

WOMEN4CLIMATE

PARIS

**WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP
IN CLIMATE
CHANGE**

**A CASE-STUDY ON CIVIL
SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS
IN PARIS**

FEBRUARY 2019

**ANNELIESE DEPOUX
FRANÇOIS GEMENNE**

**C4O
CITIES**

CONTENTS

CONTENTS	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
INTRODUCTION	4
BACKGROUND	5
PARIS AND CLIMATE	6
GENDERED LEADERSHIP IN CLIMATE CHANGE	7
RESEARCH APPROACH	8
MAPPING CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS	9
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH ORGANISATION LEADERS	10
FOCUS GROUPS	10
RESULTS	11
MAPPING CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS	12
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH ORGANISATION LEADERS	17
FOCUS GROUPS	20
DISCUSSION	22
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	25
GLOSSARY	28
APPENDIX	29
LIST OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS THAT WERE SURVEYED	29
SLIST OF CLIMATE LEADERS INTERVIEWED	31
FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS	31

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Anneliese Depoux and François Gemenne would like to thank the Municipality of Paris contacts who have facilitated communication and access to civil society organisations and their leaders. Our deep thanks to Célia Blauel, Lucas Manetti, Yann Françoise and Elsa Meskel.

We further acknowledge the work of Laura Camarut and H el ene Le Brun, both students at Sciences Po Paris School of International Affairs (PSIA). They provided essential support in the mapping of civil society organisations and conducting interviews.

Finally, we are grateful to all leaders, activists and citizens who gave their time to participate in focus groups or interviews. The list of these individuals is included in the appendix.

While this report would not have been possible without the assistance, insights and advice provided by the above named individuals, the authors take sole responsibility for any error or inaccuracy.

ABOUT THE WOMEN4CLIMATE INITIATIVE

Under the leadership of Mayor Hidalgo of Paris, C40 developed the Women4Climate initiative in 2017. The Initiative aims to:

- **Empower and inspire the next generation of climate leaders** by developing a global mentorship scheme in participating cities.
- **Raise awareness of the disproportionate impacts of climate change-induced disasters on women** and on their key role for the effectiveness of climate policies and the resilience of urban communities.
- **Drive action through research and tangible urban policy recommendations** to guide gender-responsive urban climate action in cities.

L'OR AL

L'OR AL

With its unique portfolio of 36 brands, L'Or al aims to meet beauty aspirations all over the world. Its sustainability program sets out ambitious objectives by 2020 across its entire value chain. "Being a founding partner of Women4Climate reflects two of L'Or al's core values: gender equality and climate protection. Women will play a critical role in tackling climate change. It is our responsibility to empower them", Alexandra Palt, L'Or al's Chief Corporate Responsibility Officer.

MICHELIN
FOUNDATION



Created in 2014, the Michelin Corporate Foundation seeks to promote projects of general interest in five areas: Sustainable Mobility, Protecting the environment, Sport and Health, Education and the community and Heritage and the arts.

The Michelin Corporate Foundation's purpose rests on its philanthropic actions which always aim at helping more towards the communities and at fulfilling its societal responsibility. The Foundation contributes to carry the values of respect and solidarity the Michelin group holds.

LEARN MORE

Consult the full report
w4c.org

women4climate@c40.org

INTRODUCTION



**THE CASE STUDY ASKS:
ARE GRASSROOTS
ORGANISATIONS MORE
ENGAGED ON CLIMATE
ISSUES WHEN THEY ARE
LED BY WOMEN?
WHICH TYPES OF ACTIONS
DO WOMEN ENGAGE IN?
WHAT DRIVES WOMEN
TO ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY
LEADERSHIP?**

This case-study seeks to investigate the role played by women in civil society organisations in Paris that are active on climate change. The case study asks: are grassroots organisations more engaged on climate issues when they are led by women? Which types of actions do women engage in? What drives women to engage in community leadership?

In recent years, though female leadership has increased considerably in climate action, gender parity is still a distant goal. Obstacles to women's participation remain significant, and the potential of gender expertise in climate solutions remains largely untapped. For these reasons, this case-study seeks to investigate the drivers that lead women to take up leadership positions and to participate in climate action, as well as the obstacles that prevent them from doing so.

The study methodology has three stages: first, we mapped civil society organisations that are active in the fight against climate change in Paris. For each organisation, we gathered gendered data on their leadership, membership and activities. Second, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 21 climate leaders in Paris. These interviews allowed us to understand the drivers and motivations of these women to engage in leadership, as well as the obstacles that they did, and do, encounter. We also analysed the gendered dimension of the organisations' actions and priorities relating to climate change. Third, we organised two focus groups with women active in climate solutions, in order to stimulate mutual learning and apprehend motivations, obstacles and priorities beyond the individual level.

The structure of this case-study follows this three-staged approach, and concludes with a set of recommendations to improve and increase women's participation and leadership in climate action.

BACKGROUND

This section seeks to situate this case study in existing literature on female leadership in Paris. It asks: in what context do civil society organisations operate in Paris, and what do we already know about the gender dimension of leadership on climate change?



1

PARIS AND CLIMATE

The city of Paris adopted its first Climate Action Plan in 2007 and committed to a 25% reduction of GHG emissions by 2020 compared to 2004 levels. Paris' carbon footprint is assessed every five years. In the latest assessment, conducted in 2014, the city's carbon footprint was at 25.6 million tons of CO₂ equivalent. Two thirds of GHG emissions (global Paris emissions) come from food and flights used by Parisians for business or leisure. The food consumed by Parisians and visitors generates annual emissions exceeding 4.7 million tCO₂, which accounts for 18% of Paris's carbon footprint. The remaining third, is related to local emissions, mostly related to buildings (accommodation, services, commercials...) and Paris's inner transportation.

City GHG and pollutants emissions have been substantially decreasing for more than a decade, and the Paris Climate Plan, the revised edition of which was adopted in 2018, sets out ambitious objectives to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. It aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25% by 2020, and by 50% by 2030 (compared to 2004). The plan also includes energy sobriety goals, with a target of 35% decrease in energy consumption by 2030, and 50% decrease by 2050, and get clean air by 2030.¹

In recent years, the city has experienced peaks in atmospheric pollution, resulting from road traffic. As a result, substantial measures have been taken to reduce automobile traffic in the city. These measures include the extension of subway lines, new trams and closing the river banks to car traffic.

