

Global SME Finance Forum 2025 Event Report



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Introduction

The Global SME Finance Forum 2025 was held in Johannesburg from 15 to 17 September as an official side event of the G20 Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion Working Group. The event brought together nearly 1100 participants from 78 countries including 235 speakers and featured 70 sessions with diverse stakeholders from across the SME finance ecosystem. The forum followed a diverse set of engagement models consisting of keynotes, panel discussions, debates, workshops, trainings, innovation hubs, Global SME Finance Awards, study visits to best practice financial institutions in South Africa and examples of instruments to catalyse private sector capital to support growth of SMEs, consequently creating jobs.

The conference was organized in collaboration **with Global Finance and Technology Network (GFTN) as a strategic partner. GFTN is a not-for-profit organization established by the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS)** in 2024 to harness technology and foster innovation for more efficient, resilient, and inclusive financial ecosystems through global partnerships.

Building on South Africa's G20 presidency theme of "Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainability", and based on the SME Finance Forum members and IFC priorities the Global Forum chose the theme, "Building Resilience and Creating Opportunities for Growth," to demonstrate the power of Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) financial inclusion through interconnected technological innovations, policy frameworks, and collaborative ecosystems.

The Forum agenda was organized around three major thematic pillars:

1. Improving Market Access	2. Developing Entrepreneurial Skills	3. Access to Funding & New Financial Instruments
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emphasising value chain integration and building cross-border digital infrastructure to facilitate participation in global markets.• Leveraging technology, with appropriate risk frameworks, to reduce barriers.• Enabling new corridors for financial flows.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building digital literacy, data-driven decision-making.• Adopting digital solutions to drive efficiency, agility, and competitiveness.• Scaling successful entrepreneur-led approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harnessing Fintech innovations and non-bank lending solutions.• Developing robust digital public infrastructure to lower barriers and costs for SME financing.• Enabling regulatory frameworks that support new financial instruments and local currency solutions.

Other cross-cutting topics examined are highlighted as under:

1. Resilience and Inclusion

- Strengthening MSME resilience against macroeconomic headwinds, trade disruptions, high borrowing costs, and digital exclusion.
- Promoting inclusion of underserved groups: women, youth, and the informal sector.
- Shifting SME finance policy focus from access alone to ensuring usage, inclusion, and sustainability.

2. Sustainable and Climate-Aligned Finance

- Integrating sustainable finance, green loans, and environmental/climate resilience.
- Supporting MSMEs in accessing climate financing, relevant tools, and skills.
- Scaling de-risking models (e.g., government risk sharing, pension-fund mobilization, first-loss guarantees) to attract private/institutional capital.

3. Technology and Digital Infrastructure

- Harnessing embedded finance and tech-enabled solutions to accelerate sector growth.

- Leveraging “phygital” platforms — blending physical and digital — to serve rural and bottom-of-the-pyramid populations.
- Prioritising digital public infrastructure to reduce friction and cost, including the role of open banking and related regulatory reforms.
- Expanding fintech, non-bank lending, and innovative local financial products/instruments.

4. Innovation in Lending and Finance Models

- Adopting AI-first lending and alternate data for scalable credit models.
- Promoting responsible finance in the digital era, safeguarding MSMEs and consumers.

- Aligning supply and demand for capital by preparing MSMEs for investment, improving deal structuring, and building pipelines.
- Establishing fit-for-purpose AI governance frameworks, particularly in the Global South.

5. Global Market Access and Financial Innovation

- Enabling MSMEs to participate in global markets via emerging payments ecosystems.
- Exploring stablecoins as drivers of financial innovation and inclusion.

In line with its mission to expand access to financial services for MSMEs, the Forum referenced the global MSME financing gap during its three-day discussions, framing it within broader strategic priorities such as fostering innovation, strengthening inclusion, and mobilizing diverse sources of capital to address the persistent shortfall.



Official Inauguration of Global SME Finance Forum

From Left to Right: Qamar Saleem, Global Head of SME Finance Forum; Aliou Maiga, Regional Industry Director, Financial Institution Group, Africa; Claudia Conceicao, Regional Director for Southern Africa, IFC; Mohamed Gouled, Vice President, Industries, IFC; Ethiopis Tafara, Regional Vice President, Africa, IFC; Jane Sithole, Deputy Minister of Small Business Development, Republic of South Africa; Ashor Sarupen, Deputy Minister of Finance, South Africa; Ravi Menon, Chairman of the Board, Global Finance & Technology Network (GFTN); Satu Kahkonen, Country Director, World Bank; Sopnendu Mohanty, Group CEO, GFTN; Adel Meer, Global Manager for Financial Inclusion, IFC.

Keynote and Leaders' Messages

During the inaugural sessions in the Forum agenda, we heard from key leaders at the ministerial and executive levels delivering thoughtful remarks on the future of SME Finance and how the SME Finance Forum aims to empower its network and broader SME finance community to deliver impact.

Keynote by South Africa's Deputy Minister of Finance, Ashor Sarupen



"Our G20 presidency priority paper, with a strong emphasis on underserved groups, identifies critical areas of action including improving financial literacy, strengthening consumer protection, and designing products that meet the needs of the communities we serve."

Ashor Sarupen

Deputy Minister of Finance, South Africa

Deputy Minister Sarupen highlighted the current global uncertainty, elevated debt levels, and reshaping of global trade policy as key headwinds for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) especially in emerging and developing economies. In South Africa, MSMEs account for 91% of formal businesses, 60% of jobs and 34% of gross domestic products (GDP).

Key challenges such as limited market access, higher borrowing costs, and digital exclusion were discussed, along with South Africa's efforts under its G20 presidency to enhance financial inclusion from access to usage and support for SMEs. Deputy Minister Sarupen outlined critical initiatives, including improving financial literacy, consumer protection, and innovative financing

mechanisms to build resilience, sustainable growth and inclusion.

His speech calls for continued collaboration among governments, private sectors, and multilateral partners to drive MSME growth.

Keynote by South Africa's Deputy Minister of Small Business Development, Jane Sithole



"We've put policy reform at the centre of our agenda. We are aligning our reforms with the key themes, particularly of this forum and the G20."

Jane Sithole

Deputy Minister of Small Business Development, South Africa

Deputy Minister Sithole reinforced South Africa's commitment by outlining innovative funding solutions to bridge its estimated US\$350 million credit gap. The Deputy Minister noted the particular importance of MSMEs which are projected to account for 90% of 11 million jobs to be created in South Africa by 2030 and outlined a number of steps including regulatory reforms, cooperative funding and other government initiatives. She further shared South Africa's emphasis on leveraging alternative credit data, digital tools, and policy reforms to demonstrate its comprehensive approach to MSME development.

Keynote on Synergies for MSME Success: Technology, Finance, and Policy by Ravi Menon, Chairman Global Finance & Technology Network



“We need a synergistic approach, combining policy, finance and technology to unlock SME financing at scale. Policy makers who create an enabling environment, financial institutions who deploy the capital and innovators who build the technologies. And that is what this forum is all about, harnessing synergies.”

