. Working in a traditionally male-dominated industry, she personally carried out electrical installations, repairs, and client communications. This hands-on experience gave her a practical understanding of field operations, workforce management, and customer expectations.

As the business expanded into a structured service enterprise with five technicians serving more than 5,000 customers, she identified a persistent industry challenge. Scaling field operations while maintaining consistent service quality required a technology-driven system that was largely absent from the market. She addressed social scepticism by building credibility through technical execution, operational accountability, and customer trust.

The emergence of digital platform economies marked a turning point in her career. Rather than viewing technology as a disruption, she used her operational knowledge to establish VPON, transitioning from a traditional service provider into a technology-enabled Field Service Partner. VPON digitised field service management to improve technician dispatching, quality control, and workforce training at scale.

About VPON (Sanat Bondar Pars Fartak)

VPON (Sanat Bondar Pars Fartak) operates as an end-to-end Field Service Partner serving business-to-business enterprises, industrial manufacturers, and service platforms requiring scalable physical service delivery. The organisation bridges the gap between hardware product sales and customer execution.

Its proprietary Field Service Management software suite includes central management dashboards, client request widgets, and technician applications that manage the service lifecycle from dispatch to post-service quality calls. VPON delivers tailored white-label field operations under defined Service Level Agreements, including First Response Time, First Time Fix Rate, and Customer Satisfaction monitoring.

Instead of relying only on gig-economy workers, VPON established a hybrid network of more than 3,000 local electrical retail outlets and certified technicians, transforming neighbourhood stores into localised service hubs.

Impact Created

VPON has demonstrated large-scale business-to-business execution through projects including the field replacement of more than 13,000 BLDC motors for Sepehran Motor, electrical and closed-circuit television infrastructure for 42 industrial warehouses for Lian Electric, UPS and network infrastructure for Iran Hormon Pharmaceutical Co., and municipality parking systems in Tehran.

The organisation has also upskilled thousands of independent technicians and digitised more than 3,000 partner retail outlets, supporting the digital transformation of traditional businesses.

Beyond business operations, Shiva Naseri Noshanagh serves as Alternate Inspector and Head of the Public Relations Committee at the Association of Iranian Entrepreneur Women. In this role, she advocates greater participation of women in industrial and technology-driven sectors while demonstrating that operational leadership is driven by systems, expertise, and execution.

Innovation & Leadership

VPON introduced a customisable Field Service Management architecture that converts fixed operational overheads into scalable variable costs for enterprise partners. Its white-label operating model enables manufacturers and digital platforms to outsource complex field service logistics while maintaining their own brand identity.

Shiva Naseri Noshanagh describes leadership as an adaptive capability rather than a static title. Her approach focuses on solving adaptive challenges, encouraging cross-sector collaboration, and building resilient operational systems. She promotes an environment in which technicians and managers make responsible, data-informed decisions under real-world operating conditions.

Awards & Recognitions

Gold Medalist - Creative Startup Category, TUMAD (All Innovative Engineers and Entrepreneurs Association), Turkey.

Alternate Inspector & Head of the Public Relations Committee, Association of Iranian Entrepreneur Women (AIEW).





Zahra Rahaie

Secretary & Board Member
National Association of Women Entrepreneurs (NAWE)

Zahra Rahaie serves as Secretary and Board Member of the National Association of Women Entrepreneurs (NAWE), a non-profit organisation that supports women's entrepreneurship in Iran. Through NAWE's programmes, the association strengthens entrepreneurial capacity, expands professional networks, and promotes institutional engagement. Over two decades, NAWE has contributed to developing a structured ecosystem for women's economic empowerment.

“
*A Light in Our Hands, A
Light Ahead. Together, We
Walk Toward a Brighter
Future.*
”

Professional Journey

The National Association of Women Entrepreneurs (NAWE) was founded in 2005 by Fakhr-al-Sadat Mohtashamipour and Firouzeh Saber, who recognised the need for a dedicated platform to support and connect women entrepreneurs across Iran. The initiative began as a national effort focused on training and networking women in business. Over time it developed into an institutionalised non-profit organisation dedicated to long-term capacity building.

During its early years, NAWE implemented a national training plan that introduced women from different provinces and backgrounds to entrepreneurship, business planning, and market access strategies. This grassroots initiative laid the foundation for a structured and sustainable ecosystem supporting women's economic empowerment.

A significant turning point came when NAWE evolved from a training focused initiative into a nationally recognised institution with formal governance, an established membership network, and international engagement. The association expanded its activities by organising specialised conferences, introducing innovation-focused programmes, and building partnerships with government institutions and civil society organisations.

Today, under the leadership of its board, NAWE is one of the longest-standing women's entrepreneurship networks in Iran. It continues to bridge grassroots training with institutional advocacy, enabling women from urban and rural communities to access knowledge, professional networks, and recognition that support entrepreneurial growth.

About National Association of Women Entrepreneurs (NAWE)

The National Association of Women Entrepreneurs (NAWE) is a non-profit, member-based, network that promotes women's entrepreneurship across Iran through education, mentorship, and professional networking. It connects women business owners, aspiring entrepreneurs, and industry experts through a national platform.

Its activities include training workshops, specialised conferences, innovation competitions, and networking events that strengthen business capabilities and expand professional connections. NAWE combines practical skills development with institutional advocacy and holds Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The association has approximately 210 active members representing different sectors and regions of Iran. Beyond its membership, its national training initiatives have supported thousands of women over the past two decades, with around 120 women participating in its programmes each year.

Impact Created

Over two decades, NAWE has created measurable social and economic impact for women entrepreneurs across Iran. Through its national training plan, the association has delivered more than 150 educational workshops that have strengthened business, financial, and entrepreneurial skills. These programmes have supported the establishment and growth of women-led enterprises in both urban and rural areas.

NAWE has also organised 14 specialised conferences, creating opportunities for knowledge sharing, networking, and policy dialogue on women's entrepreneurship. In addition, the association documented and published the stories of 30 rural women entrepreneurs, bringing greater visibility to their contributions and encouraging grassroots entrepreneurship.

The association's network includes 210 active members. It has conducted more than 150 workshops nationwide, organised 14 specialised conferences over 20 years, empowered approximately 120 women annually through its programmes, and documented 30 success stories of rural women entrepreneurs.



Innovation & Leadership

NAWE's innovation strategy includes the Azadeh Innovation Award, a national initiative that identifies, mentors, and recognises innovative women-led entrepreneurial ventures. The award has completed two editions involving participants from 23 provinces, more than 160 competing teams, and 18 expert mentors who supported participants through business development and innovation processes. Planning is underway for the third edition.

The association's leadership approach combines accessible grassroots training with national recognition for innovation. This enables NAWA to support women at different stages of their entrepreneurial journeys.

One of the organisation's key challenges has been extending programmes to rural and underserved provinces. NAWA addressed this through decentralised programme delivery and by documenting and promoting the stories of rural women entrepreneurs, ensuring that their contributions receive wider recognition.

Awards & Recognitions

Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), granted in January 2020, recognising NAWA's contribution to women's economic empowerment and its engagement with international institutions.





Zahra Shavandi

CO-Founder & CEO
Iran Guereh

Zahra Shavandi is a researcher, handwoven carpet specialist, entrepreneur and strategic manager based in Qom, Iran. Her work connects Persian handwoven carpets and cultural heritage with research, digital tools and contemporary market infrastructure. As CO-Founder & CEO of Iran Guereh, she has worked to address structural challenges in the Iranian handwoven carpet sector.

“Innovation does not always mean leaving tradition behind. Sometimes, it means building the infrastructure that allows tradition to survive, create value and enter the future.”

Professional Journey

Zahra Shavandi's professional journey has developed through art, research and entrepreneurship. She began her education in visual arts and pursued specialized academic training in Handwoven Carpet at the University of Art in Isfahan. She completed a Master's degree in Handwoven Carpet Management at the University of Kashan, followed by postgraduate studies in Master of Business Administration (MBA) and Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) in Strategic Management at the University of Tehran.

Her career began in museums and cultural institutions as a handwoven carpet specialist. She later worked in carpet research, production management, business development and strategic projects while continuing research into the Iranian handwoven carpet sector. She identified a recurring problem: Persian carpets had significant artistic and cultural value, but the market lacked adequate infrastructure for documenting identity, communicating reliable information, establishing transparency and building trust across the value chain.

From 2014 to 2018, Shavandi participated in a research-driven process focused on structural challenges in the sector and practical solutions, combining carpet studies, management and strategic business thinking, including cooperation and competition research. This work led to the development of Iran Guereh, formally launched in 2019. Her role evolved from researcher and carpet specialist to entrepreneur and strategic manager, connecting a traditional cultural industry with contemporary tools, digital platforms and market infrastructure.

About Iran Guereh

Iran Guereh is an Iranian enterprise working at the intersection of handwoven Persian carpets, cultural heritage, research, business development and digital innovation. It was formally launched in 2019 after approximately five years of research into the challenges and structural needs of Iran's handwoven carpet sector. It was developed as a comprehensive information, applied and strategic platform focused on researching challenges, developing operational solutions and implementing them through dedicated infrastructure.



A significant initiative is the identification and certification of Iranian handwoven carpets through a Shenاسnameh (Carpet Identity Certificate) and Certificate of Ownership. The system records characteristics, origin-related information, technical specifications, imagery and ownership information to strengthen authenticity, transparency and trust. Its ecosystem also includes digital platforms for displaying and selling carpets, professional gallery websites, tools for producers and sellers, platforms for associations and unions, professional profile pages, a social network for the carpet community, and advisory services for purchasing, selling, marketing and business development.

Impact Created

Iran Guereh addresses structural challenges in the Persian carpet value chain by improving transparency and access to information. A documented carpet identity can help producers, sellers, collectors and buyers communicate more effectively and make better-informed decisions. Digital and market infrastructure also connects traditional carpet businesses with contemporary channels of presentation, communication and commerce.

One significant measurable outcome is the registration and issuance of carpet identity certificates for more than 10,000 Iranian handwoven carpets. A significant proportion of these registered carpets have subsequently reached international owners and markets. International engagement has included Expo 2020 Dubai, INDEX Dubai 2022 and other exhibitions and market-development initiatives, with activities extending to the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Japan.

The social dimension includes making information, digital tools and market infrastructure more accessible to participants in a traditional industry, particularly small producers, independent sellers, galleries and other actors with limited access to modern market infrastructure. Shavandi's work outside the enterprise has also included research, mentoring and community-development initiatives.

Innovation & Leadership

Innovation at Iran Guereh has been driven by a practical question: what problem does the technology solve? The structured carpet identification and certification system brings together technical information, visual documentation, ownership data and authentication processes to turn fragmented information into a more reliable and accessible form of knowledge.

The organization has also explored QR-based verification, radio-frequency identification (RFID), digital databases and blockchain-related solutions for selected applications. Digital platforms support galleries, producers, sellers, organizations and carpet enthusiasts, creating opportunities for visibility, communication and market access.

Shavandi's leadership philosophy is based on research before action, technology in service of people, and



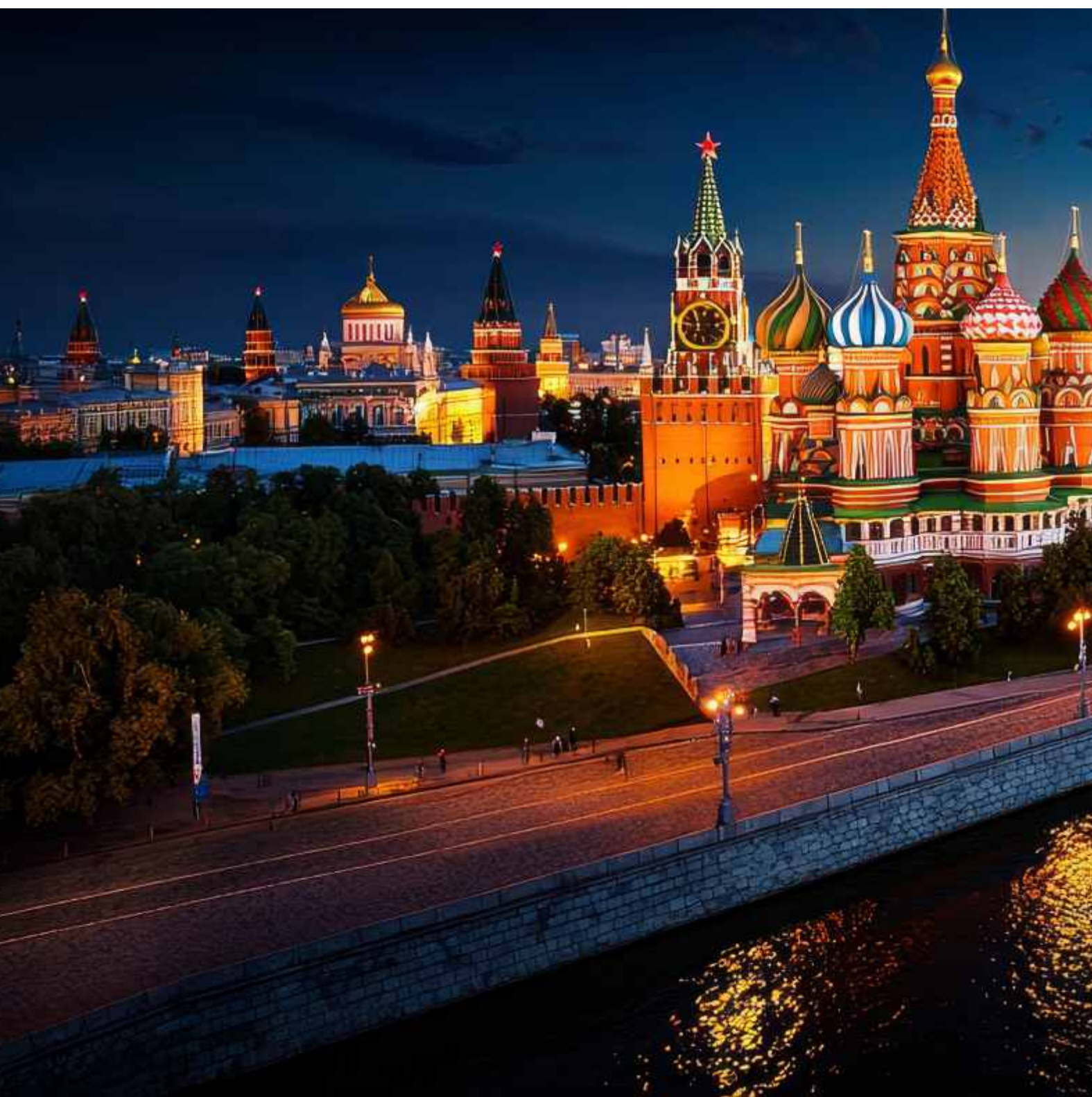
long-term value over short-term visibility. Building infrastructure for a traditional and highly fragmented industry has involved resistance to change, limited market transparency, economic uncertainty, technological barriers and difficulty introducing new concepts into established practices. Her response has been to move gradually, test solutions in practice, learn from users and adapt while creating bridges between traditional knowledge and contemporary infrastructure. She views women entrepreneurs as able to contribute to inclusive economic development by helping redesign existing systems.

