

***Profiles of 452
Laureates receiving
the WWSF Prize for
Women's Creativity
in Rural Life (1994-
2019)***



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Laureates from 2019

Laureates 2019

ACHARYA Triveni (54)



India

RESCUED FROM TORTURE TO EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL COMMUNITIES

Mrs. Acharya, former journalist with a reputed newspaper in Mumbai, took over as President of the Rescue Foundation in 2005, which combats Human Trafficking from the rural areas of India, Bangladesh, Nepal and any country from where girls and children are trafficked to India for commercial sexual exploitation.

She courageously rescues these girls from the red-light areas, massage parlors and even from private apartments and completely rehabilitates and repatriates them to reunite with their families in their native places. Her work, practically on a grassroots level, not only rescues them from torture but also empowers them to become leading members of their community, thereby besides combating a major problem of India, empowers beneficiaries to prosper in rural areas. About 50% of the Indian population lives in rural areas and women's empowerment is very necessary.

Under her leadership, the Rescue Foundation has expanded the activities at Mumbai, Boisar, Pune and Delhi. Every year the Foundation rescues about 350 girls, rehabilitates, empowers and repatriates about 700 girls to rural families in India and abroad, to regain a normal life. Her protective and rehabilitation homes are situated in urban cities as these trafficked girls are trafficked from rural villages and sold by traffickers in cities.

So far Mrs. Acharya has rescued, rehabilitated and repatriated more than 18'000 girls. Her impact is recognized by the government of India. Mrs. Acharya's work provides empowerment to women who need to be empowered badly.

Visit www.youtube.com, click on video and type Rescue Foundation. You will be able to view several videos. Also, view www.rescuefoundation.net to get a detailed view of activities.

Her work contributes to achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals-Agenda 2030 Targets #5 & #10

Laureates 2019

AKAKPO Adjoa (61)



Togo

A PIONEER WITH NUMEROUS TALENTS

This candidate is a pioneer of the organization of women in her country where she founded in 1990 the “Women’s association La Colombe” (The Dove) to bring immediate effective solutions to the different challenges faced by rural women:

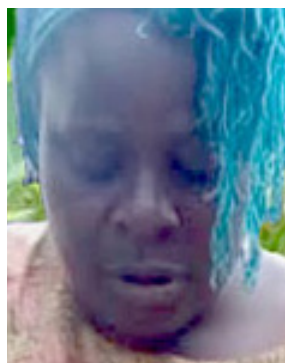
food insecurity, poverty, major health issues, illiteracy, sexual violence and sexism, the high school drop-out rate among young girls, lack of access to land, hence to credit, i.e. financial dependency on the men. In the year 2000, Adjoa gives up the security of her teaching job to devote herself entirely to her work with women and young girls. A training center for women had been opened in 1997 in the town of Vo Koutime. Over 700 girls and young women victims of various forms of violence and sexual exploitation have been trained there in a variety of fields such as dressmaking, hairdressers, cooking, dying and others. Alongside these areas, all the students received additional training in basic notions of entrepreneurship, leadership, literacy, etc. Parallel to this training, the traditional village chieftains were informed and sensitized to the rights of women in terms of land ownership and inheritance laws.

On October 15, 2019, the International Day of Rural Women, a network of women agro-entrepreneurs will be launched by women 2030 so as to encourage rural women to adapt themselves to agro-ecology to face the challenges of climate change. At the same time, so as to find a solution to the problems of violence against women and girls in rural areas, a movement of the wives of village chieftains has been launched to face this eternal problem.

Her work contributes to achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals-Agenda 2030 Targets #1, #2, #4& #5

Laureates 2019

FETGO Bernadette (57)



Cameroon

EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN TO CLAIM THEIR RIGHT TO LAND

The two Cameroon Prizewinners (2019) were selected by CEFAP-Ladies Circle, the WWSF national prize program partner in Cameroon, co-sponsored by WWSF

Mrs. FETGO Bernadette, a rural woman and mother of 9 children is a woman active in her village where she spends her time outside of her rural work, and her household chores, to gather the women of her community around the synergies for the reinforcement of their capacity,

the protection and defense of their rights and interests, the diversification of their sources of income and, above all, they continue to seek information that can help them boost their production, transform their agricultural products and market them to feed the population and secure an income to care for their families. She has made her battlefield a real priority for action in her community: advocacy for rural women's access to land, girls' education and the eradication of early marriages of girls and the promotion of hard work of the rural woman who deserves to be recognized and supported. Ms. FETGO is the leader of several women's community groups with around 1,500 rural women working for peacebuilding in Anglophone regions in crisis in Cameroon.

Her work contributes to achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals-Agenda 2030 Target #1, #2, #5 & #10

Laureates 2019

KABORE Wendlasida Constance (27)



Burkina Faso

WHERE THE ANTS CARRY THE ELEPHANTS

A school holiday she spent in her native village became a real eye-opener to Wendlasida Constance concerning the deplorable condition of rural women: with no independent sources of income, victims of their husbands likes and dislikes, living in appalling conditions of hygiene, etc. So, she created in 2014 the ALIA association (Association Libre Afrique – Free Africa Association).

Its main aim is enabling rural women to enjoy greater autonomy, based on the slogan: “training is the key to autonomy.” She later set up another project called FABI, which in French stands for beautiful, independent African women. It aims at promoting hygiene in rural areas which usually lack the most basic products in this area such as soap; enabling women to make a modest income selling such necessities and enabling them to be aware of their economic and social rights. O ALIA set up various trainings to enable rural women to make these basic products themselves - such as soap - and more theoretical training in areas like economic and social rights, how to create and run a small soap producing facility, and how to use local plants for health care. Such modest initiatives rarely

get into the limelight but their multiplication all round the world ultimately has a huge impact. For as a proverb from Wendlasida Constance’s region states: “When the mouths of the ants get together, they can carry an elephant”, be he called extreme poverty or serious underdevelopment.

Her work contributes to achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals-Agenda 2030 Targets #3, #5, #8& #10

Laureates 2019

KASHYAP Shraddha (50)



India

AN EPITOME OF COURAGE AND A TRUE CHANGE-MAKER

Shraddha belongs to a community called “Kurmi”, which is a caste in the category “Other Backward Classes” (OBC) in India. The major occupation of the Kurmi community is agriculture farming.

Shraddha was born into a lower middle-class family in Darrabhata Village in Bilaspur District (State Chhattisgarh). Her father continued the legacy of farming which he inherited from his forefathers. Despite the discrimination she faced at home, she struggled hard to get her education. It wasn't easy for her to convince her parents to let her study after the 8th grade. To pursue her studies further she had to move out, which she did to complete her bachelor's degree.

She had known since she was old enough to understand that her grandfather has already fixed her marriage long before she was born. Her grandfather promised one of his friends that if a girl were born, he would get her married in his friend's family. Shraddha who had struggled enough to get an identity wasn't willing to give in to societal pressure and marry a person who couldn't be an equal partner to her. At that time, she was quite inspired by a social worker called Shastri Ji in Bilaspur who motivated her not to let her struggle go in vain and to inspire other women and bring change in their lives. She took his advice into account and moved explored new horizons. So, she decided to play the role of a change maker in the lives of oppressed women.

She moved 2000 km away from her hometown to Madhya Pradesh State to work with Ekta Parishad, which is engaged in the fight for the rights of Dalits, Tribals and other deprived communities for land, water, and forest rights. Ekta Parishad follows Gandhian ideology.

Shraddha, who had fought patriarchy all her life to build her own identity, knew the plight of women having the lowest status even in the most deprived and oppressed communities and thus was firm about creating an equal space for women who could then be assertive enough to claim equal rights to land and property. Thus, thanks to her efforts many landless people received land rights and the daughters and daughters-in-law received equal property rights.

Shraddha played leadership roles in many land right campaigns advocating for policy changes. Few such nonviolent movements were:

- “Janadesh 2007” (foot march from Gwalior to Delhi, 350 km with 25'000 landless people).
- “Jan Satyagrah 2012”, “Mahila Evam Bhoomi Samvad Yatra” in August to October 2018 for women's land and farmers rights from Trivandrum, Kerala to New Delhi.

Laureates 2019

Apart from the above-mentioned major campaigns, she has been engaged in the land rights campaigns at the local, district and state level. She has been active in promoting organic farming, creating seed banks, and awareness generation on climate changes. She also represented Ekta Parishad at the Copenhagen Summit for climate change in 2009. She raised the issues of climate change in her country and the urgency to address this issue.

Shraddha Kashyap has become a great inspiration to women. She has not only brought change in her own life but has influenced the lives of many other women too. She has proven that no hurdle can stop a woman if she is determined to achieve her dream.

Her work contributes to achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals-Agenda 2030 Targets #4, #5, #8 & #10

Laureates 2019

LALPARASAROI Munteli (30)



Kenya

THE GODDESS OF THE LIONS

Over a period of 26 years, this prize has received many original nominations, but this one involving lion conservation is unquestionably one of the most original. Populations of large mammals are declining at an alarming rate, especially in Africa where the lion population alone has decreased by 43% in the last 20 years, reaching a low of 20'000, of which a meager 2000 in Kenya.

Alongside elephants and rhinos, lions could disappear in the next 20 years, due to habitat loss and, in the case of lions, conflict with humans, especially cattle herders.

Formerly lion conservation was purely a man's business - that is, until Munteli and her friend Mparasoroi stepped in with their Mama Simba project. This project is getting women connected to the cause of lion conservation in a real and practical way.

As a young teenager, Munteli became the 4th wife of an old man of the Samburu tribe who died soon after their marriage, thereby condemning her to widowhood for life according to Samburu traditions. But a few years later, Munteli teamed up with an older woman from her village, Mparasoroi.

They were on a clear mission, i.e. to get women involved in lion conservation on par with the Samburu warriors who had been hired by the highly original "Ewaso lions project" founded by Dr. Shivani Bhalla, an authentic community conservation project working with local people from the villages, an extreme rarity in the world of animal conservation. These illiterate women had to learn everything – to read and write, to sign bank documents, to manipulate portable telephones, and thus for the first-time taking control of their own lives. The women involved named their project Mama Simba. Munteli then learned to drive a car, the first traditional Samburu woman ever to do this. And she now sends WhatsApp messages in Samburu, Kiswahili and English!

Samburu women are also known for the extraordinary beauty and intricacy of their beadwork they proudly wear. Munteli opened up new avenues of income helping them set up a trade for beaded lions, i.e. small puppet-sized lions covered with beads artistically arranged.

There are now around 20 women working in lion conservation projects aiming at non- conflictual relations between cattle breeders and lions. Munteli herself has become a powerful role model for all women, has enabled families to increase their income and broken out of paralyzing traditional behavioral models. She is an amazing trailblazer who aptly illustrates the saying that "our only limits are our belief in the existence of limits."

Their work contributes to achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals-Agenda 2030 Targets #1, #4, #5 & #15

Laureates 2019

MOKO Jeanne d’Arc (51)



CAMEROON

COMMITTED TO WOMEN’S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

The two Cameroon Prizewinners (2019) were selected by CEFAP-Ladies Circle, the WWSF national prize program partner in Cameroon, co-sponsored by WWSF

Mrs. MOKO Joan of Arc, a rural woman, widow and mother of 6 orphans has seen the whole burden of her family resting on her since 2010 that her husband has died, leaving her with 6 children. She works hard every day to support her orphans.

When her husband died, 80% of her land was expropriated. Since then, she has engaged with other rural women to defend their interests and fight gender inequalities in the distribution and management of resources, especially land in rural Cameroon. In 2012, she created the Widows’ Club for rural development in her village. They organize information, awareness and denunciation campaigns and are supported by an association of women lawyers for the protection, defense and promotion of their rights. She is a rural woman who can be counted on, a rural woman who prepares the rural woman of tomorrow today and who gives herself the means to take control of her destiny and to mentor other vulnerable rural women in the communities. She is one of the linchpins of sustainable development, progress and the culture of peace in her community.

Her work contributes to achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals-Agenda 2030 Targets #2, #3, #5 & #10

Laureates 2019

MS.GEETA (39) AND MS. KANTA (41) share one prize



India

TRAVELLING THROUGH HELL TO REACH HIGH WATER

Both candidates belong to the Harijans, a community of outcasts of the Haryana region. Despite her being an excellent student, Geeta was pulled out of school to get married and then confined to the family enclosure. When her husband lost his job, they could barely manage a meal a day for their children.

Kanta, like Geeta, was brilliant at school but was also forced to leave school and was married at 10 years old. At 15, she moved to her husband's family where she had to do everything – the cooking, house chores, taking care of the cattle, working in the fields ... an endless succession of pressing tasks. But these two courageous women decided not to give in to such tough circumstances, which would have subdued many others. They joined a village self-help group and started training in various areas, and soon became real experts in promoting bio-sand filters. (A biosand filter is a point-of-use water treatment adapted from traditional slow sand filters. These remove pathogens and suspended solids from water using biological and physical processes that take place in a sand column covered with a biofilm). The filters act against iron and arsenic contamination and biological impurities. Due to the very low cost of these filters they are extremely well suited to poor rural communities suffering from waterborne diseases. From being despised outcasts, Geeta and Kanta have become key figures in the social and economic promotion of their communities and are looked upon with respect by all.

Their work contributes to achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals-Agenda 2030 Targets #5, #6, #9& #11

Laureates 2019

NAIYAN Jebet Kiplagat (42)



Kenya

A MANY-TALENTED LEADER OF INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Jebet Kiplagat Naiyan has had a major impact in her country in a variety of key areas, including mobilizing women to combat the severe impact of climate change in the Mau forest of Kenya. As a member of the Olulunga women's group, she has worked to save marginalized communities both at the local and international level.

Her efforts have had a multidimensional impact in the areas of human rights; indigenous rights education and especially environmental preservation, which, as in many other rural areas in the south, has become a major issue in her country. She has assisted indigenous people to develop the skills enabling them to be climate defenders, with e.g. the introduction of wood-saving jiko stoves or major reforestation projects, not to mention exploiting their regions' biodiversity and traditions. She has manifested the kind of strong leadership in areas where traditional chieftains are still major actors at the local level. The women's climate defender initiative of which she is also a member works towards shifting gender dynamics by strengthening grassroots women's access to resources, political participation and women's voices in policy decisions. An outstanding activity has been her involvement in the "Seed Sisters", an exchange between women from climatically different regions producing a variety of seeds for vegetables, beans, medicinal plants, flowers and trees that are more resistant to a dry environment. She has thus become a major source of inspiration for rural women to support each other.

Her work contributes to achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals-Agenda 2030 Targets #10, #12 & #13

Laureates 2019

NAMAGANDA Ruth (31)



Uganda

QUEEN OF COFFEE PRODUCERS

Ruth was born in W. Uganda, the only girl among 14 children of a farm family depending on cattle and banana production for its livelihood. After a very brief stint as a storekeeper, Ruth rented land, reclaiming idle fields and transforming them into productive ones.

Very soon, she started a number of village savings and loan associations for women, and soon after she joined the Kabinge Coffee Farmers' Cooperative Society (KCFCS) in Bukomansimbi. Later, she was to set up the Babinge Youth Council (2017). Under Ruth's supervision, the youth council set up management services and coffee trading services it now offers to the cooperative. The management services include, amongst others, taking care of the farms of elderly members (as almost everywhere in the world, their proportion in society is increasing) and of widows and landowners. Ruth also carries out female leadership trainings - an absolutely indispensable contribution to African development, especially in areas where husbands usually very vigorously oppose any involvement of their wives outside of the household routine such as e.g. the above-mentioned cooperative activities.

Their work contributes to achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals-Agenda 2030 Targets #5, #8, #10& #12



Laureates from 2018

Laureates 2018

ARYAL Indira



Palpa - Nepal

WORKING THROUGH LIFE'S TOUGHEST CHALLENGES TO BECOMING AN IMPORTANT AGENT OF SOCIAL CHANGE

This outstanding and incredibly courageous woman (40), nominated by Apsara Chapagain, former WWSF prize winner from Nepal 2017) has been essentially active in the field of women's rights, in recent years as radio programmer and more recently as station manager of a rural radio station, Radio Lumbini. In a country, which still has very few and poor road communications, the radio is one of the main instruments of change in rural areas. She has actively promoted rural women's empowerment programs on the radio.

Thanks to these programs many rural women became empowered, took action against the men persecuting them, started small businesses and took on leadership positions. Her contributions to the improvement of rural woman can rightly be called quite spectacular.

Her mother, Gomati Aryalwas, was married at the age of nine, and the husband died when the mother was she was ten! Her family and neighbours accused the poor young mother of having caused her husband's death and she was forced to return to her parents home. Her elder sister "suggested" she married a widower with three children, with whom she had two girls, Indira, and five years later Bindu. Life started becoming extremely tough. The young mother and her two girls could only eat leftovers. As there was no high school in the village, Indira had to walk one whole day to reach the nearest school. When their mother Gomati died of cancer Indira was 12 and her sister 7. Now life became sheer hell and Indira and her sister became the servants of the family. But she persisted in her studies and the struggles to survive and help her little sister developed in her immense strength. She started getting involved in numerous social activities through the student unions, all while working to pay her way for her studies. In 11th and 12th grade, she established a youth club in her village, then later a children's club. The youth club became extremely active, both on the material level by making latrines compulsory instead of open defecation, and on the level of girl's right to study. Little by little the tide turned, and Indira started being appreciated by villagers who until then had been unrelentingly hostile. She organized the women to take part in folksong competitions where they won many prizes, and she started activities to decrease the endemic violence in many couples. Somehow she continued managing both her studies (and completing a Masters Degree), while also earning a living for her and her sister. Finally she started working for the rural radio Lumbini where her program "Talking with sisters" became a great success. All this despite many health problems and four operations as well as raising her own family!

It is women of such amazing courage who are the first agents of social change in our world, and WWSF is proud, with this prize, to be able to honour all the Indiras of the planet.

Her work contributes to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals-Agenda 2030 -Target #4, #5 and #10

Laureates 2018

Asociación de Mujeres Defensores de Vida (AMDV)



Honduras

THE COURAGE OF FIGHTING FOR WOMEN

AMDV has been an innovative, trail-blazing organization working in very difficult circumstances in one of the most unequal, violent and corrupt countries in the world, where 17% of the population lives in extreme poverty (less than US\$1.25 a day).

Women, and especially rural women, suffer immensely in the most violent country in the world where femicide runs extremely high with an impunity rate of over 90%! AMDV was one of the first national organizations to tackle the issue of women's rights, using a two-pronged policy of influencing public policies impacting women, in addition to eight networks in various municipalities training women on combatting violence and fighting for their rights.

Their numerous, well-honed activities cover four of the UN SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), i.e.:

- a) Ending poverty in all its forms, using dual policies of both income-generating activities with rotating funds and training in entrepreneurship, and promoting health and development in early childhood. (SDG 1)
- b) Ending hunger, achieving food security and promoting sustainable agriculture. This has been done with a variety of innovative approaches such as saving seeds, drip irrigation, organic compost and natural pesticides. This has made a huge difference in the well-being of numerous families and especially the young children who are no longer stunted in their growth by a totally inadequate and insufficient food-intake. (SDG 2)
- c) SDG 3 - ensuring healthy lives and promoting the well-being of all ages – has been forwarded through AMDV's work on solar and improved stoves, avoiding the numerous illnesses linked to smoke-inhalation in poorly-aired homes.
- d) Finally, achieving gender equality in a tremendously macho culture has been a main activity of this courageous NGO via political advocacy, policy making and training. In a political culture where both police and the legal system are indifferent to the huge and constant violence against women, AMDV has been able to make a significant difference. (SDG 5)

AMDV's struggle, as one can well imagine, has not come without ongoing hardships, obstacles and personal threats to the safety of its immensely dedicated staff, but over the years they have very significantly impacted the lives of hundreds of families in the country.

Their work contributes to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals-Agenda 2030 - Target #1, #2, #3 and #5.

Laureates 2018

ASSOCIATION OF PRO-ACTIVE RURAL WOMEN OF AQUITANIA (ASOMUC)



Colombia



A GROUP OF RURAL WOMEN'S «DIVINE MADNESS» PAYS OFF

Aquitania is a municipality with an economy based on the production and marketing of long onions, of which they are the main producer in the country. These have “colonized” the whole region, and in some neighborhoods there are no longer any green areas for children to play or adults to go for walks. This monoculture has only profited a few large landowners, but in no way has it benefitted the quality of life in rural areas, and has even generated very negative impact on Lake Tota due to the amount of fertilizers and pesticides used for this cultivation.

There is also a very negative social impact, as due to the reasonably well paid salaries in the onion sector, men have taken to drinking. This has generated a great increase of alcoholism among the men resulting in growing physical abuse of wives and children.

Getting their husbands to give up even a small portion of their fields to vegetable production seemed impossible, so the women started planting among the onion grooves. However, in 2011 the women had the good fortune of meeting Swissaid, a Swiss NGO active in the field of international development, which helped them set up ASOMUC in a formal manner, teaching the members the basics of administration and accounting and especially offering three advisors for animal husbandry, technical and social activities. So little by little, seeing the potential benefits, the husbands gave in. ASOMUC was consolidated, greenhouses were built and gardens were created. The association started commercializing its organic products and the women started to manufacture creams, soaps, shampoos all based on local plants and followed workshops to encourage community tourism.

They were even called crazy for planting those “bushes” (vegetables) instead of onions, but they have stuck to their “divine madness”.

This new disease has enabled the women to become much more aware of the soil and countryside, others have learned to fight for the increased well being of family and community, still others have learned to oppose violence in their own families and believe that dreams can become true. They have started transforming a community where damaging natural resources and polluting a whole lake with chemicals and fertilizers in obedience to the capitalist dream of maximum profit. Instead greater health and a more peaceful community and family life is now a reachable dream, and for some a reality.

Their work contributes to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals-Agenda 2030 - Target #1, #2, #12 and #15.

Laureates 2018

AZIZI Ziba



Sistan and Baluchestan province - Iran

A POWERFUL ROLE MODEL FOR WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION

The Laureat (35) is a teacher who has been appointed for her tireless leadership for the education of students in rural areas, especially girls. She has also been addressing and raising awareness on issues like child marriage in her community, where it is still widespread.

In 2014, Ziba started collaborating with her nominator for the prize, Imam Ali's Popular Student Relief Society (IAPSRS). Among her activities, one can mention the distribution of school supplies in dozens of schools, the fundraising and supervision of the construction of restrooms in deprived rural areas (something especially important for women), preventing 30 cases of child marriage (each case demands many hours of negotiating with the families involved), and finally teaching destitute women one of the traditional weaving handicrafts made by Balouch women, "Sousan-Douzi". Ziba has even been able to market the product, combining it with modern art and selling it under the brand name "Noora", thereby creating employment opportunities for many women heads of household in critical need.

Above all, she has become an outstanding role model for women and girls in a culture where they still have to struggle to find their place.

Maybe most important of all, Ziba started an IAPSRS learning center in one of the most impoverished rural areas of Sistan and Baluchistan, which has provided education for children who have no schooling. The center is called Khane-Elm ("a place of hope") where a new culture is being born, one giving equal rights to girls as well as boys to be educated.

Her work contributes to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals-Agenda 2030 - Target #4, #8 and #10.

Laureates 2018

BIRUBALA Rabha



Assam - India



A COURAGEOUS OPPONENT OF WITCHHUNTING

Although this candidate (69) has already been widely acclaimed and honoured, her nomination is more than merited and would draw attention to what is still a major issue in the Third World and costing world-wide many lives of rural women: sorcery.

Despite all the honours heaped on her, at 69 she still earns her living as a day labourer! For WWSF, this is also a way of widening our nomination range. Since 1995, this “petite” but immensely courageous woman has been fighting witch hunting for many years all alone. She has faced life threatening attacks, social isolation and many other forms of aggression while trying to save the victims of witch hunting. This aggressive cultural belief is still very active among the tribal and Adivasi (indigenous or aboriginal) communities in India, which make up 8,6% of the population (well over 100 million). In Assam, the practice is closely related to the lack of health care. People resort to traditional healers and quacks. When the patients do not recover, these quacks are quick to lay the blame on some vulnerable member of the community: unmarried women, widows, the elderly are then branded as witches. The victims are then beaten, buried alive, or forced to undergo horrific rituals.

Hailing from a poor family, orphaned at six years old, married at 16, Birubala bravely faced the challenges of raising three sons and a daughter. Her son was labelled a witch by the villagers, and this started her life-long mission of defending the victims of the aggressive cultural practice of witch hunting. For years she faced the challenge all alone but victoriously, travelling from village to village, from school to school, offering hope to the victims, arousing fear in the perpetrators by making them accountable for their actions and saving many lives.

Slowly, the story of Birubala and her gutsy crusade (she all alone saved 35 women from death) started making headlines in the local press. This simple woman in her handwoven clothes became the poster girl for a new campaign for change and modernity, and in 2012 an enthusiastic group of her supporters and social activists launched Mission Birubala and the website www.missionbirubala.com. This novel mission aims at reaching out to witchhunt victims and bringing about changes in the outlook of isolated rural communities, of which there are so many in India. So far, the Mission has saved well over 100 lives.

Her nominators believe the international recognition of the WWSF prize will go a long way to rally the support of the nation in little by little outlawing this dangerous and barbaric practice.

Her work contributes to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals-Agenda 2030 - Target #1, #2, #3 and #5.