Ravi Menon

Chairman of the Board of Directors, Global Finance & Technology Network (GFTN); Ambassador (Climate Action), Singapore

Ravi Menon, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Global Finance & Technology Network (GFTN); Ambassador (Climate Action), Singapore and Former Managing Director, Monetary Authority of Singapore highlighted the urgent challenges facing MSMEs as they navigate a “double squeeze” of rising costs and rapid business model disruption from rising protectionism, tighter financing conditions, and disruptive technologies. Resilience, he shared, is fundamentally about survival, the ability to scale and bounce back from challenges.

The address focused on MSMEs’ financing problem – lack of collateral, thin credit files and higher perceived credit risk. For each he gave examples of how policy, finance and technology come together synergistically to create innovative solutions, for example:

- Ghana’s Integrated Financial Ecosystem (GIFE) aims to provide a digital passport of trust for SMEs, helping them access loans without the need for tangible collateral. This initiative saw loans disbursed with a non-performing loan (NPL) ratio of under 2%.
- China’s WeBank leveraged digital footprints, advanced data analytics and machine learning to extend US\$30

billion in SME loans to over 5 million SMEs that had otherwise thin traditional credit files with average approval process completed in seconds.

- India’s Jan Dhan, Aadhar and Mobile (JAM) trinity and India Stack has also helped extend financial inclusion to millions of SMEs through enabling access to accounts, micro loans and digital insurance.

Keynote on The role of digitalization, equity investment and policies by Mohamed Gouled, Vice President, Industries, International Finance Corporation



“Even the most innovative SMEs need an enabling environment. That is why the World Bank Group with OECD developed an MSME finance plan that is now being advanced under the South African G20 presidency.”

This framework will help countries benchmark their progress, identify gaps, and prioritise reforms that unlock private capital.”

Mohamed Gouled

Vice President, Industries, International Finance Corporation

Mohamed Gouled of IFC emphasised that SMEs need finance tailored to their size, sector and development stage in order to grow, integrate into value chains and adapt sustainable business models that can create jobs and strengthen communities.

The keynote highlighted the transformation of the SME ecosystem over the past decade, stressing the importance of three imperatives – digital innovation, growth equity, and supportive policies to help SMEs adapt, grow, and create jobs. Specific successes, such as IFC’s partnership in India yielding substantial job creation, were shared to illustrate the impact of tailored finance, innovative tools, and regulatory support on SMEs.

African Perspectives on Empowering SMEs Through G20 Cooperation and Innovation, Ethiopis Tafara, Regional Vice President Africa, International Finance Corporation



“An illustration of IFC’s capacity to harness its expansive global network is this very event, the Global SME Finance Forum, which really serves as a testament to what is possible when we unite around a shared vision. Inspiring each other with innovation, making new connections, building new partnerships, and sharing valuable lessons are essential to a strong SME finance ecosystem.”

Ethiopis Tafara

Regional Vice President Africa, International Finance Corporation

Ethiopis Tafara, Regional Vice President Africa, IFC highlighted IFC’s multifaceted approach to advancing financial inclusion and SME development in Africa. He emphasised IFC’s long history in championing the digital financial revolution and cited the recent IFC collaboration with Orange Bank as an example of its continued commitment. This partnership expanded critical digital and telecommunications infrastructure in regions with limited connectivity, allowing MSMEs to digitise their value chains, using mobile money for payments, supply chain management, and even customer relationship tools. IFC’s commitment to strengthening SME support is likewise demonstrated through IFC Startup Catalyst (ISC), a platform designed to invest in accelerators and seed funds supporting innovative early-stage startups. In addition to investment capital, IFC Startup Catalyst provides funds and accelerators with access to networks, training, and sector expertise through its Booster program. As a result, more than 750 startups have received funding across 55 emerging markets. He also underscored IFC’s efforts to bridge financing gaps through innovative supply chain financing solutions, exemplified by the partnership with C2FO to launch a web-based working capital platform for MSMEs. Finally, he recognised the importance of global convenings like the Global SME Finance Forum, which foster collaboration, innovation, and knowledge-sharing to build a robust SME finance ecosystem across Africa.

SME Finance Forum landmark initiative for democratizing SME Finance intelligence through use of Agentic AI in partnership with GFTN



“SME Finance Forum is aiming to become digitally native and offer our members and partners solutions that truly create scalable impact. We are very proud to have worked with GFTN on this AI powered tool”.

Qamar Saleem

Global Head SME Finance Forum

We are pleased to introduce ALFIN, your co-creation partner for research and insights built on proprietary and trusted data from the SME Finance Forum and GFTN.

ALFIN consolidates fragmented data from diverse verified sources, including videos, publications, and upcoming data sets into a single structured knowledge hub, structured, searchable, and fully cited”.

Sopnendu Mohanty

Group CEO, GFTN

GFTN and the SME Finance Forum (SMEFF) unveiled a cutting-edge AI-powered tool developed for financial institutions based on **trusted data from IFC, SME Finance Forum, World Bank, and proprietary sources**. The SME Finance Forum shared their strategy to focus on innovation, solutions, and impact, aiming to become digitally native and providing members with scalable tools. GFTN further elaborated on the platform’s unique features, such as blending verified primary information from GFTN’s global network of forums with publicly available data, using an argumentative agent to validate and verify data, and allowing SMEs to customise their own models.

The platform is only in its first version with ongoing improvements planned, making it an evolving solution for the future.

Key Themes

1 IMPROVING MARKET ACCESS

Improving market access is a vital driver for SME finance, as it empowers small and medium-sized enterprises to participate in regional and global value chains. By leveraging technology, strengthening risk management, and building robust digital infrastructure, SMEs are better positioned to tap into new financial corridors and enhance their overall financial health.

Sessions addressing this theme included discussions on digital public infrastructure, enabling women-owned enterprises, transformative digital solutions, agri-fintech, stablecoins, supply-chain finance, and policies that enable financial inclusion and market access.

Digital Public Infrastructure emerged as the foundational layer, interoperable payments and identity systems were flagged as critical enablers. Examples include Mojaloop's instant payments bringing transaction costs down to 1-2 cents, and the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) linking dozens of African countries to enable pan-continental trade. The Mojaloop open-source platform and APIs underpin many of these rails, and platforms such as C2FO demonstrate how unlocked receivables can provide working capital across sub-Saharan Africa. Stablecoin pilots, both in policy and practice, show promise in reducing remittance costs and hedging currency volatility. Panelists stressed designing for the micro-end of the market, harmonising regulation for cross-border flows, and creating delivery channels tailored to particular market segments such as women-led SMEs, rural enterprises and informal operators.

Case Study

WEOF: The Women's Entrepreneurship Opportunity Facility (WEOF) is a partnership between Goldman Sachs and IFC that works with local banks to deploy gender-lens financing. Over \$3 billion in investments has been unlocked with 267,000 women entrepreneurs receiving financing through IFC client financial institutions, more than double the original target.