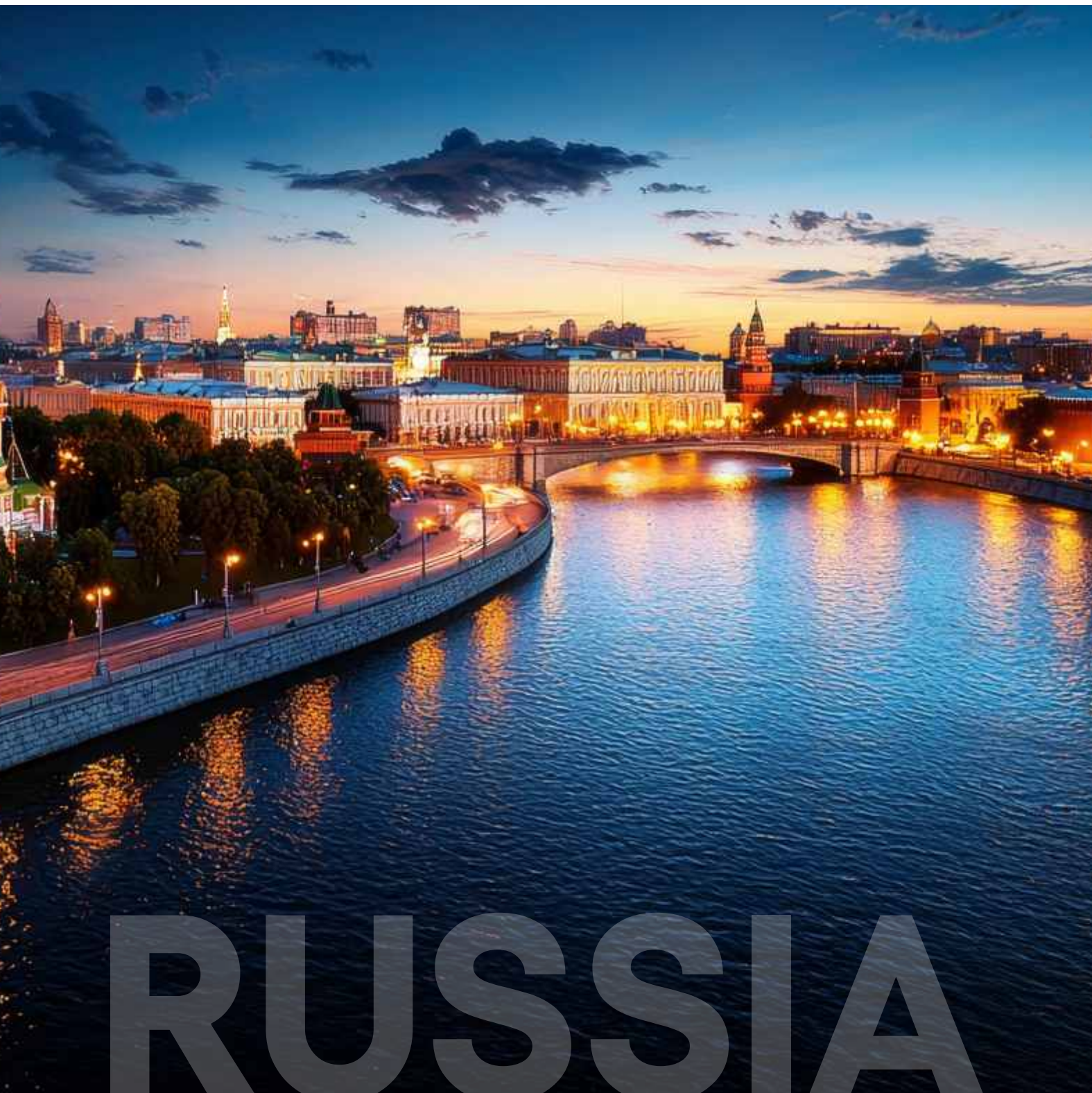
Awards & Recognitions

Shavandi has contributed to multiple peer-reviewed and professional publications on handwoven carpet management, carpet industry development and cooperation-competition strategies. She has conducted research and presentations at national academic conferences, participated in professional and specialized programs in e-commerce, handwoven carpet trade and business model development, and conducted a strategic research project on cooperation-competition in the Iranian handwoven carpet sector under the supervision of the Qom Province Industrial Estates Company.

Her professional experience spans museums, cultural institutions, research projects, production management, business development and strategic management. International exposure includes participation in exhibitions and business-development initiatives related to Iranian handwoven carpets, including Expo 2020 Dubai and INDEX Dubai 2022, and engagement with international markets and stakeholders in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Japan and other markets.







RUSSIA





Alsu Nabieva

Rector
Russian University of Cooperation

Dr. Alsu Nabieva is an educator, researcher, and academic leader with more than two decades of experience in higher education. As Rector of the Russian University of Cooperation, she has led institutional modernization while advancing research, cooperative education, and regional development. Alongside her academic leadership, she contributes to public service through social and cultural initiatives that support education, women, and community development.

“
*A journey of a thousand miles
begins with a single step*

”



Professional Journey

Born on 12 March 1979 in Kazan, Alsu Nabieva demonstrated a strong commitment to education and leadership from an early age. Dr. Alsu has over 20 years of experience in education.

She began her academic career in 2005, teaching history and Turkish. In 2006, she began working at the Russian University of Cooperation, where she rose through the ranks from senior lecturer to university rector.

Dr. Nabieva holds a Doctorate in Economics, is a Candidate of Historical Sciences, and serves as an Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and Management of the National Economy.

In 2020, she assumed leadership of the Russian University of Cooperation, an autonomous non-profit educational institution established by the Central Union of the Russian Federation. Under her leadership, the university accelerated the development of both its main campus and regional branch network. The institution modernized its academic infrastructure through the renovation of educational buildings, upgrades to university facilities, and the establishment of modern scientific and technological laboratories.

Beyond academia, Dr. Nabieva has played an active role in public life. Since 2019, she has served as a Deputy of the State Council of the Republic of Tatarstan. She also participates in the Merhemet-Mercy Association of Women Deputies of the State Council of the Republic of Tatarstan. The association addresses social issues affecting the population of the republic, supports social and cultural initiatives, promotes the protection of motherhood and childhood, and undertakes charitable activities. Its work has contributed to addressing issues affecting children with disabilities, orphans, retirees, and families across the region.

In addition to leading the university, Dr. Nabieva heads several public organizations. Since 2026, she has also served as a member of the Russian Chapter of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance, contributing her academic and leadership experience to international cooperation within the BRICS framework.

About Russian University of Cooperation

The Russian University of Cooperation is a higher education institution that delivers education and research across the fields of economics, management, trade, and consumer cooperation. It offers undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate programmes alongside continuing professional education, advanced training, and retraining opportunities. The university also conducts scientific research, organizes academic conferences, and undertakes applied research projects that contribute to knowledge development and professional practice.

The university combines academic education with a practice-oriented approach that prepares students for employment in the real economy. Through collaboration with organizations operating within the consumer cooperation system, students participate in practical training and real-world projects before entering the workforce. The curriculum also places emphasis on developing entrepreneurial, managerial, and digital competencies that respond to evolving labour market requirements.

A defining feature of the institution is its extensive network of regional branches across the Russian Federation, which expands access to higher education in multiple regions of the country. The university serves more than 60,000 students and is supported by hundreds of faculty members and researchers engaged in teaching and scientific activity. Alongside its national presence, the university continues to strengthen international cooperation, reinforcing its position as one of the country's leading educational and research institutions.



Impact Created

Under the leadership of Dr. Nabieva, the Russian University of Cooperation has strengthened its contribution to the economic and social development of the regions of the Russian Federation. The university's work has supported education, employment, research, and the cooperative sector while expanding opportunities for learners across the country.

The university contributes to the economy by preparing qualified specialists for the real sector, including trade, the agro-industrial complex, and consumer cooperatives. Each year, it graduates thousands of professionals whose skills meet labour market needs, helping to address workforce shortages in several industries. Its extensive branch network also generates employment within the institution and in related sectors, including educational services and infrastructure support. In addition, the university undertakes research projects and applied studies designed to improve the efficiency of regional economies and strengthen the cooperative sector.

Its social impact extends beyond academic instruction. Through its network of regional campuses, the university has expanded access to quality higher education, including in remote areas of the Russian Federation. It also delivers professional development, retraining, and continuing education programmes for different segments of the population, supporting lifelong learning and workforce development.

The institution places particular emphasis on supporting women in education and management while fostering an inclusive educational environment. It also participates in social initiatives that promote local community development and provide support to vulnerable groups. The university's measurable impact is reflected in its enrolment of more than 60,000 students, its broad portfolio of educational programmes, its nationwide presence, and increasing scientific activity through a growing number of publications and participation in national and international projects.

Innovation & Leadership

Dr. Nabieva's leadership combines institutional management with educational innovation. A central feature of her approach has been the integration of practice-oriented teaching methods that connect academic learning with real-world experience. Students participate in practical projects while working alongside businesses and organisations within the cooperative sector, enabling them to apply theoretical knowledge in professional settings.

She has also supported the wider adoption of digital technologies across the university. Online learning platforms, interactive courses, and distance education tools have increased the accessibility and flexibility of academic programmes, allowing the institution to respond to changing educational needs while maintaining academic standards.

Her leadership philosophy emphasises openness, collaboration, and the development of individual potential within the educational community. This approach positions leadership as both administrative and developmental, encouraging initiative, responsibility, and creative thinking among students and university staff. It has contributed to the creation of an educational environment designed to support long-term institutional growth and sustainable outcomes.

The implementation of these initiatives involved several challenges, including resistance to organisational change, resource limitations, and the need to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. These challenges were addressed through the gradual introduction of reforms, professional development opportunities for teaching staff, and continuous dialogue among stakeholders. The result has been a more flexible and contemporary educational model aligned with current academic and professional requirements.



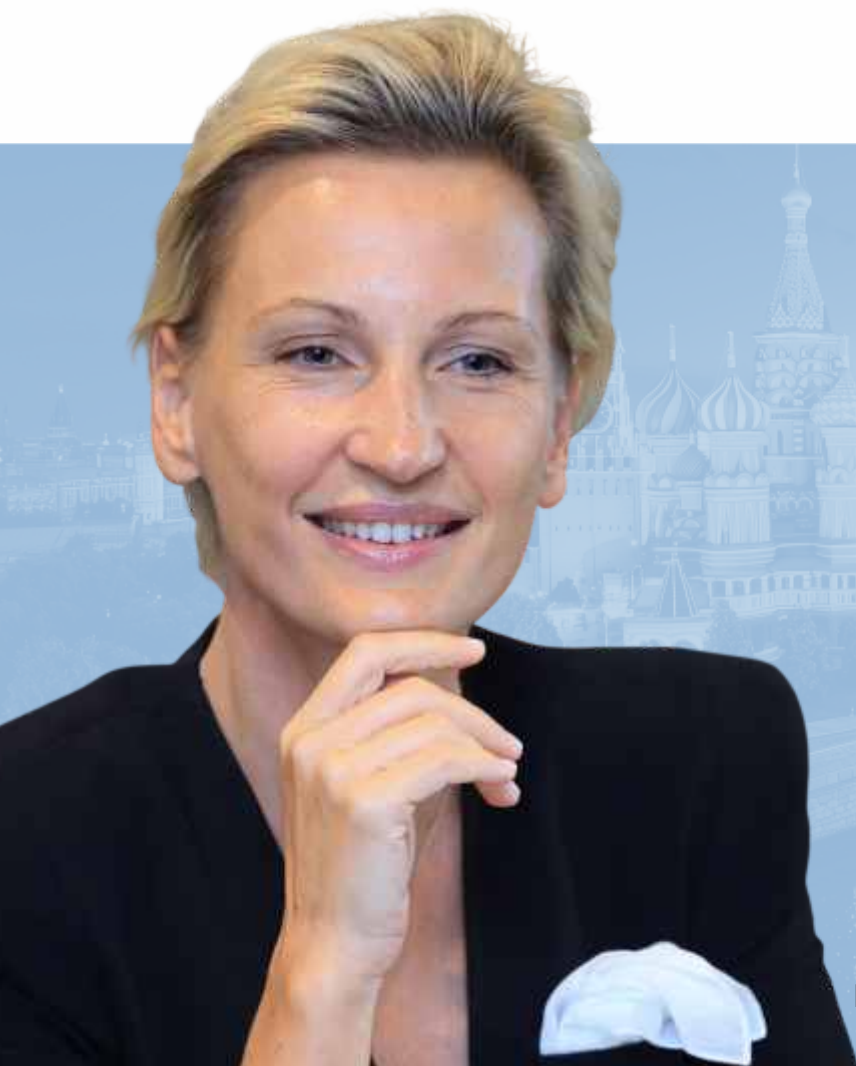
Awards & Recognitions

Over the course of her career, Dr. Nabieva has received numerous national and institutional honours recognising her contributions to higher education, consumer cooperation, and public service. Her recognitions include the "Young Leader of the Russian Cooperative Movement" (2007); the Certificate of Honor from the Central Union of Trade Unions of the Russian Federation (2012); a Letter of Thanks from the First Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, I. I. Shuvalov (2013); Gratitude from FISU President Claude Louis Gallien (2013); the Medal "For Services to Education in the Republic of Tatarstan" (2014); and a Certificate from the President of the Russian Federation, V. V. Putin (2014).

Her subsequent recognitions include the Certificate "For Conscientious Work in Consumer Cooperatives in Russia" (2015); the Certificate of Honor from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of the Republic of Tatarstan (2015); the Order "For Contribution to the Development of Consumer Cooperatives in Russia" (2017); Gratitude from the Chairman of the Central Union of Trade Unions of the Russian Federation, D. L. Zubov; a Letter of Thanks from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Tatarstan, R. T. Burganov (2018); and a Letter of Thanks from the President of the Republic of Tatarstan, R. N. Minnikhanov (2018).

Further honours include the Medal "For Contribution to the Development of Consumer Cooperatives in Russia," First Class (2019); the Medal "For Faith and Loyalty to the University" (2019); the Order "For Contribution to the Development of Consumer Cooperatives in Russia," Third Class (2022); the Certificate of Honor of the Central Union of the Russian Federation (2022); Gratitude from the Moscow Department of Education and Science (2022); a Letter of Gratitude from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation (2022); the Badge of Honor "For Merit in Education" (2023); Gratitude from the Rais of the Republic of Tatarstan, R. N. Minnikhanov (2023); a Letter of Gratitude from a Deputy of the State Duma of the Russian Federation (2023); the Certificate of Honor of the Moscow Regional Duma (2024); the Certificate of the Moscow Regional Duma "For Work" (2024); and a Letter of Thanks from the President of the Russian Federation for a significant contribution to the implementation of the educational and tourism programme "University Shifts" (2025).





Anna Nesterova

Chairperson and Founder,
Russian Chapter of the
BRICS Women's Business Alliance
Founder, Watchmaking Manufactory "
Palekh Watch"

Aнна Nesterova is a Russian business leader whose work spans finance, digital trade, international cooperation, and the creative industries. Her leadership reflects the intersection of economic innovation and cultural heritage.

“
*True wealth is not in capital, but
in the ability to leave something
greater behind: a living
tradition, inspired people,
opportunities for next
generations.*



Professional Journey

Anna Nesterova began her professional journey in finance after earning a degree in Finance and Credit from the Academy of Labor and Social Relations in 2006. In 2020, she expanded her academic background by obtaining a degree in International Economic Relations from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), strengthening her expertise in global economic cooperation.

Before 2015, she built an extensive career in finance. Between 2008 and 2017, she headed the investment company Center Capital, which recorded an annual turnover exceeding 40 billion rubles. Anna later led the cross-border e-commerce platform GlobalRusTrade. The platform operated in 113 countries and provided translation in 11 languages, enabling businesses to engage in international trade across multiple markets.

From 2017 to 2024, she represented Russia in the BRICS Business Council Working Group on Digital Economy. In this capacity, she contributed to discussions on digital transformation and cross-border economic cooperation among BRICS member countries.

One of Anna Nesterova's most significant contributions has been her role in establishing the BRICS Women's Business Alliance, where she earned the title of "founder sister". Recognised as one of its founding members, she helped create a platform designed to promote women's entrepreneurship and strengthen business cooperation across BRICS countries.

In 2020, she was appointed Chairperson of the Russian Chapter of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance. In this role, she has supported initiatives that encourage collaboration among women entrepreneurs, facilitate international partnerships, and expand opportunities for business development within the BRICS framework.

Alongside her work in international business, Anna established the watchmaking manufactory "Palekh Watch" in 2020. The enterprise combines the traditional Russian art of Palekh miniature painting with contemporary watchmaking.

Each watch dial is hand-painted by master artists from Palekh using techniques that have been passed down through generations. By integrating traditional craftsmanship with modern horology, the manufactory creates products that showcase an important cultural art form while supporting its continued practice.

The initiative also contributes to sustainable employment for skilled artisans and helps ensure that specialised artistic techniques continue to be transferred to future generations.

Awards & Recognitions

Anna Nesterova's professional and public contributions have been recognised through several honours.

She received the Woman Icon award at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum, "Women as an Engine of Inclusive Growth." She has also received acknowledgements from the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation for her contribution to the development of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Her public activities have been recognised by the President of the Russian Federation. She has also been acknowledged by the Chairperson of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation for her contribution to implementing projects of the Council of the Eurasian Women's Forum.

In addition, she received the "For Contribution to International Cooperation" award from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Fluent in English and French, Anna continues to build bridges between cultures, promoting women's entrepreneurship and cross-border collaboration.





Daliya Gaynanova

Founder, GT Dress, Head of ANO
"All for Children", Deputy, Kazan City Duma

A social entrepreneur from Russia, Daliya Gaynanova transformed a deeply personal challenge into a mission to improve the lives of people with disabilities. Through adaptive fashion, public service, and non-profit initiatives, she has worked to address practical needs while promoting dignity, inclusion, and systemic change for families across Russia.

