

May 2021

We can do and be better



Dear colleagues and friends of the WOMENVAI platform!

The global health crisis is likely to have permanent effects on the way we work... and on the way we live, socialize and move around the world. It is not yet clear how, but it is certain, hopefully so, because we have somehow realized that a better, resilient and socially innovative society is possible.

Firstly, from a gender equality perspective: women leaders, women's organizations and hard-working women, often on the front lines of the pandemic, have again demonstrated in the crisis current expertise, reach and ability to lead. While curfews and lockdown were and still are on the agenda in some countries around the world, we know that domestic violence has increased dramatically, and we are all, with our

NGOs, hard at work to promote more health, education and justice services.

The SDGs constantly remind us that Equality between women and men, as well as the preservation of our Planet, are essential to a better life in the 21st century, that education for all is the strategy to achieve this, and that it is thus necessary to allow to live our potential fully, to develop our skills and knowledge, in the safe spaces of our houses, schools, faculties, universities and in our external environment.

We can see it clearly: the positive impact of girls' education radiates absolutely everywhere, and this translates into reduced poverty, reduced violence, reduced pressure on the environment, better health, longer lifetimes, more inclusive and resilient societies, and stronger and more peaceful democracies. Education, especially the education of girls, and the empowerment of women are the keys to global recovery.

WOMENVAI and its partners have celebrated throughout the past months with a culmination in March 2021 the extraordinary strength and resilience of all women around the world: together, we are ready to build a better world, now!

Let's bet WOMENVAI can help all of us achieve these bolds objectives of life!

Yvette Ramos, President and co-founding member of WOMENVAI

In this issue

- a. Editorial by Yvette Ramos
- b. Reinvention and Entrepreneurship in Pandemic Times, by Denisse Salas Hussy
- c. Message from Lylian Coelho, Vice-President
- d. Messages from the WOMENVAI Academy Members
- e. March 19th Call For Action
- f. A Dedicated Message from the Secretary General of the United Nations
- g. March 2021 - IWD activities of our Coalition partners from France, Morocco and Portugal
- h. Events organized by WOMENVAI Coalition partners
- i. News from from the world by our Ambassadors
- j. How to contact us



Reinvention and Entrepreneurship in Pandemic Times

by Denisse SALAS HUSSY, Cofounder and Member of the Committee of Swiss Engineering, Geneva

Dear all,

I would like to share with you, community of Womenvai, the opportunities that I discovered during the COVID-19 pandemic, which I shared during WSIS Forum 2021, held on March 8th, 2021.

In March 2020, when the pandemic hit Europe and the world, I had already decided to start my entrepreneurship journey. The first step was to reinforce the skills that I needed in order to succeed. The second step was to tell everybody about my project while I was working on creating the identity of my business, which methods to apply, etc. In November 2020, I decided to launch a pilot test with three clients and now I am working on the business brand.

But the most important decision was that my business would help business women to embrace and adopt technology as an ally in their businesses in order to have a greater competitive edge, both online and offline.

(... to be continued on page 2)

Reinvention and Entrepreneurship in Pandemic Times (Continued)

The social purpose of my business is to help women from developing countries to be economically independent, and help them with entrepreneurship education - but this help is not limited to women: girls and boys could greatly benefit too.

In parallel, I have created the Spanish-speaking podcast "Reinventarse y Emprender", a platform to spread a message of hope, inspire people, give them tools and motivate them to reinvent themselves and help them make their dreams come true. This podcast does not only inspire people, but also promotes guests' businesses as well.

This podcast provides you with inspirational entrepreneurship histories of people like you and me, who, one day, decided to start something on their own.



Despite only existing for two months, it has already reached the following positions in the past 30 days on Apple Podcasts, ranking:



#26 in the Entrepreneurship category (Switzerland),
#39 in the Entrepreneurship category (Spain),
#178 in the Business category (Switzerland)
and #220 in the Business category (Spain).

I invite you to listen the podcast, subscribe and take action.

More on reinventarseyemprender.com
Contact me at contact@denissesalashussy.com



Message from Lylian Coelho, Vice-president - WOMENVAI

During this month of March, I had the opportunity to develop different actions engaging Women & Men to increase Women's rights as Leaders in Water & Sanitation Services.

Sharing examples for a better future partners to fight against climate change.

Working as development director at Chair Water for All SUEZ in the water and sanitation sector.