25,6 M
TONS OF CO₂ EQUIVALENT
IS THE CITY'S CARBON
FOOTPRINT IN 2014

Mitigating GHG emissions is a co-shared responsibility. The Municipality of Paris is directly responsible for less than 2% of GHG emissions (related to the municipal fleets and buildings) of Paris's carbon footprint. Through targeted actions, the Paris city council can mitigate around 20-25% of Paris's carbon footprint, most of these actions relate to local emissions. The reduction of the remaining emissions depends on action taken at a National level, private initiatives and choices led by companies and citizens in their daily life.

To achieve the emissions reduction targets it is essential for the Mayor of Paris to include all citizens in efforts to implement the Paris Climate Plan. To increase citizen engagement, in May 2018, the Mayor of Paris launched the "Volunteers for the Climate" programme to support, emphasize and disseminate Paris Climate Action Plan and to accelerate the transition to a low carbon society. Currently, more than 15,000 Parisians have become "Volunteers for the Climate" and over 100 associations support the programme.

Civil society organisations are plentiful in Paris. Under the 1901 law on non-profit associations, it is easy to set up and run civil society organisations – at least from an administrative viewpoint. It is estimated that there are 65,000 civil society organisations registered in Paris, with more than 660,000 members – a significant share of the total population.

¹ Mairie de Paris (2018) Plan Climat de Paris. Vers une ville neutre en carbone et 100% énergies renouvelables. Available online, also in English and Spanish: <https://www.paris.fr/planclimat>

2

GENDERED LEADERSHIP IN CLIMATE CHANGE

Existing discussion on gender and climate change is usually confined to gendered vulnerabilities in developing countries. Numerous studies have addressed the role women could play in climate adaptation strategies, as well as their specific vulnerabilities. Other studies have addressed the importance of urban policies to tackle climate change. Cities are responsible for a large share of global greenhouse gas emissions and will also be affected harshly by some climate impacts. Yet the role that women can play to address climate change in cities remains unaddressed. This role is multi-faceted, from consuming habits to civil society mobilisation.

In the literature on gender and climate action conducted by Women4Climate, it was noted that women leadership and participation in international climate negotiations had been increasing since 2008, thanks to the role played by many NGOs, but that it remained insufficient. In particular, gender expertise was insufficiently mobilised in sectors such as transport planning and energy.

The literature review also noted that participation in climate action is constrained by the gendered division of labour in society, as well as income inequalities. In that regard, participation in climate action is often a privilege, accessible mostly to wealthier women with a higher education. This was confirmed in the empirical findings of our study. As climate action in cities of the Global North addressed mostly consumption patterns, this often excluded women from lower economic backgrounds, who had little choice in their consumption patterns.

This study focuses on climate leadership, as well as addressing gender climate expertise and the barriers and obstacles to women's participation in climate action.



PARTICIPATION IN CLIMATE ACTION IS CONSTRAINED BY THE GENDERED DIVISION OF LABOUR IN SOCIETY, AS WELL AS INCOME INEQUALITIES. IN THAT REGARD, PARTICIPATION IN CLIMATE ACTION IS OFTEN A PRIVILEGE, ACCESSIBLE MOSTLY TO WEALTHIER WOMEN WITH A HIGHER EDUCATION. AS CLIMATE ACTION IN CITIES OF THE GLOBAL NORTH ADDRESSED MOSTLY CONSUMPTION PATTERNS, THIS OFTEN EXCLUDED WOMEN FROM LOWER ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS, WHO HAD LITTLE CHOICE IN THEIR CONSUMPTION PATTERNS.



RESEARCH APPROACH



This study targets women leaders in civil society organisations, from grassroots organisations to large NGOs. It uses a combination of three methods:

- a systematic mapping of civil society organisations active on climate change in Paris,
- semi-structured interviews with leaders of these organisations, and
- focus groups with organisation members and leaders.

1

MAPPING CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

First, we mapped out the civil society organisations that were active in the fight against climate change in Paris. We considered different types of organisations, such as environmental NGOs, neighbourhood organisations and grassroots associations. Not all of these organisations were focused exclusively on climate change, but all of them addressed climate change through some of their activities. We only considered organisations whose head office was located in one of the 20 arrondissements (boroughs) of Paris.

In order to conduct a representative mapping, we used three different organisation registers:

THE REGISTER OF THE DIRECTION DE LA DÉMOCRATIE DES CITOYEN, NE.S ET DES TERRITOIRES (DIRECTORATE FOR CITIZENS AND TERRITORIES' DEMOCRACY, DDCT):

in charge of the Paris Participatory Budget, and thus includes a considerable number of projects emanating from grassroots, neighbourhood organisations.

THE REGISTER OF VOLONTAIRES POUR LE CLIMAT (VOLUNTEERS FOR THE CLIMATE):

an initiative launched by the Municipality of Paris to create awareness and engage Parisians (or commuters) in actions to tackle climate change in Paris. There are currently 15,000 volunteers.

THE ONLINE REGISTER OF THE ACTEURS DU PARIS DURABLE (ACTORS FOR A SUSTAINABLE PARIS):

a network of citizens, small companies, organisations with an online self-registration portal.

Additionally, we used the snowball sampling method to add organisations that were not present in any of these registers. While we do not claim to have covered all organisations active on climate change in Paris, we are confident that our sample is highly representative. There is no doubt that some organisations are missing for our mapping, and that others have been founded since. We are confident, however, that our conclusions would not be significantly altered by the addition of these organisations to the mapping. The full list of the 104 organisations surveyed is provided in the appendix.

For each organisation, we gathered gendered data on their leadership, membership and activities. This information was collected either online, over the phone or through direct meeting with the organisations' members and/or leaders.



2

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH ORGANISATION LEADERS

The semi-structured interviews allowed us to understand the drivers and motivations of women to engage in leadership, as well as the obstacles that they did, and do, encounter. We conducted a total of 21 interviews, either face-to-face or over the telephone. Each interview was conducted using the same set of questions (included in the appendix). Each interviewee was free to elaborate on the basis of the questions provided.

