

# General Report

## Cameroon at the #AfWID2025

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**PREPARED BY:**

WFAC at the #AfWID2025

For More information contact: [communications@wfaccameroon.org](mailto:communications@wfaccameroon.org)

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# CONTEXT

## ABOUT THE AFRICAN WOMEN IN DIALOGUE (AFWID)

[AfWID](#) is an inclusive platform of dialogue which seeks to unite African women from all walks of life under one roof to deliberate on issues of continental importance. It is an annual 5-day platform with its home in South Africa.

The week-long dialogue gives voice to the perspectives and experiences of thousands of African women. Its intent is to create a space to launch disruptive and innovative ideas ushering in new futures for a better Africa. The changes needed reside in the changes each one of us can make in our own capacity in the movement. From grassroots women to businesswomen, women in public service, rural and urban women, entrepreneurs, activists, academics, students and homemakers, we all have fruitful ideas, experiences and expertise on how to build our world with women at the centre.

Through informative presentations, interactive panel discussions as well as valuable training and workshop-based commissions, the forum provides an empowering space for participants to share, learn, reflect and network.

- Source: Zanele Mbeki Development Trust



## ABOUT WOMEN FOR A CHANGE

[Women for a Change, Cameroon](#) is a subregional feminist advocacy, research, and awareness-raising organization working with and for women and girls sexual and reproductive health, leadership and development within the context of climate justice, peace and security across Central Africa. Rooted in feminist principles, we are dedicated to creating a world where women and girls can live fulfilling lives, free from systemic inequalities, violence, and discrimination.



# 1. Introduction

This report captures the key takeaways, reflections from participants, lessons learned, and the proposed way forward for our communities in Cameroon and the broader Central African region.

The African Women in Dialogue (AFWID) 2025 Conference, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from January 27 to 31, 2025, brought together over 1,000 women from all 55 African countries, including a notable delegation of 144 women from the Central Africa subregion. The Central African delegation included representatives from **Angola, Chad, Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and São Tomé & Príncipe.**



Each country nominated 16 women from diverse sectors, including grassroots leaders, entrepreneurs, activists, farmers, students, journalists, diplomats, and policymakers, to participate in AFWID 2025. These women engaged in critical dialogues aimed at fostering peace, sharing experiences, and advancing gender equality across the continent. The theme for the 2025 AFWID was **“Women’s Voice and Power as Agents of Change”**, emphasizing the critical role of women in driving societal transformation across the continent.

AFWID is a Pan-African initiative led by former First Lady Zanele Mbeki of South Africa, designed to unite women in a safe, inclusive space where they can engage in meaningful dialogue, exchange knowledge, and collaborate on transformative solutions for Africa's future.



Afwid 2025 is the 3rd continental convening after the 1st and 2nd took place in 2019 & 2023 respectively.

As steering committee members for Afwid as well as subregional coordinators for the Central African region, our delegations represented diverse constituencies- from **women with disabilities to farmers, students, 'buyam-sellams' to journalists, diplomats to NGO leaders, and public officials**. All were invited to actively engage in numerous discussion sessions, media interviews, workshops, and networking sessions that deepened our understanding of the challenges and opportunities in women's empowerment. The event served as a platform for our women leaders, activists, and policymakers to also reflect on signs of progress made since the Beijing Declaration was adopted in 1995 and charting a course for the future.

## 2. Delegates Remarks



The theme of the AFWID 2025 Conference, "Women's Voice and Power as Agents of Change," is deeply relevant to our time and region, says **Maureen Atanga**, Cameroon delegate.

In areas affected by violence, worth noting that women often bear the heaviest burdens, including displacement and loss of livelihood & human lives. Yet, they also play a vital role in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and rebuilding their communities after conflict.

According to **Nancy Makeoh**, the conference highlighted how crucial it is to listen to and support women in these processes, recognizing that their perspectives are invaluable for lasting peace and development.



Empowering women to take on leadership roles and make decisions that affect their lives and societies is key to achieving gender equality and driving change in Central Africa, alluded to by **Celine Ngo** of Central Africa. By doing so, she adds: “We pave the way for more inclusive, just, and sustainable progress for the entire region”.