22nd of March 2021:

Water Day was a significant moment to share experiences.

[More info here.](#)

MESSAGES from the WOMENVAI Academy members



From WOMENVAI Academy member in Côte d'Ivoire, Ms. Doa Tile Larissa épouse Obouley

Beneficiary of the wonderful training on female leadership for value creation in Côte d'Ivoire (LFCV-CI) under WOMENVAI initiative, in collaboration with NGO ROSCIDET.

It was an experience that allowed me to capitalize on a great range of knowledge on several modules, on the theme: Female Entrepreneurship in the girls of sustainable technologies. And this theme was treated by eminent panelists from ten essential modules.

This allowed us to understand and integrate the challenges of Female leadership and the development objective of this period. Thanks, Womenvai!

By Djètovi Bèdè, Benin, CEO of Youth For Challenge

Youth For Challenge is a Non-Governmental Organization created in Benin in 2018 and working mainly on SDGs 4, 5 and 8. Our vision is to be a leading organization by 2030 in the profound transformation of Africa, by empowering our youth and promoting the accessibility and quality of our education. Through our action in the education, leadership and entrepreneurship fields, we are directly serving local communities, mainly youth and children, students and entrepreneurs, women and men.



Empowering women and raising the voice of women entrepreneurs may trigger a profound socioeconomic development and innovation in our local communities. We live today in a digital world where internet and ICTs are offering a lot of opportunities for capacity building, success history sharing, networking worldwide, coaching and mentoring, business funding, marketing, etc. That's why, we signed last year a MOU with our new partner, Womenvai.

And since November 2020, we have started together a new project **Women Leadership and Value Creation in Benin**.

This project aims at empowering 20 young women entrepreneurs selected in all regions of Benin.

Through a coaching and mentoring program, we raise their voices. Indeed, we reinforce their entrepreneurship skills with 4 capacity building webinars on topics such as strategic planning, digital marketing and communication, business creation, business canvas and analyzing tools.

20 entrepreneurs pitched their business ideas in short videos. We chose 3 winners on March 8th, 2021:



Ms. Jihane TOURE is awarded in the cosmetic sector. She is the promoter of **Jie Care Cosmétique**. Her business idea came from the use of cosmetic products unsuitable for the skin and harmful to health. She therefore wants to create a range of products with a majority of natural ingredients and an after-sales services to give good advice on body care. She also plans to use social media in her marketing strategy.

In the agrobusiness sector, we have **Ms. Sandra ODJOUGBELE**: nearly 40% of papaya production is thrown away due to post-harvest losses. In addition, papaya has many cosmetic, food and medical virtues. Sandra therefore wants to launch **Papaya Industry** to transform these 40% lost production into fruit juices, a range of cosmetics and slimming teas. She will also use digital marketing to reach her targeted customers, increase her company's visibility and sell its products.



The social project of **Ms. Emeline KOUCHEME** is to create a recruitment agency for housekeeping staff. **Heart's home** is therefore a company that connects workers and customers (households, companies, individuals) in order to guarantee the reinsertion of vulnerable men, women and girls, a better working conditions and the quality of services. Emeline will make extensive use of digital tools (social networks such as Facebook and Instagram, a website) in order to launch and develop her business.

That is what we have done with WOMENVAI as far as this project is concerned. Now, we are planning some future women empowerment projects around Africa with the support of our partners. We would like to thank all the team of WOMENVAI, mainly Yvette Ramos, Asma Brini, Denise Salas and Betty Bonnardel-Azzarelli.

March 19th, 2021 - Paris Call For Action

By Yvette Ramos, President of Swiss Engineering Geneva and Cofounder of WOMENVAI

Conference

On March 19th, 2021, twenty-five years after the great historic conference in Beijing in 1995, at the occasion of International Women's Day and World Engineering Day (WED, supported by UNESCO), WOMENVAI, AIODD and their partners organized an international conference on the theme of Gender Equality, in Paris, at the headquarters of Nokia France.

This event gave us the opportunity to combine face-to-face and videoconference meetings under the exceptional circumstances of Covid-19, with a strong message from its France CEO, Thierry Boisson.

The conference was supported by key UN participants, including H.E. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. Speakers from 12 countries, on 4 continents, brought in their actions and pragmatic solutions for Equality during a series of outstanding interventions.