Laureates 2018

CHAPPAZ Marie-Thérèse Fully



Valais, Switzerland

PASSION AND CREATIVITY CREATE MIRACLES

Marie Thérèse Chappaz (49) from Fully, in the Valais, combines perfectly and in a rare manner the three main criteria of this prize: creativity, innovation and courage. In 20 years, this exceptionally dedicated winegrower has imposed herself as the reference par excellence of Swiss wines for the quality of her wines. The Wine Advocate, possibly the ultimate reference in this field, gave her 99 out of a 100 for two of her wines. She is also a person of great generosity and authenticity that she combines with a disarming modesty.

In 1987, at the age of 18, she inherited a vineyard from her father and threw herself, alone and with passion, into the production of quality wine, using a very classical approach, with the exception of what is termed integrated control of predators of vineyards. Her first wine dates from 1988. Like all the winegrowers in her region, she used massive doses of herbicides which were spread by helicopter.

Her Road to Damascus took place in 1997, when she visited a French vineyard in Southern France where she discovered the method pioneered by Rudolph Steiner, biodynamic cultivation. This approach replaces the traditional power-based approach of wine production with an approach which is infinitely more respectful of the soil, based on preparations that are dynamized to reinforce the vine and make it more receptive to the energies of the earth and the heavens.

She has developed an approach enabling her to cultivate her vines without synthetic pesticides or herbicides, using a method applying straw which protects the basis of the plants so as to avoid poisoning the soil with herbicides (which leave many vineyards resembling a lunar landscape.) She also reintroduced horses to till the soil rather than the heavy machinery which compresses the soil.

Her present 26 acres of vineyards produce 25 sorts of different wines. Her wine is produced on the very steepest vineyards in Switzerland.

Marie-Thérèse Chappaz needed an immense courage to embark on her venture, given the fact that on one hand she had an anxious nature and on the other hand she was at that time one of the very rare women active in an area which was totally dominated by men. An addition to that, nearly everyone told her that her biodynamic approach would never work, at least in the vineyards of her region, the canton of Valais. She was even called the “ayatollah” of winegrowing because she dared to try radically new approaches, e.g. refusing to use helicopters to spread pesticides and depending on a method she developed herself and that had never been tested regionally.

For ten lonely years, she had to struggle alone before a few others started imitating her. She also launched her own cellars which was still one more adventure, creating wines of an absolutely exceptional

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quality using natural yeasts instead of commercial ones. In the early 2000's, Per-Henrik Manson, a world reference for wines, gave her a notation of 100 on 100 for her wine "La Petite Arvine".

For the 25th anniversary year of the WWSF Prize for women's creativity in rural life, we feel it is a privilege for us to nominate this pioneer of a highly original and creative approach to winegrowing, so totally respectful of nature and the environment.

Her work contributes to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals-Agenda 2030 - Target #12 and #15.

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MOSQUERA María Adriana



Los Cerrillos rural community, Colombia

BOUNDLESS CREATIVITY IN CHANGING REGIONAL FOOD CUSTOMS

This is unquestionably one of the most creative and innovative nominations we have received since the prize was created.

The project centers on creating a school garden adapted to climate change, which has had a significant impact on the local community, working with preschoolers in a rural farming community. The goals of the project which have already been reached are to contribute to the future and vitality of rural life in the community through awakening a passion for sustainable agriculture and local and nutritious food among young children who have already started changing eating habits in their homes.

Adriana's (38) project resulted from her own efforts to solicit resources to reorganize and expand the preschool curriculum mandated by the organization Bienestar Familiar that financially supports rural pre-schools such as her own. She has managed to successfully motivate and organize her children's families and other members of the local community. She has had to overcome major cultural obstacles such as the deeply ingrained notion that rural life is inferior, that agricultural products produced by smallholder families are inferior, even "dirty" and the attitude of parents who were telling their children to leave the "hopeless" rural areas for the glitter of the cities. So initially Adriana had to fight it out alone as there was very little if any community or institutional support for her ideas, even from Bienestar Familiar which originally opposed her project.

But, with grit, determination and her indomitable spirit she finally managed to elicit growing interest for this highly innovative and so evidently intelligent and creative project which has three main dimensions:

- a) Setting up a small climate adapted garden where she involved the children. She manifested great creativity in integrating lesson plans on other topics into the garden through a "work-play" pedagogical approach in which the children learned the curriculum through playing in the garden. She even invented songs with the students around plants and food to develop a sense of pride about growing their own food and the importance of eating well.
- b) As part of the focus on climate change, she set up a simple climate station where the children were taught how to measure temperature and precipitation levels and how to use these data about what to plant in the garden and when.
- c) The final aspect of the project was organizing the children into a group to commercialize their products.

The whole experience taught the children that the food they produced was not only beneficial to their health and that of their families, but enabled one to diversify livelihoods. Integrated into this experience was a pedagogical approach to learning the basics of accounting and maths as well as managing and

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spending money.

Whereas before the children and their families preferred processed food to the “vulgar” vegetables, they now eat fresh produce they cultivated themselves and approach the task of caring for the garden with excitement and joy. Finally, Ariana has proven that even very young children can play a significant role in community level change.

Her experience has been so successful that she is now working to have her approach formally integrated at the middle-and high-school levels. It has raised authentic interest in other areas of the country and there presently is talk of expanding it outside her community. Finally, she has been successfully contributing toward several of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including zero hunger, climate action and life on the land.

Her work contributes to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals-Agenda 2030 - Target #10, #12 and #13.

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RAQUEC YAQUÍ Elvia Leticia Aldea Cruz de Santiago



Tecpan, Guatemala

A POWERFUL PROMOTER OF MAYAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Elvia (34), a woman of Maya Kaqchikel ascent, grew up in a small rural community. At 12, her father took her out of school as she was a girl. She however vowed to show her parents and the community that women, just as men, can study and become professionals. She helped pay her studies and in addition supported her family by working on the side.

After 10 years of grit and unbending determination, she graduated from university with a degree in social work, the first person in her rural community ever to do so. She later joined a Population Council project aimed at the empowerment and education of Mayan girls. After that, she found her perfect niche in a program of the Women's Justice Initiative (WJI), implementing and overseeing women's rights programs in rural communities. Now as WJI's program director, she continues to play a critical role in the development and execution of creative initiatives to empower rural Guatemalan women and girls of Mayan origin through programs focused on access to legal services, women's rights education and leadership development. She runs numerous workshops for Mayan women in their/her mother tongue, Kaqchikel, and meets with numerous community leaders and municipal services to advocate for the prevention of gender based violence and ending child marriage. Before becoming a program director, she had led a program, entitled "Delaying early marriage among Mayan girls through culturally grounded community-based interventions." SAVARIRAJ Pushpa

Her life is devoted to Goal 5 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". Through her creativity and charisma, she is using an innovative community-based approach to partner with local rural communities to increase women's access to justice, to opportunities and to improve their ability to exercise their rights to live free from violence.

And there is no doubt that she is slowly reaching her aim.

Her work contributes to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals-Agenda 2030 - Target #4 and #5.

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SAVARIRAJ Pushpa



Tamil Nadu, India

A PIONEER OF ORGANIC CULTIVATION AMONG TRIBALS

Sister Pushpa (35) is a member of St. Joseph's Hill Tribe Development Social Service and Orphanage Society and is a leader and motivator of Tribal Women's Self-Help groups. She has been working with these women since 2008. As a dynamic and talented trainer and resource person who works especially with women and girls, she has made a significant impact. She belongs to the Medical Mission Sisters.

Her main project is promoting organic cultivation among tribal women and farmers and also marketing the produce on local markets. The vegetables are also sent to cities like Pondicherry and Chennai, where the demand for vegetables has been soaring due both to population increase and the increase in vegetarianism.

Traditionally, vegetable cultivation was undertaken only by men. But many men have entered into other professions such as masonry assistants, blacksmiths, carpentry and other activities needing specialized training. Others have migrated in search of salaried jobs, so the space was open for women to take over.

The vegetable production is undertaken without pesticides or other chemicals. The following activities are promoted by Sr. Pushpa:

- development of vermin culture and compost pit
- organic cultivation/development of seed banks
- plant nurseries/bee keeping
- the production of vegetables at an affordable cost
- protection of the environment

Sr. Pushpa is also establishing linkages with marketing outlets and banks, and teaching the tribal women to challenge a male-dominated social structure, enabling them to generate a self-sufficient livelihood and to educate the tribal children.

The challenges were immense as the tribal women had no idea whatsoever of the importance of vegetable production, let alone organic production, and its potential impact in terms of health, regular income, etc.

Marketing from scratch, especially in the cities, was another major challenge and Sr. Pushpa had to initially canvass potential outlets street by street, shop by shop.

The nominators feel awarding the prize to this candidate will give her significant recognition regionally and hence empower the cause of this important activity for some of the most downtrodden and neglected populations of the sub-continent.

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VALDEPEÑA RAMIREZ Aurora & CASTELLANCA RUÍZ Teresa Huexca



Morelos, Mexico

AN EPIC FIGHT AGAINST A GIGANTIC AND DESTRUCTIVE BARRAGE

We are suggesting the prize be split between these two indigenous women who are involved in the same struggles against a huge thermo-electrical station being implemented in the region and which has been creating total havoc both on the environment and food chain and in the social structure of the community.

In addition, this nomination was backed by 10 different nominators, from university researchers to grass roots groups. These women not only faced the opposition of a huge, tentacular economic project, but often had to face the incredible male chauvinism of their own husbands and brothers who were supposedly on their side.

Both these women have been organizers in a massive consciousness raising campaign and both women have been molested and harassed due to gender issues and simply because of their daring to stand up. Aurora (47) especially feels she has innovated in eliminating community prejudices against women, and the “shy, quiet lady” has become the “strong woman” who fights for the defence of their land. There was on one occasion a violent clash with 200 policemen when the people were manifesting against the establishment of a camp for the workers of the project. To quote Aurora, “You may think you can’t fight more, they make you believe your hands are tied, but we have learned it’s not true, that there’s always a way to resist. I do it by taking care of people’s health, recovering knowledge and resources of the community. Raising my voice in assemblies when the men will not listen”.

In addition, Aurora trained herself to become one of the most knowledgeable persons in her community in terms of medicinal plants, many of which are disappearing because of the project called “Proyecto Integral Morales”, or simply PIM.

To conclude, we will quote Teresa (42) who writes: “I am an indigenous woman by heart, life in my town was beautiful because its land produced a lot, there were lots of fish, there was always something to eat in the fields, its birds were beautiful, the little animals, everything. Now everything has changed. There is rancor, bitterness, anger, disappointment, family ruptures, there’s even people who won’t say “hello” to each other and all this is related to the problem of the thermo-electrical station. “I want my town to be united as it used to be. I wish it were all a dream, but at the same time I don’t, because due to this imposed monster project, I met a lot of people like me”. That’s why I’m here, still struggling with my comrades, fighting to keep our community together and protect it from other people’s ambitions.”

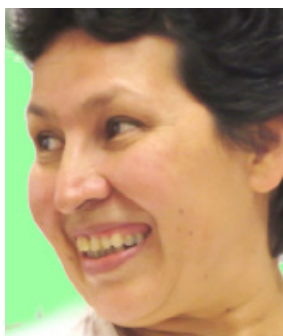
Their work contributes to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals-Agenda 2030 - Target #1, #2, #3 and #5.



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ANA ELVIA ARANA



Columbia



A TIRELESS FIGHTER FOR A BALANCED ENVIRONMENT

Ana Elvia Arana, 57, from Columbia was born in 1960 in the rural part of Tulua, in the Valle del Cauca. Her childhood was intrinsically linked to the world of the countryside and very early she felt a deep attachment to nature. As a child, she learned to read and write thanks to a national literacy program on the radio. Listening to various programs on old civilizations awoke in her a deep yearning to learn. She had a strong desire to go to school. So, when she was 11, her mother moved to a small township where there was a school.

Later, the family moved to Cali, and as they could not pay her schooling, Ana started working – first in a cafeteria, then a factory. But her life changed again at 16 and she was able to attend high school. She took classes in ecology, joined a nature protection association and began to understand the links between the history and culture of a community and the environment.

Soon after graduating from university, this pioneer passionate about social justice started working with civil service organizations in the environmental field. Tired of living in the city, she sold her house and emigrated to a rural community where she built her own house in wattle and daub with earth tiles and created a rich garden growing the most varied produce. She still lives there.

In 1995, she created her own foundation, The Tropico Foundation, whose aim is the conservation and protection of the environment and social surroundings of vulnerable communities. Due to very modest funding, the start was challenging, but Ana never gave up, doing what she could, either with or without money. Ana believes the best way for a community to tell and evaluate its history and its way of surviving is to listen to its own voice and write its own thoughts. She trained people to tell their own stories and write them down. This approach was a trailblazer for all similar research developed in this part of the country.

After a brief stint at the university of Andalucía (Spain) where she earned her Masters in agro ecology and sustainable development, she returned home and started work on the creation of protected areas, where she made a significant contribution to the National System of Protected Areas of Columbia (SINAP in Spanish).

Ana talks and listens easily to people and groups. She is constantly inviting and facilitating dialogue between institutions, communities, businesses and government. A main thrust of her work has always been empowering communities on issues surrounding their land and their environment goals. Tropico has worked with hundreds of Afro-Columbian peasant farmers and indigenous families in agro ecological projects that have allowed them to strengthen their organizational processes, agriculture and fishing and reductive and sustainable animal rearing. Last but not least, Tropico's work with institutions and communities in the Valle del Cauca has generated a national-level model for participative creation of protected areas and this is now being replicated in different parts of the country.

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ANNE POELINA



Australia

AN EXCEPTIONAL FIGURE AMONG THE FIRST NATIONS OF THE WORLD

An exceptionally gifted and culturally grounded woman from the aboriginal population of Australia, now aged 60, Anne Poelina's contribution to the rural women of her country, especially Western Australia, is deeply inspiring both from a personal and professional perspective. Her work and values, the principles upon which it is based, is a model of community service and advocacy that transcends culture, ethnicity and gender. She has been able to build trust and respect for her work at all levels, from her indigenous grass roots community engagement to the highest levels of government and industry. This world-traveled Ph.D. keeps the closest contacts with the most humble members of her First nation community.

For the past 40 years, Dr. Poelina has played a leading role in indigenous health, education, language maintenance, publishing, empowerment, evaluation, clinical practice, consultancy, kinship and cultural development. Despite many opportunities to move to a capital city and pursue senior career advancement, she has chosen to stay in her own remote region and establish her own NGO so that she could focus on changing policy by demonstrating progressive action on the ground. She has had to battle the acculturated mistrust and uncertainty due to the political and social factors born of the legacy of a colonization, which was exceptionally heavy, handed with the original First Nation occupants of the country.

She is currently in the process of establishing the Mardoowarra College, a residential indigenous community college for young people 13-25 from the Kimberly region. This region has suffered some of the worst examples of conquest, colonization, dispossession and continued subjection of the Traditional Owners in human colonial history and continues to experience the worst youth outcomes in the world, statistically speaking, particularly in regard to suicide, incarceration rates, drug and alcohol misuse homelessness, unemployment and extreme poverty.

In her early teens, Anne travelled over 2000kms to the capital city of her region, Perth, where she lived in a small hostel so as to attend high school. She later entered the prestigious Western Australia Government School of Nursing where she was the first indigenous Australian to graduate with a diploma in General Nursing. She has continued forming herself during her whole life and could many times have occupied tenured positions, were it not for her deep soul attachment to her own community.

Anne's work and studies emphasize the interdependent relationship between cultures, humans, land, water, biosphere and biodiversity. The culmination of her work is trying to coordinate all of the pieces to construct a sustainable economy and loving, caring and sustainable society. She has played an absolutely unique role in her country building skills and methods from Western science, arts and politics to define, interpret and communicate First People's ancient understandings of land and water stewardship, an understanding so badly needed in our modern world literally running out of water resources in many countries.

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Anne has taken a leading role in preventing a number of inappropriate development projects in the majestic Kimberly region wilderness. She played an active and influential role in preventing the proposed gas-processing hub at Walmadany (James Price) point, which would have been one of the most important in the world, if not the most important one. She has been for the past six years battling a coal mining company in court to prevent a new coal-mining precinct starting in the floodplain of the pristine Mardoowarra (Fitzroy River). Anne works at many levels, particularly as a member of her local Aboriginal community and as a director of the Walalakkoo Native Title governing council. She recently coordinated indigenous leaders from the six First Nations groups that share the Mardoowarra to create the Fitzroy River Declaration to prevent damage to the river from resource extraction and processing or industrial agriculture.

The list of publications and films of this amazing activist and thinker is as impressive as her achievements. Her contribution to the blossoming of women's creativity in rural life among the aboriginal nation can only be hinted at indirectly through the above, very succinct presentation of her far reaching activities. As one of her nominators, professor Bob Morgan of NSW, Chair of the World Council Indigenous Peoples on Education stated, "throughout the past thirty years I have watched Anne grow into a strong confident knowledgeable and humble woman who passionately engages a wide range of matters relevant to rural Australians, particularly indigenous woman and girls."

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APSARA CHAPAGAIN



Nepal

PROMOTING WOMEN THROUGH FORESTRY MANAGEMENT

It is thanks to the tireless work of people like this candidate that Nepal has become recognized as a world leader in this field due to one of the most successful decentralized forest management projects ever set up. About 8 million people (out of a total population approaching 29 million) are involved in community forestry, and almost a third of Nepal's forests are protected and managed by over 20'000 Community Forestry User Groups (CFUG) who consider these areas to be hamro ban ("our forest").

In the 1970's a series of studies speculated that by the mid-1990's Nepal would resemble Afghanistan in terms of desolate landscapes barren of trees. This somber prediction was reversed, essentially thanks to sound management and protection by local user groups.

Apsara Chapagain, 45 has been an important actor in this whole movement of forestry management, working tirelessly for over two decades with grass roots groups all over the country. Already as a teenager, she worked to help form the local CFUG. Because of her demonstrated leadership and effectiveness, she was selected as a delegate to an initial meeting of forest users from all over Nepal, which ultimately resulted in the formation of the Federation of Community Forestry Users in Nepal (FECOFUN,) of which she has been a tireless activist since its creation. She was nominated the first woman Chairperson of the Federation, and her tenure was one of the most successful in its history. It resulted in a substantial increase in female representatives and office holders (to almost 50%). It is important to be aware of the fact that women are the de facto managers of forests in Nepal, as they are the ones that collect the fodder and fuel wood that supports the integrated farming-forests-livestock system that predominates throughout the country.

With improved forestry conditions, women spend less time collecting firewood, one of their main tasks. One is very far from the 30kms or more some women walk to collect wood in the Sahel region! Also the contribution of community forestry to watershed protection, soil erosion control, protection and restoration of water resources, environmental purification and a healthier living environment has been immense. Through their participation in the CFUGs, women have developed their leadership skills and in some of the groups, even marginalized women and Dalits (untouchables) have become members. Well over 700 such groups are run solely by women, and thanks to them, women are substantially influencing local decision-making.

The social impact of the CFUG has sometimes been remarkable. In one case such a group has been operating an ambulance service, and many of them have been making significant contributions to poverty reduction (by e.g. providing forest free products to the poor).

There are still major challenges to face, such as overcoming elite-capture of forestry control, still improving access of the poor to the fruits of CFUG activities, but despite this, there are very good reasons "to call community forestry management in Nepal one of the most successful decentralized modes of forest governance."

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CHOTI KUMARI SINGH



Ratanpur, Bihar - India



EMPOWERING THE POWERLESS

Choti, now 20, is an upper caste young woman who at 17 started social and educational work in her own village, Ratanpur, in the ranks of Amrita SeRve, an NGO born of the well-known spiritual leader Amma's work. She started her activities with the most downtrodden of the downtrodden, the Musahar Dalit (=untouchables) community of Bihar, for which the Bihar government has even coined a new term: mahadalit, which means very oppressed. Only 6 percent of adult men and 2 percent of adult women of the community are literate. Hygiene is almost inexistent, children are never vaccinated.

There is no awareness of social welfare programs. Most are landless laborers. Children frequently marry at 10 or 12. School attendance is catastrophic – quite a few children would just come for the midday meal. Cleanliness is a quasi-inexistent notion – many children would bathe about every two weeks.

Choti has evidently had to battle tremendous odds to overcome stereotyped projections about lower casts (including the most difficult of all: those the Mahadalits hold about themselves!) and to empower the community, the main thrust of her action.

Choti started after-school tuition classes in 2014. Getting children to these classes was a herculean task, as parents showed not the slightest interest in educating their children. So Choti took upon herself to go from home to home gathering the children for her classes. The children smelled very bad and motivating them for personal hygiene was still more challenging. So Choti and her colleagues would take the children to the nearby river to bathe them. Slowly, ever so slowly, the children started acquiring new habits.

Alcohol was brewed in homes, and violence and fighting was common among the women. But after endearing herself to the mothers through her selfless work with their children, things started changing here too. Choti started self-help groups where every woman saves 20 rupees a month, which are deposited in a common bank account, in view of starting home-based activities. All pregnant women are now taken to the Primary Health Care center, and mothers educated about their child's vaccination schedule.

The tuition classes have proven a huge success. 108 children are enrolled and especially there has been a complete change in the parent's mindset concerning education. Choti expects many of the children to go on to college, which would evidently be a first for this community.

Several decades ago, Rosa Parks heralded the process of desegregation in the USA by her resolute NO to segregation in public transport. In Ratanpur village, (District Bhojpur of Bihar), Chota has been instrumental in eradicating the curse of untouchability, segregation and utter socio-economic neglect of the Musahars by her resounding YES to schooling their children.

Choti would be the youngest ever to receive the WWSF prize, and giving it to her would be a powerful sign that, as the French saying goes, "Value does not have to await the adding up of years" to be expressed. The young have also a major contribution to make to a world that works for all.

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ESTHER NAKAJJIGO



Uganda



A COURAGEOUS OPPONENT OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY

Already as a teenager, Esther, 21, of Munyonyo, Uganda took upon herself, without any outside prompting, to start the uphill battle against this plague in an area, which has been called "probably Africa's most complex and difficult place to live", the Kalangala district in the islands of Lake Victoria. There is a remarkably high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, generally poor health, lack of government services, frequent family breakdown, widespread belief in witchcraft, alcoholism and very high levels of commercial sex work. In addition, strangers from the mainland come there to escape the stigma of HIV/AIDS and the law.

There are few permanent houses and most people live in shacks with almost no sanitation and hygiene. Family structure is nearly non-existent, putting women and children at risk of neglect, abuse, and increasing problems due to unwanted pregnancies and the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Men tend to spend their money on alcohol and women rather than invest in meaningful projects.

The men fish, but women sort and clean the fish. They are poorly compensated and often expected to provide sex favors for their employers. The only job that pays well is commercial sex, which many women resort to as a last means of providing for their children. Add to that the fact that the islands are a spiritually dark and desolate place where witchcraft is at the center of daily life and constantly impacts human relations.

So it needed an exceptionally courageous heart like that of Esther Nakajjigo to take on the challenge of combatting this quasi-perverse culture ... and that at the age of 14! Her schoolmate Sonia who attended school on the mainland tried to perform an abortion on herself during the night in the school bathroom. After bleeding the whole night school authorities sent her home to the islands. When she arrived there, instead of being rushed to the health center she was taken to a shrine, as the community believed the angel of death would take people's soul there just after midnight, which is when Sonia died.

So Esther mobilized the health workers to begin doing community sensitization and would spend her whole school holidays on the island educating the people in the field of health, encouraging women to go to antenatal checks, immunize their children and young people to seek out adolescent health services. She very soon started a Women's Health Team which would do community outreach work while she was at school, and would then join them during the holidays. They would visit schools and give health talks, especially targeting adolescent girls, as there was a widespread belief that one had to have sex after one's periods so that the next menses would not be as painful. Boys had a strong allergy to condoms, believing they brought bad luck.

Under the leadership of this remarkable teenager, attitudes on the island started to change, with maternal and infant morbidity and mortality falling drastically. But that is just the beginning. In her second year

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at university, Esther innovated the "Saving Innocence Challenge" an expedition where 3 girls from 10 city schools (i.e. 30 girls) go to the island to educate the most vulnerable of these isolated, rural girls, those living with HIV, and/or victims of violence and teenage pregnancies. The city girls live in the island girl's homes and each team has three days to have an impact on the girl concerned, her family and her community. The city girls use themselves as role models to inspire the locals with a new vision and stop seeing their island lives as hopeless and the mainland as too daunting and unreachable. The most creative of Esther's 10 teams wins a National Humanitarian Award. The island girls under this inspiring new leadership have created 54 small businesses for 114 vulnerable island mothers who are now capable of taking care of their children without having to sell themselves for a few fish to local fishermen constantly looking for human preys with as much eagerness as they seek shoals of fish. The teams have also trained 510 island girls to make their own reusable sanitary pads so as to avoid sleeping with fishermen to get fish to sell and buy sanitary pads in order to be able to go to school when menstruating! These pads can last for a year (12 cycles), are practically cost free, three times more absorbent than commercial pads, dry in only two hours, and are especially designed for heavy flow.

The challenge continues, and Esther plans to reach 5000 vulnerable island girls by the year 2020. This amazing experience born of the compassion and creativity of a 14-year-old teenager just goes to show the impact one single person can have. Like the proverbial stone thrown into a pool, Esther's courage, vision and perseverance have reached wide and far and go to show once more that "our only limits are our belief in limits". Esther, you are an inspiration to a whole continent. Right on!

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LEVU CHUTE ADI VASULEVU MEREWALESI



FIJI

A VERSATILE GRASS-ROOTS DEVELOPER

This nominee, 54, is a champion rural transitional woman leader. Her exemplary leadership as a rural woman has gained recognition at many levels in Fiji. For the past twenty years, she has provided safe spaces for women from different ethnic communities to work together on issues affecting women around peace and harmony.

