

# Honoured to represent FIED

by **Alethia O'Hara-Stephenson**

It was a profound honour to represent FIED Canada alongside Safa Boughattas, President of FIED Canada, at the International Forum for Enterprising and Dynamic Women (FIED Africa) in Burkina Faso this past November. The forum was held under the esteemed patronage of Captain Ibrahim Traoré, President of Burkina Faso, whose presence underscored the importance of women's and youth empowerment as a national and continental priority.

This experience was both inspiring and deeply meaningful. Being on the ground allowed me to witness firsthand the tangible and transformative impact that FIED Africa is having in uplifting women and youth across the continent. From entrepreneurship initiatives to leadership development and economic empowerment, the work being led by FIED Africa is not only timely - it is essential.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the forum was the opportunity to connect with an extraordinary group of leaders, entrepreneurs, policymakers, and changemakers from across Africa and the global diaspora. These were individuals who have achieved remarkable success in their respective fields and who are now intentionally investing their time, knowledge, and resources into shaping a more inclusive and prosperous future for others. The collective energy, wisdom, and commitment in the room was truly powerful.

Representing Canada on this global stage was a moment of immense pride. I was honoured to share examples of the innovative and impactful work taking place in Canada to advance women's entrepreneurship, financial empowerment, and inclusive economic growth. These exchanges reinforced the importance of cross-border collaboration and the value of learning from one another as we work toward shared goals of equity and opportunity.

The experience was further enriched by the opportunity to be interviewed by two local media outlets in Burkina Faso. During these interviews, I was able to speak not only about FIED Canada, but also about the important work of the Dufferin County Canadian Black Association (DCCBA). I was proud to highlight elements of Dufferin County and to speak about Jamaica, honouring my heritage and representing the full breadth of my identity?Canadian, Caribbean, and globally connected. Being able to bring all of these dimensions together in an international setting was deeply affirming.

A particularly memorable moment was our visit to the Presidential Palace, where we had the distinguished honour of hearing President Ibrahim Traoré address the delegation. His remarks emphasized the critical role of women and youth in nation-building and reinforced the significance of platforms like FIED in driving sustainable development.

On behalf of Safa Boughattas, President of FIED Canada, and myself as Vice President, this journey was an incredibly rewarding experience. We are proud to celebrate and support the exceptional leadership and vision of Djelika Yao, Founder and President of FIED Africa, whose unwavering commitment continues to create meaningful pathways for women and youth across the continent.

This experience reaffirmed a powerful truth: when women are empowered, communities thrive, economies grow, and futures are transformed. We return from Burkina Faso inspired, energized, and more committed than ever to advancing the mission of FIED - both in Canada and globally.