## 2.1. On Daily Sessions

Some of the sessions our delegates part in over the last 5 days of the forum included but were not limited to Breaking Barriers and Strengthening Connections, The Power of Multilingual Engagement, Reimagining Our Future Beyond Beijing, Women’s Work and Economic Empowerment, Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda, building and sustaining African feminist movements etc.



In an experience shared by **Akong Florence**, she said: “I felt empty and at peace after attending our breaking barriers session. It was indeed something I needed, and I hoped the session lasted longer. Since it provided delegates the opportunity to focus on self-connection and interpersonal communication. Activities such as creative sketching, exchanging drawings, and using words of affirmation helped build a sense of unity”.

Buttressing Florence’s view was **Amshatu Verbe** who also felt calm and confident after taking part in the session. These exercises reinforced the importance of non-verbal communication in advocacy and movement-building.

According to **Marie Laure** of Gabon, AFWID 2025 highlighted the importance of language accessibility in feminist spaces. Many participants took on roles as translators, ensuring inclusivity across linguistic barriers. This commitment to multilingual engagement demonstrated how language diversity can be a strength in feminist organizing and movement-building.



In the session **“Reimagining Our Future Beyond Beijing”**, many participants from our region, especially those from Cameroon, highlighted the significance of that session to both their career and self-growth. **Ngwana Mary**, a roadside vendor and participant at the forum, explained that the session provided an important opportunity for reflections on the progress made since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were adopted in 1995. *“Being a teenager then”, she adds: “I didn’t know about any of this, nor did I know that issues concerning my rights are being discussed at a global forum. I recalled listening to the news about it but thought it was for a certain group of people. Today, I feel so proud that I am part of those reflecting on its impact 30 years after”*.

During the session, participants also assessed both the achievements and the existing gaps while discussing ways to accelerate gender equality efforts across Africa. A key takeaway was the strong call for increased youth leadership and the adoption of feminist economic models, which were seen as essential for shaping a more equitable future.



In the session on economic justice, delegates, highlighted the importance of recognizing and valuing women’s labour, both in formal and informal sectors. In many parts of our region, particularly for women in Cameroon, much of their work, whether in markets as food sellers or in small-scale agriculture is often overlooked despite its crucial role in sustaining local economies. The discussions emphasized the need to shift this narrative, ensuring that women’s contributions are valued equally to their male counterparts. Strategies were proposed, such as investing in women-led cooperatives, supporting small-scale agribusinesses, and fostering women-led economic networks, all aimed at closing the gender pay gap. Furthermore, the session showed us the need for stronger economic policies that can provide more opportunities and security for women, ensuring they have the tools and support to thrive in all areas of economic life.

## 2.2. Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda

The session on peacebuilding, titled "*What Will It Take for Peace to Reign?*", was facilitated by **Dr. Zoneziwoh Mbondgulo-Wondieh**, Executive Director of Women for a Change (WFAC). Dr. Zoneziwoh emphasized the critical role of women in peacebuilding, particularly in conflict-affected areas across Africa. Participants from countries such as **Cameroon**, the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, **Zimbabwe**, **South Sudan**, and other nations deeply affected by wars and crises shared their lived experiences. Many of these women highlighted the challenges they face in their daily lives, not only as victims of conflict but also as central figures in the rebuilding and healing processes of their communities.



The session became a powerful platform for discussing the urgent need to integrate women into peace negotiations and transitional justice processes. Despite their significant contributions to peace and recovery, women are often excluded from formal peace talks, which diminishes the effectiveness and longevity of peace agreements. Participants stressed that women's inclusion is not only a matter of justice but also of practicality, as they are crucial to fostering reconciliation, rebuilding trust, and ensuring stability in post-conflict settings. Dr. Zoneziwoh also pointed out the stark contrast between the policies and resources available for men in peace processes compared to those for women, which has created a substantial gap in the progress made toward peace and security in conflict zones. The session concluded with a call to action for governments and international organizations to prioritize women's leadership in peacebuilding and fully implement the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda, ensuring that women's voices and contributions are central to creating lasting peace across Africa.



### 3. Impact on Women in Cameroon

### 3.1. Knowledge Sharing and Movement Synergy

The Cameroon delegation explained that the knowledge gained from AFWID 2025 would be shared with the public through various community engagement activities, social media campaigns, and collaborative advocacy initiatives. With a stronger commitment to building solidarity and strengthening joint efforts for the advancement of women's rights. The benefit of working as a collective is enormous. By working together, these organizations can amplify their impact and ensure their voices are heard in shaping policies that affect their lives.



### 3.2. Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Economic Inequalities

In Cameroon, gender-based violence, early marriage, and workplace inequalities continue to be pervasive issues. The key takeaway from AFWID 2025 was the need for systemic changes in policies and practices. The focus on empowering women through law reform, economic independence, and shifting cultural attitudes provides a roadmap for tackling these entrenched disparities. The strategies discussed at the conference will directly influence advocacy work in Cameroon, particularly in addressing legal reforms and societal attitudes towards women's rights.

### 3.3. Strategies for Grassroots Implementation

The grassroots strategies proposed at AFWID 2025 are particularly relevant for Cameroon's socio-economic landscape:

- Encouraging small-scale agribusiness initiatives for financial independence.
- Strengthening women's cooperatives and economic solidarity models.
- Advocating for the implementation of Women's Peace Missions in conflict-prone areas.
- Promoting intergenerational mentorship to nurture young feminist leaders.

# 4. Impact on Women in the Central African Region



The Central Africa Consultation at AFWID provided a platform for women from the region to come together and address the specific challenges they face, such as conflict, economic inequalities, and gender-based violence.

Through shared experiences and collaborative discussions, participants developed common solutions tailored to the region's unique needs. This consultation fostered regional solidarity, empowering women to collectively co-create strategies for overcoming their obstacles. The outcome was a set of actionable solutions that will guide efforts toward gender equality and women's empowerment in the region, ensuring a unified approach to tackling these issues and amplifying the voices of women in decision-making processes. The major key outcoming solutions were focussed on:

## 4.1. Strengthening Regional Solidarity and Collaboration

In the Central African region, women have long struggled against shared challenges, such as conflict, economic inequality, and gender-based violence. The discussions at AFWID 2025 highlighted the power of regional solidarity and collaboration. By joining forces across countries, women in the region can work together to create a unified movement for gender equality. The lessons learned from AFWID will be pivotal in encouraging women's organizations from across the region to unite, share resources, and amplify their voices on the global stage.



## 4.2. Tackling Conflict and Its Gendered Impact

Conflict continues to affect many countries in Central Africa, and women are often at the heart of rebuilding communities. Despite this, they remain excluded from many peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Ensuring women's participation in peacebuilding and decision-making processes is crucial for long-term stability. Women's contributions to conflict resolution must be recognized and valued, as they play a pivotal role in fostering peace, rebuilding societies, and preventing future violence.

## 4.3. Empowering Women through Economic Justice

In much of Central Africa, women are disproportionately involved in the informal economy, where they face economic hardship and lack access to opportunities. Addressing these economic inequalities requires supporting small-scale businesses, promoting women-led cooperatives, and creating pathways for financial independence. Encouraging these initiatives will not only help women escape poverty but also contribute to the broader economic growth of the region. Creating sustainable and inclusive economic models will give women the tools they need to thrive and become key players in their local economies.

#### 4.4. Promoting Regional Leadership and Advocacy

As young women in the region increasingly take on leadership roles and advocate for gender equality, supporting them through mentorship and skill-building is vital. Ensuring that young women have access to resources, networks, and opportunities to lead will help build a stronger, more diverse leadership pipeline for the region. Empowering these leaders is key to breaking down the barriers that have historically kept women from fully participating in the political, economic, and social life of the region.

By addressing these issues and implementing these strategies, women across Central Africa can build a stronger, more inclusive future, where their voices are heard, their contributions are valued, and their rights are upheld.