With great creativity and innovativeness, she has helped multicultural women's groups develop women led income generation projects in very rural, remote and poor communities. She creatively blends peace building and economic empowerment for rural women, and helps women through action research to analyze and understand their situations of poverty and injustice. She has encouraged women to develop meaningful and creative strategies to promote their own dignity and rights in cultural situations where women are considered second-class citizens by the men in a culture deeply embedded in patriarchal mores and structures.

Levu Chute activities have multifaceted forms, be it as a counselor, mediator, skilled negotiator, radio presenter, community enabler and, last but not least, mother. She is also a skilled businesswoman who supports nascent start-up community businesses by sharing her business acumen. She has for a long time been involved with the rare NGOs operating in Vanua Levu and has ensured a focus on rural areas with marginalized communities. All her projects are linked to social security and peace-building by weaving into broader projects, conflict resolution skills training and/or supporting the use of traditional methods within these communities.

A major achievement has for instance been the development of the Vunucuicui Multiracial Women's forum seed bank and cooperative shop in that location, which included working through issues of cultural misunderstanding between the women over the management of the shop. The provision of advice and skills training to assist the Naleba Multiracial women's group address poverty in their community through self-identified women run livelihood activities, including egg and chicken farming. On other occasions, she helped a mother's club identify income generated activities linked to the handicrafts market, assisted another community to enhance water security, to mention but a very few of her activities.

She does not shy in front of speaking truth to power and considers that a key part of her community empowerment work is representing women's voices, needs and concerns at the provincial level, where she became member of the Macuata Provincial Development Board. But her most creative and significant work and the one which has had the most immediate and enduring impact is her foundational work in the femLINK's Women's Weather Watch (WWW) model. It was after the 2004 cyclone and flooding which devastated whole communities that Vasulevu noticed many women suffering alone. With a colleague she came up with the idea of linking women together around environmental and humanitarian issues. Thus

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was born Women's Weather Watch, which was not only to provide weather information but also a space to amplify the experiences of women in their wonderful diversity. Since the idea first popped up, WWW has become an active network of women leaders who are hubs of information in their communities. Levu Chute and her colleagues dared dream that women could become agents of their own recovery.

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MANJU VERMA



India

OVERCOMING ALL THE ODDS

Born in the village of Lawan, not far from Jaipur, Manju Verma, 41, seemed to have all the cards stacked against her. She belongs to the "Regar" community, considered a low cast community of cobblers and untouchables. As her family could not pay for her education, at 17 she was "married off" to a young man of 20. A cobbler, he would spend a great part of his miserable income on alcohol and other addictions, and very soon started beating Manju for any and every reason imaginable.

But Manju, very soon with two children, and realizing she could not offer the minimum to her children on the little her husband gave her for the household, started making fans and brooms to earn a few extra rupees. In the aftermath of massive floods that affected Jaipur and surrounding areas in 1981, she joined a self-help village group (SHG). However, in her community, women leaving their families to attend, alone, outside meetings were severely criticized, and Manju had to put up with many lewd comments, not to mention increased abuse from her husband. Despite all these obstacles, she persisted as she considered it a modest cost to assure a brighter future for her children. She started saving, and then attending various workshops and trainings organized by a Jaipur-based NGO. Through these trainings, she became greatly empowered, and despite the village gossip, she started mobilizing the women of her community about their rights, capacities, health, and education and worked on their political, social, economic and cultural empowerment. In 2003 she started her own SHG and took her first loan. The journey started and she never looked back. She joined the executive committee of a local NGO of which she has been a member for 19 years.

The developments completely altered her status in her community. Instead of being a scorned untouchable, she acquired a dignified position and people started admiring her and calling upon her in times of crisis. Slowly but steadily, the financial situation of her family improved. Her children are receiving a higher education and the family has its own house. Manju is now a key figure in the social, political, cultural and economic upliftment of the women of her village community. Where people once made snide and derogatory comments about her, they now respect her as a role model.

Last but not least, Manju is a firm believer in the education of the girl child. According to Manju, a woman aware of her capacities can work wonders. Coming from a community of untouchables, she makes sure no woman in her neighborhood or community remains unheard.

Laureates 2017

MUQADAS AABROO



Pakistan

AN EXCEPTIONAL CHAMPION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Muqadas Aarbroo, 26, was born in an area where girls were not welcome nor allowed to attend school. But her mother took a strong stand for her daughters education, and from her early years Muqadas joined the struggle for women's rights, despite the fact that in the Muzaffargarh district of Southern Punjab, located in a flood-prone area between the Indus and Chenab rivers, girl's education is very much frowned upon and many women in the area have not even registered to vote. Century old customs prevent women from attending mixed gatherings, associating freely, making their own decisions.

Very early this intrepid pioneer of women's rights became aware that the fundamental issue was a change of mindset of the whole community and culture and would demand a great struggle. At the same time, she had a great trust in the natural abilities of women, including in their innovative ideas and decision-making skills, which she set sought to promote from a very early age, having made up her mind that her life aim would be to serve women.

Very early she joined the Women's Social Organization – Pakistan (WSO-PK). Among her early activities was income generating programs and microfinance programs, for which she formed 2300 women's groups. This had a major impact as many women were living below the poverty line and were now able to start their own businesses.

She introduced the (to the area) new concepts of branding, marking, packing and packaging of products. For instance, women in the area crafted clothes with beautiful hand embroidery, then sold them to middlemen at a very low price. So she organized the women of the area into hundreds of autonomous groups and selected and trained women to take orders and sell the produce on the market, thus completely eliminating the middlemen.

She also introduced waste management in the area, an unknown concept until Muqadas intervened, and low cost sanitation systems.

She has had a continual impact on her community concerning the role of women and women's rights. More and more women are demanding their right to vote, to make decisions concerning marriages and in the key area of property rights. Many women were deprived of their basic rights in this area out of simple ignorance, and this is now changing, with more and more women demanding their rights in this field. She continues striving for the education of girls, and especially to change social attitudes towards the birth of a girl-child.

By and large, Muqadas has always had a great willingness to take on tough projects and focusing on their completion. Her leadership qualities have constituted the very backbone of her success in so many areas. She is a natural problem solver and handles complex situations tactfully and without problems.



Laureates from 2016

Laureates 2016

Anne Pelagie Yotchou Tzudjom



Cameroon



CREATING STRONG NETWORKS AND LEADERSHIP AMONG RURAL WOMEN

A founding member of the network Genre en Action in 2007 and coordinator of Cefap-Ladies Circle, Anne Pelagie is an expert in Gender, Development and Transitional Justice. She has been an active member of numerous networks in the field of gender issues and development. Her driving conviction has been that it is crucial to empower rural women for the wellbeing of their families and for the growth and well being of their local communities in the long run.

The obstacle she has identified, and aims to overcome, in order to give rural women a central position in eradicating poverty, is that gender inequality cannot be ended until women are not given access to resources (such as credit, land and education) in rural areas.

To address these challenges she has started several projects for rural women. One of her projects focuses on capacity building through the use of ICT in the development of microbusinesses. Anne has also conducted training programs to familiarize rural women leaders with the use of technology so as to increase their participation in governance and political debate at the national level, as well as to obtain the know-how and a new mindset for networking together. She organized a project on the improvement of the quality of life of women and girls in rural areas, which attempts to provide clean water, sanitation, education and health. This initiative also included the construction of a shelter for battered women and girls and of the first "Hope Home" for vulnerable pregnant adolescents and their children in Cameroon. She also helped rural women in establishing a processing unit and managing the selling of agricultural and fishery products. In her journey Anne has encountered many difficulties, funding and fundraising being the biggest one. She has taken up this challenge to raise awareness and collects funds on her own by reaching out to international networks. Her creative and courageous efforts have been supported by a team she has gathered, of 150 volunteers and technical experts, coming from 10 different regions of the country, indicating her reach and impact.

Laureates 2016

Caroline Owashaba



Uganda

AN ENTREPRENEUR FOR ADDING VALUE AND SELF RELIANCE

Caroline Owashaba (30) has begun many initiatives in her community, such as creating the International Day of the Girl Child recognition awards, and founding Action for Youth Development Uganda, a youth led organization that promotes gender equality, social justice, sexual reproductive health and rights of the rural people.

She started the Self Reliance Project and Children for Alternative Change (CHACHA), which engages children and mothers in social economic activities that enables them to increase their household income. One activity that is a part of the latter initiative uses discarded banana stems and fiber, to create products including lampshades, doormats, tablemats, key holders, table coasters, and earrings. While there are challenges in this sector due to the high cost of banana extractor and weaver machines, Caroline's creative innovation has been beneficial in showing rural women how to add value to available resources around them. Another challenge was that because the technology is new for rural communities, awareness has to be created about the benefits of using banana-extracted residues. Due to Caroline the community has become highly informed about such banana products. The profits from selling these items were given to mothers to create bank accounts where the saved money would go to their children to attend school. By taking their children to school, Caroline has encouraged women to become more independent and feel more empowered. By looking at alternative and creative ways to make money, she has inspired and encouraged thousands of women to make a difference in their lives, and believes that such innovation can only take place if one overcomes the fear of beginning something new as she did. She was part of ACTION/2015, which build the momentum of adopting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and is the current team leader for community-based organizations that are working towards popularizing SDGs in rural communities on behalf of the Network for African Youth for Development (NAYD) in Uganda.

Laureates 2016

Chinta Bai TREGRAM



India

A STRONG COMMUNITY LEADER FOR WOMEN FARMERS

Chinta Bai (40) is a leader of Ram Rahim Pragati Producer Company Limited (RRPPCL), a significant rural economic farmer-owned institution in one of the poorest areas of Madhya Pradesh, India. Being born into a marginalized indigenous tribal community, in a condition of poverty, landlessness, and “bonded” farm work, Chinta’s rise as a community leader is evidence of her undeterred spirit to overcome all odds.

Her courageous step to leave her abusive husband, whom she was married off to at the age of 13 years, led to her social exclusion and loss of familial support but this did not bring her down. Her story changed when she joined a self-help group and started a humble goat business. Today, under Chinta’s leadership, RRPPCL has been able to change the terms of market power and commodity exchange to benefit small and marginal farmers who are the most disadvantaged and exploited participants in India’s agricultural system. Through Chinta’s initiatives, RRPPCL has brought together 2,662 women shareholder farmers and has enabled them to sell over 4,000 tons of wheat, maize, Bengal gram, red gram, green gram, and soybeans. Chinta fought relentlessly for RRPPCL to be a part of the National Commodities Derivatives Exchange, which provides small farmers with an online, real-time market to directly sell their produce across India. Chinta was not only responsible for this remarkable progress, but she has also been instrumental in inspiring women to stand up to traders to obtain fair prices for their goods. Her adoption of technical knowledge and skills critical to agricultural market practices, which are often not accessible to rural farmers and remain the domain of middlemen and elite farming capitalists, is commendable in the face of her illiteracy.

Chinta is a true leader who used her own disadvantaged start to fight against traditional norms and encourage women to be independent.

Laureates 2016

Eva Darare Gonche



Kenya

RESTORING WOMEN'S RIGHT TO LIFE OF DIGNITY

Eva Darare Gonche (45) has made an enormous impact on her community through her involvement in many major activities to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. In her community, there is a strict cultural bias against girls, especially those who become pregnant out of wedlock.

Pre-marital pregnancy is an intolerable crime that forces girls to be evicted from their homes. The single mothers must often participate in illegal businesses such as brewing local liquors and engaging in prostitution in order to survive. Eva wanted to enact change within her traditional community and hence organized the young, socially excluded mothers. This was a highly difficult task considering the fact that the community has shown complete defiance of government orders and efforts in the matters of violence against women, leading to fears in the poor and discriminated women to even come together and mobilize. She taught them indigenous practices of making handmade products, such as beadwork and basketry, by using locally available materials. Through these goods, the women were able to earn money and were reaccepted into society.

Eva also aspired to help pregnant girls so she gained support from community elders and leaders who agreed that any man who impregnates a girl must give her 70 goats to help her settle down and support herself. The strict community saw a decrease in pregnancies, and children who were born out of wedlock were brought up fairly accepted. It took an immense amount of courage for Eva to challenge traditional cultural practices in her community and not give in to pressure or fear of the consequences that could follow the opposition to established structures and practices. Through innovation and creativity, Eva was able to bring the socially outcast girls back into the community and help them start a decent, legal business. Eva has made a huge difference for hundreds of women in her community and hopefully this influences other nearby communities to adopt similar changes.

Laureates 2016

Hermila (Mily) Treviño-Sauceda



USA



CREATING AWARENESS ABOUT FARMWORKERS' RIGHTS

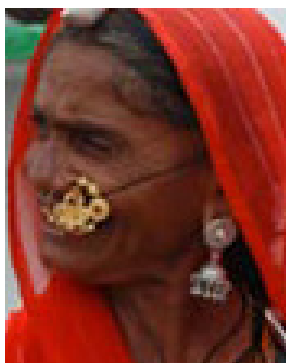
Mily Treviño-Sauceda (57) is the leader of the women farmworkers movement in the US, which started in California, and she works hard to help female farmers overcome oppression, achieve just treatment, and realize their potential.

She faced difficulties that come along with belonging to the community of farmworkers, as they have the lowest incomes in the richest country and their labor organizing rights are not protected. Her personal situation also posed several problems for Mily as her family kept on moving back and forth between US and Mexico, her education was further disturbed because her parents prioritized her brother's education over hers which meant that she would often be working in the fields. She started advocating for the working conditions of farmworkers early on in her life, which led to her losing her jobs. Despite all odds, she has actively voiced concerns, has been involved in the fight against violence against women, and has helped train members of the police department and other public officials to understand and deal with perpetrators and affected women. She has also advised public officials and made policy recommendations to improve the treatment of women. Mily has used her experience as a farmworker to advocate against the use of pesticides because of the dangers they have on people and plants. Her campaigns and speeches on the topic have been a large contributor toward preserving the environment.

To promote understanding of what it is like to be a female farmer, Mily worked with farmworker women to present skits that demonstrated their hard work, sexual harassment in the fields, pesticide dangers, and domestic violence at home. She believed that the dramatization would help people better visualize these serious issues and communicate their reality. Mily is an inspiration to women through her advocacy campaigns and her creative approaches to help women farmworkers comprehend and confront their challenges. Mily is also instrumental in helping farmworkers learn their rights, obtain fair wages, and work in safe environments. She has received local and national awards for her leadership work.

Laureates 2016

Kesi Bai



India

FIGHTING PATRIARCHAL STRUCTURES OF DECISION-MAKING

Kesi Bai (48) resides in the Bhilwara District, a region in India that is severely drought prone. Despite the male-dominated way of life, Kesi Bai has played an important role in saving and developing pastureland and raising awareness for water crisis management.

As water scarcity is a major issue, Kesi Bai mobilized women towards securing and restoring common resources. The women often faced challenges in their community due to ingrained biases from the men. Kesi Bai displayed great courage by sitting in on the male-only community discussions and expressing her views on how to develop the land to save water. She had to pierce through an extremely strong political clout of upper caste (Thakur) men to have her voice heard as they laid charges against her of breaking tradition of subservience. They opposed Kesi Bai and questioned the credibility of her work on pastureland development and accused the accounts of the pastureland of being non-transparent and forged. Kesi Bai took initiative in inviting experts to review the land and proving these accusations to be wrong.

The resulting confirmation of her success boosted confidence in Kesi Bai and her work. To this day, 14 years later, the village gets all its fuel wood from the 75 hectares pasture, which was earlier not in a suitable condition to be used for animal grazing by people of the lower caste, who were heavily dependent on animal grazing for their living. Kesi Bai has been so successful in improving the quality of life in her rural community, that she was elected Sarpanch (head) of the Chitamba Panchyat (the village-level institution of self-government) for a four-year term. In this way, she has been able to challenge traditional views and promote gender equality and women's participation in community decision-making. The success of natural resources being restored allowed for further changes in the community, such as girls being permitted to attend school and women raising their voices against the social custom of spending huge amounts of money on death ceremonies. Kesi Bai's courage and work in water management influenced changes in gender relations beyond her community to other villages outside of the Bhilwara District.

Laureates 2016

Nirmala Devi Tharu Chaudhary



Nepal

POWER TO THE INDIGENOUS WOMEN WAGE LABORERS

Nirmala Devi Tharu Chaudhary (39) has done an exceptional job in empowering women in her community. Always eager to expand her education, Nirmala became a literacy facilitator, which offered her the opportunity to learn how to organize and manage women's groups. She worked through Women Acting Together for Change (WATCH), an organization that focused on awareness, empowerment, organizing, self-reliance, and self respect, all values that Nirmala wanted to expand upon.

She became a Social Mobilizer and was a model for women in how to live healthily, how to garden, and how to generate personal income. She was able to achieve these things despite being a daughter of a bonded laborer and a housemaid. Having grown up in poverty, she was not able to continue her schooling after 7th grade, and had to become a housemaid herself at the age of 10 years to support her family, following her mother's paralysis. After being married off at the young age of 14 years, she had to take up the job of a wage laborer for a landlord, where she faced stigma, exploitation and discrimination. Nirmala escaped these conditions with the help of an organization. Nirmala further demonstrated great courage when she engaged in rescuing 46 bonded laborer families from their landlord. Nirmala met in secret with the bonded workers and encouraged the women laborers to take part in literary classes to become organized. The women were then able to ask for proper wages and limited working hours, and eventually they became free and were able to resettle.

Nirmala is proud to empower and organize rural women and teach them how to utilize their constitutional, legal, and human rights. With the help from WATCH, Nirmala has made contributions ranging from starting the Talau Cooperative, which produces and rears piglets for distribution, to lobbying the government to make changes in the draft Constitution of Nepal. She organized 11 women's groups to come together, comment and make changes to the proposed Draft Constitution of Nepal, which had been published for feedback. These feedbacks were made to further the cause of women. She also used this opportunity to fight for the rights of the indigenous community of Tharu, which the government had been ignoring.

Laureates 2016

Peggy Carswell



Canada



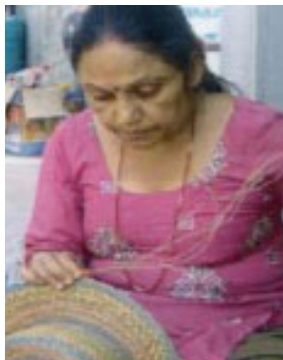
STEERING THE ORGANIC MOVEMENT IN ASSAM

Peggy Carswell (64), a resident of Canada, has been active in Assam, India, since seventeen years, where she has transformed the lives of thousands of people by inspiring them to use organic and sustainable farming techniques. Assam is one of the leading producers of tea in India, but farmers were accidentally misusing harmful pesticides because they could not read the English instructions.

Peggy brought small-scale tea growers and farmers together and showed them how to grow tea and vegetables organically. To overcome the challenge of shortage of skilled people in India in this specialized field, she has been able to establish training centers to promote hubs for people to practice organic farming over time. These have included three demonstration gardens where people can learn the organic farming practices first-hand. Small tea farmers have been able to benefit immensely from her approach that does not use pesticides. For example, many of the growers now use an indigenous method of crushing the tea with a wooden tool, which adds a slight smoky flavor, a popular taste in the West. This would not have been possible without using the sustainable agricultural practices introduced by Peggy of generating organic tea by using local seeds, locally available organic inputs, composting, insect pest management and crop rotation. She has built a collaborative group of Assamese and Canadian farmers, small tea growers, partner organizations, and local and international volunteers. Her workshops have served as platforms where small tea growers can learn about sustainable agricultural practices, marketing, packaging, and networking with tea experts and importers. The most important change that Peggy was able to bring about was to increase the availability of small-scale equipment to produce finished tea goods that helped the tea-growers tremendously. A challenge that Peggy is working to address is that while a lot of work is being done by South Indian organizations on sustainable and organic crop production and preservation of local seeds, Assam is not able to benefit from it as not much information and funding reaches this part of India.

Laureates 2016

Tulsi Gyawali



Nepal

EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH INNOVATION IN WASTE MANAGEMENT

Tulsi Gyawali (50) is an innovator and leader in waste management. In her community, there was a lack of technology for solid waste management, so waste would be dumped into the center of the village. Tulsi found it to be problematic that people felt their responsibility was over after they threw the waste on the road. Not only did the garbage foster diseases and plagues, but it also led to environment degradation.

Tulsi tackled the problem at its origin by converting the degradable kitchen waste into compost manure that could be used for growing vegetables, medicinal herbs, and ornamental plants. She was then able to organize terrace and rooftop vegetable and flower gardens. Tulsi trained many rural women and children on solid waste management and rooftop farming. In addition, Tulsi created a use for other garbage and showed women how to weave decorative products from colored plastic wrappers of biscuits, milks, and noodles. Constructing these products, including hats, sandals, and baskets, has created jobs for rural women to help them make some small earnings. This additional income resulting from the reuse of products give women dignity and pride. In these two innovative low-cost approaches to dealing with waste, Tulsi played a vital role in raising the living standards of rural women in her community. Her innovative skills in waste management were used in the popular bin composting system in Bharatpur Sub Metropolitan City in Nepal and villages of the district. She built a good network with NGOs, academic institutions and governmental organizations. A Human Rights activist, she has used her experience working with organizations to raise her voice against domestic violence against women.

Laureates 2015

AMUPPA



Peru

WOMEN UNIT TO PROTECT THEIR LAND FROM MINING

AMUPPA, The Association of Women Protectors of the Wetlands and Watersheds (Asociación de Mujeres Protectoras de Paramos y Cuencas de Agua), is an organization that aims to preserve rural land threatened by a mining project in the highlands of Peru. In 2005, some of the women who were to be the founding members of the organization (Cleofe Neyra and Elizabeth Cunya) participated in a peaceful local march and were kidnapped alongside twenty-six other protestors and held captive for three days. Despite this, these women went on to officially form AMUPPA in 2008, demonstrating outstanding courage and an indomitable spirit when it comes to protecting their rights as rural women.

AMUPPA works to protect the land from mining corporations, as well as using and sharing traditional knowledge in order to produce medicinal or hygiene-related products that can be sold commercially. More specifically, women within AMUPPA have learned how to produce soap and toothpaste, and have shared this knowledge with a larger coalition of grassroots groups in Latin America called ULAM (Latin-American Union of Women). AMUPPA was "formed to unite women defenders of the land, water and human rights from the effects of the mining project" on the Rio Blanco. Members have faced criminalization or social exclusion, but capacity workshops have been promoted and executed in order to improve community cohesion and recognize the valuable work these women do. Further, AMUPPA is pro-agriculture, and is currently working towards finding a variety of potato that is suitable to be grown in the high-altitude region in which the women live.



Laureates from 2015

Laureates 2015

Ana Elfa Zambrano



Colombia



THE IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Ana Elfa Zambrano (56) a rural woman whose community work has aimed at the defense of the collective rights of the rural community. In her work on behalf of her community, she has facilitated training processes for the empowerment of women; promoted rural culture through reading, music and dance; and founded and administered a community aqueduct, among other things. In addition to her all-important work with the aqueduct—which has brought water to the homes of 50 families, reduced the hours spent by women fetching water, and which provides treated, clean water to the community—Ana Elfa also promotes environmental ethic among the youth by teaching a class during the week to share knowledge on environmental and historical values of natural resources.

Ana Elfa has demonstrated courage for persisting in her community work despite the fact that she faced criticism from men "who declared war on her"—by empowering their wives and was considered a threat by some of these men. However, through her continued work and improvement of the community, these people even support her now, which speaks to her success in both fixing issues and changing perspectives within the community. She has served rural women in her leadership capacities, in her empowerment workshops, and by delivering breakfast to mothers of the village once a month as a part of the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare. Additionally, she has served as a support system for many of these women in her capacity as manager/water-treater of the aqueduct: because she goes from house to house to ensure people are getting their water (and also to collect bills for water service), she stays to listen and speak with the community members, often offering advice and support. It is clear that Ana Elfa is a profoundly important member of her community, for women, families, and the village alike.

Laureates 2015

Anitaben Dindor & Kailashkunvarben Chauhan



India

TRAINED RURAL WOMEN ARE KEY FOR DEVELOPMENT

Anitaben Dindor & Kailashkunvarben Chauhan, both trained SEWA members (Self Employed Wmen's Organisation), share one prize.

After following a training in assembling solar lanterns, Anitaben Dindor now trains groups in assembling solar lanterns. She goes weekly to the villages of Dungarpur to assemble solar lanterns and if asked she also goes to other villages to repair lanterns. She is paid Rupees 50 (less than 1 US\$) per lantern assembled and is able to assemble 1-2 per day. The difficult terrain of the Dungarpur district is contributing to the problem of attaining electricity connections and consequently only 33% of the households are connected to the network.

Anitaben has also helped to improve her community and her village with a hand pump. Due to the scarcity of water, women of this area had to spend considerable amount of time walking long distances in order to obtain clean water. Having hand pumps near their houses enables the women to save time and decrease their workload.

Anitaben also learnt how to manufacture vermicomposting, makes it and sells it to others. She uses it for her own crops and explains the process to other members. Seeing the benefits Anitaben gets from the use of vermicomposting other women are encouraged.

Kailashkunvarben Chauhan trained in agriculture, now trains other women for agriculture and related activities, moves from village to village, provides knowledge to other women and organizes them. She explains about the use of good quality and certified seeds and fertilizers, arranged to get wheat seeds from the Gujarat government and gave them to the women, which helped increase output and the women harvested six tons of wheat instead of two tons earlier.