“
Having a child with disabilities is not a punishment—it is a path to redefining life. Through love, resilience and purpose, it is possible to transform not only one's own destiny but also bring hope to thousands of other families.
”



Professional Journey

Daliya Gaynanova's life changed dramatically sixteen years ago when she became the mother of a child with a severe form of cerebral palsy. Before that, she had graduated with honours from the Faculty of Law and started her career at the Supreme Court of the Republic of Tatarstan with strong ambitions for the future.

However, the birth of her son, Timur, completely transformed her life path. From the very first days, she faced immense challenges, from fighting for his life to navigating a system that lacked information, guidance and support for families like hers. She was left to find rehabilitation options, medical care and basic resources on her own.

Due to her son's condition, she had to leave her legal career. To support her family, she took on any job she could find, working as a cleaner, janitor and on night shifts. Later, she started her own cleaning company. Even then, she realised that financial stability alone would not solve the deeper issues faced by families raising children with disabilities.

The turning point came from a very personal need. As her son grew older, she could not find appropriate and dignified adaptive clothing for him. She started by creating a simple functional bib, and that small step became the foundation of what is now GT Dress.

Over time, she understood that her struggle was shared by thousands of families. This realisation led her to establish the non-profit organisation ANO "All for Children" and engage in public service. Today, she combines entrepreneurship, social impact work and her role as a Deputy of the Kazan City Duma, working to create systemic change and improve the quality of life of people with disabilities and their families.

About GT Dress

GT Dress is a Russian adaptive clothing brand designed for children and adults with disabilities. The mission of the brand is to create functional, comfortable and aesthetically appealing clothing that meets the specific physiological needs of people with various health conditions.

The organisation develops garments using unique patterns tailored to different diagnoses, including cerebral palsy, autism spectrum disorders, stroke recovery, amputations, dementia and other conditions. Its product range includes adaptive bodysuits, jumpsuits, trousers, jackets and specialised clothing for people with limited mobility or medical needs such as gastrostomy.

What makes GT Dress unique is the combination of medical functionality and modern design. The brand aims to redefine adaptive clothing by making it not only practical but also stylish, dignified and inclusive.

Its business model combines commercial sustainability with a strong social mission. While part of the production is sold, a significant portion is donated free of charge to families in need through charitable initiatives. Today, GT Dress operates across Russia and internationally, supplying individuals, care institutions and social organisations.

Impact Created

The project has created significant social and economic impact. From an economic perspective, GT Dress has established a sustainable social enterprise, contributing to the development of the adaptive fashion industry and creating employment opportunities.

From a social perspective, the impact is substantial. More than 15,000 adaptive clothing items have been donated to families across Russia. Through the non-profit organisation "All for Children," more than 100 workshops and over 30 charitable events have been conducted to support families and promote inclusion.



The organisation also runs the "I Am Happiness" club for mothers of children with disabilities. To date, 45 women have completed the programme, rediscovered their potential and improved their quality of life.

Innovation & Leadership

The innovation of the project lies in creating a unique solution at the intersection of fashion, healthcare and social impact. GT Dress addresses a previously underserved segment of adaptive clothing.

Each product is designed based on real user needs, including ease of dressing, safety, comfort during rehabilitation and the preservation of dignity. A key element of the organisation's approach is direct engagement with end users, allowing continuous improvement of its designs.

Special attention is given to developing adaptive clothing for veterans. Through personal visits to hospitals and direct communication with patients, Daliya Gaynanova gains insight into their challenges and rapidly develops solutions that support their recovery and daily life after injury.

The business model combines financial sustainability with a strong social mission, enabling the organisation to provide free clothing to those who need it most.

Daliya Gaynanova's leadership style is rooted in personal experience, empathy and resilience. Having lived through these challenges herself, she makes decisions that reflect the genuine needs of the community. Despite initial limitations, including lack of funding, production challenges and low market awareness, she built a scalable and impactful project through persistence, strong values and a clear mission.

Awards & Recognitions

Daliya Gaynanova has received several awards and recognitions for her work in social entrepreneurship and adaptive fashion, including the medal "For Valiant Labor" of the Republic of Tatarstan. She is also the winner of the national award "Leaders of the Era 2021" as well as the Laureate of the All-Russian Award "Special Happiness" (2021). She has also won the regional contest "Woman of the Year". Daliya has received Special Nomination Award from the Federation Council of the Russian Federation for Best Social Project. She has also received official commendation from Human Rights Commissioner Tatyana Moskalkova. She is also the winner of the "Know Our Own" competition in two nominations. She has won second place in the adaptive fashion competition "On Wings" as well as earned multiple letters of appreciation from governmental and public institutions.





Elena Chashchina

Co-owner and Managing Partner
EPOTOS Group of Companies

Elena Chashchina is a Russian entrepreneur whose career spans healthcare, sports infrastructure, and fire safety technology. Trained initially as a medical doctor and later educated in economics and law, she has built businesses that focus on protecting people's health, safety, and well-being. Her leadership has contributed to the growth of EPOTOS Group of Companies into a major developer and manufacturer of fire-extinguishing equipment with an international presence.

“
Be the last to die

”

Professional Journey

Elena Chashchina's professional journey reflects a transition from medicine to business while maintaining a consistent focus on improving people's lives. Her first professional qualification was in medicine, reflecting an early commitment to serving society. As economic conditions evolved, she expanded her expertise by earning degrees in Economics and Law, enabling her to pursue leadership roles in business.

One of her earliest entrepreneurial responsibilities was as co-owner and general director of the largest sports facilities in the city of Perm, including an ice rink and a sports complex. Under her management, these facilities provided healthy recreational opportunities for tens of thousands of people every year. This experience combined operational management with a broader social objective of promoting active lifestyles.

Her next business venture shifted towards protecting people's health and property through fire safety. Elena became co-owner and general director of the EPOTOS Group of Companies, a Russian developer and manufacturer of fire-extinguishing equipment and systems. During her leadership, the company expanded from a small enterprise into a large industrial business. It also established what the submission describes as the largest and most modern fire-extinguishing equipment plant in Europe.

Elena continued to strengthen her management capabilities through professional education. In 2019, she completed a Master of Business Administration (Executive MBA "Euromanagement - Master of Business Administration for Managers"). She is also a member of the Atlanta Business Club.

A significant milestone came in 2020 when Elena joined the BRICS Women's Business Alliance. According to the submission, this increased the international visibility of the EPOTOS brand and created opportunities to develop joint international projects through the Alliance. Throughout her career, she has combined professional development with business expansion while maintaining a focus on technological advancement and international cooperation.

About EPOTOS Group

The EPOTOS Group of Companies was founded in 1991 as a Russian developer and manufacturer of fire-extinguishing equipment and systems. The company pioneered modular and autonomous fire-extinguishing technologies in Russia and has continued to develop solutions for a wide range of fire protection needs.

The company designs and manufactures equipment that extinguishes fires using powder, aerosol, gas, fine-sprayed water, and fast-hardening foam. Its operations cover the complete production cycle, beginning with scientific research and the development of fire-extinguishing compounds and continuing through the manufacture of finished equipment. Production takes place at three modern facilities located in Kirovo-Chepetsk and Saint Petersburg.

EPOTOS equipment protects urban public transport systems, energy facilities, and industrial infrastructure in Russia and international markets. The company's products are used in China, India, several European countries, and members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

The company employs more than 500 people and manufactures tens of thousands of units every year. It also holds several hundred patents and proprietary technologies. Over the years, EPOTOS has established an international presence through technology sales in the United Arab Emirates and South Korea, while developing a distribution network serving China, India, Australia, the European Union, and South Africa. The organisation continues to share its technologies and experience internationally in the field of fire safety.



Impact Created

The impact of Elena Chashchina's work can be understood through its economic, social, and measurable outcomes. The economic impact in terms of employment generation, market expansion, and exports.

The social impact focuses on areas such as women's empowerment, community development, skilling, and inclusion.

The impact can also be reflected through measurable outcomes and relevant data or metrics, where available.

Innovation & Leadership

Innovation forms a central part of Elena Chashchina's leadership approach. Under her direction, the company's research and development activities have continued to expand, resulting in a growing portfolio of patents and proprietary technologies.

In 2021, she established an Accelerator for fire safety technologies to support the development of emerging projects within the sector. She also initiated scientific and technical cooperation with leading technical institutes to address practical fire-extinguishing challenges through applied research.

Elena has encouraged the adoption of new technologies across the organisation. According to the submission, artificial intelligence is being actively implemented within the group of companies under her leadership and personal example. These initiatives reflect an emphasis on research, technological advancement, and collaboration between industry and academic institutions.

Awards & Recognitions

Elena Chashchina has received several professional recognitions during her career.

In 2017, she received the commemorative medal "85 Years of Civil Defense" from the Ministry of Civil Defence, Emergencies and Disaster Relief of the Russian Federation.

She also received the commemorative medal "Fire Protection in the Service of People. 1918-2018" from the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Russia.

In 2021, she became the winner from Russia in the BRICS Women's Innovation Project Competition organised by the Chinese Chapter of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance.

Her professional development includes diplomas from the SKOLKOVO Practicum and SKOLKOVO Global Shift programmes.

She is included in the TOP 100 Rating of Russian CEOs in Moscow in the category of Consumer Goods among large enterprises.

In 2025, she received the medal "For Distinction in Service in the Land Forces" from the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation.

In the same year, she received a Letter of Gratitude from the President of the Russian Federation for her contribution to the preparation and conduct of activities associated with the Russian Federation's chairmanship of the BRICS association in 2024.





Galina Volkova

Doctor of Economics
President
ORTOMODA Group of Companies
Expert in Adaptive Clothing
and Orthopedic Footwear
Architect of Russia's Inclusive
Fashion Movement
Public Figure Head of the Fashion Section
Moscow Union of Designers
Chair of the Jury, International Adaptive
Clothing Designers Competition "On Wings"
Curator, Inclusive Economy Working Group,
BRICS Women's Business Alliance

For more than 25 years, Galina Volkova has worked at the intersection of design, medicine, and technology to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities. Through scientific innovation, entrepreneurship, and international collaboration, she has contributed to the development of adaptive fashion and orthopedic footwear while advancing inclusion as an integral component of economic development. Her work combines manufacturing, research, policy engagement, and professional community building to promote accessibility through practical and scalable solutions.

Inclusive fashion is not about pity or social charity. It is an economy of equal opportunities that we have been building for the past 25 years.



Professional Journey

Galina Volkova is a leading Russian expert in the rehabilitation industry, a designer, and a social entrepreneur whose career has focused on developing orthopedic footwear and adaptive clothing for people with disabilities since the early 2000s. Her work began with a challenge that extended beyond functionality. She sought to create products that combined functionality with aesthetically sophisticated design, demonstrating that adaptive clothing and footwear could meet both practical and aesthetic needs.

A significant milestone came in 2002 when the first inclusive collection was presented at an international rehabilitation technologies exhibition in Düsseldorf. The fashion show featured models with prosthetic limbs and spinal cord injuries. It attracted broad public attention and marked an important step in redefining fashion as a tool for social integration.

The establishment of the ORTOMODA Group of Companies and the Universal Design Studio in 2005 expanded this vision into a structured manufacturing and research platform. The organisation integrated scientific research with direct feedback from users to develop products that responded to practical needs. Its work introduced adaptive fasteners, specialised construction elements, and innovative materials that have since been applied in both specialised products and the wider consumer market.

The early years presented considerable challenges. The market for adaptive fashion was largely undeveloped, and the sector faced significant scepticism. Despite these barriers, Galina Volkova continued to promote collaboration between design, medicine, and technology while contributing to the emergence of a new professional field. Alongside product development, she invested in building a professional community through educational initiatives, design competitions, and participation in international forums focused on inclusive development.

One of the most prominent initiatives to emerge from this work is the International Adaptive Clothing Competition "On Wings." The competition has become an international platform for designers working in adaptive fashion. Its 2025 final took place at the State Hermitage Museum, while the next final is scheduled for September 2026. By bringing together designers from multiple countries, the competition has supported the development of an emerging global adaptive fashion industry and encouraged wider professional engagement in inclusive design.

Today, Galina Volkova's work extends beyond entrepreneurship. She serves as Curator of the Inclusive Economy Working Group within the BRICS Women's Business Alliance (BRICS WBA), contributing to international discussions on inclusive economic development. Her work focuses on advancing systems in which inclusion is incorporated into mainstream economic development rather than being treated solely as a social initiative.

About ORTOMODA Group of Companies

Founded in 2001, the ORTOMODA Group of Companies operates at the intersection of design, medicine, and technological innovation as a Russian manufacturer of orthopedic footwear and adaptive clothing. The company develops products designed around the anatomical and functional requirements of individuals with different levels of mobility, offering orthopedic footwear, adaptive clothing, and customised solutions for users ranging from partially independent individuals to those with limited mobility.

The organisation integrates scientific research, medical expertise, and contemporary design throughout its development process. Products are designed in accordance with clinical requirements and real-life usage scenarios to provide comfort, safety, and functionality while maintaining aesthetic quality. This approach enables adaptive products to support both healthcare needs and everyday participation in society.

ORTOMODA also functions as a centre of expertise in universal design. Its innovations are implemented not only in specialised adaptive products but also in mass-market manufacturing, contributing to broader



market development and encouraging greater accessibility in mainstream consumer products. By extending universal design principles beyond specialised applications, the organisation supports the growth of a consumer culture in which accessibility and comfort become standard design considerations.

Today, the company employs more than 160 specialists, operates production facilities exceeding 3,000 square metres, and manages five specialised salons across Moscow and the Moscow region. Its products are supplied to more than 40 regions throughout Russia, providing adaptive clothing and orthopedic footwear to over 20,000 people with disabilities each year. Through participation in international initiatives and professional collaborations, ORTOMODA also contributes to the continued development of the rehabilitation industry and the adaptive fashion sector.

Impact Created

Galina Volkova's work, together with the activities of the ORTOMODA Group of Companies, has contributed to both economic and social development through the advancement of adaptive fashion and the rehabilitation industry. By combining manufacturing, research, and innovation, the organisation has helped establish a sector that addresses the needs of people with disabilities while supporting the broader development of inclusive products and services.

From an economic perspective, ORTOMODA has strengthened domestic manufacturing while creating employment for more than 160 specialists and maintaining a stable production infrastructure. The company has expanded a market segment that was previously underdeveloped, encouraging the growth of adaptive products and creating opportunities for new industry participants. Its products are supplied to more than 40 regions across Russia, increasing access to specialised solutions and supporting regional market development.

The organisation's social impact is reflected in improved access to functional, comfortable, and aesthetically designed clothing and footwear for people with disabilities and limited mobility. Each year, more than 20,000 individuals benefit from products designed to support greater independence, confidence, and participation in everyday life. The company also develops solutions for emerging social groups, including young people and veterans, for whom comfort and appearance play an important role in returning to active lifestyles.

Beyond product development, ORTOMODA has contributed to changing public perceptions of disability through fashion shows, educational initiatives, and professional competitions that promote inclusion as a social norm. The International Adaptive Clothing Competition "On Wings" received more than 280 applications from 67 regions of Russia, along with entries from several other countries, reflecting growing international interest in adaptive fashion and inclusive design. Through these combined efforts, Galina Volkova's work has supported the development of an inclusive economy, strengthened human capital, and improved quality of life for a significant section of society.

Innovation & Leadership

Galina Volkova is shaping the development of inclusive fashion as a high-tech industry that combines design, medicine, and digital solutions.

A major step in this direction was the establishment of the digital ORTOMODA salon at the Technopolis Moscow Innovation Centre. The facility applies artificial intelligence and digital diagnostic technologies to improve the selection of orthopedic solutions. Digital foot scanning enables specialists to develop personalised products based on each individual's anatomical characteristics, while telemedicine allows patients to consult orthopedic specialists regardless of their location. These technologies reduce fitting time and improve the accuracy of customised solutions.

The digitalisation of production and service processes has enabled ORTOMODA to move beyond conventional manufacturing towards a personalised model of care. This approach is particularly valuable for people with limited mobility and those living in remote regions, where access to specialised orthopedic



services may be limited. By combining digital modelling, remote consultation, and individual product design, the organisation has expanded access to adaptive healthcare solutions.

The company's international expansion has included the opening of a specialised salon in Xi'an, China, dedicated to supporting people with diabetic foot syndrome. The initiative demonstrates the scalability of Russian developments in adaptive healthcare and confirms the global demand for specialised orthopedic products.