The interviewees were female leaders selected from among the organisations surveyed in the first part of the study. The aim was to interview approximately half of them. Following this initial selection, the final choice of interviewees was conducted on the basis of their willingness and availability to participate. Interviews with four male leaders who had indicated a particular sensitivity to gender issues were also conducted. Interviews typically lasted between 45 minutes to one hour.



THE INTERVIEWEES WERE FEMALE LEADERS SELECTED FROM AMONG THE ORGANISATIONS SURVEYED IN THE FIRST PART OF THE STUDY. (...) INTERVIEWS WITH FOUR MALE LEADERS WHO HAD INDICATED A PARTICULAR SENSITIVITY TO GENDER ISSUES WERE ALSO CONDUCTED.

3

FOCUS GROUPS

Two focus group discussions were held over two hours at the offices of the Centre Virchow-Villermé in central Paris. These discussions were held on weekdays – one in the morning and the other over lunchtime, in order to maximise participation. Participants were selected on the basis of their availability and willingness to participate in the study.

A call for volunteers was first sent through a mailing list of Parisians who had responded to a call issued by the municipality to 'volunteer for the climate'. A total of 42 people volunteered through this first call, most of them women. We asked to indicate their availability through a Doodle poll, and the focus groups were organised on this basis. In total, 11 participants partook in the focus groups (5-6 participants per focus group, which we considered as an ideal number). Participants were allocated to each focus group on the basis of their availability.

Each focus group lasted two hours and covered a range of issues similar to those covered in the semi-structured interviews. The participants were usually not in a position of leadership, rather ordinary citizens concerned about climate change. All participants were women, though the call never specified that only women could participate, only that the study was about women's leadership.

RESULTS



1

MAPPING CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

We mapped 104 associations and organisations active in the fight against climate change in Paris. Organisations were diverse, ranging from large environmental NGOs to small grassroots organisations set up by ordinary citizens. All organisations surveyed have two key features in common: they were conducting activities against climate change, and they were active in the city of Paris² The complete list of organisations is available in the appendix.

Each organisation was mapped according to the following criteria:

TYPE OF ORGANISATION

E.g. local NGO, international NGO, think-tank, network of associations.

EMPLOYEES

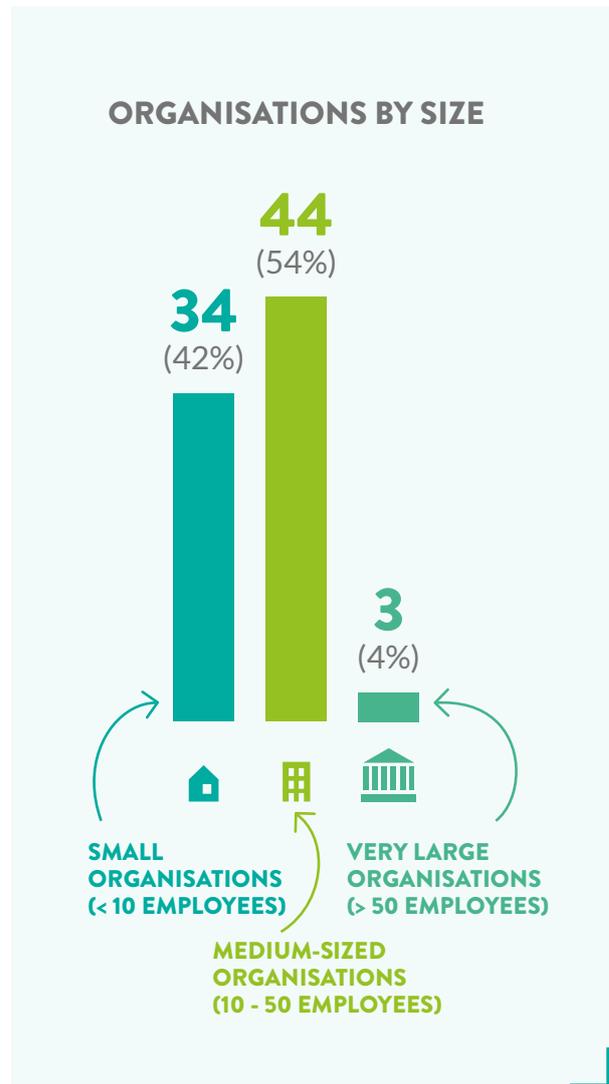
Most organisations have no paid employees, or just a few. Larger organisations however could have up to 200 employees. Overall, the organisations surveyed were roughly divided equally between small (less than 10 employees) and medium-sized (between 10 and 50 employees) organisations, while very large organisations (more than 50 employees) constituted a small minority.

SECTOR OF ACTIVITY

Some organisations are focused on climate change, others approach climate change through other fields, such as sustainable agriculture, education or food.

MEMBERSHIP

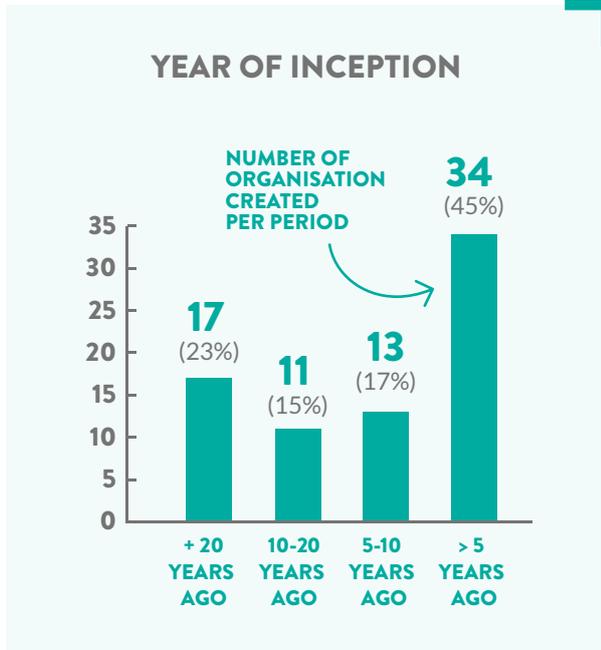
Some organisations have less than 10 members, others have up to 200,000 members. For large organisations, it was difficult to state which fractions of their membership were based in Paris.



² The city of Paris, here, is to be understood as limited to the 20 districts ('arrondissements'). We did not consider the suburban areas of the city, i.e. the 'Grand Paris'.