Case Study

PAPSS: The Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS), launched by Afreximbank, creates interoperability across African regulators. It links payment systems of multiple countries, dramatically reducing cross-border settlement costs and times, enabling SMEs to send money across 8+ West African countries in seconds, boosting intra-African trade.



The role of Digital Public Infrastructure in driving financial innovation for the future

2 DEVELOPING ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS

Digital entrepreneurial skills are increasingly essential for SMEs seeking access to finance, as they empower business owners to leverage technology, make use of data-driven decision-making, and deploy innovative approaches for greater efficiency and growth. Mastering these skills not only enhances competitiveness but also enables entrepreneurs to navigate and unlock new financial channels in today's rapidly evolving economic landscape.

Forum sessions focusing on developing entrepreneurial skills included discussions on upskilling SMEs for sustained growth, building future-ready SMEs through digital entrepreneurship, and strengthening SMEs' investment readiness.

Speakers emphasised that technology and money alone are insufficient, entrepreneurs need practical skills to build and scale their businesses. Upskilling efforts from banks (NCBA Academy, Absa), multilaterals (IFC, AfDB), and other ecosystem players (African Management Institute, CrossBoundary) featured digital training hubs, mentorship networks, real-time dashboards, pitch workshops and climate adaptation programmes. These train entrepreneurs in sales, cash flow management, governance, sustainability and climate resilience, putting the entrepreneur at the centre of the digital journey.



Enabling Resilient Women-Owned SMEs: Challenges and Opportunities for Financial Institutions Panel

3 RETHINKING ACCESS TO FINANCE THROUGH NEW FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

Access to finance and innovative financial instruments are essential for empowering small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), enabling them to bridge credit gaps and tap into new growth opportunities. By leveraging Fintech solutions, robust digital infrastructure, and supportive regulatory frameworks, SMEs can overcome traditional barriers and access the funding needed, including in local currency, to thrive in competitive markets.

Novel financing mechanisms such as merchant cash advances, supplier finance, asset-backed vehicles and tokenized receivables were explored as complements or alternatives to traditional term loans. These instruments tailor tenor, pricing and covenants to the cash dynamics of SMEs. Tokenized receivables and green bonds help fund climate-smart enterprises. Diaspora bonds channel migrant capital back into domestic SMEs. Blended finance and de-risking instruments such as IFC's Catalytic First-Loss Guarantee, risk-sharing facilities and local currency windows demonstrate how first-loss cover and match-funds mobilise mainstream capital.

Case Study

Zimbabwe Agri-Fintech: A pioneering pilot uses satellite imagery, remote sensing and mobile payment flows to underwrite smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe. The algorithm scores borrowers lacking formal records, achieves repayment rates above 85%, and opens lending to previously unserved millions of rural participants.



Beyond Traditional Loans: Alternative SME Financing Models

4 POLICY AND REGULATORY INNOVATION

In addition to the three thematic pillars of the Global SME Finance Forum agenda, many of the panel discussions and roundtables looked at the policy and regulatory environment needed to underpin the many innovations discussed above.

Delegations including regulators and G20 representatives emphasised harmonised rules for DPI, stablecoins, data governance and inclusive access. Policy must start by identifying the underserved—women, rural and informal SMEs—and build products for them before codifying rules for the already served incumbents. Concrete reforms showcased included: Ghana's updated collateral code releasing capital to hundreds of thousands of enterprises; Vietnam's simplification of SME filings cutting costs by half; Kenya's sandbox for Fintech pilots; and Nigeria's interoperable identity connecting informal traders to formal credit. Innovations like the US GENIUS Act, PAPSS harmonised oversight and stablecoin pilots illustrate the potential of cross-jurisdictional cooperation.



Unlocking Growth Potential for Informal MSMEs Roundtable



Special Sessions

1 THE GREAT DATA DEBATE

Delivered as a debate session, this discussion centred on whether alternative data sources such as utility payments, e-commerce transactions, and digital footprints should be promoted to assess SME creditworthiness and expand financial inclusion, while also addressing concerns about privacy, fairness, and regulatory compliance. Key arguments were presented by two teams: Team Inclusion in favour and Team Liberation against the motion.

Key Highlights

1. Team Inclusion's Argument

Proponents of alternative data argue that it provides valuable insights into SMEs where traditional data is lacking. They advocated for scale adoption, highlighting how non-traditional data sources enable

holistic creditworthiness assessment, accelerated loan processing, reduced costs, and financial inclusion for informal or digitally active SMEs.

2. Team Liberation's Argument

Opponents stressed the challenges of using unverified and potentially biased data for critical decisions. They opposed scale adoption, emphasising privacy, data security, and fairness concerns. Non-standardised and potentially biased data sources may lead to flawed or discriminatory lending decisions, while SMEs without strong digital presence risk further exclusion.

The debate brought to light the potential benefits and significant challenges of using alternative data for SME creditworthiness. While there's momentum for more inclusive financial models, privacy concerns, system costs, and governance issues remain pivotal.



The Great Data Debate

2 SME BANKING LEADERS LEAGUE

The SME Banking Leaders Roundtable brought together CEOs and business heads from across the globe to discuss priority themes shaping the future of SME financial services, in line with the conference's focus. Discussions centred on strengthening ecosystems to improve SMEs' access to markets domestically and internationally; addressing fast-evolving skill requirements and the role of

financial institutions in guiding SMEs through critical growth phases; and identifying new financial instruments such as equity, embedded finance, sustainable finance, and capital market solutions, along with high-potential segments including creative industries, Health-Tech, AgTech, InsurTech, and direct-to-consumer models.

The SME Banking Leaders League, a newly established think tank of the SME Finance Forum, which will build on these recommendations and develop an actionable plan with agreed milestones.



SME Banking Leaders League Roundtable

3 IFC CATALYTIC FIRST LOSS GUARANTEE FACILITY SHOWCASE

The IFC Catalytic First Loss Guarantee Facility program is designed to de-risk investments and fuel inclusive growth through the provision of first loss, it engages both local

banks and regional banks to scale up lending to underserved segments: women, rural & agriculture finance, and sustainable lending for MSMEs.

Case studies were shared by participating banks from countries like Uganda, Uzbekistan and Rwanda, with a focus on agriculture and women-led SMEs, digital innovation and climate financing.



IFC Catalytic First Loss Guarantee Facility

Global SME Finance Awards 2025 Innovators

The Global SME Finance Awards 2025 were announced at this year's Global SME Finance Forum. These Awards seek to recognise financial institutions worldwide, celebrating innovation and leadership in small and medium enterprise (SME) finance. The 2025 awards introduced enhanced benchmarking across four market segments: Commercial Banks, Development Finance Institutions, Non-Bank Lenders, and Technology Innovators, reflecting the diverse ecosystem of SME finance providers. The addition of the Sustainable SME Financier category underscores the growing emphasis on environmental and social responsibility within the financial services sector.