Galina Volkova's leadership approach is based on viewing inclusive fashion as an integral part of the broader inclusive economy rather than as a niche sector. Her work combines product development, market creation, and efforts to reshape public understanding of inclusion. Throughout her career, she has addressed challenges including the absence of an established market, limited regulatory frameworks, and inadequate supporting infrastructure. These barriers have been addressed through sustained innovation, collaboration with public institutions, and the development of a professional community dedicated to adaptive fashion and rehabilitation.

An important area of ORTOMODA's work focuses on solutions for people living with diabetes, particularly diabetic foot syndrome, one of the most complex conditions requiring specialised orthopedic care. The company develops footwear based on medical requirements using digital scanning, telemedicine, remote support systems, and digital modelling to ensure precise fitting while reducing the risk of complications. These solutions support mobility, improve comfort, and contribute to disability prevention.

There is strong international interest in these technologies, particularly in Egypt, India, China, and countries across the Middle East, where diabetic foot syndrome represents a systemic healthcare challenge. ORTOMODA's developments are designed to be adapted for implementation in different countries while taking local requirements into account, demonstrating the international relevance and scalability of its adaptive medical solutions..

Awards & Recognitions

Galina Volkova's contributions have been recognised through national and international awards from government institutions, professional organisations, and industry bodies. These honours reflect her work in advancing adaptive fashion, orthopedic innovation, and inclusive economic development.

She received an Honorary Certificate from the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation in recognition of her contribution to industrial development and many years of professional service. The ORTOMODA Group of Companies has also received several industry awards, including first place in the federal professional competition "TOP-10 of 2018" in the Women's Footwear category and the "Innovation of the Year" award under the national Golden Bear Cub prize for developing specialised orthopedic products.

International recognition has included awards and participation at leading industry events, including a diploma from the OTWorld International Trade Show and Congress, one of the world's principal exhibitions dedicated to orthopedics and rehabilitation technologies. Additional recognition from professional and public organisations includes letters of appreciation and diplomas acknowledging contributions to inclusive environments, adaptive fashion, rehabilitation, and support for people with disabilities.

Her academic credentials further reflect the interdisciplinary nature of her work. Galina Volkova holds both a Candidate of Technical Sciences degree and a Doctor of Economics degree, with her work spanning economics, design, and technology. Collectively, these recognitions highlight her contribution to the development of adaptive fashion and the advancement of an inclusive economy built on equal opportunities.





Irina Murashova

Director, Company Owner
Rostock Alliance Group

Irina Murashova is the Director and Company Owner of Rostock Alliance Group, an agricultural enterprise in the Russian Federation. For over three decades, she has managed an agricultural business that includes vegetable seed sales, seedling production, and seed breeding. Her work also includes the development of technologies for growing vegetable young plants and the start of their industrial production.

We learn every day from technology, from our colleagues, from the land itself. This is the only way to move forward: by trying new things, not being afraid of change, and constantly seeking more effective solutions.

Professional Journey

Irina Murashova graduated from Herzen State Pedagogical Institute and began her professional career as an excursion guide at a high school. Her professional values have been shaped by the importance she places on family, nature, freedom, and independence. These principles guided her transition into entrepreneurship and the agricultural sector.

In 1994, she established a company focused on importing vegetable seeds. This marked the beginning of a long-term commitment to strengthening agricultural production. A decade later in 2004, she led the construction and organisation of a trial and consulting centre for vegetable growers.

The organisation expanded further in 2010 with the establishment of a nursery specialising in coniferous and ornamental plants. In 2017, the company began developing technologies for growing vegetable young plants followed by the launch of industrial production in 2018. In 2023, the enterprise established a breeding and seed-growing centre, adding another important dimension to its agricultural activities.

Among the defining milestones of her career was the first highly professional production of young plants in the Russian Federation. Another defining milestone was the creation of a breeding and seed-growing centre.

About Rostock Alliance Group

Rostock Alliance Group operates in the agricultural sector under the general management of Irina Murashova. The business focuses on vegetable seed sales, seedling production, and seed breeding. Its principal products and services include vegetable seeds and the production of young plants through propagation.

The organisation's unique value proposition is the supply of seeds and young plants. It employs approximately 250 people and serves the seeds and seedlings markets. Its customer base includes farmers, professional glasshouses, processing factories, and local growers.

Impact Created

The organisation has contributed to employment generation by engaging approximately 250 employees across Volgograd, Stavropol, Rostov-on-Don, Astrakhan, and other regions of the Russian Federation.

Its work also expanded the seedling market. Before the establishment of the company's seedling centre, a professional seedling supply market did not exist in the Russian Federation. The organisation became the first to introduce this activity on a professional scale. It has also exported seedlings to Belarus and Azerbaijan.

Women's empowerment at Rostock is supported through full social rights. Almost all top management positions are held by women, and many types of work in the nursery require the care and precision of women's hands. Community development activities include the restoration of forests and rivers, landscaping, tree planting, and nature clean-up campaigns. Professional development is supported across all organisational levels, with senior staff receiving training at Skolkovo and the Scandinavian Economic School.

Innovation & Leadership

The organisation introduced an innovative grafting technology that is applied to four vegetable crops. The unique Rostock seedling complex created by Irina Murashova supplies seedlings to agricultural enterprises across a wide range of regions in southern Russia and beyond.

One of the principal challenges was that many customers became competitors because young plants



had traditionally been grown by farmers themselves. The organisation addressed this challenge by demonstrating the advantages of professional young plant production and relieving growers of the labour-intensive process of producing young plants.

Awards & Recognitions

Irina Murashova has been recognised as an Honoured Worker of Agriculture and an Honoured Farmer of the Russian Federation. Rostock also received the CX World Awards recognition for Best Social Project 2024.





Liudmila Shcherbakova

President
Velpharm Group

Founder and President of Velpharm Group, Shcherbakova Liudmila has led the development of a full-cycle pharmaceutical ecosystem in Russia. Her work has focused on strengthening domestic pharmaceutical manufacturing, advancing research, and expanding access to modern medicines. She also contributes to international healthcare cooperation through the BRICS Women's Business Alliance.

“
Pharmaceuticals are, above all, about responsibility for people's health. The trust of patients and society is the highest recognition of our work and the strongest motivation to advance science and create the medicines of the future.

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Professional Journey

Liudmila Shcherbakova is the founder and President of Velpharm Group, a pharmaceutical holding whose activities are focused on developing a full-cycle ecosystem for research and medicine manufacturing in Russia. From the outset of her career, she focused on strengthening the domestic pharmaceutical industry and ensuring that Russian manufacturers had access to high-quality pharmaceutical substances. Her entrepreneurial journey began by supplying pharmaceutical substances from leading manufacturers in China, India and Europe to pharmaceutical companies in Russia.

Working closely with manufacturers gave her a detailed understanding of the industry's needs. That experience shaped her decision to support domestic production of both active pharmaceutical ingredients and finished medicines. It laid the foundation for the creation of modern pharmaceutical manufacturing infrastructure in Russia.

Under her leadership, Velpharm Group has developed into a vertically integrated ecosystem covering the complete production chain, from active pharmaceutical ingredients to finished medicinal products. The company established modern production facilities, an R&D centre and a pharmaceutical logistics complex.

A major milestone was the establishment of the Velpharm-M scientific and production complex in the Moscow Special Economic Zone. The facility currently produces more than 110 medicines across more than 20 pharmacotherapeutic groups, with the portfolio expected to exceed 300 medicines by the end of 2026. In 2025, the second phase enabled the production of sterile medicines, pharmaceutical products in plastic ampoules and soft gelatin capsules, while construction began on a facility for medicines treating oncology, autoimmune and respiratory diseases.

Liudmila Shcherbakova is a member of the Russian Chapter of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance and contributes to initiatives promoting international cooperation in healthcare and pharmaceutical technologies. In 2024, she received the Order of Honour of the Russian Federation for her contribution to the pharmaceutical industry.

About Velpharm Group

Velpharm Group is a dynamically developing Russian pharmaceutical holding, whose development strategy is focused on building a modern industrial ecosystem for the full-cycle production of medicines - from the development and manufacturing of active pharmaceutical ingredients to the production of finished dosage forms. The company operates four high-technology production facilities: two for finished dosage forms and two for active pharmaceutical ingredients and employs more than 2,000 specialists.

Its research and development centre supports projects from molecule development to industrial-scale manufacturing while developing proprietary synthesis technologies. The company can manufacture more than 300 medicinal products across multiple therapeutic groups and dosage forms. More than 150 additional medicines are in development or registration including biotechnological, oncological, autoimmune, neurological, antitumour, hormonal and inhalation medicines, many of which were not previously manufactured in Russia.

Velpharm Group has also developed proprietary technology for producing biological pharmaceutical substances, enabling domestic full-cycle production of Heparin sodium and low-molecular-weight heparins used in thrombosis prevention and treatment. These activities support technological independence, improve access to medicines and strengthen healthcare resilience.

Impact Created

Velpharm Group contributes to the development of Russia's pharmaceutical industry by expanding domestic production and improving access to modern medicines. Its investment in manufacturing



capacity and scientific capability supports technological independence and broader availability of affordable treatments.

The company employs more than 2,000 specialists and continues to create employment while strengthening professional skills within the pharmaceutical sector. It has also expanded the production of essential medicines that were previously unavailable through domestic manufacturing improving access for patients.

Under the leadership of Liudmila Shcherbakova, Velpfarm Group places strong emphasis on the development of human capital, creating opportunities for professional growth, and fostering a corporate culture based on equal opportunities. Her leadership in a high-technology sector also demonstrates the growing role of women in science, technology and pharmaceuticals.

Innovation & Leadership

Innovation remains central to Velpfarm Group's development strategy. The company's strategy is focused on building a modern full-cycle pharmaceutical industry that integrates scientific research, the development of active pharmaceutical ingredients, and the industrial production of medicines. It has introduced proprietary technologies for synthesising pharmaceutical substances including those of biological origin supporting domestic production of heparin-based medicines and modern anaesthetics.

The company has expanded advanced manufacturing capabilities through sterile medicine production, blow-fill-seal technology for liquid dosage forms and the development of biotechnology programmes.

Liudmila Shcherbakova's leadership is characterised by long-term planning, strategic thinking and investment in research and workforce capability. By strengthening scientific capacity, implementing modern production standards and developing specialist expertise, Velpfarm Group has addressed the challenges associated with high-technology pharmaceutical manufacturing.

Awards & Recognitions

Liudmila Shcherbakova received the Order of Honour of the Russian Federation in 2024 by decree of the President of the Russian Federation for her contribution to the pharmaceutical industry. She also received the APEC BEST Award in 2018 for the VELPHARM project in the category related to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, as well as the "Following the Call of a Woman's Heart" Award in the "Breakthrough" category. She is a member of the Russian Chapter of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance and serves as coordinator of its healthcare working group.





Tamara Kobaladze

Chief Executive Officer
Kronstadt Engineering Center

Tamara Kobaladze is the first woman to lead a heavy engineering enterprise in Russia. Her career spans law, procurement, industrial transformation, and executive leadership. She has led large-scale industrial modernization while advancing technological resilience and women's leadership in a traditionally male-dominated sector.

“
To lead an industrial enterprise, you must understand what drives it from within. A plant is not just equipment and performance indicators—it is its people, their expertise, commitment, and pride in their work. A leader who sees only numbers will never achieve genuine transformation.
”



Professional Journey

Tamara Kobaladze is the first and so far, the only woman in Russia to lead a heavy engineering enterprise. She graduated from the International University in Moscow with a Master's degree in Law. Throughout her career she has followed a consistent leadership principle: transformation succeeds when people understand its purpose and take ownership of change.

Raised in a large Georgian family and having spent her life in Russia she learned early to turn obstacles into opportunities for growth. Her mother who headed a state swimming centre that produced two Olympic champions, instilled discipline, strategic thinking, confidence, and resilience.

Her professional journey - from a legal expert to a procurement leader recognized by RAEX, one of Russia's leading rating agencies, as Best Procurement Director for localization and supply chain transformation in 2018-2021 - brought her to one of the most ambitious goals of her career: restoring the Uralhimash plant, founded in 1942, to its status as a flagship of chemical engineering.

In 2022, she led a large-scale transformation programme that introduced new production approaches and industrial practices. The programme improved operational efficiency and aligned employees around sustainable development and long-term growth. In 2023, she received a commemorative medal marking the 300th anniversary of Yekaterinburg for her contribution to regional development. In 2024, Uralhimash became a mentor enterprise under Russia's national industrial tourism programme, and in 2025 it ranked among the country's Top 10 industrial tourism sites.

Today, she serves as Chief Executive Officer of Kronstadt Engineering Center which manufactures equipment and components for the oil and gas sector, provides engineering design services, develops proprietary industrial solutions, and maintains energy equipment, including gas turbines. She also contributes to committees of the Russian Chemists Union, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation, and the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs.

About Kronstadt Engineering Center

Kronstadt Engineering Center is a specialised industrial enterprise focused on manufacturing equipment and components, engineering design, and proprietary technological solutions for the energy and industrial sectors.

The company supports the Russian fuel and energy complex and related industries under import restrictions through manufacturing equipment for oil & gas, mining, shipbuilding, and aircraft manufacturing, and servicing energy equipment including gas turbines.

The company is also developing its own equipment and technological solutions for heavy industry. It positions itself as a key partner for advanced industrial projects in Russia and internationally with an increasing focus on BRICS countries and the Global South.

Impact Created

Tamara Kobaladze has strengthened domestic production capabilities in strategic sectors supporting technological resilience and safeguarding skilled industrial employment.

Under her leadership Kronstadt Engineering Center functions as a hub for advanced technological solutions in the oil and gas sector helping ensure the reliable operation of critical industrial equipment and infrastructure.

Her career also demonstrates women's leadership in heavy industry. She has built a successful professional trajectory in a traditionally male-dominated sector, participates in professional associations and expert councils and supports initiatives that develop managerial and technical competencies among future specialists.



Innovation & Leadership

Tamara Kobaladze combines the strategic mindset of a lawyer, the rigor of a procurement executive, and practical industrial experience. Her leadership approach emphasises high standards, respect for people, and organisational transformation.

Colleagues have remarked that she "married the plant" reflecting her ability to transform a humanitarian background into an engineering mindset. She immersed herself in every aspect of production - infrastructure, technology, regulations, and operational systems while leading a workforce of more than 1,500 employees.

Her close engagement with production teams strengthened trust with technical specialists and helped translate strategic priorities into practical action. Her experience demonstrates that industrial transformation requires the ability to ask the right technical questions, respect professional expertise and build a system in which decisions are implemented consistently.

Awards & Recognitions

Between 2018 and 2021, RAEX (Expert RA) repeatedly recognised her as Best Procurement Director in the field of import substitution for her contribution to procurement strategies and industrial localisation.

In 2023, she received the commemorative medal marking the 300th anniversary of Yekaterinburg for her contribution to the city's economic and industrial development. She has also received the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation medal "For Labour Valour."

Under her leadership, Uralhimmash became one of Russia's leading manufacturers of equipment for the gas, oil refining, petrochemical, chemical, nuclear, and conventional power industries. The enterprise also joined the federal industrial tourism programme and became a mentor plant in 2024.





Yulia Gavrina

President
Association Beauty Professionals BRICS

Yulia Gavrina is an education and beauty industry professional with more than 23 years of experience in management, professional education and international cooperation. She has contributed to leadership development within the beauty sector and continues to strengthen collaboration among BRICS countries through educational and professional initiatives. Her work focuses on building partnerships, supporting women entrepreneurs and expanding opportunities for beauty professionals across international markets.

“
Always stay one step ahead.
”

Professional Journey

Yulia Gavrina graduated from the Faculty of Philology and began her career as a teacher of Russian language and literature. For more than 23 years, she worked within the Dolores Beauty Center and Academy system, progressing from administrator to Deputy General Director. She also taught management programs for salon owners and directors. She continues to develop international cooperation within BRICS countries.

About Association Beauty Professionals BRICS

Association Beauty Professionals BRICS is an international platform that brings together beauty industry professionals, academies and brands from BRICS countries. The Association develops educational, creative and professional initiatives. It operates with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the BRICS Women's Business Alliance.

Impact Created

The Association promotes international cooperation, professional education and communication among BRICS countries. It places particular emphasis on supporting women entrepreneurs, strengthening the professional beauty community and creating new opportunities for specialists in the international market.

