



**WIM MADAGASCAR**

**AUTO+ WOMEN IN MOTOR SPORT**

Interview of the club's women in motorsport chief  
**Sandy Yamick Solofonirina**

**Fédération du Sport Automobile de Madagascar**

### Madagascan women take to the stages

The Women in Motorsport arm of the Fédération du Sport Automobile de Madagascar will this month race over a small piece of history as it stages the first one-day rally event to be held in the country.

The event, which forms part of the country's national rally championship, will be solely run by the club's women in motor sport department and in addition to providing competition for Madagascar's female drivers the event will also see a female contingent competing, thanks to an innovative development which allows them entry to the rally for female crews.

AFSA's Women in Motorsport spoke to the club's women in motorsport chief Sandy Yamick Solofonirina to find out more about the event, which begins on 19 September.

**How did the event come about?**

We decided to organize the fifth round of the National Championship to show our ability to do so, to take this challenge and put our practice what we have learned from FIA training, from our travels and the exchange of experience that involves. We were lucky that Continental Aum, a car dealer, decided to support such a big project.

**What is the format for the event?**

It's a one-day event, composed of 70 kilometers of special stages. There will be no stages on gravel. The challenge will be to maintain a good rhythm while trying to keep up with the speed fitness of the stages. We call it 'one-day', one-stage. It's the first one-day event ever organized in Madagascar.

**Who is the event aimed at?**

It is for all licensed drivers competing in the National Championship. But we're encouraging female participation by making the entry fee free of charge to female crews. We expect to have all licensed drivers in Madagascar, but we also hope to be able to have licensed drivers. The cars will be the FIA homologated cars (Group N), as well as group 5 cars.

**What are your hopes and expectations for the rally?**

The One-Day Event, which opens towards the National Championship, also aims to give a fair chance to all crews and will hopefully foster more participation from females.

We also hope to gain more attention from the public, our partners and government officials, not just to promote motor sport, but to focus attention on our future road safety campaigns. Women in Motorsport Madagascar already has the support of both the Minister of Population and Minister of Education in disseminating safety messages and to also in touch with the United Nations representatives to prepare future initiatives.

**How much progress do you think Women in Motorsport Madagascar is making?**

Considering where we started, I would say that Women in Motorsport Madagascar is performing better than we imagined.

I was appointed in 2013 as Women in Motorsport Coordinator for Africa, and for one year I was the only WIM member in Madagascar. Owing to convenient stop of the road for a Women in Motorsport chapter in the country.

Since 2014 we have started to have a positive impact on Madagascar motorsport: we have conducted safety awareness campaigns, we have expanded a local racing event to support our activities, we have promoted the participation of female drivers in national championship rallies, and the number of licensed female drivers has regularly increased. Last but not least, this September 2015, we are organizing the first ever Rally One Day Event in Madagascar, inspired by the FIA.

**What inspired the creation of a Women in Motorsport programme in Madagascar?**

As African women we play a great role in promoting motor sport. We trained in the will of these women, we relied on their passion and gave them the opportunity to play a role in it, as opposed to simply supporting sons or husbands.

Michèle Motte was also such an inspiration, she proved that women can do it, and we would like to write a similar history on the African continent.

**Do have you big plans for the future?**

While we try to take it one step at a time, we do not exclude the possibility that the Madagascar Women in Motorsport organization could organize a rally on an international scale in the future.

We also would like to have the opportunity to have a Women in Motorsport meeting in Africa. Finally, our long-term project would be to build a race circuit where young drivers could train themselves in a safe manner.

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