Global SME Finance Awards 2025 Summary

Across Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East & North Africa, leading financial institutions are redefining how credit, digital innovation, and capacity-building intersect to empower women entrepreneurs, SMEs, and sustainable enterprises. This year's winners showcase diverse yet connected strategies: embedding finance into everyday business operations, using AI and big data to accelerate loan approvals, creating holistic ecosystems that pair funding with skills training and market access, and aligning lending with environmental and social impact objectives. Whether scaling instant mobile lending across multiple countries, launching national SME digital platforms, driving rural inclusion through hybrid delivery models, or channeling capital via green and social bonds, these innovators prove that inclusive finance can be both commercially viable and transformative — enabling underserved businesses to thrive, fostering resilience, and setting global benchmarks for future-ready financial services. Key highlights of winning innovations are below, by region and categories of awards:



Global SME Finance Awards 2025

1 BEST FINANCIER FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Africa – Best Financier for Women Entrepreneurs

Access Bank – W Initiative (Nigeria)

Access Bank's W Initiative is a pan-African program dedicated to empowering women entrepreneurs through tailored financing, mentorship, business training, healthcare support, and market access. It combines products that offer collateral-free loans with capacity-building platforms like the W Academy and networking via the W Community. Operating across multiple African countries, the initiative integrates rapid digital loan approvals, trade fairs, and educational programs, creating a holistic ecosystem that drives financial inclusion and business growth for women.

Americas – Best Financier for Women Entrepreneurs

Banco Cooperativo Sicredi (Brazil)

Sicredi supports female entrepreneurship across Brazil through comprehensive programs that combine financial literacy, business strategy training, and leadership development with tailored lending solutions. Initiatives like the Woman Entrepreneur Course and Donas do Negócio have helped women strengthen businesses, join local governance structures, and improve representation. Operating in thousands of communities, many of them underserved, Sicredi blends the trust of cooperative banking with digital innovation to expand opportunities for women entrepreneurs nationwide.

Asia – Best Financier for Women Entrepreneurs

Amartha (Indonesia)

Amartha connects rural women entrepreneurs to accessible credit through a hybrid model that pairs grassroots networks with digital technologies like its all-in-one Afin super-app. The platform offers lending, savings, bill payments, and training, backed by AI-powered credit scoring and neighborhood agents who help first-time users adopt digital tools. Its approach focuses on tailoring financial solutions to rural contexts while boosting business skills and confidence, leading to stronger communities and sustained women-led economic development.

Europe – Best Financier for Women Entrepreneurs

FINCA Impact Finance (Eurasia)

FINCA Impact Finance empowers women entrepreneurs in Eurasia through inclusive SME lending, financial literacy initiatives, and mentorship programs. Its services are adapted for rural and underserved communities, offering quick repeat loans alongside training tailored to women's business realities. By combining mobile banking, low-literacy digital tools, and community clubs for networking, FINCA fosters entrepreneurship, expands women's leadership, and strengthens financial resilience across diverse cultural and economic contexts.

Middle East & North Africa – Best Financier for Women Entrepreneurs

Social Development Bank (Saudi Arabia)

Social Development Bank provides collateral-free financing and digital access to women-led SMEs, complemented by non-financial support through capacity-building hubs like the Dulani Business Center. Its initiatives include helping women launch ventures in emerging sectors such as ride-hailing via car ownership loans, and expanding business skills and market visibility through targeted training and mentorship. This holistic approach aligns with national economic plans to boost women's participation in the private sector.

2 PRODUCT INNOVATION OF THE YEAR

Africa – Product Innovation of the Year

Co-operative Bank of Kenya – Digitally Prequalified Facility

Co-op Bank's Digitally Prequalified Facility uses AI-driven analytics to instantly assess MSME eligibility for unsecured loans. The fully digital solution integrates with customer banking profiles, enabling accessible, on-demand capital without paperwork. It bridges a critical gap for SMEs by providing fast liquidity in both formal and informal sectors, supporting operational stability and enabling businesses to seize growth opportunities quickly.

Americas – Product Innovation of the Year

Kapitale – Pague com Kapi (Brazil)

Kapitale's Pague com Kapi embeds financing into the supply chain by allowing merchants to use future credit card receivables as a payment method at checkout. This innovation eliminates the need for separate loan applications, creating seamless cash flow for inventory restocking and growth. It's particularly impactful in retail segments such as health and beauty, where small businesses often face challenges accessing formal credit.

Asia – Product Innovation of the Year

Shenzhen Credit Service (China)

Shenzhen Credit Service's platform merges vast government data with AI-driven credit modeling to build detailed SME credit profiles, enabling real-time approvals and more affordable financing. By integrating public data securely and collaborating with multiple banks, it brings tailored lending to previously excluded businesses, streamlining cost and process barriers in SME financing.

Europe – Product Innovation of the Year

Allica Bank (UK)

Allica Bank addresses the disparity in interest rates offered to SMEs compared to large corporations through a combination of high-interest deposit products, cashback rewards, and a transparent savings gap calculator. By providing tools and campaigns that highlight these inequities, the bank empowers SMEs to make better financial decisions, improve returns, and build stronger long-term financial strategies.

Middle East & North Africa – Product Innovation of the Year

Palestine Monetary Authority – Monshati Platform

The Monshati Platform serves as Palestine's first national MSME digital ecosystem, integrating finance, grants, diagnostics, and advisory support into one portal. It facilitates quicker access to funding, business improvement tools, and market linkages, with a focus on women, youth, and rural entrepreneurs. This one-stop approach addresses fragmentation in SME support and fosters sustainable enterprise growth.

3 SME FINANCIER OF THE YEAR

Africa – SME Financier of the Year

Access Bank Plc (Nigeria)

Access Bank has developed a comprehensive SME ecosystem that blends AI-powered lending with large-scale digital platforms, rural agent networks, and targeted training programs. By removing collateral requirements for most loans, offering tailored account packages, and partnering for supply chain integration, it ensures inclusive financing for SMEs while enabling sustained growth through education and market access.

Americas – SME Financier of the Year

Banco de Crédito del Perú (Peru)

BCP integrates digital tools, AI-driven lending, payment solutions, and formalization platforms into one SME support model, addressing key barriers like informality and limited credit access. Through its ecosystem of financing, mentoring, and digital payments, it enables entrepreneurs at different stages to formalize, access affordable loans, and grow sustainably in both urban and rural areas.

Asia – SME Financier of the Year

Aye Finance Ltd. (India)

Aye Finance extends affordable, collateral-free loans to micro-enterprises using a cluster-based underwriting model enhanced by AI and alternative data. Its "phygital" approach blends branch coverage with digital lending, while specialized products like Shakti Loans address challenges faced by women-led businesses. The company also invests in digital supply chain solutions and sector-focused advisory tools to boost client growth.

