

## Project Ceremony

31 January 2020



Bernadette Ulens, President, & Eva Töttösy-Tackoen, Vice-President Projects, surrounded by the Speakers and Members of the Project Committee at the 2020 Project Ceremony

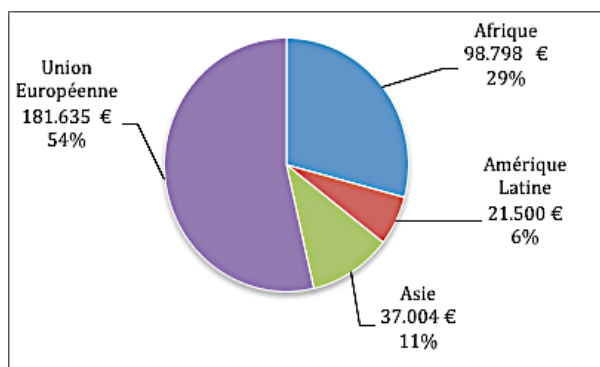
***This year the press room of the European Commission's Berlaymont building was again a buzzing hive of anticipation as over 250 attendees gathered together for the 2020 Project Ceremony. This annual event is the occasion for the Femmes d'Europe Association to showcase some of the wonderful projects it finances each year.***

Bernadette Ulens, the President of Femmes d'Europe, opened the Ceremony with a warm welcome to the participants. In jest, she remarked that we were not in competition with Davos this year. By coincidence, however, 31 January, the date of our Ceremony, is also the date on which the United Kingdom leaves the European Community. Thankfully, Femmes d'Europe is an apolitical organisation and she emphasised that we do not wish to lose our British members – we want them to stay with us!

She extended a special welcome to Dr Helena Dalli, the Member of the European Commission with responsibility for the newly created Equality portfolio in the von der Leyen Commission. Dr Dalli has been a long-standing Member of the Maltese Parliament and brings a wealth of experience to the European Commission from her positions as Minister, including responsibility for European Affairs and Equality. Dr Dalli made an inspiring keynote address, stressing that our Association is making an important contribution to the European values, including on gender equality, both in the EU and in the wider world. She thanked the Femmes

d'Europe for their work, which brings concrete results for women and children at a global level.

2019 was another good year for Femmes d'Europe projects as announced by Vice-President Eva Töttösy-Tackoen. The total amount of funds distributed to 81 projects across the world was EUR 338,937. The geographical distribution and breakdown of this funding is illustrated in the pie chart shown here. Eva recalled that the Association has distributed more than EUR 10 million to some 2,400 projects throughout the world since its foundation in 1976. Its focus is on small-scale projects in favour of women and children in the areas of education, health and the fight against poverty.



Eva then announced that today we would have the pleasure of hearing the testimony of representatives from 10 of the 81 associations that have received project funding from Femmes d'Europe in 2019 and invited them to take the floor. The following is a brief summary of some highlights from the presentations. The complete addresses can be consulted on the Femmes d'Europe website on the following link:

**[www.assocfemmesdeurope.eu](http://www.assocfemmesdeurope.eu) - Nos Projets - Cérémonie des Projets.**

Our first stop of the day was in Senegal where André Petithan presented the work of the Malem-Auder Association, a Belgo-Senegalese joint venture that has been working together with women from the communities of 180 villages situated in the centre of Senegal since 2008. Their objective is to equip dynamic groups of women in these communities with the resources to participate in economic life. The focus is on integrating crop culture, biogas, ecological market gardening and a processing workshop, which has been an example of a successful development model within the region.

Next to Malawi, where "Mbedza Projects Support", a UK charity, has set up an HIV Testing and Counselling, Education and Community Development Centre in the peri-urban market town of Songani. Susan Bird, the Project Sponsor, explained that the Centre is now up and running with 8 staff and they test and/or counsel over 100 people a month. The Community Centre also hosts a library as well as a youth club and a football team. The Centre's large hall can also be used for watching videos, for cultural events, and for festivals.

The focus of the "Centro Residencial Nuestra Señora de Los Dolores", a charity based in Cordoba, Spain, is to reach out to men and women

aged over 65, who are alone, vulnerable and often in poor health. Enrique Mariño, Founder of this foundation, explained that the centre currently hosts 69 persons in varying degrees of health and 20 who are completely dependent on care. Femmes d'Europe has financed the purchase of 7 sets of fit for purpose geriatric furniture that improves the residents' general well-being and facilitates the task of carers in their daily work.