Innovation & Leadership

One of the Association's key objectives is to strengthen international cooperation across the BRICS space. Yulia Gavrina's leadership approach is centred on teamwork, professional trust and long-term collaboration among specialists, brands and educational platforms.

Awards & Recognitions

Yulia Gavrina has received professional recognition within the Russian beauty industry and the international professional community for her long-standing work in management, education and international cooperation.





Yuliana Slashcheva

Head of the Board of Directors
Soyuzmultfilm Film Studio
Chairperson of the Board of the
Animation Film Association
Director General of the
Gorky Film Studio

Yuliana Slashcheva is a Russian media executive who has led the transformation of Soyuzmultfilm Film Studio while also serving as Chairman of the Board of the Animation Film Association and Director General of the Gorky Film Studio. Her career spans corporate communications, media management and film production. Her leadership has focused on revitalising one of Russia's best-known animation studios by combining its creative heritage with modern technology and new business models.

“
Always stay one step ahead.

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Professional Journey

In 1996, Yuliana Slashcheva graduated from the Faculty of Marketing of the Moscow Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences with a degree in economics, marketing and public relations. During her studies, she completed an internship at the American company Quasar Communications. In 2002, she became Head of Corporate Communications at ESN Group, where she managed company's external relations and interaction with regional government agencies, partners and the media. In 2004, she joined BBDO Group as a partner and consultant and led the creation of a public relations agency within the group. In 2005, she returned to Mikhailov & Partners as President. In 2013, she became General Director of CTC Media. By order of the Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation, she was appointed Head of the Board of Soyuzmultfilm Film Studio in 2017. On 8 October 2019, she also became Director General of the Gorky Film Studio. Since 2017, she has been included annually among the Top 10 senior executives in the Media Business category of the TOP 1000 Russian Managers rating. She received the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation medal 'For Contribution to Russian Culture' in 2021, the honorary medal '185 Years of State Property Management of Russia' in 2023, and a letter of gratitude from the Mayor of Moscow in August 2024 for her contribution to Russian cinema.

About the Soyuzmultfilm Film Studio

Founded on 10 June 1936, Soyuzmultfilm is a Russian animation film studio that has released more than 1,500 cartoons across puppet, plasticine and hand-drawn techniques. The studio preserves the traditions of Soviet animation while creating content for contemporary audiences. Its 360 Brand strategy extends beyond animation to feature films, short-form content, parks, shows, performances, toy production and video games. Plans include expanding feature film and short-content production, strengthening its offline presence and growing related products.

Impact Created

In 2025, Soyuzmultfilm's revenue increased by about 21 percent compared with 2024, reaching about 2.5 billion rubles. Around 80 percent of revenue came from the sale of rights, including exclusive rights and licensing, while the remaining 20 percent came from television channels Multilandia and Umka, management of Soyuzmultclub, international distribution and branded toy production. The studio cooperates with charitable organisations supporting children with disabilities and has established a Charitable Foundation for the Support of Animation. According to Ipsos research, brand awareness among children aged four to 15 increased by eight percent in the first half of 2025, while loyalty increased by 131 percent. The studio's own research conducted in summer 2024 found that 87 percent of children under 17 recognised the Soyuzmultfilm brand. Its productions have received more than 800 international festival prizes and awards.

Innovation & Leadership

Soyuzmultfilm has adopted modern production technologies, including Unreal Engine 4 for projects such as the full-length film 'Formula of Water', enabling faster animation production without compromising quality. The studio also introduced motion capture technology for animated characters and developed a virtual reality programme that allows actors to rehearse with digital avatars. Artificial intelligence is used in several projects, including the restoration of classic cartoons and enhancement of image quality to 4K. The studio's mission is expressed through the statement, 'We are where the children are.' It positions itself as a child's friend and a parent's ally. Until 2017, the studio faced a deep crisis. It recovered through new government support instruments, a successful business strategy and the coordinated efforts of its new team.





SOUTH AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA





Christine Masaiti

Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Grandstage Trading (Pty) Ltd

Christine Masaiti is a South African entrepreneur working at the intersection of agribusiness, renewable energy and the circular economy. As the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Grandstage Trading (Pty) Ltd, she leads the Ecopower Brands initiative, which transforms African agricultural crops into value-added food, wellness and cosmetic ingredients. Her work focuses on reducing post-harvest losses, strengthening agricultural value chains and creating new market opportunities for smallholder farmers through technology-enabled processing and sustainable innovation.

Leadership is not about building successful businesses alone—it is about creating opportunities that outlive us. Every innovation I pursue is driven by a commitment to unlock Africa's potential, restore dignity to its people and leave a legacy of shared prosperity.

Professional Journey

Christine Masaiti is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Grandstage Trading (Pty) Ltd, a South African agribusiness and circular-economy enterprise operating across agriculture, agri-tech and renewable energy. Through the Ecopower Brands initiative, the company develops higher-value food, wellness and cosmetic ingredients from African agricultural crops while promoting resource efficiency and sustainable value addition.

She holds a Master of Science (MSc) in Global Management from the University of Salford, United Kingdom. Her professional career began in 1991 in the financial services sector before expanding into renewable energy and agri-processing. Over the years, she developed expertise in strategic business development, investment management, international trade, agribusiness value-chain development, sustainability, circular-economy innovation, technology commercialisation, stakeholder engagement and cross-sector partnerships.

In 2017, Christine founded Grandstage Trading after identifying a persistent challenge across African agriculture. Large volumes of agricultural produce were being lost annually because many smallholder farmers lacked access to affordable processing technologies, reliable markets and opportunities to add value to their produce. She established the company to create greater economic value from agricultural resources while developing a commercially sustainable model that combines beneficiation, innovation and circular-economy practices.

She subsequently developed Ecopower Brands as an integrated agri-tech platform that combines renewable energy, mobile processing technology, artificial intelligence, digital traceability and circular-economy principles. The platform converts underutilised agricultural produce into premium food ingredients, nutraceuticals, cosmetic raw materials and other value-added products while expanding market opportunities for farming communities.

Her entrepreneurial journey includes winning the BRICS Women's Startup Contest, becoming a finalist in the South African Tech Challenge, and establishing strategic international partnerships with organisations including the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), the Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency (NFIA), Oost NL and other global innovation ecosystems. A significant milestone was the transition from AvoEcoPower to the broader Ecopower Brands platform, expanding a single-product concept into a scalable, multi-crop agribusiness ecosystem designed to serve multiple agricultural value chains and international markets.

In 2025, Christine was selected as one of six South African women leaders from 62 applicants to participate in the inaugural South African cohort of the BRICS Chamber of Commerce and Industry Women's Empowerment (BRICS CCI WE) Global Women Leadership Programme (GWLP). During the six-month programme, she participated in executive learning, international mentorship, strategic networking, cross-border collaboration and a guided leadership project focused on technology-driven circular-economy business models that strengthen food security, climate resilience and inclusive economic development.

About Grandstage Trading (Pty) Ltd

Established in 2017 and headquartered in Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa, Grandstage Trading (Pty) Ltd operates as an agribusiness and circular-economy enterprise through its Ecopower Brands initiative. The business works with smallholder farmers, agricultural cooperatives, commercial growers, processors and rural producer networks while serving the food and beverage, nutraceutical, cosmetics, personal care, pharmaceutical, animal nutrition and international ingredient industries.

Its current product portfolio includes extra virgin avocado oil, crude avocado oil, baobab, hibiscus, ginger and turmeric powders, avocado seed ingredients, herbal teas and botanical extracts. The enterprise



focuses on transforming African agricultural resources into differentiated, market-ready ingredients that increase farmer incomes while reducing post-harvest losses.

A key feature of the business model is its circular-economy approach. Agricultural by-products, including avocado seeds, skins and other crop residues, are converted into higher-value ingredients for food, cosmetic, wellness and industrial applications. Renewable-energy-powered mobile processing units are designed to enable off-grid processing closer to production sites, reducing transport costs and carbon emissions while bringing value addition nearer to farming communities.

Grandstage Trading currently operates through a lean management team supported by strategic technical, manufacturing and commercial partners. It also engages smallholder farmers across Southern Africa through an initial digital traceability pilot involving approximately 30 farmers. The company is preparing to scale operations towards processing up to 50 tonnes of agricultural produce per day through a planned commercial processing facility supported by distributed mobile processing units. It serves South Africa while expanding into regional African markets and export destinations across Europe, the Middle East, Asia and other BRICS+ countries through business-to-business ingredient supply, contract manufacturing, export distributors and strategic trade partnerships.

The company follows Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) principles and works with certified contract manufacturers that comply with internationally recognised food safety standards, including Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and ISO 22000 where applicable. As processing capacity expands, the company plans to obtain additional certifications, including Halal, Kosher and Organic certification for relevant export markets.

Impact Created

Grandstage Trading creates economic value by increasing the market potential of African crops through beneficiation. Between 2022 and 2026, the enterprise established strategic partnerships with smallholder farmers, commercial producers, research institutions and manufacturing partners to validate its circular-economy business model and prepare for commercial expansion. During this period, it developed value-added products including extra virgin avocado oil, avocado seed ingredients, baobab powder, hibiscus products, turmeric and ginger ingredients while positioning these products for domestic and international markets. The company also strengthened market access opportunities through international innovation programmes and strategic partnerships.

Its social impact centres on building more inclusive agricultural value chains by enabling farmers to participate in higher-value markets rather than relying solely on raw commodity sales. Working with government agencies, research organisations and innovation partners, the enterprise promotes sustainable agro-processing, renewable-energy technologies and digital traceability systems designed to improve market access, product quality and long-term farmer incomes. Its planned mobile processing model seeks to decentralise value addition, reduce transport costs and minimise post-harvest losses.

The company's environmental contribution is reflected in its circular-economy model, which converts agricultural by-products into valuable food, nutraceutical and cosmetic ingredients while integrating renewable-energy-powered processing technologies to improve resource efficiency and reduce carbon emissions. One example is the utilisation of avocado seeds, traditionally treated as waste, to produce powders, herbal teas and functional ingredients for food and wellness applications. As commercial operations expand, Grandstage Trading plans to report independently verified annual metrics covering farmer participation, employment creation, production volumes, export performance, waste reduction and greenhouse-gas savings.



Innovation & Leadership

Grandstage Trading's innovation lies in combining renewable-energy-powered mobile processing, circular-economy principles, digital traceability and product innovation to address post-harvest losses, limited local processing capacity and low-value commodity exports. Its model incorporates solar-powered mobile processing units, artificial intelligence-enabled production planning, Internet of Things (IoT)-based monitoring and digital traceability systems. These technologies support decentralised processing, reduce waste and create new revenue opportunities across agricultural value chains.

Christine's leadership philosophy is to create sustainable prosperity by transforming challenges into opportunities through innovation, collaboration and purpose-driven entrepreneurship. She leads through integrity, servant leadership, strategic thinking, inclusion, resilience and continuous innovation, bringing together farmers, researchers, technology partners, investors, government institutions and commercial markets around a shared vision of building competitive African value chains.

One of the most significant challenges she has faced has been developing an innovative business model that required significant investment, technical partnerships and market validation while operating as a woman entrepreneur in an emerging sector. She responded by building strategic partnerships with research institutions, industry leaders, government agencies and international innovation ecosystems, while continuously refining the business model and expanding its technological capabilities. This resulted in the successful evolution of Ecopower Brands into a scalable agri-tech and circular-economy platform with strong potential for regional expansion and international market participation.

Participation in the Global Women Leadership Programme strengthened Christine's capacity to lead cross-border innovation initiatives and expand strategic international partnerships. She continues to focus on commercialising solar-powered mobile processing hubs, integrating artificial intelligence and financial technology into agricultural value chains, and expanding exports to BRICS, European, Middle Eastern and Asian markets with the objective of increasing Africa's participation in higher-value agricultural industries.

Awards & Recognitions

Christine Masaiti received the Nudge Winner recognition during the BRICS CCI WE Global Women Leadership Programme 2025-2026 Global Convocation in New Delhi, India, for leadership, innovation and the application of behavioural change principles in developing technology-enabled agribusiness solutions.

In 2025, she was selected as one of six South African women leaders from 62 applicants for South Africa's inaugural BRICS CCI WE Global Women Leadership Programme cohort.

Ecopower Brands, formerly AvoEcoPower, was named a finalist in the South African Tech Challenge 2025, recognising its renewable-energy-powered circular-economy agri-tech solution.

Christine also won the BRICS Women's Startup Contest 2025 for developing an agribusiness model that integrates renewable energy, digital technologies and value-added agricultural processing. In the same year, she received support through the Visa She's Next programme in recognition of the growth potential of Grandstage Trading and the Ecopower Brands initiative.

In 2024, the enterprise received innovation support through the Flanders Trust Fund, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) to advance sustainable agri-processing and technology innovation.





Dimakatso Kanyane

Founder
Dillets Sanitary Products

Dimakatso Kanyane is a South African entrepreneur and founder of Dillets Sanitary Products, a locally owned manufacturer of sanitary products focused on advancing menstrual dignity, women's health and inclusive manufacturing. Drawing on both personal experience and industry expertise, she has built an enterprise that combines local production with social impact. Her work centres on increasing access to affordable menstrual products while creating opportunities for women and young people within South Africa's manufacturing sector.

*I turned my pain into purpose,
and that purpose became a
mission to restore dignity,
empower, and create meaningful
change.*

Professional Journey

Dimakatso Kanyane is the Founder of Dillets Sanitary Products, a South African women's-health manufacturer producing locally made sanitary products. Her entrepreneurial journey is grounded in a commitment to menstrual dignity, women's health and inclusive manufacturing. She began her career in the importation of sanitary products, where she gained experience in import and export processes, customs clearance, warehousing and logistics.

Dimakatso established the enterprise in 2023 after her own experience of severe period pain, heavy menstrual flow and leakage highlighted the limitations of sanitary products available to meet her specific needs. She recognised that addressing these needs required a locally relevant manufacturing response and set out to build a product and manufacturing model that combined dignity, affordability, quality and commercial sustainability.

Several milestones have marked the enterprise's growth. The company became a First Runner-up in the Global Women Leadership Programme (GWLP) Cohort 2025. Dillets products were listed on Takealot Marketplace and expanded into supplying mining companies, municipalities and public schools across South Africa. A defining turning point in Kanyane's journey was the development of period-friendly schools and communities. Through this initiative, the enterprise works to ensure that no girl misses educational opportunities because of menstruation. By increasing access to menstrual products, providing menstrual health education and supporting safe spaces for discussion, the initiative aims to reduce stigma, improve confidence and encourage consistent school participation.

In 2025, Dimakatso was selected as one of six South African women leaders from 62 applicants for the inaugural South African GWLP cohort. During the six-month programme, she participated in executive learning, international mentorship, strategic networking, cross-border collaboration and a guided leadership project focused on dignity revolution. At the 2026 Global Convocation in New Delhi, she was named First Runner-up in the BRICS CCI WE Global Women Leadership Programme 2025-26. The experience further strengthened her vision of transforming today's products into tomorrow's ecosystem.

About Dillets Sanitary Products

Dillets manufactures locally produce sanitary products designed to support menstrual dignity, women's health and inclusive manufacturing. Its product range includes sanitary pads, tampons and panty liners developed to meet the menstrual health and dignity needs of adolescent girls and women.

The enterprise supplies products through Takealot Marketplace, schools, institutional clients and direct-to-consumer channels. Its product portfolio includes 240 mm thin pads, 240 mm maxi pads, 290 mm thin pads and 290 mm maxi pads manufactured using organic cotton materials. Products are available from R15. The company also provides white-label manufacturing solutions and delivers school outreach programmes focused on menstrual health, dignity and product donations.

Established in 2023 and based in Siyabuswa, Mpumalanga; the enterprise employs 8 people, 6 women and 4 young people. Its manufacturing capacity is 300 units per minute, and it serves customers across South Africa. The business SABS Certificate and works with Courier guy and Chinese based raw materials manufacturers.

Impact Created

The enterprise advances menstrual dignity by increasing access to locally manufactured sanitary products while creating opportunities within the manufacturing value chain. Between December 2024 and August 2026, it produced 1.2 million sanitary products and reached 1,20,000 women and girls across South Africa. 30,000 products were sold commercially and 90,000 were distributed through social-impact programmes, where applicable.



The business created or sustained eight jobs, with six positions held by women. It also sourced packaging from local suppliers and generated revenue of R1.8 million.

One example of the enterprise's community impact is its outreach programme at Mantwani Primary School. Through this intervention, 92 beneficiaries received sanitary pads and participated in menstrual hygiene management empowerment workshops. The programme sought to support school attendance and participation by addressing menstruation-related barriers." Unless Dimakatso has actual attendance data demonstrating the improvement. Activities conducted between May 2026 and July 2026 were supported by proof of delivery records, school outreach reports and photographic documentation.