Europe – SME Financier of the Year

Raiffeisen Bank International (Austria)

RBI delivers instant mobile lending across multiple Central and Eastern European markets, cutting application and approval processes to minutes. The platform is designed for both new-to-bank and underserved SMEs, integrating AI scoring, cloud infrastructure, and open APIs to ensure scalability and efficiency while also embedding ESG financing options in select markets.

Middle East & North Africa – SME Financier of the Year

Jordan Ahli Bank (Jordan)

Jordan Ahli Bank supports SME development through specialized service centers, automated systems to speed up loan processing, and targeted financing for women-led and green projects. Its approach combines digital tools, sustainability bonds, and wide geographic outreach via microfinance operations, creating a blended model of innovation, inclusion, and impact for small businesses nationwide.

4 SUSTAINABLE SME FINANCIER OF THE YEAR (NEW CATEGORY)

Africa – Sustainable SME Financier of the Year

Cooperative Bank of Oromia – Michu Digital Lending (Ethiopia)

The Michu platform is Ethiopia's first fully digital, AI-powered, collateral-free lending solution for MSMEs, developed in partnership with a fintech provider. It targets women, youth, and underserved enterprises with integrated financial literacy and sustainability components, using alternative data to widen access while embedding responsible lending and long-term growth support.

Americas – Sustainable SME Financier of the Year

Banco Promerica (Guatemala)

Banco Promerica's sustainable financing strategy leverages innovative bond issuance to channel capital towards SMEs, women-owned businesses, unbanked enterprises, and environmental projects. By combining sustainable product financing with targeted education and ESG integration, it fosters both economic empowerment and environmental stewardship across diverse business sectors.

Asia – Sustainable SME Financier of the Year

BRAC Bank PLC (Bangladesh)

BRAC Bank aligns SME growth with public health and environmental goals through its financing program for water, sanitation, and hygiene-related enterprises. Working with partners, it blends direct local SME lending with outreach via microfinance institutions, ensuring that climate-resilient and hygiene-focused products reach rural communities while promoting sustainable practices.

Europe – Sustainable SME Financier of the Year

Türk Ekonomi Bankası – Sustainable SMEVerse (Türkiye)

TEB's Sustainable SMEVerse combines green financing, ESG advisory, and digital enablement in a unified platform, helping SMEs transition to low-carbon and competitive business models. Through partnerships with sustainability service providers and industry associations, it offers training, reporting tools, and preferential finance aligned with international climate and compliance standards.

Middle East & North Africa – Sustainable SME Financier of the Year

Al-Amal Microfinance Bank (Yemen)

Al-Amal Microfinance Bank promotes inclusion and sustainability in a challenging environment by financing clean energy and climate-smart agriculture solutions through Sharia-compliant products. Its operations extend to women and youth entrepreneurs, combine technical training with business incubation, and deploy solar energy systems that reduce reliance on diesel, fostering community resilience and environmental impact.

Learning Day Highlights

On the third day of the Global SME Finance Forum, the agenda focused on practical learning through a series of innovation hub solutions clinics, trainings, and site visits to local partners.

1 AGRI FINANCE

Clinic addressed climate change impacts, rising demand for sustainable products, supply chain vulnerabilities, and labor/infrastructure challenges.

Training – Smart Finance for Agriculture: Showcased Fintech and AI-driven financing beyond collateral models. AgriTech case studies highlighted farm mapping, loan processes, and partnerships with off-takers to reduce market risk, improve monitoring, and enhance supply chain predictability.



Innovation Hub Agri-Finance

2 SUSTAINABLE SME FINANCE

Clinic on scaling sustainable SME finance discussed lowering data costs, tech partnerships, and sustainability reporting (OECD guidance). Updates from IFC and UN Climate Champions on training and Climate-proofing SMEs.

Training – Nature & Circular Economy Finance: Explored circular business models for SMEs, emphasizing capacity building and data innovation.



Nature and Circular Economy Finance Opportunities and Innovation

3 SUPPLY CHAIN FINANCE (SCF)

Clinic focused on affordable, inclusive finance, partnerships, and overcoming regulatory/digitalization barriers.

Training – SCF Tools & Solutions: Case studies from IFC, ABSA, M1xchange, and Ticano on climate metrics, platform utilization, and purchase order financing.



Innovation Hub Supply Chain Finance

4 WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP FINANCE (WEF)

Clinic featured storytelling, product demos, and workshops on credit assessment, alternative data, and bias elimination. Solutions included leveraging data, ecosystem understanding, and equity measures.

Training – Gender-Focused Financing: Case studies from BRAC Bank, Consumer CentriX, Women’s World Banking, UN Women, and IFC stressed the importance of disaggregated data, impact investing, market segmentation, and gender bonds.



Training: Innovative Funding

5 DIGITAL FINANCE

Clinic tackled AI/alternative data in credit scoring and SME digitization, with case studies from IFC, AIR, MTN, and Standard Bank.

Training – Digital Lending: Showcased Fintech/financial institution use of alternative data, AI models, payments infrastructure, and portfolio management (Eshandi, WeBank, Accial, Cascade).



Innovation Hub: Digital Finance

6 NON-FINANCIAL SERVICES (NFS)

Clinic addressed challenges in funding, scale, quality, sustainability, and buy-in. Emphasised combining financial and non-financial services, digital tools, and curated SME ecosystems.

Training – Integrated Solutions: Case studies from Banque Saudi Fransi and Kore Fusion/NED Bank showed sustainable NFS integration, value-added digital platforms, SME digitization, and impact measurement.



Training: Integrated Solutions

7 STUDY VISITS

Seven study visits were conducted to leading South African financial institutions, all members of the SME Finance Forum. These visits provided participants with first-hand exposure to innovative SME finance models, strategies, and tools.

First National Bank (FNB) – Demonstrated a targeted SME segmentation and sub-segmentation approach supported by a robust coverage model. Four trends shaping SME growth were highlighted: gender inclusion, energy stability, digital transformation, and youth entrepreneurship (critical given 46.6% youth



Study Visit: First National Bank (FNB)

unemployment). For upper-tier SMEs, FNB focuses on customer service quality, omni-channel engagement, loyalty, and specialised business support. Their nationwide SME program serves both clients and non-clients, combining loans and equity investments with non-

financial support such as masterclasses, mentorship, business tools, and an EdTech platform. To date, the program has financed over \$42 million and created more than 9,300 jobs.

Servicios Empresariales (SE) Holdings

Founded in 2014 to support emerging commercial farmers and link them to markets. Acts as an aggregator, grouping smallholders to meet quality, volume, and delivery requirements of large corporates. Partners with major manufacturers like Tiger Brands and Unilever, providing mechanization, financial, and technical support. Currently supports over 2,000 farmers and has created 631 jobs.