Kailashkunvarben explains to women why and how to grow green vegetables and empowers them to cultivate their backyards for family consumption. She also trains women to take care of their cattle, explaining that animal husbandry means taking good cattle care. She gives them knowledge on how much food to give, about the quality of fodder, at what time to feed, how often and at what interval to provide water, tie them in a place with shade, give them love, etc. "If we take good care of our cattle then we will get good quality and quantity of milk", she says. Following such training, the quantity of milk has increased among the members. Now there is enough milk for the community and the rest of the milk is left for sale.

Laureates 2015

Emilie Alauze



France



A TRAILBLAZER FOR BIODIVERSITY

Emilie Alauze (34) is a winegrower in the Hérault region of France. She was nominated by colleagues within a viticulture network for her work in creating and developing tools to help viticulturists in the region effect preservation of biodiversity and the quality of water. Through her work, particularly with the program she created called "Biodiv&Eau" (Bio diversity and water), she has taken steps to coordinate the actions of diverse actors in the interest of biodiversity: viticulturists, local collective organizations, environmental associations, and hunters. She has also instilled agro-ecological infrastructures favorable to biodiversity. Her work also emphasizes the protection of water quality.

In addition to this innovative work, part of Emilie's contribution to this rural wine-farming area of France has been to promote and facilitate communication among key players within this agricultural sphere. She serves as Présidente des Jeunes Agriculteurs de l'Hérault and was also elected to La Chambre d'Agriculture d'Hérault. In her leadership capacities, she has done meaningful environmental work, and can also be considered a trailblazer for her many accomplishments as a young woman.

Laureates 2015

Genni Maria Segura Pinto



Costa Rica

AN INDIGENOUS LEADER WHO LOVES HER COMMUNITY

Genni Maria Segura Pinto (34) is a Cabecar indigenous woman living in the mountains of Costa Rica. As a leader of a group of women artisans, she has worked to improve the skills and financial independence of herself and her fellow community members. Despite the fact that she never went to school when she was younger, she can speak Cabecar (the indigenous language), Spanish, and English, and uses these skills to translate between community members and visitors. In this way, she has been instrumental in connecting her indigenous community to the outside world in order to access such modern needs as improved healthcare or technology for education. However, her language skills have also enabled her to promote and protect the Cabecar culture by educating visitors. She ensures income for herself, her family, and the people in her community through a visitor program she co-designed, where visitors have an opportunity to learn more about the culture and its contribution.

Genni is also an environmental caretaker who works to assure that trash is properly handled in the small community. She actively works to plant new trees along with other members of the community. Although she didn't receive a formal education when she was younger, Genni enrolled in elementary school when she was 27, and, after accelerating through elementary curricula, is now in her second year of high school at the age of 33. Genni is currently working on a book with stories in Cabecar, Spanish and English. She is also currently overseeing the construction of the Lucas Drummond education center, which she will manage upon its completion; it is purposed to host visitors and promote indigenous culture.

Laureates 2015

Haoua Djiderev



Cameroon



AN ACTIVIST FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Haoua Djidere (45) is a woman farmer who is nominated for her work in sustainable and organic farming techniques, for organizing women farmers in the region, for sharing knowledge and information among them, as well as spurring activism for demanding her rights as a rural woman, and for serving as a role model for women in her community. When Haoua began working the land in 1999, she quickly united working women within the same zone as her to form the Jardinière interest group within Groupement d'Intérêt Communautaire (GIC). In 2000, this group obtained legal recognition.

Haoua led the women in the group for 8 years, organizing educational initiatives. In 2008, she created Daouridal, another group within GIC, under the pretext of which she led the women in the group to demand 10 hectares of land in the municipality to develop as a group. Despite the fact that the government only awarded them 4 hectares (10 kilometers away from the center of the village), Haoua has continued to lead these women in cultivating this land. Haoua herself has harnessed profitable and eco-friendly products, particularly corn and manioc.

Haoua sells her vegetables three times cheaper than other venders in the market. With the help of experts from the delegation of commerce, Haoua explains both to farmers and clients how they can benefit from the corn culture. She uses clean water to grow her crops and practices composting. She advocates the use of such items as old wheels, buckets, and basins for women to begin their own domestic agricultural projects; many women have followed her example. In this way, she has served as a positive example for good agricultural practices, and also as a role model for her financial independence (especially in a region where women "depend financially on their husbands"). She is recognized by members and leaders within her community as an activist in the defense of rights of women and the autonomy of women.

Laureates 2015

LauriMaya Thami



Nepal

DISMANTLING CASTE-BASED DISCRIMINATION

LauriMaya Thami (60+) is a rural woman who lives in the Jumla district, where the human development index is the lowest of any other area in Nepal. Thami is changing oppressive cultural norms in her village—she became a widow 14 years ago, and refused to wear the traditional garb of widows that allows society to stigmatize them. As such, other women are following suit. She has also been working to dismantle the oppressive practice of chhaupadi (where women are moved into isolation and are considered untouchable during menstruation) of child marriage, early marriage, and caste-based discrimination.

Thami has promoted gender equality through her work as a community gender facilitator in women's empowerment and livelihood improvement. She has empowered women and children to claim their rights and has gained a sizeable critical mass of supporters and young activists. She also promotes gender equality through her door-to-door campaign to convince parents to send their children to school, particularly their girl children. As a Woman Health Volunteer, she works with pregnant women to educate them on the reproductive health of mothers and infants, and also educates local couples about basic contraceptive methods.

Laureates 2015

Mary Kwena



Kenya

BOYS AND GIRLS TOGETHER FOR A CULTURAL SHIFT

KENYA - Mary Kwena (29) is a woman who has dedicated her career to fighting for women's rights and empowering rural communities in East Africa. As a Program Associate for the Girls' Advancement Program within the Asante Africa Foundation, Ms. Kwena has pioneered sustainable education and sanitation, sexual maturation, health and hygiene training programs, and financial education initiatives to empower and educate rural girls in marginalized communities. She has impacted the lives of over 4'000 girls and has created discourse surrounding traditional community practices that are harmful to women.

Ms. Kwena's main project is the Wezesha Vijana Program, which is an educational program designed to educate rural girls about financial and reproductive health issues. Through this program, girls are able to advance in schools by building their confidence in managing menstruation at school, asserting the protection of their bodies, and reducing drop-out due to pregnancy. The program is aimed also at increasing communication between peers and parents in order to better manage sexual and reproductive health, which is expected to yield the long-term impact of healthier families. In order to promote this education and communication, Ms. Kwena has created two innovative program elements that encourage open communication amongst families and communities, including mother-daughter meetings and girls' clubs, wherein girls and their parents are engaged in the examination of beliefs and cultural practices, and girls are enabled to build a network of peer support to promote further education and help in decision-making.

Another innovative aspect of Ms. Kwena's work is her current effort to adapt her health and rights curriculum for boys. She believes that parallel training for boys in sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence will influence a change of attitudes and behavior in support of girls' empowerment, delayed pregnancy and educational advancement. She hopes that educating this generation of both girls and boys will yield a sustainable cultural shift at the community level regarding the practices of childhood marriage and female genital cutting as they become parents and village elders.

Laureates 2015

Valliammal Rajan Palniyappan



India

A COMMITTED COMMUNITY LEADER AND TEACHER

In 2003, Ms. Valliammal Rajan Palniyappan (45) (Valli Krishnaswamy) a lawyer by trade, left Bangalore in order to address problems in rural areas that were causing mass migrations to urban areas, whereupon migrants were further marginalized. She started the Anisha Foundation in order to train marginalized farmers to convert to organic farming, improve degraded soils, create women's self-help groups, develop income-generating activities for farming and landless women, help establish organic kitchen gardens, set up seed banks (to improve sustainability and self-sufficiency), and build a resource center with demonstration plots. These activities have enabled community members to reduce the cost of cultivation, yield more crops, stabilize and improve income, and reduce debt. Some tangible results include:

- 220 farmers are now farming organically; their families are consuming organic food and vegetables and saving money by not having to purchase seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides
- 1,500 farmers have been trained in organic farming
- over 300 landless families now have productive kitchen gardens
- 6-7 tons of organic vegetables are grown every year
- self-help groups have been established to empower local farmers and market their own products to the wider community.

Valli's project, the Anisha Foundation, has demonstrated laudable environmental ethic for its emphasis on local food production and consumption, use and conservation of native seed species, organic farming practices, and alternatives to chemical pesticides and fertilizers. She has demonstrated courage by leaving behind opportunities and income in Bangalore and instead devoting her energy to the rural poor. She has bettered the communities in the district of Chamarajanagar by increasing education as well. Valli also fulfills the criteria of having made connections with other organizations. One example is a partnership that was established by Anisha hosting an international volunteer camp, which was run by SDIA's Human Force Volunteering for Social Change.



Laureates from 2014

Laureates 2014

Brigitte-Marie Bravo



Niger

AIDING AND PROTECTING AFRICAN CHILDREN AND RURAL WOMEN IN AN AFRICAN CITY

Sister Brigitte-Marie Bravo (54) born in Carmaux, France, obtained a public law license in 1982. That same year, she joined the Fraternité Notre-Dame, a traditional Catholic religious order founded to serve destitute people. Two years later, she started teaching and then served as director until 1996 when she went abroad for missionary work.

In December of 1996, Sister Bravo settled in Niger and opened a Fraternité Notre-Dame community in the capital city of Niamey. As head of the mission, she guided its charitable outreach, focusing on the well-being of women and children. She led the way in establishing schools, orphanages, and maternity hospitals. As an active member of civil society committed to the defense of Human Rights, she participated in drafting and implementing policies concerning the rights of children in Africa.

Sister Bravo's work includes helping young rural women who come to the city seeking jobs as domestic servants and then face sexual abuse, pregnancy, and destitution. In such cases, the mission provides support to help the mother keep her child and avoid the trauma of abandonment. Food, medical, and psychological support are provided, and women receive health education for their children, as well as vaccinations and HIV screening tests—all provided with respectful attentiveness. When children are left at the orphanage, she works tirelessly for family reunification.

Sister Brigitte-Marie's engagement is marked by the role she plays as a chairperson in CONAFE (a coalition of NGOs working for children) and as a representative in CONIDE (coalition of Niger NGOs for the Rights of Children). In 2013, she was appointed by the Minister of Justice to be a member of the committee in charge of writing the youth judicial policy. She has been regularly called by the judicial system in cases of infanticide or children abandonment attempts.

For almost two decades, Sister Brigitte-Marie Bravo has been working for vulnerable women and children—not only providing care for those suffering abuse, poverty and hunger, but also working to establish safeguards to prevent such suffering.

Laureates 2014

Danka Zelic



Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

HELPING WOMEN REBUILD COMMUNITY AFTER WAR

Danka Zelic was born in 1973 into a Croat family in Livno, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), when BiH formed part of the Socialist Federation of the Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1990, after a period of political crisis, Yugoslavia split. By 1992, unsolved issues led to a bitter inter-ethnic war that lasted almost four years and forced more than two million from their homes—including 17-year-old Danka. She went to Croatia and then Germany, but unable to stand idly by while her country fell apart, she returned to her hometown a year later.

While the war raged, Danka helped families communicate across front lines via an amateur (ham) radio because telephone lines were down. Looking toward a career, she studied at the Zagreb Police Academy and then began working for the police in Livno. In 1996, she transferred to the police force in the rural community of Bosansko Grahovo near the Croatia border, where her story begins.

Danka's work focused on criminal activities in the first years after the war, which were especially hard in BiH. The war had displaced huge numbers of people within the country. The Croat minority had been expelled from Bosanski Grahovo in 1992. Three years later, this municipality's majority population of Serbs fled. Into their vacated houses Croats settled, leaving behind their own homes in Central Bosnia into which Bosniaks moved, in turn. Trauma, poverty, and hopelessness traveled with these upended residents.

Danka felt compassion for the women who fought with all their strength to keep their families together. They had to find shelter, food, warmth, and medication, muster support for their husbands, encourage their children, stand in long lines for assistance, and make home in places without electricity or food. In this pressured situation, many faced physical and emotional abuse from their husbands. No one expressed concern for these women or decorated them with medals for their courage to survive those long years of war.

As a policewoman, Danka began to focus on the growing number of domestic violence cases. Determined to help these women also outside her institutional role, she started bringing them food and basic provisions. Before long, she realized they needed psychological help even more than material aid. They needed to recognize their own strength and regain their self-esteem. At this point Danka discovered the organization Li-Woman, which was doing just that sort of work. On her own time, using her own vehicle and funds, she began connecting women to this group.

In 2000, aiming to improve the quality of rural life, Danka gathered together 30 women who shared her vision into a non-government organization, Udruženje Gradanki Grahovo (Women Citizen's Association of Grahovo). It was an unusual NGO – directed by a Croat and with Serb members at a time when these groups had no relations. But Danka managed to mobilize these women because she had established trust with them. In 2002, she resigned from the police in order to work full time for the organization, rejecting a

Laureates 2014

secure salary and position.

Udruzenje Gradanki Grahovo's first projects were agricultural, since land was their only resource (their possessions had been burned or stolen). Danka linked up with donors such as Church World Service and International Orthodoxy Christian Charities, who were pleased to find a local organization to facilitate their own humanitarian agendas, since the municipality was insufficiently organized. These institutions donated livestock, especially in the most isolated remote villages.

A real challenge but also a breath of fresh air was the fact that all goods had be legally registered under women's names rather than those of the men, traditionally the legal owners of all property in this region. Notably, Danka is the only female member of the local agricultural cooperative and her voice is truly heard there

Laureates 2014

Eunice Obala



Kenya

RESOLVING CONFLICTS AND EMPOWERING WOMEN IN PASTORAL COMMUNITIES

Eunice Obala (41) has a Bachelor's degree in Leadership and Development Studies, a diploma in Community Development and a certificate in Social Work. She has coauthored numerous papers on risk and disaster reduction and humanitarian issues.

Eunice is Program Manager for a development and resource sharing project among pastoralists in Ileret, a remote area in northern Kenya's Marsabit District near the border with Ethiopia. The project is under the auspices of VSF Germany, a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization that works with people whose livelihoods depend heavily on livestock.

Eunice is notable not only for her skills and education, but also for her sensitivity to the particular challenges and needs of the communities with whom she works. Pastoralism in northern Kenya's borderlands is marked by recurrent conflicts for control over limited resources and by the exclusion of women in decision-making, ownership, and access to assets. Recognizing that acceptance and respect from the men was a vital part of shaping the project and carrying it forward, Eunice engaged them impartially, aiming to understand their views on conflict dynamics and traditional cultural practices. This led to willingness on their part to tolerate and support women's involvement in the project.

Each step of the way, Eunice engaged with the communities in participatory conflict resolution using culturally informed approaches to inter-community dialogue meetings and gender inclusion. Her efforts resulted in signed reciprocal agreements, endorsed by the Kenyan and Ethiopian governments, specifying resource sharing. Women took part in negotiations and peace committees.

Increased security created a sense of safety. Less worried about themselves, their children, and husbands, women got more involved in efforts to prepare for droughts and mitigate the crippling impact of droughts. Moreover, they formed groups for savings and loan schemes such as VICOBA (Village Community Banking Schemes) and income generating activities. They promoted livestock marketing, constructed accommodation facilities, set up grinding mills, a butchery and slaughterhouse. Women have also been trained in community health services to reduce malnutrition and the mortality rate.

In so many ways, the efforts fostered by Eunice and supported by the government have positively impacted women and improved gender relations.

Laureates 2014

Eva Hönle



Austria

WEAVING LIVES TOGETHER AFTER DECADES OF CIVIL WAR

Eva Hönle (51) started LADY LOMIN in 2007 to help single mothers in Lomin, a rural area in Kajo-Keji County in South Sudan. Her work began after the 2005 Sudanese peace agreement officially ended 21 years of civil war that claimed 2.5 million lives. Setting the stage for South Sudan's independence from Sudan, the agreement drew people home from refugee camps in Uganda and Kenya to rebuild their lives. By the time South Sudan was formally created in 2011, Eva's project was well underway.

Based in Austria, where she works as a teacher and textile artist, Eva has visited Lomin twice a year, staying for 10 weeks and training the local women in weaving, knitting, tie-dying, tailoring, and printing—and finding markets for their products.

Growing steadily, Lady Lomin workshops have provided work, hope and a promising future to more than 20 women and their children and families. Increasingly, participants carry the project themselves, managing most of the workshops and developing the marketing. With Lomin situated near the South Sudan-Uganda border, most of their products are sold in the capital cities of Juba and Kampala. Besides covering the cost of food, school fees, medical expenses for their families, the income brings the women a sense of dignity, respect, and consideration in a man-centered culture.

Committed to working respectfully and effectively, Eva learned the local Kuku language as part of her effort to better understand traditional ways of working and thinking. With creativity and empathy, she has encouraged the women she works with to reach beyond poverty and discrimination to self-reliance. Environmentally conscious, she sought out sources for organic cotton yarn for the women's various creative endeavors. She managed to build a store in Juba, raising funds by selling products from weavers at markets and gaining additional financial support from the government of Austria.

Eva and the women of the Lady Lomin had to face many challenges, including keeping the workshops productive while caring for the many children who came with their mothers. A sort of a kindergarten is soon to be opened. The workshop is now part of the community, well known and integrated into public life.

Laureates 2014

Jean-Christabel Asipkwe



Uganda

ENCOURAGING RURAL WOMEN LEADERS – A KEY TO DEVELOPMENT

Jean-Christabel Asipkwe (41) holds a masters degree in public administration. Committed to empowering communities, especially women, she began working for CEFORD (Community Empowerment for Rural Development) in 2003. Today she serves as the organization's Executive director.

Operating in several districts of the West Nile, CEFORD focuses on sustainable livelihoods (agriculture, functional adult literacy, skills development for youth and disaster risk reduction), primary education, good governance, community health, and organizational development. It is an organization partner with OXFAM in implementing food security and livelihood emergency programs in South Sudanese refugee camps.

In all of her work at CEFORD, Jean-Christabel uses the Gender Action Learning System (GALS), a community-led empowerment methodology aimed at creating gender justice. Her expertise and passion are evident in the leadership she brings to CEFORD's mobilization, adult literacy, gender mainstreaming, and livelihood improvement activities. She has demonstrated perseverance in improving the lives of rural women and youth through various creative approaches. Innovative actions include a school link creation, reactivation of school clubs, child-to-child monitoring clusters, a children's parliament, child talent day exhibitions, role model talks, etc. With her guidance, women have started savings groups, adult classes for better household hygiene and sanitation practices, and have become increasingly involved in development programs and processes. CEFORD has worked with them in challenging existing power structures and promotes development skills for individual life and livelihood planning.

By the end of 2013, CEFORD had reached directly 7278 persons (4424 women and 2854 men). There are three key areas of change in the life of the members: a more equal division of labor, with men accepting that women can own land and other properties; a decrease in alcohol consumption; increased investment in the education of children.

Most recently, Jean-Christabel has worked hard with the Moyo Parliament to mobilize the people of Obongi community to contribute to the purchase of a community ambulance. She keeps on participating in disaster risk reduction and response as well as humanitarian needs for South Sudanese women refugees to help bring a positive life change.

Laureates 2014

Juana Alicia Ruiz Hernandez



Colombia

RISING FROM PAIN TO HEALING AND HOPE ONE STITCH AT A TIME

Juana Alicia Ruiz Hernandez (41) spent a challenging childhood in San Pablo. However, her destiny was linked to the smaller Mampujan community through church activities and her marriage to Alexander, a local resident there.

In March 2010, paramilitary troops arrived at the peaceful town of Mampujan, home to 245 families. The troops accused the people of being guerrillas and threatened a massacre. Before anyone was killed, the order was changed and instead of facing death, residents were told to evacuate by morning, facing the loss of their homes, possessions, livelihood, and way of life.

Settling in Mampujan Nuevo, they began to rebuild their lives—and Juana became a tireless champion of their efforts. Working with the "Asociacion para la Vida Digna y Solidaria" a human rights organization that encourages development and integration of rural communities, she helped facilitate the purchase of a farm to support the town through raising pigs, chickens, and crops.

Juana also became involved in the project "Sembrando Paz", designed to help the community to recover from the trauma of being displaced from their homes. Gathering women together around a quilting project, she encouraged them to talk about their experiences and feelings while sewing their stories into quilts. This proved to be a creative and productive way to release anger and sorrow and begin a healing process. And it resulted in the creation of a strong women's group, called "Mujeres Tejiendo Suenos y Sabores de Paz" (Women knitting Dreams and Flavors of Peace).

Receiving an invitation to present their sewn stories for official display, the women completed 11 tapestries depicting the hardships they faced, as well as their hopes for the future. After being displayed across Colombia and then in Switzerland, their work gained wider notoriety with exhibitions in Germany, Holland, Canada, and the United States.

Through this project, the women of Mampujan Nuevo have not only achieved emotional healing but also found a way to support their community economically. With Juan's leadership, they are now selling their tapestries.

Since 2010, Juana has been engaged with the preservation of community traditions and customs, including the annual commemoration of the day of their displacement, which they mark with various cultural activities. She has also played a significant role in efforts to peacefully pressure the government to follow through on promises to provide reparations for the people of Mampujan, along with the official titles to their land so they can return to their homes.

Juana is an exceptional example of leadership, creativity, courage and commitment, rising from pain to healing and hope.

Laureates 2014

María Teresa Urbina Alacón



Mexico

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY

María Teresa Urbina Alacón (55) is the coordinator of a group of 30 courageous women from La Perla, Veracruz, Mexico. Since 2013, she has helped them fight their community's extreme conditions of poverty and isolation through an innovative sustainable agricultural project designed to provide household food security.

Remotely situated near Orizaba Peak (North America's third highest mountain), La Perla is a small community in which 93% of the residents live in extreme poverty. Poor roads and worn-out and eroded land have severely restrained their opportunities of economic development. Because of this, men have migrated to cities to find work, while women have stayed behind to care for children and the elderly in the most difficult of circumstances. The poor soil and technical challenges of food production have left children malnourished, thwarting their physical and intellectual development—thereby compromising their future capabilities and ensuring a perpetuation of the poverty cycle.

With nothing but bleakness on the horizon, these women decided to take action to break the cycle. Gaining the support of the Instituto Superior Chesterton and the Instituto Científico Técnico y Educativo, they organized themselves to learn new agricultural techniques along with technical, administrative, and organizational skills.

Through these institutes, they learned how to build small greenhouses (30 m²) and began to cultivate mushrooms and vegetables. The greenhouses are designed to collect rainwater to irrigate the plants while crop waste is used to produce organic fertilizers. Although the project is primarily meant to cover the nutritional needs of their families, the women have produced a surplus. Selling it, they have generated extra income and used that to purchase new materials for the greenhouses. Already, the project is very close to becoming self-sufficient.

Against all odds, these women have found a way to improve the quantity and quality of food supply for their families while also developing a source of income. They have impacted their community in a strong and positive way through, demonstrating what creative determination can achieve.

The project is ready to expand, with plans to start a fruit plantation—and a waiting list of women who want to participate.

Laureates 2014

OMIL (Organization of Indigenous Women of Laramate)



Peru



BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE THROUGH TRADITION AND INNOVATION

OMIL (Organization of Indigenous Women of Laramate) was created in 1998 in Laramate, Ayacucho, Peru. Since then, this organization of 150 women and their families have been working for the recognition and exercise of Quechua women's rights, focusing on issues such as violence against women, food security, economic and political development, and cultural preservation. OMIL has been encouraging women to assume the role as change agents in their community.

One of the multiple challenges that they have faced as an organization has been resistance to the decision to identify themselves as "Indigenous." Reaching this decision after a profound process of cultural identity affirmation, they faced strong opposition and even discrimination from their own community and local authorities. But this did not stop them from establishing themselves as leaders in their community.

Today, OMIL women are involved in economically productive endeavors, such as "Productos Organicos en su Mesa" (Organic Products for your table). Through this project they have solved the malnutrition and food security problems of their own families. Moreover, by selling the surplus in a local open market, they have managed to secure economic independence and development opportunities for their families. Notably, they have integrated traditional Quechua agricultural practices for diversifying and preserving crops—simultaneously enriching their families' diet with healthy, nutritional food.

To support the evolution of this project, OMIL provides low-interest loans to its members, thanks to a capital donation received for this purpose. Through a Management Committee, the good administration of the capital is ensured, in terms of sustainability, growth, and equal opportunities. The Committee also advises women on ways to create new economic opportunities and improve their existing initiatives. After only one year, OMIL has developed a full system of a rural credit scheme, reinforcing the empowerment of its women.

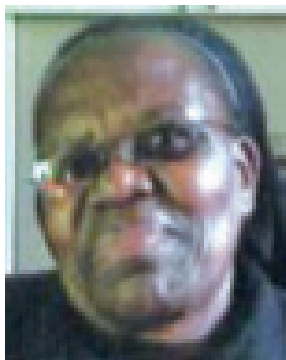
The OMIL women are also addressing other topics that affect their families such as the need for sustainable food security programs, loss of cultural identity, domestic violence, early pregnancies, and loss of biodiversity.



Laureates from 2013

Laureates 2013

Armeline Tsiki



Lesotho

CHANGING THE LIVES OF GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION

From a young age, Armeline Tsiki (66) felt called to join the "Sisters of the Good Shepherd." So it was no surprise when she took her vows as a nun. She also earned a certificate in primary school teaching, and later completed a BA in education. Armeline sees education as the key to a better life for all, especially women and girls. Currently, she is the principal of St. Rodrigue High School in Lesotho, which she once attended. It is an all-girls school in the deeply patriarchal Catholic Church community, situated in a country where men hold most power at the local level.