They also evoked major stakes and risks. All referenced initiatives helped to understand how to act in a local or international environment with the strength of networks of highly influential women.



From left to right: Pascale Fressoz (AIODD), Saida Agrebi (OISAT), Yvette Ramos (WOMENVAI)



From Left to right: Saida Agrebi (OISAT) Thierry Boisson (CEO NOKIA France), Yvette Ramos (WOMENVAI), Pascale Fressoz (AIODD), Inès Aivazian (WOMENVAI), Elisabeth Eude (STRONGHER), Mandine Pichon Paulard (Science Po Paris), Laetitia Bemba-Poindron (NOKIA), Lylian Coelho (WOMENVAI), Jean-Michel Nicolle (EPF School of Engineering)

To conclude, we all put up together a «Call for Action 2021-2025», with innovative and relevant initiatives by all partners, including the first ever European certification for Gender Equality in Artificial Intelligence (GEEIS France), a white paper on the strategy for diversity and equal opportunities in SMEs – Small and Medium Enterprises, the contribution to the Generation Equality Conference this year in Paris, with the launch of the World Gender & Governance Action Platform, the kick-off of the WOMENVAI Academy Awards for Least-Developed Countries Women Entrepreneurs (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania), professional training courses for women in STEM (Brazil), the contribution to the Dubai World Expo, United Arab Emirates.

March 19th Call for Action

Women Engineers & Scientists Leading SDGs Coalition

On this day of 19th March 2021, we, WOMENVAI and AIODD cofounders, reunited together with our partners and colleagues committed to promote Girls and Women's right in accessing leadership position in STEM careers, in public and private organizations around the Globe, to celebrate the World Engineering Day and the International Women Day on the theme:

“Women in leadership: achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world”

As UN Women recognizes the “tremendous efforts of women and girls around the world to shape a more equal future”, its Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka calls for women's representation that reflects all women and girls in all their diversity and abilities, and across all cultural, social, economic and political situations.

“This is the only way we will get real societal change that incorporates women in decision-making as equals and benefits us all, she states”. Some progress was made over the past decade but there is still a long way to go towards achieving Equality, as in 2021, yet:

- For the same position, while a man earns **1 euro**, a woman earns **0.77 euros**
- A woman works **25% of the time more**, for the same result
- Access to property is more difficult for women: they are **only 13% of landowners**
- Women represented on average **4.4% of business leaders, 16.9% of board members**
- Only **24% of national parliament members** are women
- Only **28% of researchers** worldwide are women



Mandine Pichon-Paulard
Science-Po Student,
Speaker at the conference

Let us step up the action as it is time to formalize practices and follow the recommendations of the UN and other global stakeholders to develop strategies for Equality in the public and private arenas whether within small or large organizations (Very Small Enterprises to Medium ones), NGOs representing the civil society, including Engineering societies, Engineering and Science Faculties, and local authorities (small to medium cities and cantons).

Bringing today Equality experts and high-level contributors and officials from the private and public sectors, we, WOMENVAI and AIODD, commit to achieving a **5-year action plan**, in a collaborative manner, with 2 flagship actions per year. We are thus ambitiously proposing simple and practical methods to better integrate Gender Equality policies that will be managed by our network.

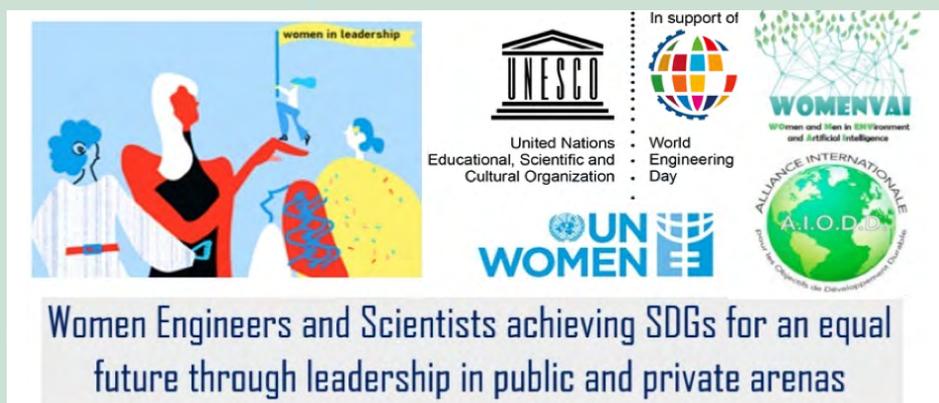
It is time to give more opportunities to today to the Youth and more generally, to all women in the private and public sectors by breaking the glass ceiling which no longer has its place in the 21st century.