Standard Bank Group – Africa’s largest bank by assets, operating in 20 African countries and global financial centres. Showcased three SME-focused solutions:

- **Smart²** – A recommendation engine using data and behavioural science for personalised client engagement.
- **SimplyBLU** – An all-in-one merchant platform offering payments, analytics, inventory control, and online storefronts.
- **BizFlex** – Short-term, unsecured loans with flexible repayments linked to daily revenue, providing fast, digital access to funding.



Study Visit: Standard Bank Group

Tsys Capital – Finances and equips SMEs to develop capacity, scale operations, and achieve excellence. Offers fit-for-purpose financing, training, and wealth creation services. Leverages South Africa’s Enterprise & Supplier Development legislation to unlock funding, build supplier capacity, and integrate SMEs into key value chains, opening new markets and improving access to capital.

Business Partners Limited (BPL) – Specialist risk finance company providing debt, equity, blended finance, and technical assistance. Operates with a flexible SME definition, enabling broader reach. Funds SMEs from ~R500 000 - R50 million (~US\$29,000 - US\$3 million). Their strategic selection process and commitment to capacity development have ensured profitability for 24 years.

Tyme Bank – Established in 2015, South Africa’s first digital bank and fastest-growing, serving over 10 million customers. Largest SME funder by volume. Known for quick, paperless loan approvals, a “phygital” model combining kiosks and retail points, low transaction fees, and integrated banking plus business solutions. Strong retail and international partnerships expand SME payment acceptance.

22 On Sloane – Africa’s largest startup campus, with hubs in Johannesburg and Cape Town, offers incubation, acceleration, co-working, mentorship, skills training, and funding access for startups and SMEs. Partnering with corporates, investors, and government, it connects entrepreneurs to markets through pitch competitions, hackathons, and masterclasses. Since inception, it has supported hundreds of startups to scale, secure investment, and create jobs, with a strong focus on youth and digital innovation.



Study Visit: Tyme Bank

Key Challenges and Enablers Identified

Some of the key challenges and enablers identified are as below:

Key Challenges/Barriers:

- **Tightening financial conditions:** High interest rates, declining lending volumes, and a shift toward short-term credit raise the cost of borrowing for SMEs.
- **Geopolitical and supply chain disruptions:** Fragmentation and shocks to global supply chains disproportionately affect SMEs at the end of the chain.
- **Collateral and credit history barriers:** Many SMEs lack formal credit histories or collateral, restricting access to traditional loans.
- **Blurred personal - business finances:** Difficulty distinguishing between household and business finances complicates credit assessments.
- **Limited market segmentation:** Scarcity of reliable information leads to poorly tailored financial products.
- **Climate and ESG-aligned financing gaps:** Challenges include not just supply of green finance, but also weak demand and SME readiness.
- **Digital divide:** Constraints include poor infrastructure, handset/telecom affordability, and exclusion of rural, women-led, or informal SMEs.
- **Misaligned digital solution:** SME voices are often missing in product design, leading to tech solutions that do not fit their needs.
- **Regulatory and policy bottlenecks:** Issues such as fragmented rules, weak credit infrastructure, and incomplete collateral registries limit scale.
- **Lack of risk mitigation tools:** Absence of guarantees and de-risking mechanisms deters private capital and investors due to perceived high risk.

Key Enablers:

- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** Interoperable payments, digital IDs, e-KYC, account aggregator can help to reduce cost and expand access.
- **Alternative Data (with safeguards):** This holds huge opportunity for unlocking credit & inclusion. However, it must ensure privacy, security and fairness (avoiding perpetuating bias).
- **Digital Tools (AI, blockchain, tokenization, tech integration):** Digital tools play a critical role in scaling SME financing and reducing transaction costs through automation.
- **Integrated cross-border payment systems:** This serves to address the critical need to integrate SMEs into key supply chains and unlocking access to regional / global markets.
- **Embedded finance:** This can be done by seamlessly integrating financial services into platforms that SMEs already use to reduce friction, lower onboarding costs and provide financing at the point of need.
- **Stablecoins:** This could be a potentially powerful solution to the persistent financial barriers faced by SMEs across Africa.
- **Capacity Building & skills training:** This addresses the critical need to support SMEs in financial, digital and management skills to leverage capital and technology for growth.
- **Policy & Global Partnerships:** Closer coordinated efforts between governments, development finance institutions (DFIs), commercial banks, fintechs, and private investors can crowd in capital, share risk, and scale successful models.
- **Risk Sharing Mechanisms:** Export credit guarantees, and risk mitigation instruments can help to reduce the downside exposure for lenders, while simultaneously mobilizing greater volumes of private capital.
- **Inclusive financial Programs (e.g. Women-focused programs):** Dedicated initiatives and inclusive financial strategies can be tailored to support women, youth and green enterprises in the digital age.

Key Innovations Highlighted

1 Digital Finance & Alternative Credit

- **Oze, Kifiya, Kaleidofin, Ecobank** – AI-powered credit scoring using alternative data (mobile money, utility bills, transaction history) to expand access for women-owned and informal SMEs.
- **Eshandi, WeBank, Accial Capital, Cascade** – Digital lending models leveraging alternative data, AI-driven scoring, and integrated payments to streamline SME credit lifecycles.
- **Proxtera, Veefin Group, SIDBI** – Combining alternative data models with scalable credit guarantees to de-risk SME lending in underserved markets.
- **Tazama, Sybrin Technologies, Paysys Labs** – Open-source, real-time fraud detection tools for mobile money and digital payments, enhancing trust and inclusion.

2 Digital Payments & Merchant Enablement

- **Mastercard, Amazon** – QR code payments, digital wallets, and instant settlement systems enabling embedded finance and transaction-based credit scoring.
- **Integrated Payment Services Ltd (IPSL), Afreximbank, COMESA Clearing House** – Merchant-centric instant payment systems leveraging transaction data for real-time creditworthiness and B2B payment solutions.
- **Standard Bank – SimplyBLU** – All-in-one merchant platform integrating payments, analytics, inventory control, and zero-fee online storefronts.

3 Supply Chain Finance (SCF)

- **Vayana, Standard Chartered Bank** – Digital SCF platforms with AI credit assessment and blockchain verification to lower transaction costs and expand rural SME access.
- **Mlxchange, Ticano SME Finance, Tarfin** – Purchase order financing and trade-linked SCF solutions tailored for SMEs in high-need sectors.

- **FNB Commercial, Airtel Africa Foundation**, – Collaborative SCF innovation hub tackling regulatory, adoption, and digitalisation barriers.

4 Agri-Finance & Agri-Fintech

- **Sowit** – Satellite imagery, AI agronomic recommendations, and mobile advisory tools to optimize yields, cut costs, and de-risk lending.
- **Adapta Inc.** – Farm scoring using data-only models for credit scoring integration.
- **Tarfin** – Digital agri-finance solutions integrating input supply, credit, and value chain partnerships.
- **SE Holdings (South Africa)** – Inclusive aggregation model with Digi-30 investment readiness tool, linking emerging farmers (esp. women/youth) to finance, inputs, and guaranteed offtake contracts.
- **Tsys Capital Group** – Enterprise & Supplier Development-aligned financing, capacity building, and mentorship within South Africa's B-BBEE framework.