Innovation and Leadership

The enterprise's innovation lies in the local manufacturing of sanitary pads to address period poverty by improving access to menstrual products and supporting girls in managing menstruation safely and with dignity. Since its establishment in 2023, the initiative has contributed to improved school attendance and reduced period-related absenteeism.

Dimakatso's leadership philosophy is about serving with purpose, leading by example and creating opportunities for others to grow. Her approach is guided by integrity, empathy, accountability and courage while remaining open to continuous learning and adaptation. She combines social purpose with the operational discipline required to build a sustainable manufacturing enterprise.

One of the company's major challenges has been entering a competitive market. She addressed this by listening closely to customers, adapting products and strategies where necessary and building strategic partnerships that strengthened market confidence and created new opportunities for growth.

Her participation in the Global Women Leadership Programme strengthened her leadership capabilities by increasing her confidence, expanding her ability to adapt to new environments, building meaningful international relationships and providing a platform to represent African innovation globally.

Her next priority is to transform Dillets products into tomorrow's ecosystem by controlling the entire value chain and expanding the enterprise's contribution to women's health and inclusive local manufacturing.

Awards and Recognitions

Kanyane was named First Runner-up in the BRICS CCI WE Global Women Leadership Programme 2025-26 at the Global Convocation held on 21 March 2026. She also received the Game Changer Certificate 2025.

In 2025, she was selected as one of six participants from 62 applicants for South Africa's inaugural Global Women Leadership Programme cohort.

Her additional recognitions include the Bamblela Business Award, the National Presidential MSME and Cooperative Awards, and participation in the IATF Hackathon.



**Kim Naicker**

CEO, Director and Co-founder -
National Waste Incineration (Pty) Ltd, South Africa

Kim Naicker is the Chief Executive Officer, Director and Co-founder of National Waste Incineration (Pty) Ltd, a South African environmental-services enterprise focused on waste treatment and environmental management. Her work centres on responsible waste processing, resource recovery and the development of sustainable waste-to-energy solutions that address environmental and energy challenges. Drawing on a professional background in telecommunications and information and communication technology (ICT), she combines commercial, operational and administrative expertise with a commitment to environmental innovation.

“What you invest, you will ultimately receive in return. The more time, energy and belief you invest, the greater your chances of turning your vision into success.”

Professional Journey

Kim Naicker leads National Waste Incineration (Pty) Ltd, an environmental-services enterprise established in 2022 to develop integrated waste-treatment and environmental-management solutions in South Africa. Her professional journey reflects a transition from telecommunications and information and communication technology (ICT) into the environmental sector, where she applies her commercial, operational and administrative experience to addressing complex waste-management challenges.

The company was established in response to two significant national issues that intensified following the COVID-19 pandemic: the growing challenge of medical-waste management and the country's ongoing electricity crisis. Recognising the need for sustainable and responsible waste-processing systems, Kim focused on developing an integrated approach that combines waste treatment with resource recovery and energy generation.

Since the company's establishment, her leadership has concentrated on building the systems, partnerships and operational capabilities required to manage waste responsibly while meeting environmental, occupational health and regulatory requirements. She has worked to strengthen the enterprise's operational foundation through strategic collaborations and the development of technologies designed to support sustainable waste treatment.

Several milestones have marked the company's progress. These include receiving permission from the Premier of the Free State Province in South Africa, securing a land partnership, obtaining letters of intent for the purchase of biodiesel, and establishing technology partnerships through which the required machinery has been built, tested and prepared for rollout, subject to securing funding.

Kim's leadership development has also extended beyond her organisation. In 2025, she was selected as one of six South African women leaders from a pool of 62 applicants for the inaugural South African cohort of the Global Women Leadership Programme (GWLP). During the six-month programme, she participated in executive learning, international mentorship, cross-border collaboration, strategic networking and a guided leadership project covering business leadership, business management, legal and marketing disciplines.



Her participation culminated at the 2026 Global Convocation in New Delhi, where she received a Special Jury Mention in the BRICS CCI WE Global Women Leadership Programme 2025-26, recognising her contribution to leadership and sustainable enterprise development.

About National Waste Incineration (Pty)

National Waste Incineration (Pty) Ltd is a South African environmental-services enterprise that provides integrated waste-treatment and environmental-management solutions. The company has developed a model that brings waste sorting, treatment and conversion together under one operational framework.

Its services are designed to manage solid municipal waste, medical waste, veterinary waste and agricultural waste for both government and private-sector clients. Through its waste-to-energy approach, the enterprise plans to convert waste into electricity, bio-oil, biodiesel and bitumen while operating with the objective of achieving zero waste and zero harmful emissions.

The organisation's value proposition is based on a vertically integrated waste-to-energy ecosystem that addresses three interconnected challenges: waste management through diversion, recycling and material recovery; renewable energy generation through electricity and fuel production; and environmental protection by reducing landfill dependence and emissions.

Operations are supported by a Triple Stream Model comprising waste management through advanced sorting, treatment and certified disposal; recycling and material recovery using artificial intelligence-enhanced recovery of plastics, metals, glass and paper; and waste-to-energy production through electricity, bio-oil, biodiesel and bitumen generation.

The technology incorporates several innovation features, including the absence of harmful emissions and chemical additives, the ability to process nearly all waste types, including wet and organic waste, a fully circular process that leaves no residual waste, long-term energy-storage capability, and artificial intelligence-powered operations, reporting and logistics.

Established in 2022, the company aims to operate from the Free State and plans to employ 150 people while expanding to four operational facilities. Each plant is designed to process more than 150,000 tonnes of waste annually. The enterprise intends to serve all nine provinces of South Africa, working with both government and private-sector clients before expanding its scalable and replicable technology internationally.

Impact Created

National Waste Incineration contributes to environmental protection by supporting responsible waste treatment, reducing unmanaged waste and strengthening resource management.

Innovation & Leadership

National Waste Incineration's defining innovation lies in the characteristics of its adopted patented technology. The process does not use chemical additives, generates no harmful emissions or effluents, and produces no residual waste, as all remaining materials are reused within the process. The technology accepts almost all waste types, including organic and wet waste, while enabling the processing of materials that traditional recycling systems cannot utilise. It also incorporates long-term energy-storage capability.

The enterprise addresses three major challenges simultaneously: climate change, the waste crisis and South Africa's energy shortages. Its environmental approach focuses on reducing dependence on landfills, eliminating harmful emissions and supporting the restoration of natural ecosystems. Its energy model aims to provide reliable renewable baseload power, enable long-term energy storage and reduce

reliance on imported fossil fuels while supporting improved waste-management compliance and diversified green revenue opportunities.

Kim's leadership philosophy is centred on creating sustainable impact through innovation, integrity and purposeful action. She leads through ethical governance, collaboration, accountability, resilience and continuous improvement, with a strong emphasis on safety, environmental responsibility and operational discipline.

One of the principal challenges she has faced has been navigating the regulatory, funding and market barriers associated with introducing advanced waste-to-energy technologies within a highly regulated and evolving environmental landscape. She has responded by developing strategic partnerships, engaging proactively with regulatory stakeholders, promoting sustainable waste-management practices and pursuing commercially viable solutions that balance environmental and economic objectives. These efforts continue to support the establishment of National Waste Incineration as an emerging participant in sustainable waste treatment while strengthening industry engagement and advancing cleaner waste-management practices in South Africa.

Participation in the Global Women Leadership Programme further strengthened Kim's ability to lead across international markets, build strategic partnerships, enhance stakeholder engagement and support sustainable business growth. The programme also expanded National Waste Incineration's strategic network, increased collaboration opportunities across BRICS markets and reinforced the company's position in developing innovative waste-to-energy solutions.

Kim's current focus is on securing funding, expanding support for waste-to-energy infrastructure, advancing sustainable waste-treatment technologies, increasing resource-recovery capabilities and growing National Waste Incineration's presence across Southern Africa.

Awards & Recognitions

Kim has earned a Special Jury Mention at BRICS CCI WE Global Women Leadership Programme 2025-26. She is also elected as one of six participants from 62 applicants for South Africa's inaugural Global Women Leadership Programme cohort in 2025.





Phumzile Khoza

Founder & CEO
Lathitha Holdings

Phumzile Khoza is a South African entrepreneur driving renewable energy and circular economy innovation through Lathitha Holdings. She has built a business that converts waste cooking oil into biodiesel, demonstrating how environmental challenges can be transformed into sustainable economic opportunities. Her work combines climate innovation, commercial development, and strategic partnerships to support South Africa's transition towards cleaner energy.

“
Innovation is not just about technology; it is about solving real problems for people and the planet. I am committed to building African solutions that create lasting environmental, social, and economic impact. My journey has taught me that resilience creates opportunity. Every challenge has strengthened my resolve to build African solutions that transform lives, protect our environment, and inspire the next generation of innovators.
”

Professional Journey

Phumzile Khoza is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Lathitha Holdings, a South African renewable energy and circular economy enterprise producing biodiesel and advancing sustainable energy solutions through environmental innovation. Her work focuses on transforming waste resources into cleaner energy products while creating economic value through circular economy principles.

She holds a National Senior Certificate and has completed executive and entrepreneurship development programmes through the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). She has also undertaken specialised training in renewable energy, circular economy, and business growth through leading South African and international innovation programmes. These learning experiences strengthened her expertise in sustainability, entrepreneurship, and renewable energy while supporting the growth of her business.

Phumzile's entrepreneurial journey began at the age of 13, when she established businesses in the fashion and beauty sectors. These early ventures introduced her to business development and commercial operations, laying the foundation for her later work in renewable energy. Her experience across different industries enabled her to develop skills in strategic partnerships, commercialisation, sustainability, and climate innovation before founding Lathitha Biodiesel.

The transition into renewable energy reflected a commitment to addressing environmental challenges through practical business solutions.

About Lathitha Holdings

Lathitha Holdings is a South African renewable energy and circular economy enterprise producing biodiesel and advancing sustainable energy solutions through environmental innovation. Its primary offering is high-quality biodiesel for industrial applications, produced from recycled waste cooking oil. The company also provides waste cooking oil collection services, circular economy solutions, and sustainability advisory support to help organizations reduce waste and lower their environmental footprint.

Its value proposition lies in transforming waste cooking oil into a renewable fuel that reduces environmental pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and dependence on fossil fuels. The production process uses transesterification technology to convert waste into biodiesel, supporting resource efficiency and South Africa's Just Energy Transition.

Established in 2021 and based in Johannesburg, Gauteng, Lathitha Holdings serves customers in the mining, transport, agriculture, construction, and manufacturing sectors. The company collaborates with restaurants, food manufacturers, research institutions, and strategic partners to strengthen sustainable waste management and renewable energy value chains. Over the coming years, Lathitha Holdings aims to expand production capacity, grow its waste cooking oil collection network, strengthen regional distribution, and scale its operations across Africa through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Impact Created

Since its establishment in 2021, Lathitha Holdings has created environmental and economic value by converting waste cooking oil into renewable biodiesel and related sustainable energy solutions. Waste cooking oil that might otherwise pollute rivers, soils, and drainage systems is instead recovered and transformed into a cleaner alternative to fossil diesel for industrial applications.

The company has supplied biodiesel to customers in South Africa, including the mining sector. It has also expanded its market presence through strategic partnerships and pilot projects that demonstrate the commercial viability of renewable biodiesel.



Beyond environmental outcomes, the enterprise contributes to economic development by creating employment and enterprise development opportunities within the circular economy. It engages local waste cooking oil suppliers and collection partners while promoting the participation of women and young people in the green economy.

Commercial milestones include securing pilot opportunities with the mining industry, winning the BRICS Women's Startups Contest in the Ecology Category, and establishing strategic collaborations with organisations including the University of Surrey, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), and initiatives supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ).

The company measures its impact through indicators such as waste cooking oil recovered, renewable biodiesel produced, greenhouse gas emissions avoided, and the growth of its circular economy network. As operations continue to expand, Lathitha Holdings is strengthening its impact measurement systems to provide verified reporting on environmental, social, and commercial outcomes.

Innovation & Leadership

The central innovation of Lathitha Holdings is its circular economy model, which converts waste cooking oil into high-quality renewable biodiesel through sustainable feedstock collection, resource recovery, and clean energy production. This model addresses environmental pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and dependence on fossil fuels by transforming a waste stream into a renewable energy resource for the mining, transport, agriculture, construction, and manufacturing sectors.

Since its establishment in 2021, the company has demonstrated both the commercial and environmental potential of this approach through pilot projects, industry engagement, and strategic partnerships.

Phumzile's leadership is guided by purpose-driven innovation, collaboration, and sustainable impact. She believes that businesses can generate economic value while protecting the environment and creating opportunities for communities. Her leadership approach combines resilience, integrity, continuous learning, strategic partnerships, technical innovation, commercial growth, and environmental stewardship.

One of the company's principal challenges has been securing the funding, regulatory approvals, certifications, and market adoption required to scale a renewable fuel business within an industry traditionally dependent on fossil fuels. Phumzile addressed these challenges by participating in entrepreneurship and leadership programmes, strengthening technical and commercial capabilities, building strategic partnerships, and pursuing local and international market opportunities. These efforts enhanced the company's credibility, expanded its professional network, and positioned it for long-term growth.

Participation in the GWLP experience further strengthened her strategic leadership, international collaboration, and partnership-building capabilities. Today, her focus remains on expanding production capacity, securing long-term commercial off-take agreements, strengthening regional partnerships, and growing Lathitha Holdings across Africa through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), contributing to South Africa's Just Energy Transition and a more sustainable and resilient future.

Awards & Recognitions

Phumzile Khoza has received recognition through entrepreneurship, leadership, and innovation programmes that reflect her contribution to renewable energy and circular economy development. She was selected as one of six participants from 62 applicants for South Africa's inaugural GWLP cohort in 2025. In 2024, she won the BRICS Women's Startups Contest in the Ecology Category, organised by the BRICS Women's Business Alliance.



She was also a finalist for the Veuve Clicquot Bold Woman Award South Africa (2025) and the Lean In Equity & Sustainability Power List (2025). Her professional development includes graduating from the GIBS Entrepreneurship Development Academy's Road to Leadership, Road to Finance, and Road to Growth programmes.

Additional recognitions include completing the "TVET Capacity Development for Just Transition and Employment Promotion Projects" programme in 2026 under the Career Path Development for Employment (CPD4E) Project implemented by GIZ. She has participated in the Sasol Women in Engineering Incubator Programme (2025), Google Hustle Academy (twice), Orange Corners South Africa (twice), the WomHub Circular Economy Programme, and the CSIR Capacity Building Programme. She also participated in a biodiesel production pilot with the University of Surrey focused on circular economy and sustainable innovation initiatives.



Women in Innovation, Science and Entrepreneurship (WISE)

Women in Innovation, Science & Entrepreneurship (WISE) is a multinational BRICS+ innovation, science, technology and entrepreneurship platform. It was launched on 4 July 2025 at the BRICS WBA Annual Plenary in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The global programme owner is the BRICS Chamber of Commerce & Industry Women Empowerment (BRICS CCI WE), led by Ms. Ruby Sinha, President of BRICS CCI WE and Programme Lead, WISE. BRICS WBA South Africa is the South African implementing partner, while SheatWork is the knowledge partner.

WISE focuses on Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, the Internet of Things, cybersecurity, robotics, semiconductors, HealthTech, AgriTech, ClimateTech and SpaceTech. Its three pillars are Innovation and Collaboration, Funding Support, and Policy Advocacy. The programme's organising framework connects leadership development, enterprise growth, innovation systems, funding pathways, policy influence and international market access.



Advancing the female equity agenda requires institutions to collaborate across leadership development, enterprise growth, innovation, funding, policy influence and international market access rather than working in isolation.”

The WISE approach places global networks, female equity and policy enablement within the same institutional framework. It defines global networks as communities and economic ecosystems rather than occasional support groups. It distinguishes formal access from what women require to participate fully and achieve equitable outcomes, while calling for policy to move from protection to enablement and to embed accountability within economic and innovation systems.

For South Africa in 2028, the identified opportunities are to convert standing participation into hosting, capital mobilisation and institutional formalisation while building on the foundations developed through Brazil and India. Proposed areas include cross-border laboratories, accelerators, mentorship and applied research using strengths in mining technology, financial technology, universities and artificial-intelligence and data infrastructure; exploration of a BRICS+ Women's Innovation Fund or co-investment vehicle through blended finance; and dialogue towards a BRICS+ declaration on women in science, technology, innovation and entrepreneurship supported by implementation and accountability mechanisms.