It is time for our generations and all those who will follow, that Equality rhymes with Equity, for the progress of a more inclusive society in all ways, including well-being for all.

It is time to give a priority to the Global Goals of the United Nations, the Agenda 2030, to achieve the Equality goal at government, business, local authorities and universities levels, as it is everyone's job.

Let us crystallize our efforts to achieve SDG 5, and through it, all of the SDGs for a more inclusive, fair and sustainable world. For an **Inclusive Artificial Intelligence**, sign the first International Charter for an Inclusive AI [here](#).

Signed at the NOKIA France Headquarters



A Dedicated Message from the Secretary General of the United Nations

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

—
**MESSAGE ON THE OCCASION OF THE OBSERVANCE OF
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY ORGANIZED BY WOMENVAI
(WOMEN AND MEN IN ENVIRONMENT
AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)**

19 March 2021

It is a pleasure to greet WOMENVAI as you mark International Women's Day.

The COVID-19 pandemic has erased decades of progress towards gender equality. From high job losses to exploding burdens of unpaid care, and from disrupted schooling to an escalating crisis of domestic violence, the lives of women have been upended and their rights eroded.

But women have also been on the frontlines of the pandemic response. They are the essential workers keeping people alive and holding economies, communities and families together. They are among the leaders who have kept prevalence rates lower, and countries on track for recovery.

This year, International Women's Day highlights the transformative power of women's equal participation. We are seeing it ourselves at the United Nations, where we have achieved gender parity in United Nations leadership posts for the first time in history.

The evidence is clear. When women lead in government, we see bigger investments in social protection and greater inroads against poverty. When women are in parliament, countries adopt more stringent climate change policies. When women are at the peace table, agreements are more enduring.

In a male-dominated world with a male-dominated culture, gender equality is essentially a question of power. I call on countries, companies and institutions to adopt special measures and quotas to advance the equal participation of women and achieve rapid change.

We must also do more to advance the role of women in technology and the sciences. Digital technology can be an enormous force for good. But I am deeply concerned by the ways in which machine learning and artificial intelligence in general replicate and exacerbate existing biases. Algorithms are often designed without sufficient transparency. Given the male domination of technological professions in the universities, start-ups and Silicon Valleys of our world, there is no surprise that there is an inherent male bias. Moreover, stereotypes, active marginalization and a lack of financing for female-led technological startups continue to steer women and girls away from science-related fields. It is time to recognize that greater diversity fosters greater innovation, and that advancing gender equality in science and technology is essential for building a better future.

Pandemic recovery is our chance to leave behind generations of exclusion and inequalities. It is time to build an equal future. This is a job for everyone – and for the benefit of everyone.

António Guterres

Laetitia Bamba-Poindron (NOKIA), Jean-Michel Nicolle (EPF/CDEFI France)



March 2021 - IWD activities of our Coalition partners from France, Morocco and Portugal

March 25th - Portugal Talk on Equality, with Cátia Rosas

Environmental Engineer at Confagri, National Confederation of Farming Cooperatives

An expert on Environment at European Commission Consultant Groups, a team member and leader on European Projects (Intelligent Energy, Horizon 2020, Erasums+), a Member of Ordem dos Engenheiros, Portugal, she coordinated the organisation and moderated the talk with the **Secretary of State for Equality, Rosa Monteiro**, film director **Raquel Freire** with the Trilogy “**Women of my Country**” and one of the women portrayed, Ângela Pica, a domestic violence survivor.



After the projection of the third episode, a lively talk took place with the speakers, from the historical legacy, to the challenges of the present and future actions. It was recognized the significant advances in national policies for Equality and Non-Discrimination in these last years and next steps, including **the National Plan against discrimination**. It was referred in the talk some of **the stories of the 12 great women from the trilogy**, such as the past anguish while someone «couldn't be» or the weight of xenophobic and prejudiced comments. The one who chooses every day “how much violence is willing to endure”, but also all their strength and perseverance. Stories of lives, with whom the audience comes across in daily lives and are connected.