Running a school that is a three-hour bus ride from the capital city of Maseru, Ms. Tsiki is educating and training the next generation of women in rural Lesotho. The majority of St. Rodrigue's students come from poor families because its tuition is among the lowest nationally and the mission of Sisters of the Good Shepherd is to serve women, children, and the poor. About half of the five hundred girls attending the school live on campus. Many are sponsored, either by the government, the Catholic Church, or by funding secured by Armeline. Most of the students have lost one or both parents due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which has deeply affected Lesotho, especially its rural families. Armeline is tireless in her efforts to find funds for these students and for those who are themselves HIV/AIDS positive.

Armeline is dedicated to raising the academic standing of the school, increasing the range and quality of courses offered, and educating the entire person. She developed a team-teaching model designed to maximize the skills that teachers from abroad bring to the school. Reaching above and beyond the prescribed national curriculum, she added courses (including computer training) to better equip students for the job market. In 2002, she helped orchestrate inter-scholastic sports competitions with neighboring high schools, giving students a chance to see more of their own country. Armeline also encouraged students to form clubs so they can explore their interests in a safe environment. Through all this and more, she has changed the lives of many girls and young women in rural Lesotho.

Laureates 2013

Aziza Jebbari - Morocco



Morocco

COMMITTING TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Aziza (35) is from Figuig, an oasis town in the Sahara, situated in east Morocco by the border with Algeria. Since childhood, she has been involved in community life for sustainable development in this remote area surrounded by rugged, mountainous wilderness. In 2002, she became project chief of PRODECOM for the promotion of handcrafts of Mediterranean countries, financed by UNESCO and the European Union.

Aziza recognizes the cultural and economic importance of handcrafts and promotes their value as a sustainable socioeconomic development tool for rural women. She has been organizing training sessions on a range of topics, such as improving crafts production and using natural materials in weaving and tapestry, as well as practicing sustainable development, advancing healthcare, and accessing drinkable water. Aiming to help people shift from any traditional practices that are not sustainable, Aziza has taken a participatory approach in all her development efforts. Reaching out to locals to explore new possibilities and adaptations to social changes, she created an atmosphere of trust with women (housewives, crafts women, and cooperative managers) – and also with men (local chiefs, farmers, herders, officers of collectives, and cooperative managers).

Considering poverty and other challenges faced by rural populations, Aziza combined her understanding of fair trade with local know-how. She found ways to help women develop income generating activities that preserve and value natural resources. For example, her program “Handicraft Products Preserving Nature” promotes respect for the environment by encouraging the use of recycled materials in rugs and pottery.

Another example of her work is her engagement in the fight against desertification and in poverty reduction. In 2009 she has been recruited by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) as a trainer in the project implementation unit of the “Participatory Control of Desertification and Poverty Reduction in the Arid and Semi-Arid High Plateau Ecosystems of Eastern Morocco Project”, co-financed by the International Fund of Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Global Environment Facility and the Moroccan Government (High Commission for Waters, Forests and Desertification Control, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Eastern Provinces Development Agency). This project, aiming at reducing poverty and protecting environment in the High Plateau, has given Aziza the opportunity of showing her capacity in promoting sustainable land management approaches. Un example is the introduction of the Vallerani System, a new technology that uses special tractors to prepare the soil. For more than a decade, Aziza Jebbari has demonstrated that she is a key and effective actor in Figuig’s communities.

Laureates 2013

Djaouida Lassel



Algeria

LEADING THE WAY AS THE FIRST FEMALE FARMER OF THE REGION

Although Djaouida (48) grew up in a modest household in northern Algeria's Blida Province, she found her way to higher education. After earning a degree in agri-food economy in 1992, she decided to invest formally in poultry (chickens and turkeys) back in her rural community. She is recognized as being the first women farmer of the region.

Having faced challenges as a female farmer working in a patriarchal and conservative society, Djaouida created the Lala Nfissa Association (LNA) to assist women who were generally excluded from the commercialization of agriculture and poultry products. LNA programs educate rural women concerning their rights and increase their voice and visibility with the authorities. Under Djaouida's leadership, LNA has addressed a range of rural issues, from agricultural practices to micro-financing, business planning, work environment, children's education, and gender inequality. Another focus is sensitizing policy makers and elected officials on the importance of women's efforts and the particular problems they face. Djaouida seeks a balance between respecting social and cultural traditions and triggering social change by breaking taboos that hinder the freedom of rural women.

Among many specifics that may be mentioned is Djaouida's commitment to raising the awareness of women and children on issues of environmental protection and water management. She established an award for innovative initiatives that foster respect for the environment and enhance hygiene standards. Fighting illiteracy head-on, she found a way to finance the purchase of 50 school buses for Blida's rural communities.

As a result of her effective activism, Djaouida is an invited member of the Algerian delegation that participates in regional and international meetings on development issues of concern to women. In this role, she builds partnerships with stakeholders at national and global levels, such as the French, German, and U.S. embassies, FAO, UNDP.

Despite her heavy workload, Djaouida earned a professional Masters degree and is now pursuing a PhD with research focused on women's associations and the evolution of the status of women in Algeria.

Laureates 2013

Eunice Uchechioma Agu



Nigeria



USING FOOTBALL AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL

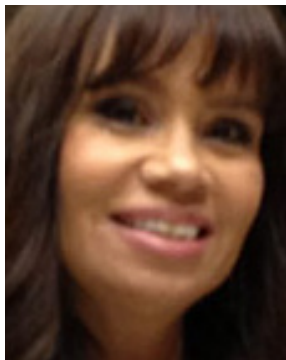
Eunice Agu (29) is an orphan, who was raised by her grandmother. She grew up in a very poor community in Nigeria, where girls received little or no education. Not accepting her fate, she earned her own school fees by doing farm work for people and carrying their loads to market. Financing her own education from primary school to university, Eunice graduated with a degree in Business Administration and Management. She began a career in banking, but then something else caught her eye: an opportunity to help underprivileged children achieve their dreams.

In 2007, Eunice formed AG Eunice International Football Academy to train and educate poor children in the Nigerian states of Delta and Anambra. For Eunice, football is more than a sport; it is a means of drawing young people together around an activity that fosters good character, leadership skills, and aspirations, while providing social conditions that help them to live healthier lives. It is a tool to fight against illiteracy, unemployment, gender inequality, and HIV/AIDS. Its core curriculum is basic life skills, featuring interactive sessions that give girls and boys a clear understanding of HIV/AIDS. Key topics include making healthy decisions, avoiding risks, building support networks, reducing stigma and discrimination, increasing knowledge about testing and treatment, addressing gender issues, and assessing values. The Academy also supports agricultural and small business development among women through micro-financing.

Since its founding the Academy has changed the attitudes of its participants. In particular, it has empowered girls and women. In Eunice's words, "Girls no longer sit back in silence when boys or older villagers tell them girls cannot play soccer, go to school or do anything other than wait for a man to marry her so she can bear children. They stand up for themselves and are proud to be playing on a girls' soccer team." Among the successes banked by the Academy since its founding six years ago: A growing number of poor village families send their children to school; two girls have become professional footballers, one is in nursing school, and six are attending university.

Laureates 2013

Lori Lea Pourier



United States of America

REVITALIZING NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES THROUGH THE ARTS

As an Oglala Lakota woman born and raised on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, Lori Pourier (50) knew from a young age the invisibility, isolation, and hardships indigenous women face. She has dedicated her adult life to addressing those problems through empowerment and restoration of Native American cultural practices and tradition. Thinking outside the box and recognizing opportunities as they arose, Lori created new and innovative ways to benefit Native American people through combining arts and culture, business and finance, philanthropy, policy development, social justice activism, and education.

In 1998, Lori became director of the First Peoples Fund. Flourishing under her leadership, it became the first nationwide Native arts and culture foundation to provide both working capital and entrepreneurship programs for Native artists and culture bearers who are committed to sustaining Native traditions at the community level. She established three core programs aimed at restoring the vitality of Native American communities: Artists in Business; Cultural Capital; and Community Spirit Awards. These programs provide a tiered system of grant support, training, technical assistance, and direct services to Native artists at different stages of their careers to cultivate their professional development. FPF also provides curriculum, workshops and train-the-trainer program services to enhance the professional development of Native artists.

Over half of FPF grants have gone to women – basket makers, sculptors, painters, singers, wood carvers, beadwork artists, storytellers, and more. What all grantees have in common is that they are community-centered artists who are passing their knowledge, artistry, skills, and stories on to others. Through their way of life as well as their art, they are preserving the collective spirit of Native peoples. In this regard, their work, like Lori's, has a continuing impact on their communities. Giving Native American women culture bearers a voice, as well as resources and recognition, Lori has helped to turn their artistic endeavors into viable livelihoods and lifted the veil of invisibility that has shrouded their lives. This work has reverberated throughout Indian Country and continues to create profound, positive impacts for rural Native women, their families and communities.

Laureates 2013

Monette Abatord



Martinique

ADVOCATING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SMALL FARMERS

Born to farm laborer parents, Monette Abatord (48) is familiar with the hardships of rural life. Despite challenges, she continued her education and earned a degree as a dressmaker. In 2005, she took over the family farm of a few acres to start growing food crops. She was especially interested in arboriculture and citrus fruit growing (dasheen, yams, bananas, cabbages, goyavas, among others). She faced significant administrative, financial, and equipment related difficulties when setting up her project, but she pressed forward, undaunted.

Joining a farmers and agricultural producers association, "Le Marché Agricole du Nord Atlantique" (MANA), Monette served as secretary general and later vice president. She promotes fresh or transformed agricultural products and local handcrafts. As part of her approach, Monette, adopts sustainable development principles, favors solidarity among producers, direct contact with consumers, and short distribution chains by setting up local markets. Under her leadership, the association helps isolated small farmers sell their goods. It manages a joint fund, which redistributes benefits. She supports integrative action and encourages rigorous management by preparing technical notes per farm with analysis of soil in order to eliminate pollution risks.

Through MANA, Monette created "Pooling means for more efficient marketing for small farmers" where producers and consumers then re-engage with open markets. This initiative attracted new investments that strengthen marketing and administrative capacity. Going forward with success and a growing vision, Monette is now working a sales strategy based on tourism development, which will bring more product diversification and an increase in customers. Recognized for her accomplishments, she is now the third vice president of the Martinique Chamber of Agriculture. In an environment usually restricted to men, she is now praised by them.

Laureates 2013

Reverend Mai Ki



Myanmar

SEEING EQUAL WORTH IN EVERY INDIVIDUAL

Growing up as the daughter of illiterate parents in a poor rural village in Chin state, Myanmar, Mai Ki (38) was determined to take control of her life. She pursued an education all the way to India where she earned a Masters in Theology. Ordained as the first female minister of the Mara Evangelical Church, Mai returned home to use her skills and training to improve rural life in villages, especially for women, children, and people with disabilities.

Rev. Ki has initiated many life-changing social interventions across Chin state. For example, she mobilized over 70 local churches to join her in an effort to empower women to take leadership in developing themselves and their families. Despite many obstacles along the way – especially the attitude of men in her village – she persisted.

In 2006, Reverend Ki founded the Rural Women Empowerment Program centered on the theme "towards a better family." The program guided the formation of self-help groups focused on issues ranging from income generation to infrastructure building. This included the creation of 36 borrowing self-help groups in 15 villages to support women in their rural education and family committees. Children, viewed by Rev. Ki as key foundation stones for sustainable and empowered development, participate in the groups.

Rev. Ki's special ability to see equal worth in every person is evident in her concern for people living with disabilities, referred to by her as "differently able friends." In 2009, she started the Shalom Unit with the mission of "strengthening the weak" through empowerment. Like the Rural Women Empowerment Program, this program includes various self-help groups for disabled people.

A strong advocate for sustainable living and farming and environmental protection, Rev. Ki introduced women to alternative farming methods, along with techniques to secure food availability. She established training for women in animal husbandry, community healthcare, and disaster relief skills. She also initiated lessons on weaving cotton and making traditional clothing for export – an alternative source of income to purchase food during times of famine.

Laureates 2013

Seynabou Male Cissé



Senegal



CREATING LASTING PEACE

In 1999, Seynabou Male Cissé (60) held a forum with other women working for peace in the Casamance region of southern Sénégal, West Africa. (Religiously and ethnically distinct from the rest of the country, Casamance has been torn by conflict fueled by a separatist movement that began in 1982 and has become increasingly violent and fractionalized.) The forum led to the birth of USOFORAL, meaning "Let's join hands" in the Diola language.

Seynabou is confident that rural women's leadership is a catalyst for long-term economic justice, gender equity, and peace on local, national and sub-regional levels. With this in mind, USOFORAL trains women in the how-to of research, action, and building women's organizations and grassroots federations in order to participate effectively in the realization of lasting peace in Casamance.

During the many years of conflict in the region, traditional rural women's groups were no longer able to function because so many members fled elsewhere for safety. Though women have now returned to their homes, they often lack the time for and experience in organizing groups that meet the demands of today. USOFORAL provides the means for rural women to organize and to take advantage of the opportunities offered by post-conflict restructuring programs. This has made it possible for women to make their voices heard and to rebuild their lives.

Seynabou has been USOFORAL's highly-capable coordinator since its inception. Her inclusive approach ensures that rural women are at the forefront of every peace-building initiative. Her efforts began in Enampor where the mobilization of rural women and other members of the community successfully protected the village from violence and antipersonnel mines, making it a place where women could freely exercise their creativity. Likewise, with Seynabou and USOFORAL's support, women in displaced villages like Toubacouta secured their village lands and resumed cultivation. Their success prompted other members of the community return to the village. Such communities, supported by USOFORAL, serve as models of stability and social cohesion for other communities that are struggling to establish peace.

Laureates 2013

Sladjana Ujić



Bosnia-Herzegovina

CREATING A NEW PARADIGM FOR RURAL WOMEN

Born in Gucevo village in the Rogatica municipality, Sladjana Ujić (43) never met her mother and rarely saw her father. She grew up in her grandparents' home, dominated by an aggressive grandfather who drank. Her circumstances made her feel like an outsider. Trying to fit in, Sladjana followed the patriarchal traditions that surrounded her. Even though she was an excellent student, she gave up formal education in favor of marriage, motherhood, and working the land.

Some years later, when her daughter shyly asked what she planned to wear for a parents' meeting at school, Sladjana realized the child was ashamed of her "rural woman" appearance and behavior. At that point Sladjana determined to change her life. She began attending educational workshops organized by women's non-governmental organizations. Then it occurred to her that she needed to form an association to make changes in her community. In 2005, Sladjana founded the SNOP Women's Association to change socially imposed gender roles that deprive rural women of continuing education, careers, property, financial credit, and decision making. The organization now embraces the municipalities of Han Pijesak and Soklac, as well as Rogatica.

Through SNOP, Sladjana has launched 15 projects to improve the status of rural women, develop rural businesses, and foster environmental protection. Examples include: repairing a village school and setting aside one classroom as a work and meeting place for community endeavors; organizing annual local gatherings for villagers to dialog with municipal economic and development policymakers; building a water supply system for a village school and several households; purchasing 14 greenhouses to provide new economic opportunities for women; starting a weaving workshop to revitalize traditional women's hand-crafts made of natural wool as part of an effort to develop rural tourism.

Having earned a leadership role in the village where she was born, Sladjana no longer feels like an outsider. She continues to work on her education, participating in seminars that enhance her skills as a social activist. In 2012, she became the Minister for Rural Development in the Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Alternative Government. Her motto? "I believe, I can, I want, I do."

Laureates 2013

Suchismita Majumdar



India



REHABILITATING THE DISABLED IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Suchismita Majumdar (50) has dedicated her life's work to empowering people with disabilities living in rural areas. Her passion for such work is driven by her own personal story of contracting polio at an early age. She underwent several corrective surgeries, but still suffers a locomotor disability. This physical challenge has taught her the importance of self-advocacy and given her impetus to understand the special needs of the disabled living in Assam, India.

In 1997, Suchismita founded Swabalambi, a community-based organization dedicated to rehabilitation of the disabled in rural communities. The organization works to promote the human rights and fundamental freedoms of physically and mentally challenged people, while also providing training needed to help them be self-sufficient and active members in their communities. Swabalambi offers invaluable services including medical assessment and corrective surgeries for those in need. In addition, Suchismita has organized many programs including: early intervention and prevention of disabilities, health camps in rural communities, family counseling and guidance, special educators, and self-help groups among parents.

Convinced that social and economic opportunities for disabled individuals are both humanitarian and economic, Suchismita has also set up training centers for disabled youth to develop prevocational and vocational skills. Children and adolescents with mild and moderate mental retardation receive prevocational training, which includes learning basic counting, the identification of shapes, sizes and colors, concepts of time and money, and how to sort raw materials. And children and adolescents dealing with mild and moderate physical disabilities are given an opportunity to develop design and technical skills in vocations such as cane bamboo and jute crafts, handloom weaving on Jacquard machines, tailoring and machine embroidery, and soft toy construction. With great empathy and innovation, Suchismita has created income-earning opportunities for the disabled – demonstrating that they, like her, have abilities that can be tapped into to create meaningful productive lives. Many trained through her programs have become breadwinners in their families.

Beyond helping disabled individuals become self-sufficient and active members of society, Suchismita has brought companionship to many by arranging marriages between disabled partners as well as among disabled and non-disabled partners.



Laureates from 2012

Laureates 2012

Bendettah Muthina



Eastern Africa • Kenya

ALWAYS SEARCHING FOR NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO EMPOWER WOMEN

Since Bendettah Muthina (40) founded three local women's groups in the 1990s, she has been teaching women about hygiene, health, women's rights, and girls' rights to education. In late July 2008, Bendettah joined with the founder of Project Africa, and subsequently founded a new PA chapter in Lunga Lunga, Kenya. She later started PA-centers in two more villages, Godo and Perani. Now, Bendettah continues to work for the rights of women and girls in countless capacities.

Collaborating with a professor at the University of Wisconsin, Bendettah assisted in establishing the Mobile Clinic in 2010, for which she and a public nurse travel by motorbike to provide care for the most remote villages. She has also helped launch the Nikumbuke Permanent Health Post in Lunga Lunga to provide health care to a larger population. Not only do the center and the mobile clinic provide health services, they also provide lessons for women in nutrition, breastfeeding, hygiene, STD/HIV awareness, family planning, malaria, etc. Thanks to the health-education program, more families now know how to protect themselves from malaria and family planning is becoming more widespread.

Again in 2010, Bendettah worked to implement a long-term health promotion campaign that includes summer health camps and training for community health workers. An anti-malaria program was also established, comprising of Malaria Rapid Tests, the distribution of insecticide treated nets, and the "Malaria Street Theater." Additional endeavors include a water project, a micro-finance project, and an English literacy and friendship campaign that pairs up girls in rural Kenya with American university students.

Unable to attend university despite success in high school, Bendettah understands the importance of education for girls. Consequently, she established a literacy program that has to date pulled 40 women out of illiteracy and allowed 250 women to improve their English. At the educational center, women also have the opportunity to take business classes. Of the 89 women who studied for their business exam, 32 passed in March 2012.

Additionally, Bendettah added classes in tailoring and dressmaking for girls who drop out of primary school. These girls are often at great risk for abuse and early pregnancy, however, this program gives the girls the opportunity for employment. Not only does Bendettah's center provide educational opportunities for women, but technology classes also train youth in computer skills. One of the greatest successes for young girls is "The Stars" program, a mentorship program for girls aged 6 to 17. Each Saturday these girls meet to support and encourage each other. Local teachers attest that now 85% of girls finish their 8th level in primary education, as opposed to the 50% that finished prior to the program.

Laureates 2012

Bhan Sahu



South Central Asia · India

FROM BARELY EDUCATED YOUNG GIRL, TO HOMELESS WIDOW, TO INSPIRING ACTIVIST

Bhan Sahu's (39) life has been anything but easy. However, eager to change her life and the life of her children, Bhan committed herself to changing the system and ensuring rights for India's rural and poor. She found a job in an NGO as a paid volunteer. Carrying the youngest child on her back, Bhan would cycle for miles, visiting villages where she would inform villagers of important news within their local and state government. She helped the illiterate villagers access new government plans for poverty elimination and rural employment.

Bhan is committed to holding the government accountable in order to ensure the basic rights of residents of the Chhattisgarh state. In January 2009, Bhan Sahu formed a women's group called Jurmil Morcha with local tribal and Dalit women. This group works to bring forgotten issues to light, such as non-payment of compensation, forced migration, human trafficking, crop failure due to drought, lack of healthcare, and environmental crimes like drying up of rivers by the miners who overuse water. In order to draw attention to these issues, Bhan organizes rallies, meetings, mass petitions, and hunger strikes. They have traveled to Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Orissa, Rajasthan and Karnataka, participating in everything from campaigns fighting for social justice and rural employment to initiatives combating repression and sexual violence. In addition to her position as founder of Jurmil Morcha, Bhan also works as a civilian reporter. She reports on pressing concerns that are often ignored by larger media outlets. One of these topics included an incident, in which government officials paid villagers working on certain jobsites only half of their wages.

Bhan's report on this issue caught the attention of mainstream national newspapers and shortly after its publishing, over 1,000 workers received the payment they had earned. To date, she continues in her capacity as a civilian journalist. Not only does she write her own blog, but in August 2009, Bhan also started posting "video" reports without any training in order to raise greater awareness on a wide range of issues directly affecting communities of the Chhattisgarh state.

Bringing news to rural, often illiterate, communities can be a difficult task. However, Bhan has found a way to address this problem. With a mobile phone, Bhan visits these villages and shows them how they can access audio reports through their cellular devices. In remote villages that have virtually no access to newspapers or Internet, people are now able to stay informed on the politics and economics of their local and regional governments.

Laureates 2012

Jacqueline Musugani Nyangoma



Middle Africa • D.R. Congo

EMPOWERING WOMEN AND LOBBYING FOR THE RIGHT TO DIGNITY

Jacqueline Musugani Nyangoma (48), married and mother of 7 children, is a grassroots women's rights leader from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, working passionately to ensure justice and peace for the women of her country. In order to help the women of her community in South Kivu, she leads "Initiatives for Women in Difficult Situations for Integrated Development" (IFESIDI). As secretary general, Jacqueline represents rural women who fall victim to rape and violence in eastern RDC.

She does this at multiple national, regional, and international events, speaking out about violations and their right to justice. Thanks to her efforts and the work of other women and organizations, perpetrators of rape and other acts of violence against women are now being brought before the court in the RDC. In recognition of such success and as a testament to her hard work and determination, Jacqueline was elected to the administrative council of "Network of women's organizations in Francophone Africa" (ROFAF) in 2010.

When Jacqueline is not lobbying for women's rights, she is working in South Kivu, empowering women and victims of violence. Since 2002, she has been informing women of their rights and helping them regain their dignity. She teaches women to gain social and economic power, encouraging them to establish small projects such as the selling of foods and small goods to help feed their families. Jacqueline also advises women on farming practices, informing them on the benefits of growing soybeans, for both their health and environmental sustainability. The list of Jacqueline's accomplishments is extensive, and ranges from establishing employment opportunities for women, to evacuating women from her province when a colonel came to conquer South Kivu.

Unfortunately, Jacqueline and her family have been forced to live undercover due to threats made against her. However, Jacqueline continues to support the female resource center she established in Kamituga in 2010 and helps empower women in their right to dignity.

Laureates 2012

Matilde Lucio



South America · Argentina

A COMPASSIONATE LEADER, DEDICATED TO THE INDIGENOUS CAUSE

Matilde Lucio (64) is an indigenous leader, who has been at the forefront of the struggle for indigenous rights in the South American Chaco Region.

Despite leaving primary school at a young age to work in the fields with her family, Matilde has played a key role in the protection of indigenous culture and identity, while also promoting sustainable development and the environmental conservation.

In 1995, Matilde founded the local Guarani Assembly (APG), which aims to fight for the rights and recognition of the Guarani identity. As leader of the APG, Matilde helped spearhead a long legal struggle, involving countless advocacy actions including roadblocks and demonstrations, in which the indigenous community was finally granted 4100 hectares of its ancestral land. Given the rate of deforestation and the centrality of land to indigenous culture, the recovery of their ancestral land is considered vital to ensuring sustainable development and strengthening food security in the community.

Additionally, through her dedication and leadership, bilingual education was made available in local schools and Guarani youth are now able to speak their native language and feel proud of their indigenous identity. Matilde also works to promote Guarani culture through the publishing of picture books for children that tell traditional Guarani stories, and the successful creation of a radio program to communicate information on indigenous rights and culture.

She has played a role in the empowerment of indigenous women in a region where they suffer multiple forms of exclusion and discrimination based on their gender and ethnicity. Illiteracy levels are extremely high among indigenous women and most have not completed primary education.

Additionally, increased male migrant labor has resulted in women to be left alone in their communities, for most of the year, to single-handedly protect, feed and care for their families.

Matilde advocates for and strongly encourages indigenous women to set up their own community development organizations. Due to Matilde's leadership, women in the region are more organized and aware of their rights, which they now advocate or, demanding their right to housing, health care and education.

Laureates 2012

Mehtaben Nagji Gadhvi



South Central Asia • India

FROM POVERTY TO PROSPERITY TO LEADERSHIP

Mehtaben Gadhvi (52) got married at 14 to a 40-year-old violent, unemployed husband, later giving birth to 6 girls and 1 boy. Before joining SEWA (Self-employed women's association), Mehtaben never ate with other women nor talked to any men. However, after getting involved in various training sessions, she began to speak before women and men about issues in her village, listening to the villagers' problems and initiating activities on their behalf.