5 Women Entrepreneurship Finance

- **BRAC Bank** – Impact investing model integrating financial inclusion into its value chain for underfunded entrepreneurs.
- **ConsumerCentriX & Dalberg** – SME Banking Toolkit with Women SME Segmentation Tool for tailored product design.
- **UN Women** – Gender bonds as a profitable financing instrument for FSPs.
- **Women's World Banking** – Strategies to identify and address gender bias in financial services.
- **Ecobank** – “Ellevate” initiative empowering women-led businesses with tailored finance and cross-border trade tools.

6 Banking Innovations & SME Support

- **Standard Bank – Smart²** – Behavioural science-driven recommendation engine for personalized client engagement.
- **Standard Bank – BizFlex** – Short-term unsecured loans with revenue-linked repayments and transparent pricing.
- **FNB** – Comprehensive SME program combining financial and non-financial support, creating 9,300+ jobs.
- **TymeBank** – Digital-first banking with kiosk-based onboarding, turnover-based SME lending, and embedded retail partnerships.
- **Business Partners Limited** – Adaptive lending and emergency fund strategies for SME resilience.

7 Ecosystem & Policy Innovation

- **AfricInvest & Equity Bank** – Collaborative platform (AforE) to strengthen African SME ecosystems and value chain integration.
- **Alliance for Innovative Regulation, Circle, Absa Group** – Stablecoin use cases for cross-border SME payments, real-time settlements, and currency volatility protection.
- **AWS, Yoco, South African Reserve Bank** – Fit-for-purpose AI governance frameworks for responsible innovation in the Global South.
- **Ecobank** – Pan-African SME strategy with green finance pilots, embedded credit via MTN/JUMO/Nvoicia, and AfCFTA trade facilitation tools.
- **22 On Sloane** – Development of Africa's gaming SME ecosystem with investment and market access strategies.



SME Finance Forum Community: Catalysing Impact

The SME Finance Forum (SMEFF) was established in 2012 by the G20 and is managed by the IFC, World Bank Group. The objective is to scale MSME finance for job creation and economic growth. As the leading MSME finance network globally, industry innovations support replication of best practices, steer policy advocacy, and foster global knowledge transfer. It also powers the global peer learning membership network by connecting them with relevant partners, investors, and policymakers. The network comprises nearly 300+ financial services stakeholders with coverage of over 190 countries. It is the largest SME financial services industry network of its kind.

During the conference annual SMEFF Community Meeting was also held. During this meeting, the SME Finance Forum highlighted their transformation journey which has grown the network geographically and with new types of members representing a broadening of the ecosystem. This evolution has also shifted SMEFF's focus into becoming the premier convener for SME Finance players and building a world-class knowledge hub to ensure best practices are captured and shared widely for replication

and scale. The content and innovation focus going forward is meant to impact market, empower members, reduce MSME finance gap and support SMEs to grow and create jobs, thus driving global economic growth.

The SMEFF team also shared results from the 2025 member's survey which highlighted how members are benefiting from the Forum and also progress achieved over 2024 results (figures in brackets reflect 2024 results):

- 73% of members gained new knowledge (72%)
- 60% adopted new practices (48%)
- 33% engaged with policymakers (33%)
- 38% established new partnerships (24%)

The meeting also focused on dialogue with select members. The panel session included speakers from member institutions sharing firsthand experiences from their impact driven initiatives and how SMEFF has amplified their success and opened new pathways for innovation and growth.



Conclusions and Call to Action

SMEs face a complex web of challenges that hinder their growth and resilience, especially in the face of macroeconomic headwinds, geopolitical disruptions, and tightening financial conditions. High interest rates, declining lending volumes, and short-term credit preferences raise borrowing costs, while lack of collateral, formal credit histories, and blurred personal-business finances restrict access to traditional finance. The digital divide—driven by poor infrastructure and exclusion of rural, women-led, and informal SMEs—further compounds these issues. Climate finance gaps, misaligned digital solutions, and fragmented regulatory frameworks add to the burden, while the absence of risk mitigation tools deters private investment and limits scale.

Fortunately, throughout the three days of discussions, a number of potential solutions were identified to help counter some of the challenges noted above. A range of critical enablers can unlock SME potential and drive inclusive, sustainable growth. Digital public infrastructure such as interoperable payments, digital IDs, and e-KYC reduces friction and expands access. Emerging technologies like AI, blockchain, and tokenization offer scalable solutions for financing and automation.

Embedded finance and stablecoins can integrate SMEs into global markets and supply chains, while alternative data enables more inclusive credit models. Capacity building, inclusive financial programs, and coordinated policy efforts are essential to empower underserved groups and green enterprises. Risk-sharing mechanisms and innovative financial instruments can mobilise private capital, while “phygital” platforms and knowledge portals help bridge information gaps and support SMEs at the bottom of the pyramid.

The Global SME Finance Forum 2025 established a pathway for addressing the global SME financing gap through integrated technological innovation, policy coordination, and ecosystem collaboration. The Forum's comprehensive discourse across market access, entrepreneurial development, alternative financing, and policy implementation provides concrete pathways toward inclusive economic growth and SME resilience.

The SME Finance Forum is committed to moving the agenda forward, incubating the learnings and catalysing the SME financial services ecosystem by engaging its members and affiliates and market at large to scale innovative solutions and seek solutions to key problems and challenges. The SME Finance Forum organizes nearly 100 activities during the year leading to our annual conference. Hence the key near term focus areas of the SME Finance Forum are highlighted below:

- 1. Innovation Hubs:** Six thematic hubs (Digital, Sustainability, Women Entrepreneurship, Agri Finance, Supply Chain Finance, Non-Financial Services) will endeavour to build, pilot and scale targeted solutions. Each hub convenes once a quarter in addition to dynamic engagement.
- 2. Immersion Visits:** On-site immersion visits to leading institutions and country ecosystems for direct transfer of best practices. The SME Finance Forum aims to organize 1-2 immersion visits per year.
- 3. Knowledge Partnerships:** Collaborations with industry leaders is aimed at producing high value thought leadership as well as toolkits.
- 4. Partnership Brokering:** Facilitate strategic collaborations, business partnerships and financing opportunities for access to capital, market access, innovation partnering, or risk-sharing mechanisms.
- 5. Regional Chapters:** Aimed at driving regional synergies for members, affiliates and SME financial services ecosystem across 5 regional chapters – Asia, Africa, Middle East and Central Asia, Europe and Americas.
- 6. Peer Groups:** Focused on segment specific initiatives and partnerships across 4 peer groups – Banks, NBFIs, Fintech, and DFIs. Specific knowledge, solutions and toolkits would be developed through these structures.
- 7. SME Banking Leaders League:** Consists of senior SME banking leaders from across the world forming a think tank to support future strategy making and members' sounding board of ideas. The think tank aims to convene once a quarter.