YEAR OF INCEPTION

The oldest organisation – Friends of the Earth France – was founded in 1970. However, many organisations were founded very recently – close to half of organisations surveyed were founded in the last five years.



KEY ACTIVITIES

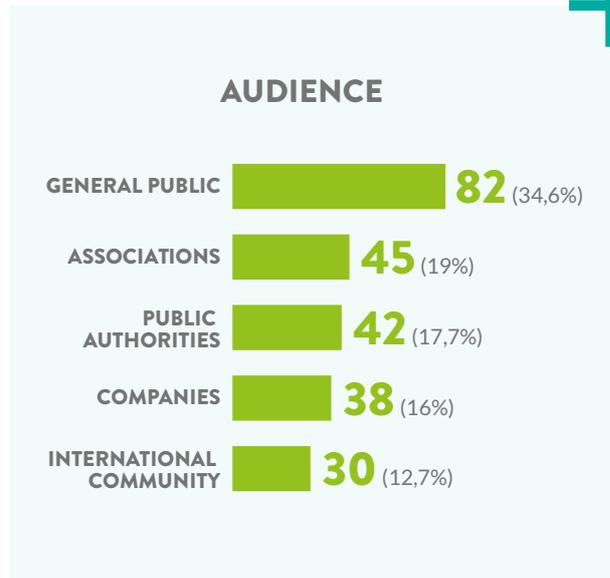
Ranging from awareness-raising to organising distribution circuits for local agriculture.

FIELD OF INTERVENTION

Such as water, mobility, energy or agriculture.

AUDIENCE

The general public remains the key audience for about a third of the organisations, but some target more specific audiences, such as public authorities, companies or other associations. Indeed, quite a few organisations describe themselves as networks of other organisations.

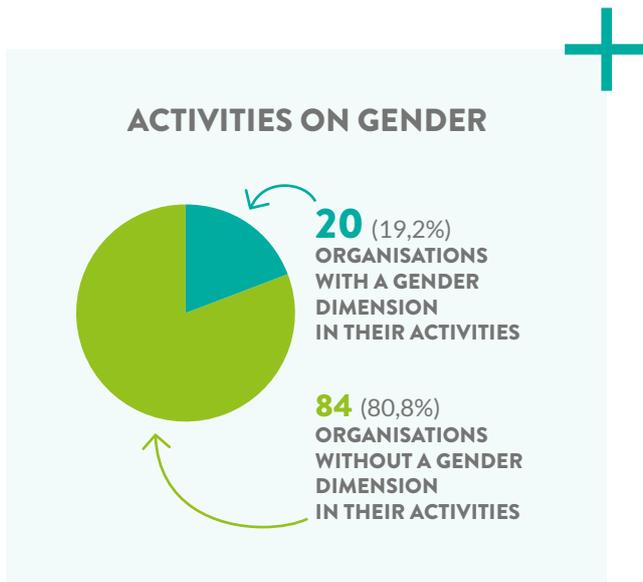


LOCATION OF ACTIVITIES

The majority of organisations hold activities in Paris only. However, a considerable number also hold activities elsewhere in France.

ACTIVITIES ON GENDER

About 20% of the organisation surveyed have developed specific activities related to climate and gender.



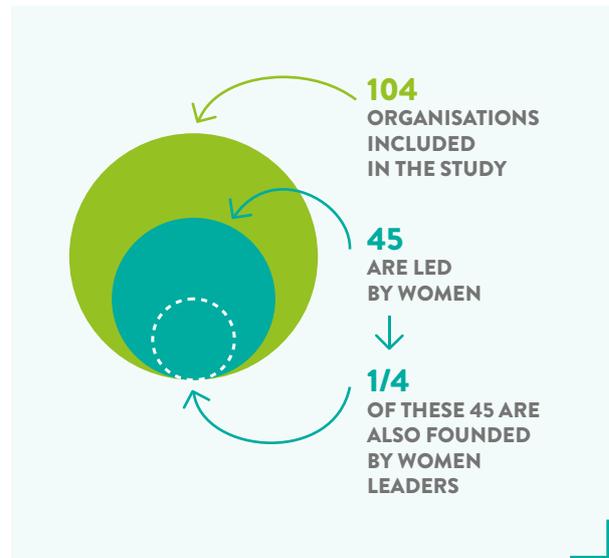
LEADERSHIP

Just under half of the surveyed organisations were led by women, though there was no obvious correlation between female leadership and the organisation of activities relating to gender.



Among the 104 organisations included in the study, **45 are led by women – that's a 43% rate of female leadership.** Approximately one quarter of the women leaders are also founders or co-founders of those organisations. This indicates that climate change, environment and sustainability are issues that resonate with women's entrepreneurial inclinations. The overwhelming majority of these women are volunteers – their leadership role is not financially compensated, with the exception of major organisations with paid employees. Therefore, most of them have another paying job, and dedicate much of their free time to climate leadership.

We also investigated the professional background of the women leaders. A recurring pattern is that **many of the women leaders were previously engaged as volunteers or concerned citizens in several projects associated with the fight against climate change** before taking up the leadership of an organisation. **However, the professional background of these women leaders is extremely diverse**, ranging from the non-profit sector to private companies and public service. A remarkable singularity is that, while some women took on the leadership of the organisation after several years of experience in the field, other women decided to found their organisation after only a few years of working experience, or immediately after completing their studies.



THE PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND OF THESE WOMEN LEADERS IS EXTREMELY DIVERSE (...) SOME WOMEN TOOK ON THE LEADERSHIP OF THE ORGANISATION AFTER SEVERAL YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD, OTHER WOMEN DECIDED TO FOUND THEIR ORGANISATION AFTER ONLY A FEW YEARS OF WORKING EXPERIENCE, OR IMMEDIATELY AFTER COMPLETING THEIR STUDIES.



Only approximately one fifth of the organisations surveyed included a gender dimension in their activities, and no particular correlation was observed between the inclusion of such activities and female leadership. Gender-related activities included projects, publications or even public interventions. Likewise, we could not find any correlation between the inclusion of these activities and the organisation's size, nor audience.