Mehtaben started as a team member of an insurance program for poor women, explaining the importance of insurance and encouraging village women to take out insurance. She persuaded 700 to 800 women to do so and continued to help other village women to do the same. She also trained rural women leaders and organized 2500 women from the Lakpat taluka region in Gujarat. Additionally, she helps women to successfully borrow money from different sources and ensures timely reimbursement.

Mehtaben learned about the importance of reducing the effects of climate change through SEWA's education and guidance. She has since been actively working in water conservation, well repair, nursery raising, fodder growing, vermin-composting production, and the use of economically and environmentally friendly cook stoves and solar lanterns. After learning such valuable information, she took it upon herself to educate other women of the importance of solar lanterns and provided 125 such lanterns at subsidized rates. Mehtaben also leads the water campaign team in constructing 85 rainwater-harvesting tanks in her village, which help to store rainwater. These tanks provide immediate access to safe, pure drinking water around the year, saving time, which can be used for livelihood activities. The benefits of these advancements include an increase in income and an improved the quality of life for all village members.

Mehtaben, with 5 cows to her name, produces enough milk to earn an income from the local dairy cooperative where she sells her surplus milk. She also started a prosperous decoration business and helped all of her daughters to marry. Mehtaben's accomplishments inspire and empower other women, showing them that they too can change their lives for the better.

As a result of her own ambition, dedication and training, there have been remarkable changes in her community and Mehtaben now feels empowered, which is exemplified by her success of being elected as an executive committee member in the Kutch Craft District Association.

Laureates 2012

Nune Sarukhanyan



Western Asia · Armenia

WORKING WITH FARMERS AS EQUAL PARTNERS

As a woman who was raised in a traditional Armenian family in a small village, Nune (49) understood early on that inequalities existed between men and women. After working and traveling throughout different villages and regions in Armenia, she began to understand that these inequalities were systematic and widespread. Since then, Nune has been focused on raising the status of women.

In 2004, Nune was selected as the president of the Green Lane Agricultural Assistance NGO with over 500 members, 80% of which are women. Currently, she is an advisor of organic agriculture. She is the author of 25 academic articles, 37 popular scientific articles and 4 books, focusing on organic agriculture and the investigation of wild edible plants and herbs. She is also the creator of two types of vegetable beans and four types of peas.

Working to raise the status of women, she works in 10 regions in Armenia coordinating with other organizations. Through this work, she has provided consultancy and assistance in the creation and capacity building of more than 30 women's groups.

During the last ten years, she has also implemented a number of grant projects for agricultural development. The latest project began on October 1, 2011 and will last until September 30, 2012. This project aims to promote women-owned businesses in Armenia through the establishment of a network of pre-existing women's groups. This network contributes to the strengthening of a business friendly environment, provides technical and organizational assistance, organizes common branding and marketing initiatives, and expands networking and outreach opportunities.

Currently Nune provides more than 1200 farmers with consultancy. As a result of her intervention, the lives of over 900 women and youth have been significantly changed and the socio-economic status of their families and rural communities has improved.

Laureates 2012

Rose Cunningham



Central America · Nicaragua

INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE HOLDS THE SEEDS FOR ELIMINATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Rose Cunningham (60) is from the Nicaraguan Miskito community, which has been internally displaced for several years. She founded Wangki Tangni as a way not only to relieve the immediate effects of poverty, malnutrition, and disease, but also to build a sustainable project to address the prolonging existence of such issues in the Indigenous communities of Nicaragua's North Atlantic Coast. Through Wangki Tangni, Rose created programs assisting indigenous people to develop the skills needed for self-government, protection of the regions biodiversity, and preservation of their traditional values.

Wangki Tangni currently maintains several programs, including a food security project, a women's center, and a women's sewing collective. These programs offer education and training on a variety of subjects including sustainable farming, political participation, women's rights, violence against women, self esteem, sexual health, and the defense of basic human rights.

Harvesting Hope is one of Wangki Tangni's organic agricultural food security initiatives that promotes sustainable women's empowerment and entrepreneurship, providing women with healthy sustenance, income generation, and human rights awareness. Harvesting Hope began in 2003, providing seeds to 20 women and has now expanded to include almost 1,000 women. As a member of the community herself, Mrs. Cunningham has incorporated important aspects of Miskito tradition such as the bartering system and respect for natural resources, making this program culturally unique.

Mrs. Cunningham's dedication to preserving her community's traditions has also led to other innovative programs that use trainings on sustainable farming and local farmers markets to educate communities on violence against women. Linking strategies against violence with strategies to maintain indigenous identity and cultural rights, these programs emphasize the cultural opposition to gender-based violence. For example, Wangki Tangni organizes intergenerational dialogues, in which community elders share traditional stories of women's power, reinforcing understanding of violence against women as being inherently wrong.

Laureates 2012

San Vannary



Southeast Asia · Cambodia

PRESERVING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE, WHILE INCREASING VILLAGE SUSTAINABILITY...

San Vannary (33) is a Cambodian mother of 3 young children, who has been working in positive activism throughout life. Though she is a young mother, Vannary also works for a non-governmental organization, traveling all over Cambodia working with women's issues, such as abuse, HIV AIDS, and gender awareness. Fuelled by a love for her country and a commitment to social change for her people, Vannary has envisaged, designed and implemented projects and training ranging from rural gardens, decentralized democracy training, and sex and body awareness education. Vannary worked with "Helen Keller International" and ActionAid International-Cambodia, for over 12 years and has continued to collaborate with the same rural communities in her personal ventures. She has actively implemented 15 herbal gardens in 7 provinces during her time with ActionAid and has set up 10 women's self-help health rooms with attached herbal gardens.

Ms. San Vannary is passionate about organic, self-sustainable gardens that counter the impacts of globalization and the privatization on food security. She advocates community participation, simple tools and replicable models to produce self-reliant, healthy food. Over a year ago, Vannary developed a plan for rural food security and village advocacy training projects in Dambok Khpos. Using perma-culture, which creates a self-sustaining ecosystem relying on renewable resources, Vannary's project addresses the crucial irrigation issue in Cambodia, characterized by an abundance of water during the rainy season and a severe lack of water during the dry season.

Vannary has also become involved with efforts to revitalize the traditional Cambodian silk industry through a Mulberry tree-growing project. Recently, steep increases in silk yarn prices and the lack of efficient irrigation systems have resulted in the collapse of many Cambodian weavers. In addition to such community projects, Vannary has successfully run a tailor and handicraft business, Lotus Silk, employing 9 women who are widowed, disabled, or from vulnerable backgrounds.

Her ability to rally community members is phenomenal and can be witnessed in the incredible amount of community member involvement, motivation, and support she receives. Vannary uses her own 'train the trainer' technique, in which she not only provides people with knowledge and a new skill set, but also a belief in the person, that they too can grow and share what they have learned.

Laureates 2012

Tatsiana Guryna



Eastern Europe • Belarus

DEVELOPING RURAL REGIONS AFFECTED BY CHERNOBYL

Tatsiana Guryna (64) has dedicated herself to the development of local communities and territories in the Chernobyl affected areas of Belarus. She began her work with rural villages as a schoolteacher of chemistry and biology. Her strict dedication was recognized and she was offered a position in the Department of Education of the Slauharad District Executive Committee, in which she worked for 8 years representing the direct concerns of villagers.

Then in 1986, over 20% of Belarus was exposed to the devastating effects of radiation as a result of the nuclear explosion in Chernobyl. After the disaster, Tatsiana Guryna remained in the area, against radiologists' advice. She was determined to assist the desperate rural women during this time of great distress. As a biologist, she was concerned about the quality of food being produced and consumed in the area. Collaborating with the International Foundation for Rural Development, Tatsiana experimented and succeeded in developing technology to cultivate radiation free vegetables in polluted areas. After making this discovery, she dedicated herself to sharing the knowledge and educating other residents in the district.

Tatsiana Guryna then became one of the founders of the Local Fund for Rural Development, later holding positions as its Head and Director. She developed project after project aimed to enhance human security and standards of life in the area, especially for women. In 2007, Tatsiana cofounded the non-profit organization, Revitalization-Agro, for which she was elected to be the first board chairwoman and later, the director.

In 2010, she established Selchanka, a non-governmental organization for women's development. Selchanka's main goals have been to involve women in the management of local community and business affairs, to strengthen the authority of the mother in family relations, and to contribute to the personal success of all rural women. Tatsiana has organized countless trainings and workshops to reduce the psychological pressure on women. Due to Tatsiana's dedicated efforts, her projects were often implemented in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, the Embassy of the United States, and many other influential international actors. Tatsiana Guryna continues to participate in the implementation of projects addressing the key concerns of the Belarusian villages. Currently, she holds the position of director of the Local Foundation for Rural Development "Renaissance-Agro" and continues to work with the International Foundation for Rural Development. Her efforts include empowering women in rural communities and families, facilitating youth employment, developing dairy farming, and improving rural children's leisure activities among many others. Each year, Tatsiana organizes about 50 informational education events in villages and about 1,000 individual counseling sessions. Over 500 villagers benefit from assistance and support from Tatsiana and the organization she leads, every year.

Laureates 2012

Zahra Aderdour



Northern Africa • Morocco

OUTSPOKEN IN DIRECTING ATTENTION TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Zahra Aderdour (46) is an incredible pioneer for women's rights in rural Morocco. She is first and foremost a nurse trained in women's healthcare and midwifery. Zahra works in Tighmi in the Tiznit province, a severely socially conservative town, in which women are not allowed to leave the house. When she started working at the health center, women did not attend. However, after many years working within this town and developing positive relationships with both men and women, she now assists rural women and children who were not served by healthcare professionals in the past. Her position allows her to teach women about hygiene, sanitation, disease prevention, and HIV/AIDS awareness. Additionally, she has led two training sessions for birth attendants.

Zahra has not only served others in her capacity as a health care provider; since 2009, she has served as one of two women in the Tighmi Rural Community Program, a government-sponsored organization to initiate human development work. In this capacity, Zahra has developed and executed numerous projects to help the impoverished and under-represented rural women of the surrounding villages. One of these projects was the successful building of a well in a village where 90% of the population was female. Additionally, Zahra's influence on the administration board allowed for toilet facilities to be built in a rural school for 100 children, electricity to be provided for the poor village, among numerous other projects. Zahra maintains personal relationships with many people within Tighmi, providing advice and help for countless women and children across the region. She has helped women and girls on innumerable occasions, whether through providing education or helping them through a difficult situation. Today, Zahra continues to fight for the rights of rural women within the Tighmi Rural Community.

In 2009, Zahra founded the first women's association in Tighmi, the Association for Peace. This organization currently provides Arabic literacy lessons to over 60 women. There have been countless barriers Zahra has had to overcome to provide education for women in a male-dominated society. In fact, at one point, a letter was written and signed by over 100 Tighmi men voicing their concerns and threatening to use violence if Zahra continued to teach. With Zahra's courage and dedication to provide healthcare, education, and basic human rights, she has positively affected the lives of women, children, and men across the province.



Laureates from 2011

Laureates 2011

Betty MUNGA



AFRICA · Kenya

SOLIDARITY, THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Since 2006, Betty Munga (55) has worked, alone, as a Program Officer for the Self Help Groups Approach Program in Kenya. The program works to empower women, economically, socially and politically in order to improve the lives of women and their communities.

Economically empowering the rural women in the village of Mtwapa, Betty organized 108 groups, each with 20 members, to come together, and save and raise funds in their own ways. By giving an agreed upon savings amount, the group members pooled together their savings to form a common fund. Through this process, the women were able to borrow and lend loans in order to begin and expand their businesses.

The groups formed by Betty also allow for social empowerment by helping one another to build their own houses, paying school fees for their children, covering health service fees and contributing to community projects. Furthermore, the groups allow women to openly discuss relevant problems such as wife beating and cultivation of land. Not only are the groups aiding the women involved, but the women also work to improve their communities. Initiating the building of toilets in schools and cleaning abandoned water-dams are just few of the projects the multiple groups have conducted.

Betty's creative and hard work continues as she implements the formation of new groups, strengthens weak self-help groups and works closely with local administration and the government. Her commitment to the rural women has proven that great change is possible, even for the women facing the most unlikely and difficult situations in life.

Laureates 2011

Lydia SASU



AFRICA • Ghana

AN ADVOCATE FOR WOMEN'S SKILLS AND RIGHTS

Lydia Sasu (65) was born into a farming family in Ghana where she witnessed her mother struggle to make enough money to feed her family. Involved in agriculture from an early age, Ms. Sasu has dedicated her life to improving the lives of rural women farmers.

Lydia co-founded the Development Action Association (DAA) in 1977. The Association operates in 50 communities and 98% of the beneficiaries are rural women. The DAA has implemented many development projects including the construction of a nursery and a primary school, capacity building in financial management and rural women's empowerment. Her creativity shines through in two key areas: improving literacy and bookkeeping for rural women's business development (especially in the fishing industry), and building coalitions with both local men and women's groups and international organizations to highlight women's stake in the agriculture industry.

Learning numeracy and bookkeeping skills became an important focus of Ms. Sasu, who noticed growing tensions between men and women as women were unable to track debt and monetary records after buying fish from men. With Lydia's help, in 6 months approximately 1,000 women were effectively trained in how to keep records of their fish stock. The long-term impact of this training has been that women have adapted skills of keeping records and accounts for their grains in other products including vegetables and livestock.

Ms. Sasu has also initiated training sessions targeting women farmers. In 2010, 60 women were trained in how to communicate effectively with policymakers by learning how to discuss key areas of concern through developing talking points. One example is when Lydia's leadership helped motivate women to lobby the fishery commission for enforcement of fishing laws. Ms. Sasu's support has allowed women in the community to be viewed as assets with valuable advice and a key part of the solution.

Lydia is a resourceful individual whose knowledge and skills have had a significant impact on the quality of life of rural women farmers. In 3 years, for example, Lydia's training helped support one woman to grow her livestock business from 5 to 400 pigs. Ms. Sasu is a remarkable individual and an excellent example of the difference one individual can make in a community.

Laureates 2011

Ndeye Seynabou TALL WADE



AFRICA · Sénégal

A TRUE LEADER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF RURAL COMMUNITIES

Born in a village, Mrs. Ndeye Seynabou TALL WADE (61) was raised by her grandmother with great care and love which left a very positive mark and empowered her to do something for the poor and work with women and children in rural areas, supporting them in improving their living conditions and that helped her to feel useful. Aware of the importance of women's role in development and sensitive to their problems related to lack of education, Mrs. Tall Wade, married with five children, works to help develop their capacities and increase their visibility in the villages.

Prior to creating in 1995 the 'Association Sénégalaise Femmes Enfants Environnement - AFEE (an association for women, children and the environment) with partial activities in villages in the semi desert region of Fatick, near Dakar, a region where minority populations are marginalized due to their social status and illiteracy, Mrs. Tall Wade worked for 6 years in the Senegalese Ministry of Information, in charge of the radio department for rural education. She received mail from all over Senegal and presented on air the difficulties encountered by farmers, fisherfolk and animal husbandry.

AFEE objectives include sustainable human development in villages to prevent rural exodus; coordination of AFEE activities; capacity building to take on local development issues and generating local leadership. AFEE organizes missions to take up contact with its village groups to discuss the needs of the population, raise awareness and monitor various projects, such as:

- Improving the quality of life of rural populations
- Organization of child care spaces in village courtyards, 2 already constructed
- Installation of six millet grinders in different regions of the network
- Establishment of 25 cereal banks and construction of cereal bank protection shelters against humidity and pests; 9 shelters have already been built
- Establishment of a solidarity village fund allowing for small loans in emergencies
- Construction of village shops providing food stuffs, objects and credit in emergencies
- Organization of awareness raising sessions in villages and schools and occasional distribution of children's clothing
- Giving work to village populations
- Local cereal transformation projects, employing 28 persons (24 women, 4 men)
- Promotion of cattle raising
- Supply of a harvester and a husking millet (shelling machine
- Increasing education and capacity building
- Women's literacy courses and training sessions for supervisors and managers
- Encouraging girls' education
- Providing school equipment to 32 schools affiliated with AFEE
- Health promotion
- Construction of a health shelter with an ambulance
- HIV/AIDS prevention courses and awareness raising of different health problems, e.g. malnutrition, marriage problems and early pregnancies...

AFEE's work is an excellent example of creativity in rural life carried out with patience in favor of poor women and children. WWSF is honored to have Mrs. Tall Wade among its 2011 prizewinners and wishes long life to AFEE.

Laureates 2011

Nokwanda LANGAZANA



AFRICA · South Africa

BOOSTING THE “WILD COAST COMMUNITIES”

Since finishing high school, Nokwanda Langazana (32) has been an activist for the Wild Coast communities against the commercial development of Sun International Hotels. Having been forcefully removed along with her family due to this development project, Nokwanda has said it is in her bloodline “to fight for the integrity” of her community.

In 2003 she joined the land and tourism initiative CoConnected, a program of the South African alliance of Slum Dwellers, an international housing NGO for Pro Poor urban and rural development. Nokwanda quickly became the Program Manager of CoConnected and expanded the network to 13 communities. In 2006 she relaunched the organization as the Alliance of Rural Communities (ARC), with approximately 5,000 beneficiaries to date between Bizana, Port St. John’s and Coffee Bay.

The ARC is a network of rural poor communities that ensures a holistic approach of the communities by mobilizing them around their own resources and capabilities to address those challenges that most affect them. Residents in these local communities are suffering from dire living conditions without access to basic services such as electricity, water, and safe homes. Through raising environmental awareness, strengthening clusters and implementing projects for income generation, ARC aims to improve the livelihoods of those affected in Wild Coast communities.

ARC’s new focus is on green education in 11 schools, where ARC runs workshops, teaches about waste recycling, and has started nurseries. The aim is to inform youth about the unique relationship human beings have with the environment and the financial benefits that can result from that.

Nokwanda’s work with the ARC is inspiring. Through creative and innovative approaches, ARC aims to capacitate the rural poor to redesign their natural habitat in a sustainable way. With regards to financial sustainability, ARC capacitates the rural poor with technical and professional assistance, thus creating a multiplier effect without dependence.

Through providing the rural communities with environmental education and a holistic approach to strengthen their voice in communal processes, the ARC has opened up a framework that can be easily replicated in other challenged rural areas throughout South Africa and other countries.

Laureates 2011

Prativa SUBEDI



ASIA • Nepal

FROM THE FOREST TO THE UNIVERSITY, FROM THE UNIVERSITY TO THE RURAL COMMUNITIES: AN ATYPICAL HISTORY OF A NEPALESE ACTIVIST

Growing up in a rural village surrounded by dense forests, Prativa Subedi (58) has devoted her life to raise the living standards of those in need.

Creating the Women Awareness Centre Nepal (WACN) in 1990, Prativa works to empower rural women and gives women a sense of dignity for their lives.

Though many girls did not have the option to attend school, Prativa's forward thinking father encouraged her to obtain an education, and she eventually got a Master's degree in Economics. As her desire to help the poor intensified, Prativa challenged the traditional role as a woman in Nepal. She began to write, and published four books on the harsh reality for women in Nepal. The truth was exposed in order to raise awareness on gender and development issues.

Prativa's creation of WACN provided the opportunity to create the change for women she always hoped for. Economic opportunities were created for thousands of women due to training and support in sustainable agricultural practices. Such ambition has led to the establishment of 41 women's cooperatives, ranging from 200 to 1,200 women shareholders. As a result, 25,000 women have become members of informal savings and credit groups.

Prativa's work has enabled rural women to become economically independent in a male-dominated society. Women have developed more confidence in their ability to become equal partners in development, enhancing the lives of the women and giving hope to young girls and all future women of the community. She continues to drive innovative mechanisms to help develop the socio-economic status for rural women, overcoming all odds that were put against her.

Laureates 2011

Rano KOSIMOVA



ASIA • Tajikistan

TRANSFORMING RURAL GIRLS INTO ECONOMIC ACTORS

Rano Kosimova (52) was elected chief executive of the non-governmental organization “Parastor” in 1996. Receiving higher education and graduating from university, Rano had the passion to empower other rural women to receive education, along with health and economic resources, in order to become vital members of the community.

With support from Save the Children (UK), Rano was able to open a sewing shop for 60 young girls, providing the girls with a new skill. Parastor was turned into a permanent training course center where women can learn a multitude of activities from embroidery to animal raising. In addition, business development courses are held so women can develop their skills and knowledge into a prosperous and long-term business.

Beyond Parastor, Rano has implemented many successful projects. Projects have included mobilizing community leaders to discuss social problems, educating communities about sanitation at schools and encouraging local communities to participate in decision-making processes. Such determination and strive for a better livelihood for rural women allowed Rano to undertake many projects and have a great impact on many women.

Rano has achieved the following through her work: 45 young women were trained in guesthouse entrepreneurship in order to launch their own businesses; 3 sewing workshops were established; and 15 young women were employed. Hope was restored for these women as they can now earn incomes for themselves and for their families.

femmes rurales permirent à Rano d'entreprendre de nombreux projets et d'avoir un impact important sur la vie de nombreuses femmes.

Laureates 2011

Romy SCHMIDT



EUROPE · Switzerland

A CREATIVE COUNTRYWOMAN AND WRITER ABOUT FARM LIFE

Celebrating the WWSF 20th anniversary, we are happy to have among our 2011 prize winners, a creative Swiss farm woman.

30 years ago, Romy Schmidt moved to the Bergün village (1367) near the Albula Pass in Switzerland, married the Swiss farmer Marco, learned to adapt to local customs and embraced the raw life in the Bündner Mountains with much humor, joy and enthusiasm. Together they manage their medium-size farm. As mother, wife, farmer, daughter-in-law, and grandmother, Romy is with heart and soul a farmwoman, who never loses hope, always finds a way out, and is also connected outside the country. Besides raising five children, Romy also took care of her parents-in-law who lived with the family till their end.

Romy did not miss the opportunity she saw in her mountain village as an important tourist attraction in the summer and a great sledding spot in the winter, and began producing meat specialties and a variety of sweet products, all produced in her farm, which she offers to tourists in a “self-service” shop. She serves hot drinks and sandwiches all day long and is always ready to bring help wherever there is a need. Romy is a passionate direct-sales woman (Vermarkterin) and also produces a large quantity of foodstuffs for sale via her Internet website www.bioberguen.ch. She offers specialties for cooking and raw consumption as well as liquors, preserves, dried meats, yoghurts and cheese.

But beside being a passionate countrywoman, Romy also has a passion for writing, which was already her favorite subject in school. She actively contributes to the newspaper, ‘Die Landfrau’ (The Country Woman) of the ‘Bündner Country Women’s Association’ and expresses her views in an open and charming way with contributions for reflection. Her articles touch on everyday farm life and to the point topics concerning family farm life, which gathers many readers. Her joyous character and fun writing style have made the newspaper very popular. (writings are only in German). On her personal website you can find articles on topics such as ‘A presentation of her family farm’; ‘Suddenly one is 50’; ‘Family blues’; ‘Highlights from Bergün’; ‘Romy’s Diary’, etc. Her articles are a source of inspiration from a countrywoman who loves life, gives everything, and brings a positive spirit to the farm work. As soon as her articles are published in the newspaper, Romy publishes them on her own homepage www.bioberguen.ch.

Romy also does research for other newspapers on subjects focusing on farm life.

Romy deserves the WWSF award for creativity in rural life and we honor her on the International Day of rural women -15 October 2011.

Laureates 2011

Saman BUTH



ASIA • Cambodia



EMPOWERING MOTHERS TO SAVE LIVES

Saman Buth (60), who suffered significant personal losses and trauma in the Pol Pot years, is a dedicated woman who has deeply affected the lives of those who have come across her. Her kindness and commitment has driven women to take ownership of their own future.

In 1999 she started a small NGO in Cambodia called the Children and Life Association (CLA). Its aim was to improve life and livelihood of the poor, which it continues to do to this day. In 2000, Saman created a program for Child Rights and Sustainable Livelihoods with the provision of a small fund from Save the Children UK. While this program started in only 7 villages in Mesang District, Prey Veng Province, it has expanded to more than 169 villages in the last 11 years.

Saman works with rural women through many different specialized programs, including mother-to-mother groups and child protection networks where women are empowered to look after their children. She also educates and trains women to manage their home finances as well as to become a part of a micro-finance self-help group.

In addition to these programs, Saman trains women in sustainable farming techniques in order for women to take ownership of their own food production. She also actively seeks and brings back young girls who have migrated to cities. In order to help reintegrate these girls, Saman established a vocational training centre where they engage in a range of handicraft skills. This centre also helps rural women through one-to-one mentoring and self-help groups in areas such as conserving the environment, breeding and raising animals, growing cash crops, budgeting and small business management.

Health care is also an important aspect of Saman's work. In addition to maternal health, hygiene and nutrition programmes, she has created educational opportunities for mothers to meet and discuss the health of their children. In order to assist rural women, Saman has allowed many of them to obtain small loans in order to get proper health care. Through providing rural women with access to education and health care, women's earnings have risen and they have become more socially and economically empowered.

Laureates 2011

Shaiyrbubu ABDYLDAEVA



ASIA • Kyrgyzstan



“WOMEN CAN DO EVERYTHING”

Shaiyrbubu Abdylдаeva (61) is the Founder of “Umai Ene”, a Kyrgyzstani non-governmental organization supporting rural women. Growing up in a hardworking family in the village of Kyzyl-Oktyabr, Shaiyrbubu was determined to actively work towards resolving problems in life. Rather than just standing aside, she took the initiative to receive a higher education, graduating from university and becoming a teacher. Applying her own philosophy of “Be a mother, not a step-mother, for everybody”, Shaiyrbubu began implementing projects in her community to benefit everybody.