These remain proposed opportunities, not current commitments.



Programme Journey

WISE progressed from its launch in Brazil to South African advisory and institutional engagement, Indian public advocacy and technology platforms, investor and business-to-business exposure, a Roundtable, the formal presentation of a Policy and Legal Framework, publication of a Whitepaper and sustained media amplification. Each stage added a different institutional capability to the same female-equity agenda.

Brazil provided the launch platform and connected WISE to wider BRICS, G20 and innovation networks. South Africa supported the launch, joined the Global Advisory Board, engaged South Africa's National Advisory Council on Innovation (NACI) and contributed a female-equity and sovereign-technology perspective. India provided the 2026 artificial intelligence, business, investor, technology, Whitepaper, policy and media platforms through which WISE gained visibility and practical momentum.

About WISE

WISE was launched as a global platform under the BRICS Women's Business Alliance to enable women to lead in science, technology and entrepreneurship. Its three pillars create the organising framework, while the programme becomes operational when those pillars connect leadership development, enterprise growth, innovation systems, funding pathways, policy influence and international market access.

The collaboration model brings together government, industry, academia, financial institutions, legal experts, innovation organisations and market platforms. The programme's approach recognises that leadership without enterprise pathways does not create scale, enterprise support without capital stalls, innovation without policy and intellectual-property protection remains vulnerable, and funding without markets does not produce durable growth.

Impact Created

During 2025-2026, WISE advanced multinational governance and leadership through its BRICS WBA Annual Plenary launch, South African representation on the Global Advisory Board, and cross-border advisory and partner-institution engagement. It also created enterprise, investor and technology exposure through South African participation in business-to-business matchmaking, investor and venture-capital engagement, Science and Technology Parks of India (STPI) learning and a Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology-National Association of Software and Service Companies (MeitY-NASSCOM) Centre of Excellence visit.

Policy, evidence and public agenda-setting advanced through the WISE Roundtable, Policy & Legal Framework, Whitepaper, India AI Impact Summit Leadership Reflections, NewsX engagement and national Indian media coverage. Future funds, declarations, summits and 2028 structures are separate proposed opportunities rather than completed commitments.

The WISE Whitepaper emerged from the 2026 Trailblazers Roundtable and the formal presentation of the Policy and Legal Framework. It identified seven structural barriers: social and cultural bias; funding and financial barriers; intellectual-property and innovation gaps; skills, reskilling and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics participation; the mid-career "missing middle"; governance, legal and policy gaps; and unrecognised unpaid economic contribution.

It identified six strategic action areas: policy and regulatory interventions; financial-ecosystem development; skills and workforce integration; institutional and corporate governance; innovation and collaboration platforms; and cultural and behavioural shifts. The four-phase implementation roadmap covers Experience through data collection, pilots and grassroots engagement; Reflection through stakeholder consultation and synthesis; Content through policy frameworks and financial models; and Application through implementation and formal commitments through BRICS platforms.



The Whitepaper proposes gender-responsive procurement, blended finance, a BRICS WISE Fund, digital registries, re-entry pathways and cross-border innovation platforms.

Innovation and Leadership

Zulu supported the WISE launch at the BRICS WBA Annual Plenary in Rio de Janeiro and joined the Global Advisory Board. She helped coordinate engagement with South Africa's National Advisory Council on Innovation, raised the agenda through a NewsX India interview focused on women-led innovation, and contributed to the India AI Impact Summit panel on moving women from implementers to innovators in artificial intelligence. Her contribution appeared in the Leadership Reflections Compendium.

She also led South African participation in the Annual Women's Summit, business-to-business matchmaking, STPI engagement and a MeitY-NASSCOM Centre of Excellence visit. She worked with BRICS CCI WE to advance the Roundtable, Whitepaper and Policy & Legal Framework. Her Global South technology proposition focused on the need for Africa and the Global South to shape technology, data, infrastructure and governance with purpose and authority.

Zulu stated: "We need to shift the conversation from gender equality to female equity. Equity is about enabling outcomes, not only representation." WISE applies this distinction by focusing not only on women's presence but also on the conditions required for participation and equitable outcomes.

Awards and Recognitions

WISE does not claim a stand-alone award. Recognition is evidenced through international platforms, Leadership Reflections, the WISE Whitepaper and Policy & Legal Framework, partner engagement and sustained Indian media coverage.

Selected recognition included Hindustan Times coverage on 4 August 2026 on dismantling systemic barriers for women in technology and entrepreneurship; The Tribune on 22 July 2026 on the strategic roadmap for strengthening female participation in business ecosystems across member economies; and ETGovernment on 23 July 2026 on stronger support for women in innovation across BRICS+ nations. The coverage addressed systemic barriers, female equity, funding, intellectual property, the missing middle, policy reform, finance, cross-border cooperation and institutional support.







UNITED ARAB EMIRATES



**Assia Riccio**

Founder
Evolvin' Global

Born in Italy, educated across Europe and the United States, and now based in the United Arab Emirates, Assia Riccio has built her career around expanding access to education, skills development, and international employment opportunities. Through Evolvin' Global, she has developed models that connect hospitality training with sustainable career pathways, particularly for underserved communities across Africa and the Middle East.

“
Evolvin' Global was created to reimagine how talent is developed and connected to opportunity across borders. By leveraging proven ecosystems such as the UAE's hospitality and labour mobility model, the organisation seeks to ensure that talent mobility is secure, dignified, and impactful. When these systems function effectively, talent becomes a driver of transformation that strengthens individuals, communities, and economies across multiple regions.
”



Professional Journey

Assia Riccio's professional journey reflects a long-standing commitment to education, empowerment, and creating opportunities for others.

She began her career with internationally recognised hospitality brands, including Belmond and later Jumeirah in Dubai, where she gained experience across operations, learning and development, and human resources. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Economy and Business of Tourism from Università degli Studi Parthenope in Naples, Italy, and completed executive education programmes at Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne in Switzerland and Cornell University in the United States. These academic and professional experiences strengthened her understanding of workforce development and international hospitality standards.

Her outlook was also shaped by her family's longstanding commitment to supporting children's education across Africa and South America. Inspired by her mother, who deeply valued education despite having limited access to opportunities herself, Assia grew up believing that education should serve as a pathway to empowerment and social mobility. These values later became central to her entrepreneurial vision.

A significant milestone in her corporate career came during her tenure as Group Learning and Development Manager at Jumeirah Restaurant Group in Dubai. There, she designed training strategies for more than 1,000 employees. While the role offered professional success, it also reinforced her desire to build initiatives capable of delivering long-term social impact beyond the corporate environment.

A career transition in 2017 became the turning point that led to the creation of Evolvin' Women, a social enterprise focused on empowering African women through education, skills development, and international hospitality opportunities. Starting with limited resources, Assia independently developed capabilities in areas ranging from licensing and website development to partnership management and programme design.

As the initiative expanded, Evolvin' Women evolved into Evolvin' Global to reflect both organisational growth and the changing needs of the communities it served. The organisation adopted a more inclusive model that extended opportunities to men while maintaining its focus on equitable access to employment and education. This evolution also led to the establishment of Kutafiti, the organisation's non-profit arm based in Kenya, which supports marginalised young people through scholarship funding and initiatives designed to reduce barriers to skills development and employability.

Recognising the need for more sustainable impact models, Assia drew on her hospitality background to identify coffee as a practical training platform capable of creating direct employment opportunities. This resulted in the launch of Nia Coffee, a social enterprise that combines coffee supply with the "From Bean to Barista" programme, equipping African youth with barista certification and practical skills for careers in hospitality.

Today, Assia Riccio is recognised as an advocate for social entrepreneurship, gender equality, and sustainable development across Africa and the Middle East. She regularly speaks at international forums, including TEDx and initiatives organised by UN Women, and has received recognition as one of the GCC's Women Leaders of 2017 and the Women Super Achiever Award at the World HRD Congress in 2018.

About Evolvin' Global

Founded in the UAE, Evolvin' Global is a purpose-led social enterprise specialising in hospitality talent development, international training programmes, and capacity-building initiatives. The organisation operates as an end-to-end platform for career development while strengthening the capabilities of



hospitality educators and institutions. Its work focuses on designing and delivering industry-aligned training solutions that respond to evolving global workforce requirements.

The organisation follows a blended learning model comprising 70 per cent experiential learning, 20 per cent mentoring and coaching, and 10 per cent formal and digital training. This approach is designed to ensure that participants acquire practical, job-ready skills alongside structured professional development.

Evolvin' Global delivers its work through two flagship programmes. The Hospitality Train the Trainer (ToT) Programme focuses on strengthening education systems by upskilling Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) lecturers, university faculty members, and vocational trainers through international exposure, modern teaching methodologies, and curriculum enhancement. Built around four pillars-youth employment, educator capacity building, sustainable tourism, and women and inclusive growth-the programme aims to strengthen hospitality talent pipelines.

The Accelerator Programme is a 12-month career advancement initiative that supports graduates and early-career professionals seeking opportunities in the international hospitality sector. By combining technical training, workplace readiness, and direct industry connections, the programme bridges the gap between education and employment and enables participants to transition into global careers.

Evolvin' Global's approach combines talent development with systemic transformation by linking education, practical training, and employment pathways. Headquartered in Dubai, the organisation collaborates with hospitality partners and educational institutions across 12 African countries and five countries in the Middle East. Its partnership-driven model has been designed to support future expansion into additional regions.

Impact Created

Since 2020, Evolvin' Global has generated measurable economic and social impact across its areas of operation. The organisation has enrolled more than 1,400 participants from 10 African countries, contributing to over USD 12.5 million in combined salaries through direct employment opportunities and income generation. More than 130,000 hours of training have been delivered in partnership with global organisations such as PwC and Accenture, strengthening workforce readiness and enabling talent to access employment opportunities in international markets. Graduates have progressed into roles across the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

A major initiative involved preparing and placing more than 800 women in hospitality roles during the FIFA World Cup Qatar. Participants were safely deployed and successfully repatriated through structured processes designed to support secure international labour mobility. The programme demonstrated the organisation's emphasis on ethical migration practices while expanding employment opportunities for women in the hospitality sector.

The benefits of these employment opportunities have extended beyond individual participants. Many graduates have used their earnings to support education for siblings, improve access to healthcare for family members and neighbours, and establish small businesses within their communities. Several alumni have also initiated community-based projects focused on women's empowerment and skills development. These include programmes that train women in upcycling and baking to create new sources of income. Others have continued their education while remaining employed, strengthening both their professional prospects and long-term earning potential.

Inclusion remains a central element of Evolvin' Global's approach. The organisation continues to prioritise women and underserved young people while expanding access to international opportunities. Its Train the Trainer (ToT) Programme is designed to strengthen education systems at scale and is projected to reach more than 500,000 students across Africa within the next five years. Through the



combination of direct employment pathways and institutional capacity building, the organisation contributes to sustainable economic growth, social mobility, and community development.

Innovation & Leadership

Evolvin' Global applies a talent development model that combines hospitality expertise, industry partnerships, and international collaboration to strengthen employability in emerging economies. Operating from the UAE, the organisation draws on the country's established hospitality ecosystem to connect education, employment, and labour mobility through structured international pathways. Rather than treating employability as a standalone training challenge, the organisation has developed interconnected talent ecosystems that address unemployment, gender inequality, youth exclusion, skills gaps, and limited access to international labour markets.

A defining feature of this model is its dual approach. The Accelerator Programme works directly with graduates to prepare them for employment, while the Train the Trainer (ToT) Programme strengthens educators and institutions by introducing international standards and modern teaching practices. Together, these programmes reinforce the connection between education systems and employment outcomes.

The organisation has also established a structured framework for safe international migration. The model incorporates recruitment, participant preparation, deployment, employment support, and repatriation, helping to ensure compliance, participant protection, and dignified employment, particularly for women entering international labour markets for the first time.

Its leadership approach centres on collaboration, systems thinking, and long-term sustainability. The organisation focuses on building partnerships, aligning stakeholders, and developing inclusive and transparent solutions that can adapt to changing labour market needs. Challenges associated with international mobility regulations, varying education systems, and preparation for global workplaces are addressed through government and industry partnerships, standardised frameworks, intensive coaching, and mentorship. This integrated approach supports scalable and ethical workforce development.

Awards & Recognitions

Evolvin' Global has been recognised internationally for its work in sustainable tourism and social impact. The organisation has been presented at platforms including the DMCC Sustainability Award 2026 for Impact organised by the Dubai Multi Commodities Centre, the Global Business Forum for Africa 2019 organised by the Dubai Chamber of Commerce, the UN Women Women's Economic Empowerment Global Summit 2018, the Arabian Travel Market Dubai 2018, and the African Women in Tourism Summit 2017.

In 2020, Evolvin' Global was selected for the Social Enterprise Incubator launched by the Dubai Chamber of Commerce. The organisation also supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal Four (Quality Education), Goal Five (Gender Equality), and Goal Eight (Decent Work and Economic Growth). It became one of the first enterprises with fewer than 20 employees to become a signatory to the United Nations Global Compact and serves on the steering committee in the UAE supporting implementation of the Women's Empowerment Principles, developed through collaboration between UN Women and the United Nations Global Compact.



Yulia Stark
President,
European Women's
Association (EWA)
Founder of NAYRA

Yulia Stark is an international leader in women's economic empowerment, financial inclusion, and entrepreneurship. Drawing on experience in private banking, investment, and policy advocacy, she has developed initiatives that connect financial literacy with measurable economic participation. Through the European Women's Association and NAYRA, she works with governments, educational institutions, and industry partners to expand financial capability for women across Europe, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and beyond.

“For many years, financial literacy programmes globally have focused heavily on participation metrics rather than economic impact. Through this partnership, we want to build a more practical, scalable and measurable model connected to real opportunities, real markets and long-term economic inclusion.”



Professional Journey

Yulia Stark's professional journey has been shaped by finance, policy, and a long-standing commitment to improving women's economic participation. Her career began in private banking, where she managed diversified investment portfolios for high-net-worth clients at Robeco Bank, Kaupthing Bank, and Cortal Consors across Brussels, Geneva, and Luxembourg. Her work involved equities, mutual funds, and structured financial products, providing first-hand insight into how financial systems influence long-term economic outcomes. In 2011 she founded Business Bridge International, a cross-border advisory practice supporting companies trading between Western and Eastern Europe, which she continues to lead.

During this period, she also recognised that access to sophisticated financial knowledge remained limited for many women. This observation became the foundation of her work in financial empowerment. Alongside her banking career, she served as Senator and Country Chair for Belgium at the World Business Angels Investment Forum (WBAF), an affiliate of the G20 Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion, and between 2018 and 2020 sat on the executive board of WINTRADE Global in London, co-chairing international women-in-business conferences. These roles strengthened her conviction that improving women's access to investment and financial education is both an economic priority and a social necessity.

One of her earliest initiatives was the establishment of FAB Academy in 2013, the first accelerator programme in Belgium dedicated to women-led small and medium-sized enterprises. Supported by the Belgian government, the programme coached more than 1,000 women and contributed to the creation of 570 women-led businesses over eight years, with a curriculum covering financial modelling, scalability, investor readiness, digital marketing and public speaking. The initiative later evolved into the European Women's Association (EWA), an international non-profit organisation that brings together women entrepreneurs, investors, and policymakers across Europe and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Her work expanded further through the co-founding of the EWA Accelerator in partnership with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ministry of Economy, a programme supporting women technology founders seeking international growth and launched at DMCC in 2024. It forms part of a wider portfolio of initiatives. Through the EWA Lightning Rounds, delivered with the international accelerator generator and sponsored by the UAE Ministry of Economy, women founders across the Middle East and North Africa are placed in curated one-to-one sessions with global and regional investors. Alongside these, EWA runs investment-readiness and mentoring programmes, trade missions and business delegations between Europe and the Gulf, holds a memorandum of understanding with the Qatar Business Women Association, and works with the European Commission as a partner in the ESTEAM initiative and the WEgate platform for women's entrepreneurship. Taken together, these programmes have delivered a 60 per cent post-programme funding rate among the women founders who take part. In 2025, she launched NAYRA, a gamified digital financial literacy platform. During the same year, she formalised the UAE Women and Girls Financial Literacy and Sustainable Finance Initiative in collaboration with DMCC and the UAE Ministry of Economy & Tourism. The initiative introduced the Financial Confidence Index (FCI) framework under the UAE National Financial Literacy Strategy (2026-2030).