8. **SME Finance Forum CEOs League:** Comprising of selected CEOs from across the SME Finance Forum network to drive strategic thinking and create an influence group to support leadership of institutions aspiring to succeed in supporting SMEs.
9. **ALFIN:** Recently launched, this portal is enabled by AI and allows members to navigate SMEFF extensive knowledge collateral
10. **Global Awards:** The SME Finance Forum aims to scale innovations in SME finance, with case studies and information sessions to drive replication worldwide. In addition key aspects of the innovations would be published for the industry to benefit.
11. **Webinars:** Through these sessions, the SME Finance Forum aims to explore frontier and new topics through convening industry leaders.
12. **Marketplaces:** Financial institutions are eager to partner, especially with fintechs. Meanwhile, fintechs are keen to connect with investors. Through these sessions, the SME Finance Forum aims to connect members and industry players, to enable partnerships and investments.
13. **Knowledge Portal:** A curated SME finance content library, now being enhanced by AI tool for tailored navigation. SMEFF also aims to make it easier for members to access and analyse knowledge resources.
14. **SME Banking Masterclass:** This newly launched program aims to build skills of SME bankers to become more effective and efficient for scaling SME financial services.
15. **Global Conference:** The Forum would continue to host Global SME Finance Forum to co-create solutions and share insights, with an aim to measure progress and impact being achieved.

As progress is made towards the next annual conference in 2026, the SME Finance Forum aims to leverage above products and structures to move the industry forward. The SME Finance Forum looks forward to working with industry players, its members and affiliates impactfully.



“Having become a global centre of knowledge excellence, SME Finance Forum is now transitioning towards solution building innovation hub for financial services industry to scale finance, create livelihoods and achieve impact”.

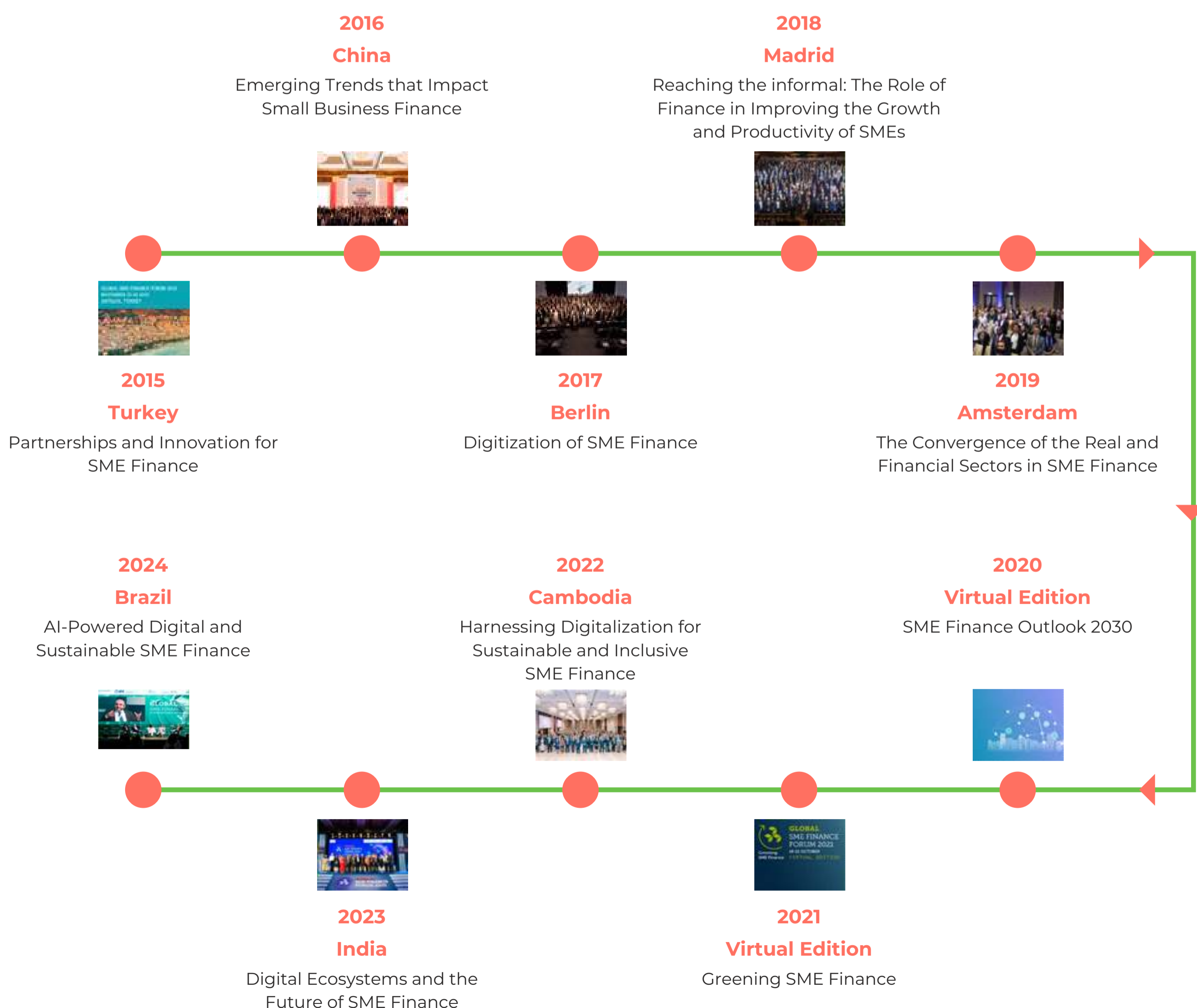
Qamar Saleem
Global Head, SME Finance Forum



Annexures

Global SME Finance Forum

The Global SME Finance Forum is the SME Finance Forum's annual flagship event. Since its first edition in 2015, this acclaimed conference has showcased and shaped the latest innovations and best practices in SME Finance. It is the world's leading, technically oriented, geographically diverse platform focused solely on scaling SME financing. The Global Forum takes place in a different country each year, attracting C-level industry leaders from more than 80 countries, as well as leading policymakers and regulators. The Forum is known for bringing to the forefront key trends and innovations in the field, from examining the potential for bank-fintech partnerships back in 2015 when most were talking about bank-fintech competition, to exploring how sustainable financing can be a driver of growth for SMEs.



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Visual of SME Finance Forum products

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Learning global best practices and innovative approaches to strengthen SME finance and drive transformation

Innovation Hubs 	Webinar
Publications & Research 	Trainings
Data Sets 	ALFIN

LINK

Linking stakeholders across ecosystems, fostering partnerships that create opportunities and scale solutions.

Marketplace 	Partnership Brokering
Immersion Visits 	
Peer Group Network 	Regional Chapters

LEAD

Leading the future of SME finance by setting standards, shaping agendas, and inspiring collective action.

GSMEFF 	Global SME Finance Awards
CEO Leaders League 	SME Banking Leaders League
Policy Dialogue 	

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