The conclusions were that no one is alone and these initiatives must continue, giving a voice and making women more visible and empowered in this desired transformation.

March 31st - Webinar on ‘The profession of the engineer Before and after Covid-19’, with Samira Achour, Morocco

Architect and Urban Planner

The National Coordination of Moroccan Engineers organized this webinar as a part of the series programmed by the network of Ittihadis engineers, moderated by Mr. Baali Srhir, its National Coordinator.

The event discussed the exercise of the engineer and what perspectives involved post-Covid 19, highlighting the added value of the European experience on the organization of the profession.

The poster features the logo of the Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires (USFP) at the top right. The main text reads: 'La coordination Nationale des Ingénieurs Ittihadis Organise un webinaire sous le thème "Le Métier de l'Ingénieur, avant et après le covid 19" LE MERCREDI 31 MARS 2021 À 18H'. Below the text are four portraits of the speakers: Baali SRHIR, Yvette RAMOS, Ahmed GOUTAA, and Samira ACHOUR.

Guest speakers included **Ms. Yvette Ramos**, **Mr. Ahmed Goutaa** and **Ms. Samira Achour** - an Architect and Urban Planner, who presented a historical overview on the organization of the profession of the architect in Morocco, as well as the laws published for the creation of the national order of architects.

Ms. Achour specified that a «**new era**», **more ecological and without fossil fuels**, after the coronavirus pandemic is emerging where architects should rethink the city and the development of urban

and rural agglomerations while preserving the health of citizens. There is a need to ensure the development of sustainable, smart cities, improve mobility, promote access to public spaces and services to all, develop “energy efficient” buildings... All those fields are planned with a mutual collaboration between architects and engineers in several areas. There is an actual need to regulate the body of engineers in Morocco with their specialties to a better collaboration with architects.

News from our 3 Partners

Rotary

**by Marie-Laure Charles,
Charter President and Founder of Rotary e-Club Paris International**



Here is an example of what my club, Rotary e-Club Paris International, does for young ladies' education: At Rotary, we have Rylas, which stands for Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, for young people from 16 to 30 years old - ie students and young professionals. We teach them how to get a job, how to write a CV, or résumé, and topics such as working in e-commerce or cyber security, rules when you study or work from home, and so on.

In 2020, I organized an e-Ryla, in French, English and Spanish, on Zoom, on leadership and ethics and this year's event focused on leadership in a digitalized world, including the German language. So that is now 4 languages.



In both cases we had over 400 participants from 40 countries: a big success that we will continue every year, the first week end of March - Friday, Saturday and Sunday. In 2022, we will focus on women in leadership."

OISAT/WASAT



By Saida Agrebi, OISAT/WASAT Founder and President

Following the successful of the Video Conference organized by WOMENVAI and AIODD in celebration of International Women's Day within their Partnership under theme: " Women Achieving SDGs for an equal future through Leadership" (Paris, March 19th, 2021),

OISAT/WASAT, International NGO with UN/ECOSOC Special Status, aiming at Solidarity, Amity, Tolerance for Peace and dealing with SDG 4 Education , SDG 5 Gender Equality,

The President of WASAT Is pleased to contribute to the edition of this newsletter as an active partner, by sharing a communication on the effective Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the field of the local authorities and civil society actors to bring SDGs services closer to the populations, and by presenting the IWD 2021 Distinction Award to Womensvai President Yvette RAMOS, in recognition of her great significant efforts to contribute to Women Empowerment in all fields and regions.

I am quite certain that our partnership will enhance the achievement of these Goals.

Arborus

By Cristina Lunghi, Arborus Founder and President

Despite the current health crisis, we have advanced our values. More than ever, we have affirmed our role in social and community innovation through our GEEIS certification activities worldwide (41 countries) with Bureau Veritas and through active partnerships: WomenVai, PWN, Think Tank Marie Claire, Elle&Co, etc.

Among other activities in March this year, we were pleased to contribute to the WOMENVAI event, with the support of UNESCO: A major goal of the SDG's Women Engineers & Scientists achieving SDGs for an equal futur through leadership in public and private areas, with a speech on a methodologic approach with the GEEIS certification."