A key topic for the gender-related activities was the role of women in sustainable agriculture, as well as advocacy and awareness-raising about gendered vulnerabilities. **The gender dimension is primarily considered with regard to climate vulnerabilities in the Global South, rather than leadership in industrialised countries.**

However, three organisations – Womenability, Follow'Her and Les Bâtisseuses – were specifically dedicated to gender equality.

In a nutshell, our mapping of civil society organisations reveals the following features:

- **The rate of women leadership is considerably higher** in civil society organisations addressing climate change than in other organisations in other sectors.
- **The gender dimension remains little addressed** in these organisations.
- **When it is addressed, it tends to focus on the gendered vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate change, rather than on leadership.**

The semi-structured interviews conducted with some women leaders of these organisations allow us to delve further into these patterns.



2

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH ORGANISATION LEADERS

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WERE CONDUCTED IN NOVEMBER 2018, EITHER FACE-TO-FACE OR BY TELEPHONE. THEY SOUGHT TO UNVEIL THE MOTIVATIONS THAT LED THESE ORGANISATIONS' LEADERS

TO ASSUME LEADERSHIP POSITIONS, AND THE OBSTACLES THEY FACED IN THIS ROLE. WHILE THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF INTERVIEWEES WERE WOMEN, FOUR MEN WERE ALSO INTERVIEWED.



**I HAVE NO CHOICE:
THIS IS MY LIFE MISSION.
IF I DON'T DO IT, NOBODY WILL.**

Motivations to assume leadership positions ran deep: most interviewees considered their work to be a moral duty, and a way to provide meaning to their life. Many considered their work as a challenge, as a way to prove something to themselves. Another striking element was a willingness to prove oneself useful. Some hinted at the fact that their motivations for leadership may be stronger than for their male counterparts, who would likely consider their leadership as a job rather than a duty.



THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT MEN WHO RUN ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANISATIONS BELIEVE IN IT. BUT IF THEY WEREN'T PAID, THEY WOULDN'T DO IT.

All leaders considered that a strong presence of women in their organisation was a key asset for mobilisation and awareness-raising on climate change. Women were often described as drivers of change, and sometimes as having more empathy for, or interest in, environmental issues than men. Women were also described as being more interested in the social dimension of the organisation – the solidarity and bonding between members – while men were often perceived as focused on the organisation's activities and objectives. **The role of women in awareness-raising was also highlighted as particularly important, as they were believed to have a bigger impact on public audiences.**



IN PUBLIC MEETINGS, WE TRY TO HAVE A MOTHER SPEAK, RATHER THAN A THIRTY-SOMETHING SINGLE GUY. IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE.

Speaking in public was identified by many as a key obstacle to women's leadership. Many women insisted that this was primarily an issue of self-confidence, but others thought that speaking in public was more natural for men than for women. One insisted that women were more often judged on their appearance, especially in the media. This led to less media appearances from women, because it required a greater investment from them. Many insisted that women were more reluctant to being exposed than men.



IT IS ANNOYING TO ALWAYS HAVE TO JUSTIFY OUR ACTION TO HELP WOMEN AS WOMEN.

A similar difficulty was observed in the relationship with donors. **Some women said that it was more difficult for them to be taken seriously by donors, who were mostly men.** Some had been told to tone down the 'girl power' rhetoric that they wanted to use, as there were concerns that this could scare off donors. When approaching donors, many women felt that they needed to justify their project more than if they were men.

All insisted that **their leadership was a source of empowerment for themselves, and that gender inequalities were far less present in their organisations than in their workplace.** They felt that gender equality was a much more important concern in civil society than in their professional environment, and many felt it a gratifying part of their engagement. Interestingly, **some also considered their engagement in civil society organisations as the only possibility for them to access a position of leadership that they were previously denied in the workplace.** For some, founding an organisation was the only possibility to access a leadership role – some organisations therefore were founded as a result of professional frustrations. Many requested that a study like this one be conducted in the private and public sector workplace as well, and not just for civil society organisations.



NGOs ARE SOURCE OF EMPOWERMENT FOR WOMEN, THEY ARE FREE FROM PATRIARCHAL FIGURES PRESENT IN THE WORKPLACE.

Few organisations developed activities that specifically addressed the gender dimension in the fight against climate change. Most didn't feel the need to develop gender-specific activities, sometimes because they considered that gender equality had been achieved in their organisation. The interest of their members for specific gender-related activities depended significantly on their sex. Men were described as being more interested in issues pertaining to energy, or in the budget and fundraising activities of the organisation. Some organisations had adopted inclusive spelling as a way to promote gender equality. Overall, however, the relatively **low rate of gender-specific activities** was closely related to the perception that gender inequalities were less present in civil society organisations, and of little relevance for the fight against climate change.

Most interviewees insisted that women were more sensitive to certain aspects of the fight against climate change, such as food, health or air quality. Some felt that women were more concerned with long-term issues and the future of their children – one interviewee associated this concern for future generations with motherhood. Some stressed that women were more concerned with the preservation of life, while men were more concerned with present-day issues.

Interestingly, organisations active in the promotion of cycling were particularly keen on gender. Cycling was envisioned as a tool for women's empowerment, and particularly for migrant women, as many of them don't have a driving license. The lack of cycling infrastructure – such as bike lanes – was thus perceived as discriminating against women. Women were also credited for drawing attention to issues that often go unnoticed by men, such as public lighting. Overall, organisation leaders noted that a greater share of women cyclists was a necessary condition for a city to be considered as 'bike-friendly': cities that had succeeded in reducing the use of individual cars had as many female cyclists as male cyclists.

Finally, it should be noted that **women leaders are usually active in several associations:** such as parent-teacher association or neighbourhood councils. **A key facilitator of the engagement of women is the compatibility, and somewhat continuity, with their professional activity:** many leaders worked in a job that was close to the field of their organisation. They would therefore see their leadership as a continuation of their job, and sometimes as a way to achieve a leadership status that was out of reach in their paid professional activity. Many women leaders were also mothers. They would often see their leadership as a way to care for their own family: **their involvement in a civil society organisation, in this case, was felt as an extension of their concern for their family.**

At the end of the day, time remains an issue for women's participation. All noted that their **involvement was heavily time-consuming** and sometimes hardly compatible with a paid professional life, which is the reason why leadership was often easier to assume when working part-time or when retired.



