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Building Bridges 2025: Conference Wrap-Up by SFG

In honour of the event's sixth edition, this special newsletter covers key takeaways and pivotal moments that defined Building Bridges 2025. This year's conference served as a powerful reminder of our collective mission, to advance sustainable finance by focusing on investable solutions. As David Blood said in the opening "the goal is for all finance to be sustainable finance. "

We are excited to share insights that will feed into our community's work for the coming year.

BIG IDEAS

A FIGHTING SPIRIT AND ACTIONABLE SOLUTIONS

The overall energy of the conference was positive, determined, and **focused on action and tangible solutions**. It is clear the sustainable finance is facing difficult times but the participants of Building Bridges felt solid in their resolve to persist despite the headwinds.

There was a strong sense of **collaboration**, with the consensus being that systemic problems can only be solved through interdisciplinary partnership. The emphasis was less

on *whether* to invest sustainably, but more on *how* to raise the investability of sustainable solutions, construct effective financial products, and build partnerships to scale impact now.

KEY MESSAGES:

There were a few red threads that stood out strongly this year:

- **Everything needs a business case:** the days of sustainable finance being 'a good thing to do' are over. We must relentlessly focus on the core business case. This includes making arguments around prudent risk management but also focusing on new business opportunities in the economy of the future and on rapidly growing markets.
- **Decentering the US** - while the messaging around climate and sustainability out of the US is troubling, many speakers were clear that the train has left the station on the energy transition and that many other markets are undeterred. China in particular continues to advance its transition with quiet, rapid progress.
- **Emerging markets and developing countries** - for the first time in Building Bridges history on the main stage we heard a strong call from mainstream asset managers to look to emerging markets and developing countries for investment opportunities. Our hunch is this is stemming from the fact that most portfolios are over-exposed to the US but also a growing recognition that these markets have strong potential due to young populations, resources, and growing economic prospects.
- **Incentives, incentives, incentives** - if we want to scale sustainable finance solutions we have to be relentless in understanding incentive structures and making them work for us. There are many ways this can be achieved - through policy signals, precise deployment of concessional capital, but also by leveraging client values, and creative structuring of products.

KEY CHALLENGES:

Of course, challenges are still present. Here are some that we noted:

- **Overestimated Risk Perception:** In frontier markets, particularly in Africa, speakers noted that country risk is often grossly overestimated by Global North investors. This inaccurate perception leads investors to miss highly profitable economic opportunities.
- **Finance as part of a broader system:** Rhian-Mari Thomas of the Green Finance Institute put it well when she said "policy is the enabler, finance is the facilitator and the real economy is the driver." While the finance sector holds a great deal of responsibility, it cannot act alone. This only adds to the complexity and underscores the need for collaboration to build sustainable investment opportunities.
- **Building local bridges to global capital:** Emerging markets may have a range of highly attractive investment opportunities but they are viewed as highly risky (rightly or wrongly) for many investors who do not have experience in these markets. As SFG overheard in the hallways: "capital is like water, it flows to the place of least resistance." Local financial partners are needed to build a bridge and provide accessible financing and technical assistance, while constructing well-diversified products that can attract capital from the Global North.

Did you miss the conference? Watch back the livestreams [here](#).

SNAPSHOTS FROM SFG's IMPACT THEMES

Building Bridges 2025 was a masterclass in connecting finance to real-world impact. Here is a brief look at moments from the sessions that aligned with our core themes.

- **Gender**

On day 3, a session on "**Gender Impact Unlocked: Worthwhile & Rewarded with Impact-Linked Finance**" organized by **SECO, Mirova, Acumen, Roots of Impact**, and **LeFil Consulting** focused on how to unlock the potential of gender impact by ensuring it is both worthwhile and rewarded. It emphasized leveraging impact-linked finance to ensure capital flows are designed to close gender gaps and recognize women's pivotal role in achieving sustainable outcomes.

- **Peace**

Also on day 3, a roundtable on "**Where Impact Meets Frontier Growth**" coordinated by the **Peace Nexus Foundation, Investisseurs & Partenaires, AlphaTalents Africa, CrossBoundary Advisory**, and **Nere Capital**, highlighted that investment in key growth sectors, especially agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa, is a key contributor peace and stability. Providing equitable job distribution and formalized economic opportunities has crucial material effects.

- **Nature**

On the very first day, a panel on "**Blended & Beyond: Finance innovation for regenerative agriculture and market infrastructure**" featuring speakers from **Eit Food, Clarmondial, Nestlé, Rabobank, WBCSD**, and the **Fourfold Foundation**, discussed the urgent need to regenerate agriculture was a central theme, with a focus on shifting to landscape-level financing to repair water bodies and restore soil. The core message was moving beyond monocropping to a rotational model based on crops that fit the landscape's characteristics, ensuring steady production, sustainable profitability (margins are 15-20% bigger), and ecosystem health.

WHERE WE GO FROM HERE: Upcoming Launches & Events

SWISS IMPACT INVESTING MAP

Wednesday, October 15 | 11-12h30 | Online

SFG gave a sneak peek of its Swiss Impact Investing Map, prepared in collaboration with iGravity and for the Swiss Platform for Impact Investing at the CFA's event on "Private Markets, Public Good: Unleashing Impact for Swiss Pension Capital".

The map will be launched on October 15, in a webinar taking place at 11am.

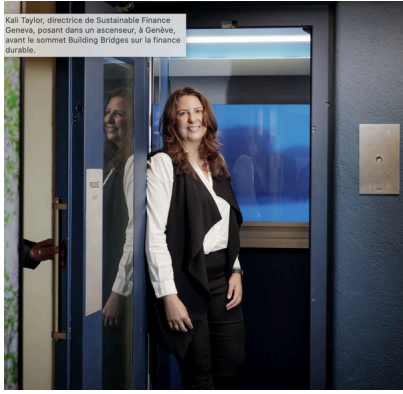
[Register Here](#)

SAVE THE DATE - POST BUILDING BRIDGES EVENT

Monday, December 1 | 12-14h | The Plaza (Rue de Chantepoulet 1, 2nd floor)

SFG, Greenbuzz, and Building Bridges are collaborating to keep the conversation going. Mark your calendar, the registration link will be circulated in our next newsletter.

In Case You Missed It



Our Managing Director, Kali Taylor, was interviewed in the Tribune de Genève in the lead up to Building Bridges where she discussed the evolution on the initiative and the current state of sustainable finance.

«Impossible de régler la crise climatique avec les seuls moyens des États»

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Faces of Building Bridges 2025



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