



Women of First 2025 Year End Newsletter

Issue #2 | December 2025

Welcome to the 2025 Year End Edition of Women of First!

Hello Women of FIRST SIG Members,

We are excited to share the second *Women of First newsletter*, where we plan to celebrate remarkable achievements, reflect on our accomplishments as a SIG, and look forward to the future. This year, we've got a lot to share — from highlighting resources to reflecting on what we learned in 2025 and looking ahead to 2026. We hope you enjoy the read!



2025 Highlights:

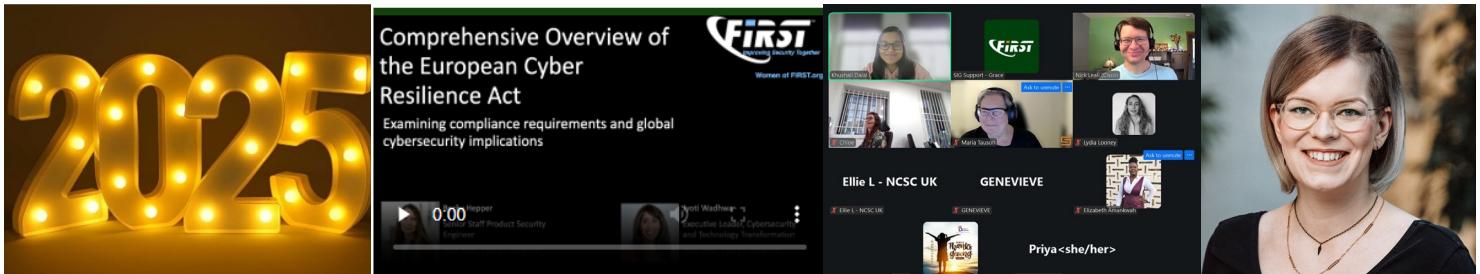
- [Parimala Swamy \(Pari\)](#) was elected as a Co-Chair of WoF SIG!
- SIG Member, [Lisa Lobmeyer](#), hosted the on-site CTF for young women in cyber security in Podgorica, Montenegro. Learn more here: <https://first-dot-org.slack.com/team/U06CM6PV5FT> and on this [Linkedin post](#)
- SIG Chair, [Khushali Dalal](#), presented at the Women in International Security and Cyberspace ([WiC](#)) Fellowship held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Check out her blog write up here: <https://www.first.org/blog/20250616-Women-of-FIRST>
- The SIG gained **41 new members** in 2025, bringing the group to 191 participants

SIG Resources:

We'd also like to spotlight our community spaces — [LinkedIn](#), [Slack](#), and our [Wiki](#) — all linked below. These platforms are great places to stay connected, ask questions, share experiences, and spark conversations. Your stories, insights, and contributions help keep our community vibrant and engaged, so don't hesitate to jump in and share! Use the **#WomenofFIRST** hashtag!

- **Slack Channel:** <https://first-dot-org.slack.com/archives/C013ZFWEQCV>

- **Linkedin Group:** <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/14711002/>
- **Wiki:** <https://wiki.first.org/spaces/WoF/pages/64258345/Women+of+FIRST+SIG+Home>



Reflecting on What We Learned in 2025:

As we look ahead to 2026, let's take a moment to reflect on what we've learned in 2025. This year has been one of increase, tenacity, and engagement. Here are a few key takeaways from our collective journey:

January: Reflections from the FIRST Africa & Arab Meeting

We kicked off the year with an inspiring session led by **Kelly Dingalo** from the Civil Aviation Authority of Botswana, who shared her experience as a Women of FIRST Fellow at FIRSTAA24.

- Kelly highlighted the event's standout training sessions, expert-led presentations, and valuable networking opportunities.
- From seamless logistics to the career-boosting training certificates, her reflections underscored how international gatherings like these strengthen skills, confidence, and collaboration across regions.

April: From Student to Scholar — Black Hat Asia Through Fira's Eyes

In April, **Nora Aliah Syafirah** ("Fira") took us inside her remarkable journey as a Black Hat Asia 2025 Student Scholarship recipient.

- Her recap offered an exciting look at keynotes from Edward Chen and Andrew Huang, immersive hacking and AI security sessions, hands-on wargaming, startup showcases, and even a LEGO Build & Picks station.
- Most impactful was her connection with fellow cybersecurity professionals and the inspiration she drew from women speakers shaping the field. Fira's story was a celebration of curiosity, courage, and community.

May: Behind the Scenes at Pwn2Own

In May, **Laura O'Donnell** opened a window into the high-stakes world of Pwn2Own, one of cybersecurity's most respected global competitions.