## 5. Reflections from Participants



The following reflections captured the participation and individual experiences of the Central African women at AFWID 2025



African women must unite to foster peace, stability, and positive change in our region. Implementing what we have learned is crucial. At Afwid2025, the workshops on breaking barriers and connecting to self and others build stronger relationships essential for feminist solidarity. Challenges include solidarity, gender data gaps, lack of financial resources, insecurity, patriarchy, and harmful norms.

Increased funding is necessary. Young women must implement education received at home, school, and organizations like Wfac, addressing gender inequality and stereotypes. Intergenerational solidarity and urging government action are key. Despite difficulties, we need solidarity, love, and hard work to achieve gender equality and deserve **“Women's VOICE AND POWER AS AGENTS OF CHANGE.”** Let's be confident in the upcoming CSW69 outcomes - **Madame Paulette Metang, Beijing Mama**



To me, Afwid2025 offered me the space to speak up, have a voice, build solidarity, and fearlessness, and share responsibility among women. It provided Cameroonian women with invaluable insights and strategies to tackle issues such as gender-based violence, education, health, and economic empowerment. Some of my highlight moments included sessions with Team Leader Bunie

Matlanyane on self-connection. Including workshops on Challenges to gender equality across Africa, pay inequalities and gender-based violence. It was exciting to learn about new empowerment strategies, including agri-business, unity, financial support, and feminist peace-building processes. The conference emphasized the role of young women in advancing gender equality and inspired personal and professional growth. Promising partnerships within Africa and a message of global solidarity were key takeaways - **Benice Wirdin.**



My experience at AfWID 2025 in Johannesburg was truly impactful and transformative. Despite challenges, we made it to South Africa and participated in sessions that emphasized breaking barriers and connecting, peace and decision-making, and addressing crises like the one in Sudan, DRC, CAR etc. Discussions on gender equality and regional sessions fostered unity and mutual support. Documentaries

highlighted the resilience of women during COVID-19. The conference inspired me to engage actively in making a difference at various levels.

I expressed my heartfelt gratitude to the organizers, especially Dr. Zoneziwoh, who underscored the importance of such platforms for learning and growth. My experiences will undoubtedly contribute to promoting gender equality and empowering women in my community and beyond - **Pelagie Ndah**



It was overwhelming and joyful to be one of the 1000 African women to attend this year's African Women in Dialogue (AFWID) conference. As a woman with a visual impairment disability, I get to experience inequality and injustice on a daily basis. Often, our opinions and voices don't get to be heard in such critical spaces. And as the theme for this year says, "**Women's Voice and Power as Agents of Change.**"

I felt that power and could finally believe once more in my voice as a change agent. The conference inspired personal and professional growth, with a strong message for Cameroonian women, especially women with disabilities, to engage in decision-making, economic participation, politics, and peace-making efforts. The experience was deemed enriching and empowering, with valuable insights for advancing gender equality. - **Amshatu Verbe**



It was a dream come true to travel to South Africa for such an inspiring and educational event. I feel immensely grateful for being nominated among the 16 exceptional women to represent Cameroon. The conference reinforced my belief in the importance of solidarity, support, love, and self-expression. Upon return, I plan to implement these values in my community, especially among some colleagues at the market, by promoting unity and sharing knowledge. The conference discussions also emphasized the need for young women to actively engage in gender equality movements, educate themselves, and challenge stereotypes. Inspired by what I learned, I know that not all is lost as I will continue to pursue my dreams with renewed focus and optimism. - **Florence Akong**



The theme "**Women's Voice and Power as Agents of Change.**" highlighted key points taken home, among which included the struggle for gender equality, the need for economic and financial empowerment, attention to women's health, and the importance of inclusive policy-making and dialogue. The discussions and outcomes of the conference significantly impacted us all especially the Cameroonian delegation, with participants acting as ambassadors to share the insights gained. Notable speakers, such as a sister from Burkina Faso, emphasized the importance

of equal consideration for women with disabilities and solidarity among women. Challenges to gender equality in Cameroon were identified, including the need for recognition of marginalization and united action. A new strategy focused on leadership was found to be crucial for supporting women's empowerment. I plan to share the knowledge gained with my community through meetings and social media. The message to women in Cameroon emphasized listening to the conference outcomes, forming groups, and actively participating in discussions on gender equality. - **Rose Ngwana**