3

FOCUS GROUPS

Two focus groups were organised to try and assess collective perceptions, beyond individual feelings. The focus groups gathered ordinary citizens concerned about climate change, offering a different perspective from the semi-structured interviews. All participants were women.

The source of their interest in and concern for climate change was different from the women leaders: some were influenced by their education or family environment, while others were sensitised to the cause through their readings, or sometimes even television shows. Many forged their conviction and engagement through books, but also songs and movies. **Popular culture and the media, as well as lifestyle, were key in the development of their concern for climate change.** Television shows like 'Ushuaia'³ or movies like 'An Inconvenient Truth' by Al Gore were often mentioned. Some also considered addressing climate change as a way to combat inequalities, and that their concern for climate change was politically motivated. **Many were also strongly influenced by their children and the concern for their future.** Some events – such as the Chernobyl disaster – also played a triggering role.

Most saw their immediate entourage as their primary target: first and foremost, they seek to raise awareness among their family and colleagues. Notably, one participant, who had invested a lot of time and energy in advocacy, changed strategy after the COP15 climate conference (2009), as she felt unable to convince her immediate entourage. She has since changed many of her consumption habits and tries to lead by example. Some are using social media to try and convince their entourage, while others stay away from those channels of communication. Those who use social media primarily use Facebook and LinkedIn to share articles and other news related to environmental issues.

In contrast with the view expressed by leaders, the gender dimension was often considered as critical. Many felt that their concern for climate change was closely linked to their identity as women or their concern for gender equality. For example, some participants viewed the oppression against women and climate change as rooted in the same causes of masculine domination. Many felt that a greater engagement by women on these issues would be a game changer in the fight against climate change. They felt that the engagement of women was increasing, particularly in developing countries. Most felt that women were more concerned than men about climate change, and were also more willing to cooperate and work together.



THE SOURCE OF THEIR INTEREST IN AND CONCERN FOR CLIMATE CHANGE WAS DIFFERENT FROM THE WOMEN LEADERS: SOME WERE INFLUENCED BY THEIR EDUCATION OR FAMILY ENVIRONMENT, WHILE OTHERS WERE SENSITISED TO THE CAUSE THROUGH THEIR READINGS, OR SOMETIMES EVEN TELEVISION SHOWS.

³'Ushuaia' was a popular programme on French television in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Presented by Nicolas Hulot, the programme was devoted to the discovery of spectacular natural environment and endemic species. The programme can be compared to those produced by David Attenborough, David Suzuki or Bear Grills on British and American television.

They wouldn't go as far as blaming men for climate change, however, most believed that men were more responsible for climate change than women, though they were often unaware of it. Although political power used to be, and still is, mostly exercised by men, they're not sure that women would have done a better job.

Participants were unsure as to whether women's greater concern for climate translated into a greater involvement in climate action. Some were of the opinion that engagement on climate issues was more a matter of generation than a matter of gender. It was noted, however, that women were perhaps more willing than men to open up about their engagement. Men appeared to be mostly concerned with issues pertaining to energy: according to participants, this was very apparent in the different associations to which they were members.



PARTICIPANTS WERE UNSURE AS TO WHETHER WOMEN'S GREATER CONCERN FOR CLIMATE TRANSLATED INTO A GREATER INVOLVEMENT IN CLIMATE ACTION. SOME WERE OF THE OPINION THAT ENGAGEMENT ON CLIMATE ISSUES WAS MORE A MATTER OF GENERATION THAN A MATTER OF GENDER.

Most participants were engaged in diverse associations, and their engagement was often driven by their concern for climate change. All participants took part in the city's Participatory Budget. All felt that women were keener than men to participate in the process.

Participants' concern for climate change was not always shared by their entourage. Many participants expressed difficulties in discussing these issues with some of their colleagues, family members or childhood friends. In general, they felt it was more difficult to discuss climate change with friends and relatives from the working class – as opposed to friends and relatives from the middle class.

Most participants note an increasing awareness about climate change in the population, but often find themselves criticised in their engagement by more radical activists. They resent such criticism as a hindrance to their engagement, as they perceive it as criticism from insiders. Overall, in their daily interactions with their entourage, they perceive a consensus around environmentally-induced health issues, but for instance, discussing the use of individual cars remains a highly divisive subject.

Some participants felt isolated on a number of occasions or in conversations, especially when they related to energy. Women felt that they are perceived as less credible than men on some topics (energy-related topics in particular), but more credible on other issues, such as health or food.

A key hindrance to their engagement remains a lack of time. Single mothers, in particular, felt they would be able to do much more if they had more time. All participants felt that their engagement on climate issues made them feel useful, and they were driven by a strong sense of purpose.

Though civil society and politics have often been opposed, none of the participants ruled out the possibility of launching a political career. Some said they were considering running in the next municipal elections. This perception that a political career could serve as a continuation of civil society engagement was a striking feature. Many felt, however, that their engagement was not sufficiently rewarded, which could sometimes lead to discouragement. 'There should be a Nobel Prize for Climate', joked one participant.

DISCUSSION



Though a very significant share (43%) of civil society organisation leaders are women, gender issues remain little addressed in these organisations' activities. There are a range of reasons that explain the limited interest in gender issues, however three appear more prominently than others.

- **First, many consider that gender inequalities are not a problem in civil society organisations working on climate change, and that there is therefore no need to address gender.** The gender dimension is perceived through the prism of gender-equality. Ironically, the fact that there are many women leaders⁴ in the fight against climate change could lead to gender issues being addressed less.
- **Second, the relevance of gendered activities was questioned.** Some people felt that men and women should play an equal role in the fight against climate change. This indicates that gender remains perceived primarily as a matter of inequalities between men and women rather than a matter of specificities of each gender. In other words, participants didn't feel that the forms of engagement on climate could or should differ according to gender. Gendered activities were perceived as generating inequalities between men and women.
- **Third, the gender dimension of climate change is often perceived to be about differentiated vulnerabilities to climate impacts in the Global South.** When mentioned during the interviews and focus groups, agriculture was most often mentioned as the sector of climate policies where gender mattered the most. Gender issues are often considered as irrelevant for climate change in industrialised countries, which could also explain the relative lack of climate activities related to gender in Paris.