A defining turning point came during the COVID-19 pandemic. As lockdowns disrupted economies worldwide, existing inequalities became more visible. Many women experienced greater financial insecurity as caregiving responsibilities increased and workforce participation declined. The period reinforced the need for solutions that combined financial education with practical confidence, measurable outcomes, and broad accessibility.

Rather than slowing her work, the pandemic accelerated a strategic shift. Expo 2020 Dubai created new opportunities for international collaboration and introduced her to an ecosystem where gender equality and entrepreneurship were closely linked with national policy. Partnerships with the UAE Ministry of

Economy and DMCC followed, transforming the European Women's Association from a primarily European platform into an international organisation with a significant presence in the UAE. These collaborations also provided the environment in which NAYRA was developed.

About European Women's Association and NAYRA

The European Women's Association is an international non-profit organisation dedicated to advancing women's economic participation through policy partnerships, financial empowerment programmes, and global advocacy. Founded in Europe, the organisation expanded into the UAE following collaborations established during Expo 2020 Dubai and supports national efforts that promote gender equality and entrepreneurship.

NAYRA represents the organisation's latest initiative. It is a data-driven digital platform designed to strengthen financial literacy among women, girls, and young entrepreneurs through scalable technology.

The platform combines gamified learning with personalised educational pathways, financial literacy modules, real-time progress tracking, and a rewards system that encourages continued engagement. Alongside these learning tools, NAYRA incorporates the Financial Confidence Index, a framework developed with DMCC and the UAE Ministry of Economy & Tourism to measure not only financial knowledge but also financial confidence, readiness, and participation in economic activity.

The platform also provides institutional dashboards that enable governments, universities, and corporate partners to monitor programme outcomes and generate data that supports policy development. Initially available in English and Arabic, the system has been designed for rapid translation and localisation across BRICS markets.

A distinguishing feature of NAYRA is its ability to adapt quickly to different national contexts. Language, currency, regulatory requirements, and cultural content can be localised within three to four weeks, allowing governments, universities, and organisations to deploy the platform under their own identity while contributing to a broader evidence base on financial capability. This approach enables each participating country to incorporate local priorities and challenges into a shared learning framework.

The UAE pilot begins in the autumn 2026 semester at the American University of Sharjah, where NAYRA is deployed through the university's learning-management system as a credit-bearing component, before expanding to further universities and to secondary schools. Through partnerships with educational institutions and businesswomen's associations, the programme aims to reach 100,000 women and girls within two years. The same implementation model has been designed for replication in other markets through local language adaptation and region-specific case studies.

Impact Created

Yulia Stark's work brings together women's economic empowerment, entrepreneurship, and financial inclusion through programmes designed to generate measurable outcomes. Her initiatives position financial literacy as a contributor to long-term economic participation rather than an educational objective alone.

The economic case for this work is anchored in the UAE's own trajectory. The country ranks first among Arab states in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2025 and thirteenth globally in the United Nations Development Programme's Gender Inequality Index. As of August 2024, Emirati women held 135,171 commercial licences, an increase of 23 per cent on the previous year, according to the UAE Ministry of Economy, and owned more than 128,000 small and medium-sized enterprises. Capability, however, has outpaced access to capital: women-led ventures attract an estimated 1.2 per cent of venture funding across the Middle East and North Africa. It is precisely this gap that the European



Women's Association's partnership with DMCC and the UAE Ministry of Economy & Tourism is designed to close, connecting financial capability to markets, investors and measurable economic participation.

The UAE's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for 94 per cent of businesses and contribute 63.5 per cent of the country's non-oil gross domestic product (GDP). Under the We the UAE 2031 vision, the country aims to increase the number of SMEs to one million while doubling the entrepreneur success rate. EWA's programmes contribute to this ecosystem by strengthening financial capability and supporting women entrepreneurs. The EWA Accelerator and the EWA Lightning Rounds, the latter delivered with gener8tor and sponsored by the UAE Ministry of Economy, connect women-led technology ventures with international investors, and across EWA's programmes as a whole 60 per cent of participating founders have gone on to secure funding. NAYRA's Financial Confidence Index will in turn generate one of the first large-scale datasets on women's financial capability in the UAE, supporting implementation of the National Financial Literacy Strategy (2026-2030).

Beyond economic outcomes, the organisation has built an international platform combining education, technology, and policy collaboration. EWA Group operates across more than 54 countries, holds over 72 strategic partnerships, and convenes a network of more than 50,000 women entrepreneurs and professionals through in excess of 315 business events, with a cumulative global media reach exceeding seven million. It has led fifteen or more trade missions to the Gulf in three years, and counts the European Commission, Google, Nasdaq, Deloitte and Mastercard among its partners and supporters. That record builds on FAB Academy, which produced 570 women-led businesses over eight years, and continues today through the EWA Accelerator and the EWA Lightning Rounds delivered with gener8tor under the sponsorship of the UAE Ministry of Economy. In February 2026 the organisation signed its agreement with DMCC, and its programmes now extend from the Gulf to the Dominican Republic, where it supports the Dominican Republic-UAE Investment Council with ProDominicana, to Ghana with the Ghana Enterprise Agency, and to the Republic of Korea, where an affiliate launched in Seoul in 2025.

The UAE pilot of NAYRA aims to engage more than 100,000 women and girls within two years through universities, secondary schools, and businesswomen's associations. The platform has also been designed for direct replication across BRICS+ markets through localisation of language, curriculum, case studies, and regulatory frameworks. The Financial Confidence Index is expected to provide policymakers with evidence-based insights into women's financial capability while supporting future policy development.

Innovation & Leadership

Yulia Stark's principal innovation is the Financial Confidence Index, a 27-item framework developed with academic partners and supported by DMCC and the UAE Ministry of Economy & Tourism. Unlike conventional financial literacy assessments that primarily measure knowledge, the framework evaluates financial self-efficacy, resilience, and digital financial capability.

NAYRA applies this framework through a mobile-first, gamified platform that can be deployed within weeks while allowing governments, universities, and corporate partners to maintain their own institutional identity. The resulting data contributes to broader evidence that supports policymaking while strengthening financial education programmes.

Her leadership approach emphasises collaboration rather than technology alone. She views sustainable impact as the result of partnerships among governments, educational institutions, businesses, and communities. This philosophy guided the development of the EWA Accelerator with the UAE Ministry of Economy and continues to shape every initiative undertaken through EWA and NAYRA. Each programme is designed around local priorities so that participating organisations become active partners rather than programme recipients.



Building an organisation that operates across Belgium and the UAE required adapting to different institutional environments and cultural contexts. The experience of navigating these differences, together with lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, informed the strategic direction of both the European Women's Association and NAYRA. Today, these experiences underpin a model intended for international collaboration and replication across multiple regions.

Awards & Recognitions

Yulia Stark's contributions to women's entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, and international collaboration have been recognised through several global honours. In September 2025, she received the Knight Grand Cross of Justice, Order of Saint James, issued by the Princely House of Bentheim-Steinfurt, the historical successor of the Counts of Holland. Earlier recognitions include being named among the Top 50 Global Inspirational Women to Look Out For by Prodigy Global Network in 2021, receiving the Exceptional Women of Excellence award from the Women Economic Forum in 2018, and the Iconic Woman Creating a Better World for All recognition from the Women Economic Forum in 2017.

She also serves on the Board of the BeNeLux Business Council in Abu Dhabi, where she acts as Belgian Embassy liaison, and is an Honorary Associate of the Diplomat Business Club in Dubai. She is a partner of the European Commission's ESTEAM initiative and of WEgate, its gateway for women's entrepreneurship, sits on the advisory board of The Rahm Foundation, and serves as Partner and Head of Strategic Investments for the EU-GCC corridor at Bluewater Capital. In addition, she is an active mentor with the Google Women Will Programme and UN Women. Her international policy engagement has included serving as Senator and Country Chair for Belgium at the World Business Angels Investment Forum, an affiliate of the G20 Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion.

Her work has also been presented at international forums, including the World Economic Forum in Davos (2023), the G20 World Tourism Forum in Indonesia (2022), LEAP Saudi Arabia (2022), the Horasis Global Meeting in Türkiye (2023), the Women in Tech Summit Poland (2023), the Future Innovation Summit Dubai (2022 and 2023), the ESTEAM European Commission events (2022 and 2023), the House of Lords in London, the SHE Conference in Sweden, Digital Enterprise Show Málaga, and the Americas Investment Forum in Santo Domingo (2026).





Medea Nocentini

Senior Partner,
Global Ventures
Founder, C3 –
Companies Creating Change

With more than two decades of international leadership across strategy, venture capital, and impact investing, Medea Nocentini has built a career at the intersection of business growth and social impact. As Senior Partner at Global Ventures and Founder of C3 – Companies Creating Change, she has played a leading role in supporting entrepreneurs across emerging markets while advancing investment models that integrate innovation, sustainability, and inclusion.

“
The business benefits of diversity of thought are clear: diverse groups are better equipped to uncover blind spots, generate a wider set of solutions, and build outcomes that are resilient.
”

Professional Journey

Medea Nocentini's professional journey reflects a consistent belief that commercial success and positive social impact can reinforce one another. Backed by an MBA from Columbia Business School in New York, a Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering from Politecnico di Torino in Italy, and an Engineering Diploma from École Centrale Paris in France, she entered the professional world with a combination of technical expertise, strategic thinking, and international perspective.

She began her career at Booz Allen Hamilton, where she developed business strategies for technology, media and telecommunications, consumer, and public sector clients across Europe, the United States, and the Middle East. The experience established the strategic foundation that would shape her future leadership roles.

Medea later served as Senior Vice President for Strategy and Corporate Development at OSN, a leading pay television platform in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). She subsequently became Chief Strategy Officer at AW Rostamani Group, a diversified family-owned enterprise generating approximately US\$2 billion in annual revenue and employing more than 4,000 people. These roles strengthened her experience in corporate strategy, organisational development, and business transformation.

A defining moment in her career came when she recognised that many impact-driven entrepreneurs across the Middle East and Africa were addressing significant social and environmental challenges but lacked structured support to expand their ventures. In 2012, while continuing her corporate career, she founded C3 - Companies Creating Change, a purpose-driven enterprise based in the United Arab Emirates that was designed to bridge this gap. Working through institutional barriers, she established partnerships with multinational corporations and built C3 into one of the region's recognised startup acceleration platforms.

In 2018, Medea joined Global Ventures as a Senior Partner during the firm's inception alongside founder Noor Sweid. As the organisations evolved, the complementary strengths of C3 and Global Ventures created opportunities to integrate impact expertise with venture capital. This combination expanded support for underrepresented founders, particularly women, across emerging markets by connecting acceleration programmes with long-term investment opportunities.

Alongside her investment and entrepreneurial work, Medea serves as an Inner Development Goals Ambassador. She is also a Professional Certified Coach accredited by the International Coaching Federation, a Certified Professional Co-Active Coach, a certified Organisation and Relationship Systems Coach, and an Enneagram Practitioner. These qualifications reflect her focus on leadership development, self-awareness, and organisational effectiveness.

About C3 - Companies Creating Change

Founded in 2012, C3 - Companies Creating Change is a B Corp-certified impact platform that connects startups, corporations, governments, investors, and subject-matter experts through collaborative programmes designed to promote innovation, investment, and sustainable growth. Today, C3 operates as part of Global Ventures, a United Arab Emirates-based international venture capital firm that invests in founders and businesses across emerging markets. Together, the two organisations provide an integrated investment and acceleration platform focused on expanding opportunities for impact-driven entrepreneurs.

C3 delivers structured programmes that support entrepreneurs from minimum viable product development through investor readiness and market expansion. Participants receive tailored mentorship, access to a global investor network of more than 7,000 members, and a community of over 4,000 sector specialists. Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles, impact measurement,



and governance practices are incorporated into programme design from the outset.

Gender equity is embedded within the organisation's programme portfolio through dedicated initiatives such as the Standard Chartered Women in Tech Accelerator, the Growth Academy: Women in Artificial Intelligence, supported by C3 and Google, the Qatar Science and Technology Park FemTech Accelerator, and the C3 I.D.E.A. (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access) Accelerator, powered by Accenture.

Global Ventures manages US\$400 million in assets under management across three funds, with 68 investments and portfolio companies that have collectively raised US\$2.4 billion in subsequent funding. Together, Global Ventures and C3 support founders from the pre-seed stage through growth across 46 countries and 22 sectors. The organisations are female-founded and female-led, with women occupying most senior leadership positions.

Impact Created

Since its establishment, C3 has developed an ecosystem that combines entrepreneurship support, investment readiness, and measurable impact. The platform has accelerated more than 500 startups representing 73 nationalities across 46 countries. Since 2021, C3 alumni have collectively raised approximately US\$1 billion in funding, while 86 per cent of accelerated startups remain operational, a survival rate that exceeds industry norms.

The wider Global Ventures portfolio has also demonstrated strong investment performance. Portfolio companies have raised US\$2.4 billion in follow-on funding, with 90 per cent securing additional investment from leading global investors, including Sequoia, Tiger Global, Y Combinator, SoftBank, and Mubadala. In recognition of their contribution to the United Arab Emirates' future economic sectors, 26 founders from the C3 community were recognised as Future100 companies in 2024.

Expanding opportunities for women entrepreneurs has remained a consistent priority throughout Medea Nocentini's work. Women account for 31 per cent of C3 alumni founders, a significant figure within the Middle East and Africa, where women-led ventures continue to receive comparatively limited funding. Dedicated initiatives, including the Standard Chartered Women in Tech Accelerator and the Growth Academy: Women in Artificial Intelligence, delivered in collaboration with Google, have strengthened support for women building technology-focused businesses. The C3 I.D.E.A. Accelerator, powered by Accenture, further advances inclusion, diversity, equity, and access across the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The breadth of impact extends across all 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, represented by ventures working in areas such as climate action, education, healthcare, food security, and financial inclusion. In 2017, C3 received recognition from the United Nations as an SDG Pioneer for its contribution to "Partnerships for the Goals" under Sustainable Development Goal 17.

Programme quality has also remained a defining feature of the platform. C3 recorded a Net Promoter Score of 88, a content rating of 9.4 out of 10, and a founder satisfaction rate of 92 per cent. During 2024 alone, the organisation delivered nine accelerator programmes.

Innovation & Leadership

Throughout her career, Medea Nocentini has focused on building institutions and entrepreneurial ecosystems that address structural gaps rather than isolated challenges. She established C3 at a time when impact investing was still emerging in the Middle East and North Africa, and when women-led businesses had limited representation within regional venture capital portfolios. Rather than concentrating solely on individual startups, the platform was designed to strengthen the wider infrastructure supporting entrepreneurship and innovation.

Under her leadership, C3 introduced sector-specific accelerator programmes, hybrid learning models,



and Environmental, Social and Governance-integrated curricula that incorporated impact measurement from the earliest stages of a startup's development. The organisation also pioneered corporate-backed social acceleration in the region by collaborating with organisations including HSBC, Standard Chartered, Accenture, Emirates Global Aluminium (EGA), Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC), ENGIE, Merck, and Google for Startups. Together, these collaborations resulted in more than 30 tailored programmes spanning climate action, inclusion, healthcare, and digital innovation.

Her leadership approach centres on expanding opportunities for individuals who have historically faced barriers to participation. This principle is reflected across Global Ventures, where gender equity forms part of the organisation's investment approach, governance, and leadership structure, in addition to its social impact programmes.

Alongside these initiatives, Medea has contributed to a venture capital platform with top-decile global performance while leading a certified B Corporation. She has also contributed to industry knowledge through more than 20 research reports covering subjects including climate, digital health, generative artificial intelligence, and mobility across the Middle East and Africa.

Awards & Recognitions

The work led by Medea Nocentini and C3 has received recognition from national and international organisations. C3 became the first international organisation to receive the Social Enterprise Mark from Social Enterprise Mark CIC, the independent global certification authority for social enterprises. The organisation was also recognised as a "Change Driver" in UNESCO's 2012 report on Youth Innovation and Social Inclusion.

In 2017, C3 was recognised by the United Nations as an SDG Pioneer for its contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 17, "Partnerships for the Goals." The organisation is also a certified B Corporation, meeting verified standards for social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency.

Global Ventures' first fund has been ranked among the top-decile venture capital funds globally, while its second fund achieved top-quartile performance based on Carta DPI Venture Capital Fund Performance Data. In addition, 26 C3 alumni were recognised by the Government of the United Arab Emirates as Future100 companies of 2024 for their contributions to the country's future economic sectors.