The African Women in Dialogue (AFWID) held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from January 27 to 31, 2025, revolved around the theme "**Women's Voice and Power as Agents of Change.**" The first two days focused on '*Breaking Barriers and Connecting/networking with others*,'. The participants were divided into 55 groups. In Group 29, Healer, Ms Tanja Meyburg drilled attendees on using feet and arms for communication, and I was honoured to serve as a Co-healer, translating the session from English to French. Later, I attended a town hall session on "**Reimagining Our Future Beyond Beijing**" and one on peace-making building, where I spoke on a panel highlighting the neocolonialism agenda as a significant hindrance to women's involvement in politics. The impact of Afwid on women in Cameroon is one that will instil in women the power to challenge gender inequalities and develop strategies to support women's empowerment. Open up space for intergenerational collaboration and solidarity - **Muma Yvonne**



I believe that the conference's discussions and outcomes will impact women in Cameroon similarly to women in other countries, provided they are informed about the issues and decisions made. One memorable moment was when I was invited to the leaders' VIP breakfast meeting, where I met all these great women of Africa, listening to their stories and memories during activities.

Sharing strategies to support women's empowerment, such as empowering women in their various domains and providing them with opportunities, as demonstrated by the women who produced conference materials. As a journalist attending Afwid2025, every day was just newsworthy, and I couldn't stop sharing insights from the conference through media reports and articles. My take-home message to women in Cameroon is one of love, solidarity, and believing in oneself and other women - **Scholar Malokeh**

# 6. Way Forward and Recommendations

## 6.1. Strengthening Advocacy and Policy Influence

- Intensify lobbying efforts to influence national and regional policies that protect and empower women, ensuring that gender equality is prioritized.
- Work closely with regional bodies like the African Union or even create an African Women Union to ensure gender-sensitive policies are integrated into national action plans, with measurable outcomes.
- Advocate for stronger legal frameworks to combat gender-based violence and address economic inequalities.



## 6.2. Expanding Women's Economic and Leadership Opportunities

- Increase women's participation in economic decision-making by promoting their involvement in leadership roles across sectors.
- Launch mentorship programs that equip young women with the skills, knowledge, and networks to become future feminist leaders.
- Provide targeted support for women-led businesses and cooperatives, including funding, capacity-building, and access to markets.
- Foster inclusive economic models that prioritize women's financial independence, particularly through small-scale agribusinesses and community-driven projects.



## 6.3. Mobilizing Community Engagement

- Organize community debriefing sessions to disseminate key insights from AFWID 2025 and drive local action on gender equality.
- Leverage digital platforms and social media to expand the reach of feminist discussions, engaging a broader audience in advocacy and awareness campaigns.
- Develop community-based initiatives that integrate lessons learned from AFWID 2025 into local activism, focusing on grassroots empowerment and collective action.

## 6.4. Building Solidarity Networks

- Strengthen partnerships between feminist organizations in Cameroon and across the African continent, creating a united front for policy influence and advocacy.
- Establish regional support networks that provide mentorship, legal assistance, and advocacy resources for women in need, ensuring they have access to necessary services and support.
- Facilitate cross-border collaborations and exchanges to share best practices and innovative solutions for gender equality.

# 7. Gratitude and Conclusion



We extend our deepest gratitude to the AFWID 2025 organizers, especially the initiative vision bearer **Madam Zanele Mbeki** and the entire **WDB Trust**.

We also wish to take this opportunity to thank **Dr. Zoneziwoh Mbongulo-Wondieh**, for her leadership in trusting in our potential and recommending us for Afwid. Their commitment to fostering women's empowerment across Africa has been instrumental in advancing gender equality.

## Final Message to Women in the Region and Beyond

Women everywhere face similar challenges, but our strength is in unity. Let's support and uplift each other, intentionally and with purpose. The path to gender equality demands resilience, solidarity, and determination. Let us stand for what is right, aim higher, and work together to create a future where every woman's voice is heard, respected, and valued.





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