NEWS from the World by our Ambassadors

From WOMENVAI ambassador in Dominica, Arnelle

I am writing to you from the beautiful Nature Isle of the Caribbean – Dominica. The month of March brought me new experiences as I undertook research on the island, in collaboration with researchers in the United Kingdom and Italy. Myself along with my colleague were able to complete a total of 170 surveys in two communities, assessing the architectural type of buildings and their surrounding environments. The goal of the research was to determine which architectural designs are best suited for different environments to build resilience. It was indeed a pleasure to be able to contribute to this research as it is also being conducted in other Caribbean islands. It is the intention to move along with the next phase soon, and I look forward to continue working in these communities as we strive to build resilience against natural hazards.



From WOMENVAI ambassador in Mexico, Karen Janett



We are currently facing a pandemic that has emphasized the gap between how women and men are implicated in careers focused on engineering, science or technology overall. Though we are living in times where technology has made access to information easier than just a few decades ago, sometimes it feels like, as women, we are still being relegated to a place where stereotypes keep us from choosing higher or any type of education which considers STEM. Only 1 out of 7 engineers around the world are women.

Most natural based solutions that include environmental engineering, technology and science for the recovery of natural resources are applied in agricultural contexts; and they are being driven and led by women around the world, just simply because women farmers currently account for 45-80% of all food production in developing countries depending on the region.

As a social scientist, I have found the need to close the gap where women have not yet been incentivized to walk the path of STEM education from a communications perspective, where we can take advantage of every media tool at our reach to actually develop better strategies and skills. I've learned that sensibility and instinct are yet another feature technology beholds. So let's work on messages and actions to let women out there know that their economic and personal time possibilities can be enhanced when choosing to study STEM-related bachelor degrees, or even just to try them combined with what they are already doing as a professional in any other grounds.

From WOMENVAI ambassador in Zambia, Agness

About ZWES – Zambia Women Engineers and Scientists

The Zambian Women in Engineering Section (ZWES) is a multi-faceted Section under the Engineering Institution of Zambia (EIZ) that seeks to promote gender balance and advancement in the engineering fraternity in Zambia.

ZWES's vision is to help build the EIZ into a world-class gender balanced fraternity in which men and women will have equal opportunities for career advancement, wellbeing and



professional development, taking a leaf from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 7th National Development Plan, which prioritise the development of women in Zambia. In March, ZWES contributed in the IWD with a webinar for its members and stakeholders under the theme “WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP: ACHIEVING AN EQUAL FUTURE IN THE COVID-19 WORLD”. EIZ secretariat also made a donation of various items to the University Teaching hospital and Kitwe central hospital children malnutrition wards.

Our Donor Procadres International Does it Also!

Procadres International, specialized in interim assignments with its talented pool of freelance executives primarily in Europe and Africa, develops a unique management consulting model with seasoned experts, for complex and impactful performance improvement, transformation or development missions. Procadres is continuously engaged in business coupled with knowledge sharing and development.

PROCADRES
INTERNATIONAL

Recent successes in the African field include:



Veener factory in Cameroon

Our Business leader rapidly deployed a successful restructuring and turnaround. Introducing health insurance to the 200 employed women and men proved to be a brilliant idea and critical investment - which motivated all to make the return to profitability a reality, saving the site and all related jobs.

Start-up in Tanzania

Mobile Afya launched the first Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) healthtech application without Internet. Led by 4 women, from Tanzania and Europe, the app provides access to information in restricted areas: family planning, neglected tropical diseases, sexually transmitted diseases and first aid in local languages for East Africa, starting with Swahili.

Want to join as a NGO Partner, Sponsor or Ambassador ? Feel free to contact us at contact@womenvai.org

Who we are: the co-founding members

Executive Committee

Yvette Ramos, President, France/Switzerland
Lylían Coelho, Vice-President, France/Brazil
Inès Aivazian, Treasurer, France
Sophie Magner, Deputy-Treasurer, Belgium/France
Lidia Zakowska, Secretary General, Poland

Ethics Committee

Soizic Vangrevelinghe, France
Denis Aivazian, France,
Sangeeta Wij, India

Communication

Ariane Barbier, France
Asma Brini, France/Tunisia
Camille Coq, France
Guillaume Pahud, France/Switzerland
Denisse Salas, Bolivia/Switzerland

Projects

Liliane Dorveaux, France
Marwa Zaghib, Tunisia
Nadia Souissi, Tunisia
Betty Bonnardel-Azzarelli, UK/ France
Lidia Santiago, Portugal

WOMENVAI

contact@womenvai.org

www.womenvai.org