The mission of "Comitato Arghosha Faraway Schools" is to fund educational projects in Afghanistan, with a primary focus on women and children. Marco Niada, the founder of the organisation, confirmed that Femmes d'Europe has funded the purchase of 80 school desks, for a new school building that has just been completed in Largar. This is a small village in one of the poorest provinces in the heart of the country, where primary and secondary school students rarely benefit from a school building and children have to walk between 5 and 10 km each way to attend their daily lessons.

"Drinking water for Cambodia" is the main campaign operation of the Association "Espoir en Soie", as explained by Bruno de La Maisonneuve, its President. Today 70% of the Cambodian population still does not have access to drinking water and this rises to 100% in the north west of the country in the province of Banteay Meanchey where the association is active. The objective of this project is to provide 10,000 families in this area with ceramic filters so that each family has access to 10-20 litres of drinking water per day.

Maria Hadjiioannou, Member of the Executive Office "Alkionides Charity Organisation" reported that, thanks to funds from Femmes d'Europe, the Charity was able to donate a portable polygraphy sleep diagnostic device, to the Archbishop Makarios Children's hospital in Nicosia, Cyprus. This device monitors the heart rate and breathing in order to successfully manage Apnea in infants. The organisation has funded the purchase and the installation of the device, as well as the training of the medical staff.

"Terroirs d'Afrique-Tamneere" is a belgo-burkinabe association with the mission to create jobs for women in Guillé, a small rural village in Burkina Faso. Eric Scheins explained that the challenge was to leverage the traditional skills of the local women so that they can earn money and

ensure the food supply. They have therefore decided to take advantage of the climate to construct a solar station as a source of green and renewable energy to power machines such as an oil press and a mill. The resulting produce is fully organic and the proceeds are reinvested in the village.

In 2017, hurricane Maria swept across the Caribbean island of Dominica, causing major damage throughout the island. Kathy Lemerle, the project promoter, reported that the roof was blown off the "Giraudel Primary School" with the result that the school contents were destroyed by wind and rain. Subsequently with assistance from UNICEF, charities and private fund raisers, they have managed to replace the roof and make it hurricane proof and repurchase basic furniture and teaching materials. Femmes d'Europe have funded desperately needed IT equipment for the school, which has considerably improved class conditions.

"CADP Lidongé" is an association operating in Masiala, a suburb of Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Father Bruno Tegbesa reported that most of the inhabitants of Masiala are unemployed with little access to basic necessities such as healthcare, housing and schooling. The Association therefore decided to set up a Medical Centre in 2016 with the mission to create a mutual health system for women and children in the area. Femmes d'Europe have supported this initiative by financing the purchase of a refrigerator to store vaccines, medical equipment to support clinical procedures and medical services to women during pregnancy and birth.

Caroline de Pognadoresse, President of the "Lazare Association Belgium", reported on its activities in developing and supporting housing

joint tenancies between young professionals (25-30 years of age) and homeless persons. The objective is to help the latter to secure a roof over their heads, to get back on their feet, make friends and form social links. The Brussels project started in 2017 and today 20 young people rent a room and share communal spaces in two houses. This project has been very successful and Femmes d'Europe have financed a table tennis table for one of these houses.

These presentations were followed by a film of about 15 minutes showing photos and videos of the 81 projects financed by Femmes d'Europe in 2019. All in all, this was a very moving representation of young and not so young faces, who have gained joy and an improvement in their living conditions around the world, thanks to the donations of Femmes d'Europe.

Bernadette Ulens closed the Ceremony by thanking the speakers for their excellent presentations and the interpreters, who had done an great job during the meeting. She extended a special vote of thanks and appreciation to Eva Töttösy-Tackoen and the members of the Project Committee for their hard work in processing all of these projects during the year and preparing the Project Ceremony. Many thanks also to Andre Tackoen, who had done a wonderful job in putting together the film on the projects.

As tradition calls for, this beautiful and moving Project Ceremony concluded with a "verre d'amitié", which afforded excellent networking opportunities between the speakers and the members of Femmes d'Europe.

*Fiona Joyce,  
Irish Group*