Created almost fourteen years ago, Umai Ene has helped stimulate women to become more active in their community by drafting business plans and providing contact with other NGOs. Initiating the renovation of the Agricultural Machinery Service Centre, 315 families received cultivation support between 2006 and 2009, enabling the families to overcome extreme poverty.

After conducting a survey to identify the major concerns of the community, Umai Ene discovered that the sale of milk was a pressing concern, for it is a main source of income for many rural families. Under the leadership of Shaiyrbubu, Umai Ene developed a permanent milk collection station, where 1500 families could deliver milk at any time. Not only did the families' income double, but also 8 new working places were created for rural women to process milk.

Changing the traditional attitude towards women in rural Kyrgyzstan (70 % of the population lives in rural areas), Shaiyrbubu's unique idea of implementing milk collection stations has empowered women to become financially and socially independent. Along with economic security women's participation in decision-making processes also increased. In Shaiyrbubu's own words, “Women can do everything!” Ms. Abdylдаeva's work demonstrates the application of her statement, positively changing the lives of women that come into contact with her forever.

Laureates 2011

Urmilaben AMRUTAL PARMAR



ASIA • India

USING KNOWLEDGE AS A WEAPON TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS

Urmilaben Parmar (42) began her farm work upon marriage. Living in tough economic conditions, she was forced to learn how to do labour work for the survival of her family.

It was during these challenging times that Urmilaben met SEWA – the Self Employed Women's Association, attended training programs and began to learn about the importance of women's strength and ownership. She underwent midwife and agricultural training, and also learned about saving, credit, and other awareness campaigns helpful for community development.

Through these trainings Urmilaben established savings and credit groups. Not only did she gain respect from her family, but she was appointed an executive committee member of SEWA, which allows her to take part in decision making processes which affect all agriculture workers at village, state, national, and international levels. In addition, Urmilaben ensured that her children received proper education.

The agricultural training that Urmilaben received was important because it not only increased her self-confidence and helped her own family, but it helped the community as well. She voiced and taught the importance of different agricultural techniques, from soil testing to the use of certified seeds. She also inspired other farmers to take part in similar trainings, which resulted in approximately 500 farmers from surrounding villages who have now undergone agricultural training.

Urmilaben has also collaborated with government offices in an attempt to link farmers and women with government schemes. When women became reluctant to start work with the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of the Government in the village, Urmilaben decided to lead by example and start the work first. Since then around 150-200 women have joined in this work.

Urmilaben has also been involved in the creation of almost 200 self-help groups. Essentially, the groups aim to help farmers gain collective strength and bargaining power to develop their families, as well as serving as a platform for discussion of good practices and farming techniques. The groups have spread the importance of knowledge and awareness among farmers.

Urmilaben is a courageous and determined woman whose efforts have benefited entire communities by spreading awareness, which had led to sustainable employment schemes and increases in income. The lifestyles of these communities have been improved with the commitment of this dedicated woman.



Laureates from 2010

Laureates 2010

Anna MERCY



ASIA • India

TURNING A VILLAGE INTO AN AQUARIUM!

Her teaching obligations at the university did not prevent Anna Mercy (56) from developing a highly original pioneering project to improve the living conditions of the village of Kumbala in the State of Kerala. After having studied the breeding of ornamental fish, for the first time ever in India she successfully developed a technology for raising 15 different species of ornamental fish in the Ghats region. She then decided to initiate rural women in the breeding of these fish.

Anna succeeded in convincing the Department of Technology of her country to give her funds enabling her to offer a five-day training to 20 women, teaching them all the different aspects of this process, from the building of aquariums to the production of food for the fish. By 2009, 300 persons had been able to follow this training. Anna encourages participants to start breeding the fish in their own ponds and on their own terraces. One fifth of those who are trained establish aquariums in their own homes. Others have started building moulded glass tanks.

Now most participants in this experiment earn an income of 4000-5000 Rupees (around USD 100) per month thanks to the sale of fish, aquariums, plants for aquariums or fish food. Shops have been opened to sell fish and accessories for aquariums, which increases local income. The project has not only had a significant financial impact, but has also had other positive side effects. For instance numerous women suffering from hypertension or asthma have acknowledged the positive effects of this activity on their health. There has also been a drastic decrease in domestic violence and – especially important - most families now send their girls to school. To insure the continued success of the project, participants receive regular follow-up visits. Worldwide, ornamental fish breeding is worth hundreds of millions and possibly billions of US dollars and India could certainly turn this into a significant source of income both for individuals and the country.

Laureates 2010

Anne Stella FOMUMBOD



AFRICA · Cameroon

A UNIQUE CHARTER FOR WIDOWS

The rural women of North West Cameroon produce 60 per cent of the region's agricultural output. However the means they dispose of are very elementary and they hardly enjoy the fruits of their harrassing labor. So Anne Stella set up a series of innovative programs to help them.

She created a group entitled "Fund for the mobilisation of women" to enable them to have access to micro credit to acquire their own farm, land and goods. Through her organisation "InterFaith Vision Foundation Cameroon" (IVF Cam) she brought together 50 different widows groups, which enabled them to be recognized by bodies like UNDP and to have greater freedom in their activities, including access to markets. To lighten the manual labour, she offered them tools and seeds which made their productivity skyrocket from 30 to 120 kilograms per month.

A major change took place in the life of many women and young girls thanks to the sensitization programs concerning HIV/AIDS. They were warned against the dangers inherent in remarriage and the responsibility of parents. Anne Stella facilitated access to microcredit for 40 other women's communities in the region, including women victims of HIV/AIDS.

Anne Stella also launched literacy programs for the women of the region to enable them to acquire much needed skills, which in turn encouraged changes in their communities. She organized training sessions to guarantee property rights and access to land for women. The status of women was a challenge to the deplorable status of widows in the region. She organized the widows of 43 communities around this injustice. In a concerted effort, they brought traditional chieftains together to educate them concerning the huge gap between customs and women's rights in their area, and to encourage them to re-examine traditional practices. But her most outstanding contribution was the promulgation of the "Metta Charter on Widowhood", a première in the history of her country enabling major progress for widows.

Laureates 2010

Dorothy AWINO



AFRICA • Kenya

LAND RIGHTS FOR WOMEN: A DEVELOPMENT “MUST”

The question of women's access to property is a major issue in many communities. In Kenya, women furnish 80 per cent of agricultural labor and produce 60 per cent of agricultural income, whereas only 5 per cent of them own land. The common belief is that women are not trustworthy and hence do not deserve to inherit and dispose of property, which acts as a major obstacle to the rights of women and children and constitutes a major hindrance for development.

After having been deceived and disinherited, Dorothy Awino (47) was forced to leave her home with her two-year-old son. In 2003, she joined other women who had been disinherited to found “The Road Marks International”, a community organisation in the Nyanza province, where the traditions of the Luo tribe led to orphans and vulnerable women being disinherited.

Her investment in the project led to major changes for the women and children of her community. Dorothy won the trust of the “Caucus for Women's Leadership”, an organisation aiming at reinforcing the abilities of local leaders to denounce violations of women's and children's rights. Thanks to this organisation, the Elder's Council of the Luo has committed itself to protecting the rights of women, even enabling some of them to reestablish themselves on their ancestral lands.

It is Dorothy's commitment to her community, her knowledge and understanding of Luo culture that enabled her to win the support of the elders of her tribe. She herself has become a member of the Elder's Council, and even coordinates their programs, something exceptional in that culture.

Dorothy believes that poverty and some traditional cultural practices represent major obstacles to the protection of the rights of women and children, and need to be overcome. Her project has initiated major changes, measured by the fact that violations of women and children's rights have significantly decreased.

Laureates 2010

Juliette KETEHOUNDJÉ



AFRICA • Benin

AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO MICROFINANCING

Juliette Ketehoundje (37) from the village of Allohoukodota in the Zakpota district of Benin, did not let poverty and illiteracy prevent her from becoming an uncontested leader in her community. Juliette is extremely dedicated, intelligent, serious and dynamic. Her commitment to the eradication of famine and poverty and the mobilisation of women is exemplary. Working directly with rural women, she is helping them change their lives through the innovative micro financing system known as “African Women Food Farmer Initiative” (AWFFI). Beginning with a group of 20 women, she doubled that number after one year. Now she is the president of a group called “Soudjagbè” with 3000 members. It is comprised of about 150 women’s groups of around 20 participants each.

Each group has its own internal autonomy and they meet regularly (twice a month) to work as a network. These meetings are considered so important that members who come late or quarrel are sanctioned. At each meeting, members of the group deposit 200 CFA francs (around 0,40 USD) in a kitty. Amazingly, the rate of reimbursement in this microcredit scheme reaches 100 per cent. Their own group savings enable the women to assure the complete reimbursement of the group loans borrowed from AWFFI. The success has been such that AWFFI is now aiming at implementing Juliette’s strategy in other areas.

Juliette now wishes to start a system of scholarships for the schooling of girls. She herself aims at learning how to read and write so that she can present herself at local elections at the request of her community, which recognizes her rare honesty and leadership qualities, and her incredibly hard work.

Laureates 2010

Konomi KIKUCHI



AMERICAS · Chile

WALKING, WALKING ... TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

Since her childhood, her love of exploring has led Kikuchi Konomi (44) to open the way for other women. Devasted by the suicide of her first husband, she decided to transform this tragedy in a manner that would be of service to all.

During a long march of 1000 kms undertaken with her second husband, Paul Coleman, she planted trees across China, Korea and Japan. During her march, she met thousands of people and shared powerful messages on the environment. Her march met with an extraordinary attention in China and her experience was broadly relayed through the media, encouraging other countries to welcome the march. At times, she slept outdoors in freezing temperatures, experiencing hunger for the first time, and facing constant physical pain. But she just marched on, courageously and with a smile, undaunted by these challenges.

She started an online community "Marching across the planet, planting trees", which attracted thousands of on line members. Kikuchi walked another 3300 kms for 11 months from Hong Kong to Taijin (China). Other persons from abroad (Great Britain, New Zeland, Japan, China) joined her in the walk. During this trip, she was especially disturbed by the effect on human health of the water pollution in the province of Shandong, where river water in which women washed vegetables and children, was heavily polluted with chemical products poured directly from factories, and human feces. She organized protests to present documentaries on the environment in China and to propose durable solutions.

She now works in Chile with her husband in an isolated region of Patagonia, on a sustainable house-building project. In a country recently rocked by a devastating earthquake, they are demonstrating the benefits of sustainability and an alternative economy to the local villages.

Laureates 2010

Narmada Baldeva GOND



ASIA • India

A GHANDIAN ADIVASI WARRIOR CHANGES A WHOLE REGION

Narmada Baldeva Gond (60) is an outstanding rural tribal woman of the Adivasi community. The Adivasis (aboriginal inhabitants) are among the most despised and disadvantaged people of the subcontinent. From an illiterate laborer who was expelled from her forest with thousands of others, struggling to make a livelihood of 20-35 Rupees per day (55-90 US cents), she became the main organizer of a whole region and has given back pride to the downtrodden.

Twenty years ago Narmada participated in a training program of 'Ekta Parishad', a Gandhian organization, using a third option – “between silence and violence there is non-violence” – for empowering the rural masses of India to use the democratic space. She discovered that poverty was not due to karma but to various social and economic conditions that could be changed. A few years later she convinced 200 families living in absolute destitution to occupy unutilised land. Despite vigorous police opposition, the Adivasi held out non-violently and managed to overcome innumerable obstacles. This was the first time Narmada declared herself a community leader. Training herself ceaselessly, she introduced numerous reforms in the newly created village of Chilghat, including organizing a panchayat (village council) to which she was elected. In 2007, Narmada was among the activists supporting the organisation in setting up a peaceful 30-day march of 25,000 landless peasants to New Delhi to claim their right to land, water and forest. The march sparked the creation of a National Commission for Agrarian Reform and major changes in the forest laws to effectively protect the indigenous population.

In the village of Chilghat, 19 families obtained property rights by requesting that the law, which makes them land owners after they till the soil for five years, be applied.

Much too often, government laws are not implemented, which is the reason for a new mobilization in 2012 with local and national actions, which will be covered by the world's media. Jan Satyagraha, or “the force of truth” is a non-violent march for justice. The march will unite, in its last phase, 100,000 deprived people to give an ultimatum to the New Delhi government regarding the necessary implementation of their fundamental rights.

Narmada is campaigning for this event. She is the living illustration of someone who refuses the limits imposed by culture, gender and birth and becomes self-empowered. In Narmada's own words: “With Ekta Parishad, we have discovered another world! We were so ignorant, but now our eyes are opened. From slaves condemned to live in the slums of Delhi or Bombay, we have become human beings proud to fight for our rights.”

Laureates 2010

Nuansy RATANASITHY



ASIA • Laos

FROM DEPENDENCY TO A PARTNERSHIP OF EQUALS

The director of a cotton business known as “The Ngeum cotton group,” Nuansy (44) has radically changed the lives of the women of her village.

Although encountering serious problems taking care of her small children when her husband had to leave her region to work, Nuansy decided she wanted to also do something for the women of her village. Despite the fact that her basic training was in the field of medicine, she had the courage to branch out into a field that was totally new to her: cotton cloth production. She discovered the existence of an important market niche for a special kind of Asian brown cotton, the sales of which would enable women to fight poverty. Summoning her creativity and her modest capital, she invested in the creation of a small cotton factory employing 50 women.

11 young women undertook special four-month training in the capital, Vientiane, to learn the various weaving techniques and methods. Thanks to this training, the women concerned could produce high quality products using new designs. The opinions and decisions of these women then began to be taken into consideration.

As a result of this new village industry, the economy of North Laos has become a little less dependant on the more industrialized productions of Thailand, which represented a real danger for the culture and the identity of the Laos weavers. The sales of cotton products have restored the pride of the men and women of the village who now work as equal and independent partners with their Thai neighbour.

Nuansy represents a model of creativity for the young people of her region and enjoys the highest reputation.

Laureates 2010

Nurcan BAYSAL



ASIA • Turkey

HAPPINESS IS PART OF DEVELOPMENT!

While working as a teaching assistant in one of her country's top universities, Nurcan Baysal (35) packed her bags to return to her hometown in Diyarbakir. Turning her back on a brilliant academic career, she decided to fight for the underprivileged of her region. Her good fortune was to be able to persuade the Ozyegin family, one of the country's leading philanthropists, to partially fund a project which rapidly led to a country-wide integrated rural development program and one of the most ambitious efforts to tackle poverty and inequity in Turkey, the 'Ozyegin Foundation Rural Livelihoods program'. It has a unique philosophy linking the development of economic opportunities with tools for empowerment and social mobilization.

The vision of the program is a process geared to eliminating social disparities and ensuring a decent life for all, which includes happiness (something rarely if ever mentioned in development jargon !) – in her own words, “re-building lives and living spaces that were once shattered and taken away from people.” For Nurcan, rural development is not only about income generation and infrastructure building, but about listening to people to comprehend what it is they actually need, desire and dream of – and then furnishing them the opportunities and tools to turn their visions into reality. Thus painting workshops for children can be as important as animal husbandry! Hence re-building relations, women's empowerment, art, preserving positive values and customs are all part of the complete picture. In other words, the program has given qualitative measures an importance equal if not superior to quantitative output. After only one year in operation, there has been measurable progress.

Among the main features of the program outlined by Nurcan, one can mention its integrated program design, an emphasis on social capacity building and livelihoods, a framework of basic rights and services, including a human rights dimension at the core of the program, and an authentic participatory effort (often mentioned but rarely practiced in the field of development).

Laureates 2010

Pratibha Rajesh BUKKAWAR



ASIA • India

REVOLUTION IN DARYAPUR

In a world where around one billion people survive precariously on approximately one dollar a day, food is the number one basic necessity for survival. Born in Daryapur near Amravati (Maharashtra State), Pratibha (39) grew up in poverty, so it was easy for her to grasp this fact. Having acquired skills in the field of food processing, she decided to start a food-based cottage industry called Trinetra Mahila Gruh Udyog (Third Eye Women's Cottage Industry) in September 2005. Starting with five rural women preparing special food formulas reproducing the tastes of certain dishes consumed locally, the number of women employed rapidly grew to 750, all illiterate and living below the poverty line, and working out of their homes. Further democratizing the process, she shared her Research and Development efforts with these women, later enabling them to become stakeholders of the ingenious food production system she had created and even involving them in policy decisions.

She then started training courses not only to improve their knowledge and hands on skills in food processing but to expand their economic opportunities by offering them training in fields as varied as catering, garment manufacturing, production of printing materials and kitchen cloths, to name but a few. After making the food production unit self-sustainable, she decided to produce certain new food products from locally available natural resources like tamarind chocolates, ambadi jam and jellies, various spices, etc, enabling the producers to expand their outreach into the national market.

With the overall development of these women workers in mind, she became Founder President of the Indian Women's development Organization, in view of stimulating skills development and employment generation at the local level. Another innovation of Pratibha was in forming the Amravati District Self-Help Groups (SHG) Association uniting 1000 SHGs from minorities living below the poverty line, enabling the members to overcome for the first time numerous social and cultural barriers to outdoor activities. With each passing year, Pratibha's efforts on behalf of women grew. This brief report cannot do justice to her very broad efforts for the rehabilitation of poor rural women and the handicapped and her exceptional social work to empower the most backward classes of her community.

Laureates 2010

Santosh Bai SAHARIYA



ASIA • India

FIGHTING HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

Santosh (30) is a member of the most vulnerable of tribal communities, the Saharoya, who depend for their survival on meager forest products.

Married at 15, she gave birth to two children and soon after her husband died. She then committed herself to ending harmful myths and practices, poverty and discrimination against women. She protested vigorously against a tradition, which forced women to walk barefoot, saying that as long as men were not submitted to the same rule, she would refuse to pay the 50 Rupee fine for wearing shoes. She managed in this manner to eliminate a tradition that did much harm to women and encouraged others to follow suite. She also managed to introduce penalties on violence against women (the most widespread underreported crime on the planet), thereby gaining much recognition amongst women.

Santosh joined the 'Swachh Pariyojna' (a local village group organization) as a volunteer. This enabled her to encourage young girls and women in her community to adopt more hygienic practices and especially to get vaccinated against sexually transmitted diseases, a privilege which was solely reserved to men! Thanks to this, the number of infected women decreased considerably. Elected to the Gram Panchayat (village council) she had to wage war against corruption and the blackmail of other elected Council members, including attempts to corrupt her. In her new function, she has become an advocate for the poor tribals, widows and women who are separated, the handicapped and lonely, and makes a special issue of encouraging families to send their daughters to school.

With remarkable daring Santosh successfully initiated the banishment of shops selling alcohol so as to end or at least decrease violence against women. Also of note, she has managed to integrate other women in the Gram Panchayat, while at the same time undertaking major efforts to end deforestation.

Laureates 2010

Wendy Jasmine PEKEUR



AFRICA · South Africa

A TRADE UNION FOR THOSE WHO FEED THE NATION

Wendy Jasmine Pekeur (31) is the General Secretary of 'Sikhula Sonke', a South African trade union, which represents rural women farmers.

Wendy's ambitions were conceived in her childhood, when she worked on the farm of her grandparents in the province of Western Cape. At the age of six, she witnessed violence in her home due to her father's use of alcohol and drugs.

At 18, she took her first steps in an organisation called "Woman and violence" which was campaigning to bring to justice a man who had killed his wife. Wendy explained her motivation as follows: "I chose the cause of farm workers, because I had worked as one on a fruit farm and knew their life. Women farmers earn the lowest wages in South Africa, and it is grimly ironic that what they produce feeds the nation and brings profits (while) they live in the direst poverty, often virtually starving." She opposes domestic violence and discrimination against women farm workers who, contrary to men, do not have any protective clothing against pesticides.

After ending her studies, Wendy worked as a volunteer for the organisation "Women of Farm Projects" (WFP). This organisation enabled Wendy and other women to acquire the experience and maturity needed to launch a trade union for women, run by women, "Sikhula Sonke". They have launched a series of community projects, such as the protection of children, the organisation of transport for people living on isolated farms, and the fight for a minimum wage and stable work for women agricultural workers. A major victory is to have obtained greater security for divorced and single women. Wendy wishes that men will sign a declaration committing themselves to end violence against women and children. She refuses all compromise on issues of gender.



Laureates from 2009

Laureates 2009

Anita RAGHAV



India

OBSTACLES SHOW OUR STRENGTH

Coming from a conservative rural background in Northern India, this is the story of a woman who had a vision for empowering women within the patriarchal society to which she belongs. Traditionally, women are kept in the 'Purdah' – the practice of preventing women from being seen by men – which does not allow women the very basic and simple pleasures of life. Be it through 'Self-Help Groups' (SHG), forming a Federation for women, organizing protests against the Village governing body, or mobilizing members of her community for environmental issues, Anita Raghav has consistently worked toward giving women a platform to raise their voices and break barriers that impede their progress and self-reliance.

Credit, in part, goes to Dr. Kiran Bedi's Navjyoti India Foundation who channelized Anita's talents, sharpened her skills, and enabled her to realize her long-term goals. Anita's protests against female feticide have saved lives, and her humble beginnings in a stitching centre (Anita Handwork) have paved the way for the development of an export house through which she can employ women from her village. Anita is highly motivated by environmental issues, and by inspiring women from her SHG's to work toward the preservation of the environment they are now active participants in the Watershed Management project through which these women spread awareness about the importance of water – a limited resource in these regions.

Working together, they have successfully planted approximately 1000 trees and made their village greener. Anita is a role model for other women in the way in which she has overcome situations of adversity, through her creative and progressive thinking, and as agent of change. Her resilience and vision, accompanied by hard work, creativity, and conviction have been at the core of her incredible journey. Anita has immense potential to further strengthen the position of women in rural areas.

Laureates 2009

Assumpta NGOZIKA REGINALD



Nigeria

A PIONEER IN THE FIGHT AGAINST AIDS

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS discrimination in Nigeria in conjunction with insufficient medical resources has made it difficult for rural communities to establish not only systems of support, but provide essential medical care to People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA). Assumpta Ngozika Reginald (33), founder of 'Womankind Nigeria for women living with HIV/AIDS' in 2005, did not just become a community advocate against discrimination, but became a voice for all of those who have been repressed or discriminated against as a result of their contraction of HIV/AIDS. Assumpta went before her community and country at great personal risk through newspaper, radio, and television interviews to discuss life with HIV/AIDS. She has courageously lent her face to the fight to end ignorance and intolerance within a male culture that believes HIV/AIDS can be seen on the face.

Living in a society that is defined by male sexuality, Nigerian women and girls are at a high risk of infection resulting from traditional practices of female genital mutilation, wife inheritance, childhood marriage, and strong expectations of loyalty and obedience toward husbands – even if it is not reciprocated. In response, Assumpta strives to increase community understanding while promoting prevention techniques to those who are not infected. Prior to her work through Womankind Nigeria, Assumpta has worked with the Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (NEPWHAN) as national treasurer and mobilization officer.

Assumpta has dedicated her life to helping PLHA. Her goals: create universal access to life-sustaining antiretroviral drugs (ARVs), strengthen outreach through prevention and testing in rural areas, and fight for the prevention of mother/child transmission of HIV/AIDS. Through Womankind Nigeria, she supports approximately 200 women monthly to have access to psychological support structures, home based and palliative care, insecticide treated nets, water purifiers, nutrition supplements, and life saving skills training. She improves her community daily through positive information dissemination, counseling, confidential HIV/AIDS testing, and through her positive presence as a voice for those affected by it.

Laureates 2009

Catherine OUEDRAOGO-KANSSOLÉ



Burkina Faso

A TIRELESS CREATIVE INNOVATOR

A high-level mobilizer of exceptional integrity who expresses complete dedication to the development of the poorest of the poor, characterizes Catherine Ouedraogo (47, originally from Réo). She is as comfortable with men as she is with women, an important ability for the mobilization of the population in rural areas, which explains her impressive impact.

The prize honors her work in mobilizing the whole East-Center Quada region of Burkina Faso, which allowed her to reach exceptional results in a short period of time.

Among her achievements, let us mention her creation of pedagogical training methods for the production of soap to be sold locally, especially the manufacture of liquid soap, an original innovation in the region, which has become very successful.

After nine months, sales multiplied by 16, assuring women a decent income. Catherine Ouedraogo had an important impact in the protection of the environment (construction of anti-erosive sites, the use of organic waste composting, safeguarding clearings through spreading straw, etc.).

She had an especially significant impact on the school enrolment of girls. In a country where, in regard to education, girls come after boys. There are now more girls than boys in schools. She never gives up in the face of difficulties; she leaves her home early in the morning to get to the village before leaving to tend her fields.

Her pedagogy is based on listening, transparency, proximity and warm human relations, the sharing of knowledge and total integration in her community.

Burkina Faso is among the 50 least developed countries in the world with a life expectancy of 48 years. Schooling is free but not compulsory, and only about 29 percent of Burkina's primary school-age children receive a basic education.