There is a notable exception however: organisations active in the promotion of cycling in Paris. These organisations have integrated gender as a core dimension of their work, partly because they see women – on foot or on bike – as more vulnerable to the dangers induced by traffic. This, however, confirms our initial assessment: among civil society organisations active on climate change in Paris, **gender issues are more associated with vulnerabilities to climate change than with capacities to lead the fight against it.**

Discussion on the gender dimension of the fight against climate change often reiterated or reinforced existing stereotypes about women. Women were thought to care more about climate change because they were mothers, whereas men were thought to be concerned only about short-term issues. Often, such stereotypes are reiterated by women themselves. Paradoxically perhaps, men often appeared warier of such stereotypes than women. Thus, it appears that **female leadership hasn't had a significant impact on the reduction of gender stereotypes** in climate change mitigation – in fact, the contrary is true. These stereotypes are also apparent in the climate change activities that men and women engage in: men tend to be more active in and concerned about energy issues, while health or food appeared to be more of a priority for women.



DISCUSSION ON THE GENDER DIMENSION OF THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE OFTEN REITERATED OR REINFORCED EXISTING STEREOTYPES ABOUT WOMEN. WOMEN WERE THOUGHT TO CARE MORE ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE BECAUSE THEY WERE MOTHERS, WHEREAS MEN WERE THOUGHT TO BE CONCERNED ONLY ABOUT SHORT-TERM ISSUES.

⁴ This is also the case, to some extent, at the international level: for example, the current UNFCCC Executive Secretary, Patricia Espinosa, is a woman, and so was her predecessor, Christiana Figueres. In France, some major NGOs, such as Oxfam France or the Fondation pour la Nature et l'Homme, are led by prominent female figure, respectively Cécile Duflot and Audrey Pulvar.

Women leaders in climate change action have often been encouraged by others or by popular culture to take up a leadership position. This means **that increased visibility of women leaders can lead other women to assume leadership positions. The importance of popular culture, in that regard, also should not be underestimated.**

Many women decided to take up a leadership position in civil society as a result of the lack of possibilities for them to obtain a similar position in their existing workplace. Therefore, it appears that civil society is more open to women leadership than other professional environments, particularly in the private sector, which is confirmed by the relatively high share of women leaders in civil society organisations. This shows once again that **women are not shy about taking up leadership positions**, but are often prevented from doing so in other contexts.

Two key impediments to women's engagement in climate leadership were identified: **lack of time and difficulties related to speaking out about their engagement.** Lack of time is particularly salient for single mothers. In focus groups, single mothers all expressed that they would have been keen to assume a leadership position if they had had more time. This issue, however, did not appear to be specific to climate change. The issue of difficulty in speaking out, however, was more specific, as it concerned not only difficulty in public speaking, but also the difficulty in discussing their engagement in climate action with family, friends and colleagues. Many pointed out that the topic of climate change remained quite divisive.



— CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS —



The relatively high share of women in civil society organisations cannot hide the fact that gender remains an issue little addressed in the activities of climate change civil society organisations, and that gender stereotypes continue to prevail.

Too often, gender is conceptualised with regard to the vulnerability to climate impacts, rather than to the capacity to lead the fight against climate change. Similarly, gender is often considered as a matter of inequalities between men and women in their engagement on climate change. In the context of climate change, the gender dimension remains too often confined to the issue of differentiated vulnerability to climate impacts in the Global South, perceiving gender issues to be irrelevant in industrialised countries. Our analysis confirms this initial assessment, with some nuances.

Recommendations to increase female leadership in climate action and to integrate a gender dimension into climate change activities:



1. First, pay attention to gender stereotypes in public debates on the fight against climate change.

These stereotypes confine women to certain sectors of climate action (such as food and health) and exclude them from others (energy in particular). Public campaigns could prove effective in that regard, but key messages could also be disseminated at public events targeting organisations, such as those related to the Paris Climate Plan. It is particularly important to work with women about these stereotypes, as they appear much more widespread amongst female leaders than male leaders.

2. Raise awareness about the importance of a gender dimension in the fight against climate change in industrialised countries.

This remains little considered in civil society climate action. It is important to encourage and support gender-related activities in civil society organisations, in particular for activities conducted in Paris.

3. Make women leaders as visible as possible.

Women leaders provide key support and inspiration for other potential women leaders. In general, testimonies of women leaders stimulate more women leadership. Initiatives like the C40 Women4Climate mentorship programme should be pursued and amplified.

4. Identify the obstacles to women leadership in the workplace, in both the private and public sector.

This is really a striking and reoccurring finding of the study. Many women leaders who have a job related to climate or environmental issues are not able to seize leadership positions in their organisation, or sometimes feel they are not taken seriously. We believe that female leadership on these issues in the workplace is a key determinant of the ecological transition, and many participants to the study have urged us to conduct a study similar to this one in the workplace. We believe this would be an important element in our understanding of the obstacles to women leadership on climate change in the workplace.

5. Provide women with tools that can help them assume leadership positions.

The application Leadership pour Elles, for example, which was launched in 2014, is no longer available. Yet such tools can provide key assistance to women leaders and should be reactivated or reinitiated.

6. Collect gender-disaggregated data and integrate a gender dimension in key official documents and climate policies.

This provides city leaders and other stakeholders with data, indicators and vocabulary to devise strategies that increase women's inclusion in climate action. The integration of a gender dimension in official documents can provide a key leverage for civil society organisations to take action.

7. Facilitate the involvement of female leaders through support of domestic responsibilities.

We understand this is not easy, but domestic work remains a key obstacle to women's involvement in leadership positions. This is especially important for single mothers, as meetings and activities often need to be organised in the evenings or on weekends. Policies that could provide support with domestic responsibilities – such as child care – could greatly encourage women to take up leadership positions, especially those with limited support.

Climate action appears to be a field in which women can take up leadership roles more easily. However, despite relatively strong female leadership, gender issues remain little addressed by civil society climate organisations – this includes both the organisations' climate activities, as well as activities to overcome the obstacles to women leadership. Most of these obstacles seem to stem from the workplace environment, in which a further comparable study is needed.

GLOSSARY

ARRONDISSEMENT

Paris is divided in 20 arrondissements, which are the French equivalents of boroughs or districts. Each arrondissement has a mayor and a local council, who are responsible for a wide range of policies pertaining to the fight against climate change.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION

A group of citizens who have organised themselves around certain purposes or objects. In the case of this study, we considered as civil society organisations all associations – big or small – that were active on climate change and distinct from business or public agencies.