- She broke down the competition structure, from zero-day exploit submissions to the private disclosure process that strengthens the entire ecosystem.

- Laura walked us through the 2025 event in Berlin — 34 entries, more than \$1 million awarded, and top performers like Star Labs pushing boundaries across categories.
- Her role as VMware's vendor liaison offered unique insight into vulnerability confirmation, researcher collaboration, and cross-industry response. A fascinating look into the craft of coordinated disclosure.

August: Understanding the Cyber Resilience Act (CRA)

Our August session featured **Jyoti Wadhwa** and **Becy Hepper**, who introduced the SIG to the vibrant and growing CRA Community.

- This initiative helps FIRST members navigate the European Cyber Resilience Act by sharing templates, guidance, and a collaborative roadmap toward 2027.
- The presenters emphasized the value of community involvement — from contributing content to joining monthly updates — and highlighted essential resources such as the CRA regulation text, ENISA's Vulnerability Database, and third-party assessment templates.
- You can watch the presentation recording here:
<https://www.first.org/global/sigs/wof/events>

November: What's New in CVSS v4?

In November, we were treated to an expert session from **Nick Leali**, chair of the CVSS SIG, who walked us through the evolution of CVSS v4 — a major upgrade to the industry's widely used scoring system.

- Nick explained how v4 introduces a more detailed impact model, new base metrics, expanded user-interaction categories, and greater scoring granularity.
- His overview helped demystify the complexities of this latest version and offered practical considerations for adoption across organizations.

NEXT UP:

December: Get Ready for a Hands-On CTF Experience!

We're closing out the year with an exciting interactive session led by **Lisa Lobmeyer**, who will be hosting a Capture the Flag (CTF) challenge tailored for all skill levels.

- Whether you're new to CTFs or a seasoned competitor, this meeting offers a fun, collaborative way to sharpen your skills, learn new techniques, and connect with fellow SIG members.
- Don't miss our final session of the year — come ready to play, learn, and level up!

Did you miss a meeting?

*You can find all meeting notes and call recordings in the FIRST WoF SIG Wiki:
<https://wiki.first.org/display/WoF/Women+of+FIRST+SIG+Home>*

Remember, you need to have your FIRST Portal account setup to access this link!



Looking Ahead:

As we look ahead to 2026, we're energized by the possibilities ahead — expanding opportunities for women, strengthening regional leadership, and creating even more avenues for meaningful collaboration. Keep an eye out for upcoming programs, events, and initiatives designed to elevate our community in the year to come.

The 38th Annual FIRST Conference is coming to Denver, Colorado, June 14-19, 2026! It will provide an excellent stage for the SIG to meet and network with others in the FIRST community. Early registration is available now, we encourage you to join us! <https://www.first.org/conference/2026/>

Joining the SIG:

Our SIG welcomes *all* participants — of all gender identities. We encourage you to share this forum with colleagues and peers; allies play a vital role in building a stronger, more inclusive network. Help us grow our community of support and engagement.

Those interested in learning more can visit: <https://www.first.org/global/sigs/wof/> > click the “Request to Join” button to fill out an application to join the Special Interest Group.

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Meeting Cadence and Topics:

Virtual meetings take place on the last Thursday of each month, new members will receive the Zoom meeting series once their application is approved. If you are already a member and need to be resent the call series, you can reach out any time to sig-support@first.org.

Have topics you want to discuss with the group? Submit them here to be added to future agendas: <https://firstdotorg.wufoo.com/forms/women-of-first-sig-submit-topics/>

Message from the Chair:

A heartfelt thank you to the FIRST Events Team — especially Grace Staley—for supporting the Women of FIRST (WoF) SIG this year. Grace's coordination, creativity, and social media leadership have been invaluable in strengthening our community.

I am incredibly proud of the growth, achievements, and collaborations we have accomplished together in 2025. As we look ahead to 2026 and beyond, I am excited to continue learning from one another, inspiring meaningful conversations, and supporting and uplifting every member of this SIG.

Wishing you all a wonderful holiday season and a Happy New Year!



Until Next Time,

Khushali Dalal

Chair WoF SIG

PS: Forward this newsletter to a friend who could use some inspiration and empowerment this month!

You are receiving this email because you have registered for a previous FIRST event (www.first.org). These communications are provided as a community benefit. If you wish to be removed from the FIRST announcements mailing list (wof-sig@first.org), please reply to events@first.org with UNSUBSCRIBE in your request. Thank you.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS