

MAFE and GEN Cameroon Sign Historic Partnership Agreement at Global Entrepreneurship Congress 2025

Cross-border collaboration will connect women entrepreneurs in Michigan and Cameroon through capacity building and mentorship programs



Detroit, Michigan Jun 11, 2025 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - The Michigan Association for Female Entrepreneurs (MAFE) and Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN) Cameroon today announced the signing of a groundbreaking Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the Global Entrepreneurship Congress (GEC) 2025 in Indianapolis, Indiana. The historic agreement establishes a comprehensive cross-border exchange program designed to empower women entrepreneurs across two continents.

The MoU was signed by **Tonya McNeal-Weary**, Founder of MAFE, and **Gilles Lewat**, Managing Director of GEN Cameroon, during the Global Entrepreneurship Congress. The partnership was officially supported by **Jonathan Ortman**, President of GEN Global, emphasizing the importance of this transatlantic collaboration for the development of women's entrepreneurship.

The signing took place in the presence of **Dr. Nafack Alphonse**, Chairman, and **Tazoh Venland Teke**, Deputy Chairman and Spokesperson for GEN Cameroon.

Bridging Continents Through Entrepreneurship

The three-year partnership will facilitate the exchange of female entrepreneurs, business experts, coaches, and mentors between Michigan and Cameroon, with a primary focus on building the capacity of Cameroonian women entrepreneurs. The program aims to create sustainable business partnerships while transferring critical knowledge and best practices in business development, scaling, and international market access.

"This partnership represents a pivotal moment in our mission to empower women entrepreneurs globally," said Tonya McNeal-Weary, Founder of MAFE. "By connecting the vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystems of Michigan and Cameroon, we're not just sharing knowledge – we're building bridges that will create lasting economic opportunities for women on both sides of the Atlantic."

Gilles Lewat, Managing Director of GEN Cameroon, emphasized the transformative potential of the collaboration: "Through this collaboration, we are creating a dynamic exchange that will fundamentally transform how Cameroonian women entrepreneurs access global markets, scale their businesses, and compete on the international stage. We anticipate this partnership will catalyze a new generation of globally minded Cameroonian women entrepreneurs who will, in turn, become mentors and investors in their communities, creating a multiplier effect that extends far beyond the program's initial scope," said Lewat.

Comprehensive Program Framework

The exchange program will feature multiple components designed to maximize impact:

- **Expert Exchange Visits:** Two annual delegations of Michigan-based female entrepreneurs and business experts will travel to Cameroon for intensive capacity-building initiatives, and one yearly delegation of Cameroon-based entrepreneurs will travel to Michigan for a business immersion trip
- **Skills Development Training:** Comprehensive workshops covering business strategy, financial management, digital marketing, international trade, and leadership development
- **Mentorship Networks:** Long-term mentoring relationships between experienced Michigan entrepreneurs and emerging Cameroonian business leaders
- **Partnership Facilitation:** Platforms for establishing joint ventures, collaborations, and business partnerships
- **Virtual Collaboration:** Quarterly online networking sessions and digital learning opportunities

Global Endorsement and Recognition

Jonathan Ortman, President of GEN Global, praised the partnership during the signing ceremony. The signing took place on June 4, during GEC 2025, the world's largest gathering of entrepreneurs, which brings together thousands of startup founders, investors, researchers, and policymakers from more than 170 countries.

Economic Impact and Vision

The partnership addresses critical needs in both regions. Michigan's robust entrepreneurial ecosystem, supported by world-class universities and established industries, offers valuable expertise for emerging markets. Meanwhile, Cameroon's dynamic and growing economy presents significant opportunities for collaboration and market expansion.

"We're not just creating a program – we're building a movement that recognizes the power of women entrepreneurs to drive economic transformation," added McNeal-Weary. "This partnership will serve as a model for similar collaborations across Africa and beyond."

The program is expected to directly benefit hundreds of women entrepreneurs over its initial three-year term, with potential for expansion to other regions based on demonstrated success and impact. To learn more, visit www.mafedetroit.org or www.genglobal.org.

About Michigan Association for Female Entrepreneurs (MAFE)

Founded by Tonya McNeal-Weary, the Michigan Association for Female Entrepreneurs (MAFE) is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting and empowering female entrepreneurs throughout Michigan. MAFE provides networking opportunities, mentorship programs, educational resources, and advocacy for women-owned businesses across the state. Established in 2003, the organization has become a leading voice in Michigan's entrepreneurial ecosystem, connecting women entrepreneurs with the resources and relationships they need to succeed.

About Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN) Cameroon

GEN Cameroon is the local chapter of the Global Entrepreneurship Network, committed to fostering entrepreneurship and innovation throughout Cameroon. Under the leadership of Managing Director Gilles Lewat, GEN Cameroon supports startups and entrepreneurs through various programs, events, and initiatives designed to strengthen the country's entrepreneurial ecosystem. The organization plays a crucial role in connecting Cameroonian entrepreneurs with global opportunities and resources.

About Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN)

The Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN) operates projects and programs in over 200 countries to make it easier for anyone, anywhere, to start and scale a business. Under the leadership of President Jonathan Ortmans, GEN collaborates with thousands of partners to enhance entrepreneurial ecosystems. This is achieved by promoting better collaboration between entrepreneurs, investors, researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders involved in the entrepreneurial process.



Media Contact

Michigan Association for Female Entrepreneurs

*****@mafedetroit.org

(313) 363-4075

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