FOCUS GROUP

A qualitative interview technique where a small group of people are asked about their perceptions, attitudes and beliefs on pre-defined issues.

INCLUSIVE SPELLING

Inclusive spelling is specific to the French language which has gendered nouns. It is a way of spelling that includes both the masculine and feminine version of a word, whereas the masculine version was previously used to express neutral or mixed nouns. It has sparked deep controversy in French society; similar to the controversy around the word 'womxn' in English.

NGO

Non-governmental organisation. While all organisations surveyed in this report are technically non-governmental organisations, the acronym NGO typically refers to a larger, well-structured organisation, such as Greenpeace.

PARTICIPATORY BUDGET ('BUDGET PARTICIPATIF')

Since 2014, Parisians decide how to allocate 5% of the city budget (roughly 0.5 billion euros) through a public consultation that allows funding to different projects and initiatives. In 2016, more than 160,000 Parisians took part in the participatory budget.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

A common social-science method of interviewing. The interviewee is asked a series of pre-defined open question, but the interviewer can ask additional, unscripted questions on the basis of the answers provided by the interviewee.

APPENDIX

1

LIST OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS THAT WERE SURVEYED

- 350 France
- 4D
- ACTE - Atelier Citoyen pour la Transition Ecologique
- Acteurs du Tourisme Durable
- Acticity
- Adéquations
- Agence Parisienne Climat
- Agir Pour l'Environnement
- AirParif
- Alternatiba
- AlterTour
- AMAP Ile de France
- ANV Action non-violente COP21
- Association Bilan Carbone
- ATD Quart Monde France
- Attac France - Association pour la taxation des transactions financières et pour l'action citoyenne
- Avenir Climatique
- AYYA
- Bio Consom'acteurs
- BLOOM
- Bon pour le climat
- Ca Commence Par Moi
- Cap ou pas cap
- CARE France
- Carton Plein
- CCFD - Terre Solidaire
- CJDES - Centre des jeunes, des dirigeants, des acteurs de l'économie sociale et solidaire
- Cler- Réseau pour la Transition Energétique
- Climate Chance
- Climates
- Climates-Réalistes
- Colibris
- Communerbe
- Convergences
- Coordination Eau Ile-de-France
- CRID - Centre de recherche et d'information pour le développement
- Cultivons la ville
- Ecodota
- Edeni
- EnerCit'IF
- Énergie partagée
- Entreprendre Vert
- Espaces
- Fédération Artisans du Monde Paris
- Follow'Her
- Fondation France Libertés-
Fondation Danielle Mitterand
- Fondation du Souffle
- Fondation GoodPlanet
- Fondation pour la Nature et l'Homme
- France Nature Environnement
- Gaia Entrepreneurs
- Générations futures
- GERES
- Greenpeace France

- HOP- Halte à l'obsolescence programmée
- Humanité et Biodiversité
- Ici Terre
- ISF - Ingénieurs sans frontières
- Institute for Climate Economics
- Interface Formation
- Journalistes Ecrivains pour la Nature et l'écologie
- l'Air et Moi
- L214 Ethique et Animaux
- La fabrique écologique
- Le Chainon Manquant
- Le Club Economie de la Fonctionnalité & Développement Durable
- Le cri du Zebre
- Les Amis de la Terre France
- Les Bâtisseuses
- Les boîtes à vélo
- Les Canaux
- Low Carbon city
- Make it real
- Makesense
- Mieux se Déplacer à Bicyclette
- Nature&Us
- Notre affaire à tous
- One Voice
- ORÉE - Organisation pour le Respect de l'Environnement dans l'Entreprise
- Oxfam France
- Pacte Finance Climat
- Paris en selle
- Pépins Production
- PIKPIK Environnement
- Planète Altruiste
- Recyclerie Sportive
- REFEDD - Réseau Français des Etudiants pour le Développement Durable
- Reforest'Action
- Réseau Action Climat
- Réseau-Cétacés
- Respire - Association Nationale pour la Prévention et l'Amélioration de la Qualité de l'Air
- Ressources alternatives
- Ritimo
- SOL
- Sustainability by education
- The Shift Project
- Toits Vivants
- Transition Paris Ile de France
- tycheagatha
- Vrac Paris - Vers un Réseau d'Achat en Commun
- WARN - We are ready now! France
- Womenability
- WWF France
- Zero Waste France

Images :

- © Burst/ Sarah Pflug
- © C40/ Genaro Bardy
- © Getty/ adamkaz
- © Getty/ bernardbodo
- © Getty/ Django
- © Getty/ izusek
- © Getty/ lechatnoir
- © Getty/ mixetto
- © Getty/ PeopleImages
- © Unsplash/ Svas
- © W4C/Sarah Bastin

Design by Datcha

2

LIST OF CLIMATE LEADERS INTERVIEWED

ALEXANDRA LUTZ

CliMates

SOPHIE LACAZE

Follow'Her

JULIETTE GABRION

Follow'Her

JULIA SCHMITT

Follow'Her

JULIE ALUNNO

REFEDD

KATARINA DEAR

Nature&Us

ROMANE BUTIN

Acticity

LAETICIA VASSEUR

HOP

CÉCILE DUFLLOT

Oxfam France

KAMERA VESIC

Pikpik

SAKINA PENPOINT

WARN

DOMINIQUE GAUZIN MULLER

Les bâtisseuses

SARAH GRAU

La fabrique écologique

MARIE-NOËL REBOULET

GERES

ALEXIS FRÉMAUX

Mieux se déplacer à bicyclette

CLARISSE PODESTA

Avenir Climatique

HÉLÈNE DE VESTELE

Edeni

HENRI LANDES

Fondation Good Planet

VICTOR HUGO ESPINOSA

L'air et Moi

CHARLES MAGUIN

Paris en Selle

LÉA BARDIN

tycheagatha

3

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

FOCUS GROUP 1

Cecile Hermelin

Flora Aubert

Morgane Danielou

Deolinda Pinto Ribeiro

Anne de Béthencourt

FOCUS GROUP 2

Aline Stinus

Anne Gateau

Florence Camprasse

Jane Hervé

Nasrine Faghieh

Carole Aublé



w4c.org