Laureates 2009

Hlengiwe “LEO” MCHUNU



South Africa

FIGHTING THE SILENT KILLER HIV/AIDS

Hlengiwe 'Leo' Mchunu's (43) journey toward becoming recognized as 'Mama Africa' in her community began on two levels: first, the personal level of losing almost all of her eight brothers and sisters to AIDS; second, with two little orphan girls. When walking through her rural village of Qudeni, Leo saw two girls (ages 3 and 5) sitting abandoned by a near empty food pot, un-washed, and terrified. Leo kept walking, but only as far as it took her to go back to her house, grab a washbasin, a set of clean clothes, and then return to care for these two AIDS orphans. Too many people would have kept walking as a result of the stigma directed against those affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Orphaned children became the catalyst for Leo's Imizamo chèche project (Zulu meaning 'we are trying'), and future philanthropic efforts for fighting HIV/AIDS. Leo personally contributed her own meager resources to fund her fledgling Imizamo project. Leo's list of efforts to improve her community are poignant: she began a community campaign to provide/care for more than 350 orphans, provide food and job training for care-givers and older orphans, called the first meeting in Qudeni on AIDS, converted two old classrooms into a kitchen and a daycare center to begin the Imizamo project that protects approximately 100 orphans and gives work to roughly a dozen largely HIV positive volunteers, made deals with local principles to allow orphaned children back into school without paying fees or wearing uniforms, launched income generating projects for grandmothers and older girls (ex. quilting and beadwork), received land to plant community gardens, and began workshops for alcoholism amongst grandmothers.

In the future Leo hopes to construct fences to protect community gardens and convert an old building in the village into a daycare hospice so that those dying of AIDS can die in comfort and dignity. Mindful of the future, Leo advocates for members of the community to attend the local clinic for treatment of AIDS. Now, even after the affects of a devastating tornado and wildfire, Imizamo is helping Qudeni, and the young lives it sustains, flourish.

Laureates 2009

Khabar LAHARIYA (Rural Newspaper)



India

'NEW WAVE' BEGAN WITH EIGHT RURAL WOMEN JOURNALISTS

In the Bundelkhand region of India, eight rural women began a newspaper to spread and promote information on life in rural areas. The patriarchal newspaper system does not leave much space for either women's news or work. Khabar Lahariya (meaning 'New Waves'), a small newspaper written in Bundelkhand's local dialect of Bundeli, is run entirely by women from the process of gathering information through investigative journalism to the final distribution of the paper to the surrounding area.

The first edition of the paper, currently seven years old, was published in Chitrakoot district, and was funded by Nirantar – a feminist organization based in Delhi. Since that time, the women have expanded into a second site in the district of Banda. Khabar Lahariya has an estimated readership of 35,000 in over 300 villages. The contribution of the paper to rural society is extensive: not only is it a symbol for feminine empowerment within rural India, but also promotes literacy, and the maintenance of literacy in the local language. The paper has steadily gained a reputation for acting as a watchdog against greed and corruption in the region. The female journalists of Khabar Lahariya are far more willing than their male counterparts to print the actual truth about strong political and community leaders.

Khabar Lahariya is a key figure in the fight to end violence against women in a region plagued by dacoity (Indian bandits). The paper directly contributes to women's empowerment through its recruitment of women from lower caste/class backgrounds, its portrayal of raped women as victims, and the members own struggle against traditional stereotypes and control within the home. To reach all active members of their readership, distributors and the journalists are willing to walk-up to six hours to reach isolated rural villages.

The members of Khabar Lahariya demonstrate a diligent understanding and commitment to women's rights, the freedom of the press, and the end to traditional patriarchal systems.

Laureates 2009

Madeleine GBLIA



Ivory Coast

FACING ADVERSITY WITH BARE HANDS

At the beginning of the century, the Ivory Coast went through a cruel civil war, which destroyed a great deal of the wealth of what had been one of the most prosperous regions of sub-Saharan Africa. As is usually the case in civil wars, the civilian population suffered the most, women and children especially.

When the civil war started in the mountainous Western region of Man, numerous members of the Grace Cooperative of Women of Ivory Coast lost everything. Their husbands were killed defending the villages, the children were taken as child soldiers to neighboring Liberia; so many of the women had to flee. In 2004 many of them regrouped in the outskirts of the capital, Yamoussoukro.

This cooperative presently regroups over 700 villages in three administrative regions, Danamé, Man and Bankouma. Under the leadership of its dynamic president, Madeleine Gblia, it is helping the women to either choose other activities, or rehabilitate their pre-war income generating activities. With this aim in view, the cooperative has created around Yamoussoukro a small centre to practice agriculture and raise livestock, which enables its members to cover their basic food needs practicing an intensive method of agriculture.

In addition to their immediate survival, these courageous women have set up an innovative and audacious program to restore their region of origin. Even if the fight is almost superhuman, these African women who literally enable the continent to survive, refuse to be discouraged.

Visit the web site of the organization: <http://la-grace.new.fr>

Laureates 2009

Maria Lucia LOPES DE OLIVEIRA



Brazil

FEMINISM AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPMENT

For generations, the North Eastern region of Brazil has been legendary for its great poverty and the totally submissive role of its women. The amazing successes of Maria Lucia, a 43-year-old social educator, seem to indicate that there is a link between the two. Since 1996, she has been working for a pioneering feminist organization, *Cunhã Coletivo Feminista*. Since 2003, she has been stimulating the development of activities related to developing a higher level of consciousness and social organization among women agricultural laborers in the Paraiba State.

The project entitled "Sowing gender in the remote semi-desert regions" is profoundly innovative because it aims at sustainable development using a feminist vision. When the project started, women's organizations were totally non-existent in the region. For the very first time, a feminist organization accepted the challenge of developing systematic activities based on education and feminism in a State 2.3 times the size of France. The program contributed to developing feminine competences in the fields of human rights and the role of a citizen, political and economic autonomy through agricultural production and income generation, all done on soil considered sterile!

This program is absolutely unique inasmuch as it illustrates a global and holistic approach, which includes development, rights, health, the environment and an increase of the power of women. It became extremely successful in transforming the lives of rural women who in turn have become agents of transformation in their own communities. As women in a series of rural communities became conscious of their power, they started speaking out and assuming their leadership, including in areas, which until now had been strictly the prerogative of men.

Laureates 2009

Mother Petra MACLIING



Philippines

PROTECTING INDIGENOUS LAND CULTURE

Over of a lifetime of activism for the Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines, Mother Petra Macliing (77) has never wavered in her understanding that the identity and life of Indigenous Peoples is intrinsically tied to the protection and conservation of the land. Given the honorific title of 'Mother' by her tribe, she is a living representation of the role of how rural women protect land and culture.

Widowed, and the literal mother of eight children, Mother Petra was determined to keep her young family from destitution while preserving her ancestral lands through sustainable farming. Mother Petra became a leader within her rural community on natural farming techniques. Innovatively utilizing rice husks, a traditional waste product and food for edible regional snails, and the waste product from traditional pig farming, Mother Petra was able to naturally fertilize her fields. Slowly, Mother Petra is drawing her neighbors away from chemical fertilizers as they witness the high yields of her rice paddies.

Natural farming techniques are one side of the battle to preserve the Cordilleras region; the other involves guarding against the invasion of corporations and prospectors. In the 1970s, Mother Petra, with Kalinga and Bontoc leaders, rallied the opposition movement to the four Chico Dams in conjunction to prevent displacement of her people. Bontoc Tribe lands are not just rich in culture and agriculture, but under the surface lies a potential gold mine. In the 1980s, assisted and supported by other indigenous women in the region, Mother Petra successfully drove off gold prospectors using collective resistance action (removing tools from the miners), traditional indigenous beliefs (the taboo that it is bad luck to see mothers and grandmothers unclothed), and open, non-violent dialogues initiated and completed between indigenous women and mining engineers.

Mother Petra is a founding member of the Cordillera Peoples' Alliance (CPA) for the defense of ancestral domains and self-determination, and of the Kalinga-Bontoc Peace Pact Holders Association (KBPPHA), a federation of traditional tribal leaders, members of the CEA.

Laureates 2009

Odette KAYIRERE



Rwanda



QUIET STRENGTH IN THE MIDST OF TEMPEST

The physical and moral misery, the desolation and isolation which characterized the victims of the 1994 genocide, which eliminated almost her entire family, including her husband, pushed Odette Kayirere to become one of the founders of the 'Widows Association of the Agahozo Genocide' (AVEGA in French), which grouped over 20,000 widows. Despite her own terrible loss, she rapidly organized small solidarity groups between widows. Very soon, she had the idea of creating AVEGA, of which she became the first organizer in her region.

With the amount of work growing, she quit her job as a teacher to consecrate herself totally to this new activity, setting up mechanisms to offset the consequences of the genocide, especially in the fields of health care, housing, and means of subsistence. Presently the AVEGA section of the Eastern Region includes over 20'000 beneficiaries, widows and orphans, of which 90 per cent work in the fields of agriculture and livestock. Some are disabled; some still without a roof over their heads and live in total destitution.

Among the numerous activities generated by this innovative and courageous Laureate, let us mention psychosocial counseling, the rehabilitation and construction of homes, income generating projects, health centers, community sensitization to problems of AIDS, violence against women and access to justice, support for education of orphans, environmental protection, to name but a few.

Rwanda, like other countries in the world, embarked on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), of which the third objective is "Gender Equality and empower women". The Government of Rwanda created favorable conditions to promote gender equality, in the sense of putting in place laws that clearly specify equality between men and women. To this end, the Constitution stipulates that all Rwandans are free as of birth and remain so and equal according to their rights and obligations. Also, the Constitution underscores on the equality between men and women with an affirmative action to solve specific problems, such as representing women by 30% at decision-making positions.

Laureates 2009

Otgonbayar CHULTEM



Mongolia



FOLLOWING IN A MOTHER'S FOOTSTEPS

After achieving an undergraduate degree in Law from Irkutsk State University in Russia, and attaining a position in the Mongolian government as a member of the Great State Khural, it would at first glance appear as if Otgonbayar Chultem (54) had left her rural roots behind forever. Instead, Otgonbayar returned to rural life to follow in the footsteps of her mother – a former advocate and organizer for organizations that supported rural women.

In 1994, Chultem created the 'Foundation for Empowerment of Rural Women' to honor her mother's life-time work. Now, in her own right, Chultem has become an advocate and organizing force for rural women in Mongolia. The Foundation, which she has been leading for 15 years, works on educating Mongolian rural women in their legal rights, and in skills that will improve pre-existing livelihoods and create a means of living for those who have none.

Chultem and her team have initiated more than 40 rural community projects, and assisted 26'000 women and their families. The Foundation is run on a completely volunteer basis, and currently has 20 branch offices in aimags (tribes) across Mongolia that reach 200 villages and rural women.

The Foundation has created a working group/forum through which this nomadic group of rural women has been able to network, sell products, and gain access to urban markets. Chultem has worked on providing milk processing- and machine-production training to more than 3000 rural women, local 'green food' growth training in Gobi desert conditions, and began a micro-credit project that enables 186 unemployed lowincome women to begin small businesses (barber shop, café, bakery, and a hotel) by working collaboratively in groups.



Laureates from 2008

Laureates 2008

Amulya Sahoo BULI



India



A DRIVING FORCE IN COMMUNITY CHANGE

After completion of her high school examination in 1996, Amulya (27) decided to devote her life to the empowerment of women in her small, dominantly tribal village of Kisinda in the Sambalpur district in Orissa, one of the poorest Indian states.

Most of its inhabitants are illiterate. The illegal, Maoist Naxalite movement has been active in the area for many years, in great part because of the region's poverty (48% of the population lives below poverty level, the highest percentage in India. Orissa also has the lowest per capita ratio of doctors in the world).

After training in the field of micro-credit and the formation of self-help groups, Amulya went back to her village. In spite of the harsh conditions and sparse life, the women in the region have undergone dramatic change. They no longer accept the beatings from drunken husbands, in part because of their increased self-confidence induced by their improved economic situation. They are more and more stable financially, investing in the education and health of their children.

To date, Amulya Buli has to her credit the creation of 603 self-help groups. Amulya has had to face major challenges and great opposition. She also had the courage to dialogue with the Naxalite regional leaders who now support her initiative for women's empowerment and development. She has even appeared on national television. "Our own girl Amulya is a precious gift from God to make us rise to the occasion and act for the betterment of our children and ourselves" say the women.

Laureates 2008

Association of Women Nurses to assist women and children victims of rape with HIV/AIDS - AFIA FEV



DR Congo

“THE LACK OF MEANS IS ALREADY A MEANS” (SENEGALESE PROVERB)

In recent years, one of the most horrendous human catastrophes since the last war has taken place in the Kivu region of the DR Congo, during which an estimated 3,5 to 5,5 million people were killed or died without the rest of the world being informed about it. The rebel insurgents systematically targeted women, who were frequently raped in front of their children and husbands and often sexually mutilated in an appalling manner. All too often, AIDS contaminated them. In Africa, her community frequently rejects a woman who has been raped.

A nurse in Bukavu, Beatrice Kabemba-Bapemacho, was so alarmed and moved by the plight of her sisters that she and four other nurses created an association which gives very small micro-credit loans (\$20) to women, on the condition that they undergo a medical test to measure whether they tested HIV positive. If the test is positive, the women are then directed to an organization like Doctors Without Frontiers, which has the means of paying for their treatments. (The loans are of course given whatever the result of the test). What is remarkable is that the beneficiaries of the loans are organized into groups where they not only share their experiences but are also given an education called “living values”. For instance they get to understand that by reimbursing their loans they are practicing integrity and manifesting love for other women who in turn will receive the rotating reimbursed credit funds.

To start the association, the five women founders, all nurses, each gave \$20 (out of a monthly income of \$60 to 100) to get a few women started. Since then, they have received extremely modest support from a few private individuals, but have no regular funding. However, they continue their activities. Some women in the micro-credit groups have already started returning to their villages.

Laureates 2008

Bali Women's Union of Farming Groups - BAWUFAG



Cameroon

TRANSLATION AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPMENT

Azoadam Rebecca B. Juga, the founder of BAWUFAG, stems from Bali in the Mezam Division of the North West Province. Deeply touched by the plight of her sisters in rural areas, she decided to take up the challenge to sensitize the women in her region.

This grass roots organization has had a remarkable impact on the region through training in food processing, micro-credit schemes, training in civil and human rights (for the first time single women and widows can possess their own land and claim rights over their production), food preservation, adult literacy and training on soil fertility management.

A uniquely original dimension of their work has been the translation of the international Magazine on Low External Input and Sustainable Agriculture into Mungaka, the local language. It was printed in pamphlets, read over tape recorders and replayed to the illiterate rural women using a sound system. This stimulated and promoted local innovation in ways that combine indigenous and appropriate external knowledge. For instance, the women farmers no longer concentrated on cultivating single crops on different portions of land, but started practicing diversified farming, cultivating for instance beans, maize, cassava and even pineapple on one plot of land.

There is a remarkable change in the women as regards the environment. They have become aware of environmental hazards and how to cope with them (e.g. they no longer burn the soil to gain fertility, they use cover crops to protect the soil from erosion and have learned to rotate crops.)

Political awareness is growing; the women are learning to speak in public and gaining ever-greater self-confidence.

Laureates 2008

Bongisiwe KHOSA



South Africa

A RURAL ECO-WARRIOR PROTECTS NATURE WITH PASSION, PERSEVERANCE AND COMMITMENT

One of 14 children abandoned by their father when she was only 10, Bongi (34), who stems from an isolated rural region of KwaZulu Natal province, was determined to finish school. To do so, she worked before and after school hours in a local store. After a brief stint as a domestic worker, she was employed at a crocodile farm for tourists, where she became involved in the rehabilitation of orphaned baby animals. It made her realize that animals and habitats “had no one who could talk on their behalf or represent them (like a lawyer would).”

So she decided to follow a training to become an environmental community officer, called Rural Eco-Warriors. She was the only woman in her group of trainees, and has thus become a role model for other women in the region. The respect she enjoys in her community is illustrated by the fact that she has been invited by the local chief to “men only” community meetings where environmental issues are discussed, thus paving the way for other women to follow her one day.

She has initiated and managed a number of environmental projects, helping the local communities to find their own solutions, which has required exceptional determination, creativity, commitment and initiative. Just one example: the local river, the source of drinking water, was getting more and more polluted. Bongi realized it was mainly due to women washing their clothes there, and taught them to wash the clothes in buckets and pour the soiled water into the ground.

She has also started and run training workshops for teachers on environmental protection, and helped protect local culture by encouraging Zulu dancing in schools. Another instance of her insight was her initiative to protect women from over-harvesting the bark of the Fever Tree (*Acacia xanthophlea*) used in traditional medicine to fight fever, by teaching them sustainable harvesting and starting a nursery to grow such trees.

Bongi's perseverance, courage and absolute passion for the environment are demonstrated in every step she has taken through her life.

Laureates 2008

East Mountain Quilters



Costa Rica

QUILTING FOR A NEW QUALITY OF LIFE

Quilting has enabled the women of the tiny pueblo of Rancho Redondo (high in the mountains of Costa Rica and many of whom are living in abusive situations with alcoholic husbands in houses with no electricity, dirt floors and only the very basic necessities of life) to become enlightened business women with their own board of directors and broad international recognition of their skills.

Thanks to an American citizen living in Costa Rica who had expressed interest in teaching pueblo women to quilt, Carolyn Underwood, around 50 women gathered in May 2004 for a first lesson. Meeting weekly, sometimes even 2-3 times a week for 17 months, they made rapid progress. They had to overcome great challenges, including the suspicion and doubts of their husbands and families, in order to attend classes. Some arose at 3 AM. to prepare meals for the day before leaving.

In November 2004, only five months after starting, they were invited to be the first quilters exhibit at the 'International Week of Coffee' in the capital. They were an immediate hit. From then on success came rapidly, and this year (2008) the entire group will be travelling to Houston's International Quilt Market (USA), the largest of its kind in the world.

What is important, however, is the profound empowerment of these women who for the first time stand up individually and as a group to oppose injustice and abuse in all its forms in their community, something which is practically unheard of by former uneducated women in Costa Rica. They contribute time, money, efforts and talent to community projects. They have learned to work together as a group, listening to and respecting each other. The enhancement of these women's lives has impacted the entire community, including economically. Their quilts sell all around the world. Last but not least they have begun donating 2 per cent of their annual income to non-profit organizations in their immediate area.



Laureates 2008

Fancy Community Help Group - FCHG



St. Vincent

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY BANKING FOR ALL

Fancy is a small remote community at the northern most tip of St. Vincent, a community of 240 women and 170 men distributed in 140 households. The remoteness of the community and the socially disadvantaged position of the women forced them to become creative in transforming the lives of their fellow community members. They are putting into place a model of rural development that is inclusive, equitable, self-reliant and sustainable, and encouraging their men to participate fully in community activities. Income generating activities are at the core of the Group's project and in the absence of a bank in the community, the women have developed an indigenous banking system suited to their own situation.

The Group started in 1997 when several small organizations, including churches and sports clubs, came together to form one community organization with initially 22 women members. After examining a series of alternative ventures, they decided that pig rearing presented the least risks and least inputs in terms of capital. When the original piglets reproduced at maturity, they were distributed first to the neediest, then alphabetically. When household food needs were met, pigs started being sold on the external market, thus generating additional income, part of which was invested in social activities in the Fancy community, like installing electricity in the preschool or food hampers for senior citizens.

The next stage came with the creation of a revolving loan scheme, which resembles somewhat the Grameen Bank system (of which the women had never heard of – this was their own invention). The project has enabled the Group to provide emergency assistance to members, facilitate access to medical care, enable members to invest in their children's education and develop income earning ventures such as farming. Over the years, the FCHG has been involved in a large variety of community outreach projects funded from the collective coffer. Women members have acquired self-confidence and significant leadership skills, and have committed to focus training activities on the poorest members of the community, with the aim that no woman would be left behind.

Laureates 2008

Group of Women Lace Makers



Portugal (Azores)



WHEN BUSY FINGERS GENERATE PROSPERITY

Pico Island erupted, soil for agriculture was drastically reduced, and the population had to find new ways of earning a living. Many men took to whale hunting (although they could not really make a living of it) and the women found in traditional lace-making the way to survive and succeed.

This activity was taught to a few women of the island in the early 20th century by a family, which came from the United States, known as the Lemos daughters. They taught the women on Pico Island to use a special needle (*farpa*) and delicate cotton thread. Until then, the women had only used wool to make clothes and blankets. But from the early 20th century, all 8-10 year old girls learned to make lace.

From 1922 onwards, Rosa Garcia took up to sell it on the nearby island of Faial, home to the famous Peter Café where people from all over the world met and which became a selling place for the lace to be taken to Portugal, the USA and South America. Each lace-maker would specialize in a task, which meant that the piece of lace would go from hand to hand till it was completed – a lovely example of community collaboration. The work was paid according to the amount of thread used. The women of the island organized their daily household chores in order to have as much time available to make lace, even at the expense of their sleep.

This creative strategy invented by the women enabled the community's survival. It allowed families to have little by little access to medical assistance, to build houses, buy ships and finally send the children to Faial island to study. Till today, the lace provides a major portion of the family income, enabling the children and grandchildren to embark on studies on the mainland and elsewhere. The lace is now a certified product that is present in national and international exhibitions and museums around the world.

Laureates 2008

Leila HAKIM-ALI



Afghanistan

GOAT HERDER BRINGS LIGHT TO RURAL HOMES

Afghanistan, a country with 32 million residents, has been engaged in constant conflict and the situation has been grave for more than a generation.

Most of us flip a switch and on go the lights. With no thought of where it comes from or how our lives would be without it. For most rural villages in Afghanistan electricity is a luxury. When the sun goes down darkness takes over and candles and lanterns light rural homes.

Leila Hakim-Ali brought the light into her home and the homes in her village of Patoo. Born and raised in a small village in Ghazni, Leila wanted a better life for her family and her community. Her desires to bring about change lead her to be trained as a Community Health Worker. During one of her training sessions she learned about the benefits of hydroelectric power. She began to think about her village. It had water, why didn't they have this technology? As a goat herder, Leila knew the terrain of her village well. She had a specific waterfall in mind and decided to turn her idea into a plan of action. She started the project with her children, moving rocks and clearing a path to the site. Before long Leila realized she would need to engage the community to help bear the cost and labour. She first approached her husband. He agreed that her idea was good but didn't believe the community could be persuaded to undertake such a large project. He was wrong. Leila spoke to village leaders and community members, and before long they were all on board. The entire community banded together and got to work. Each family pitched in US\$ 200 and helped with the labour. With an idea and a driving spirit, Leila brought in the light.

Laureates 2008

Shad BEGUM



Pakistan

UNFLINCHING WARRIOR FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The region of Dir (Northwest frontier province of Pakistan) is probably one of the most conservative regions in the world concerning attitudes towards women. Talibanization of society has been progressing in recent years. Major efforts have been made by local clerics to get the Sharia law enforced, and one of their leaders claimed that if this did not succeed through the courts, they would win in the streets. "Honor killings" are on the rise. Women are considered secondary citizens of society and men take all decisions concerning the family and society. Domestic violence and child marriages are frequent. Women have no share in inheritance or family property ... and the list of discriminations continues.

It is in this context where women's political participation is considered an insult to Pashtun customs and Islam that Shad Begum (29), whose liberal father active in a progressive NGO, founded at the age of 15 a women's organization and started actively advocating women's rights! At 22, despite threats to her life, aggressive opposition and smear campaigns calling her a conspirator, she managed thanks to her integrity, her reputation for efficiency and unflinching determination to get elected councillor in the local government on an independent ticket. Only four years later, thanks in great part to her efforts, 127 women were elected at local and district level.

Presently she heads the first registered NGO in Dir, Anjuman Behbood-e-Khawateen (ABKT). It is involved in activities for men and women, micro-credit, primary education for girls (one of the most urgent and important activities), health services education and women capacity building.

Thanks to her impact, ten women's organizations have also been formed in the district. There is a women's resource center at the district level, and more than 1000 girls have received education through informal schools set up by her NGO, ABKT. Nothing seems to stop this incredibly courageous fighter for women's rights.

Laureates 2008

Shorai CHITONGO



Zimbabwe

A FIRM NO TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

According to numerous studies, the home is, sadly, the main source of violence in societies. The problem is very acute in Africa, where most women, especially in rural areas, are not even aware of their rights.

Shorai's case came to nationwide attention when the horrendous story of her many years of abuse, including rape and terrible beatings by the most brutal of husbands became headline news in a leading newspaper. This article in turn generated intense debate and her story became a test case for the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act in Zimbabwe.

While living in rural Mutasa, she came across numerous extreme cases of domestic violence, including some that ended in the gruesome murders of the women who confided in her. Shorai (now 37) was especially touched by the plight of the children who saw their mothers butchered by their fathers and ended up on the streets. It is against this backdrop that she founded "Ray of Hope", a grassroots network of women survivors of domestic violence that seeks to rehabilitate and empower women and children affected by such violence. It numbers more than 2000 members who run ten community based income generating projects.

She has educated communities on the close link between HIV/AIDS and domestic violence and the need to make safe sex choices, thereby breaking the norm of women constantly submitting to men's sexual whims, whatever the danger for them. She has also reinstated or retained in school dozens of children victims of domestic violence. And to address the resistance of men who prevented their women family members from attending Ray of Hope meetings (which they called "gatherings of marriage destroyers and prostitutes"), she successfully invited men to her workshops, calling in male presenters to give the talks.

Laureates 2008

Sister Placida MOSHA



Tanzania

BUILDING WITH BRICKS AND CREATIVITY

One of twelve children born to a farming couple near Mt. Kilimanjaro, Sister Placida (64) was given the opportunity to fulfil a dream of hers: a fully self-reliant, sustainable school for vocational training. So many projects fail because the initiators depend on foreign donors not only for the initial investment, but also for continued funding.

After introducing drip irrigation, which enabled the school not only to immensely improve the school diet but also reduce water consumption, she created a fishpond that not only feeds the students but is also able to sell the surplus, thus generating income. Not content with that, she then purchased an interlocking brick mould, which produces bricks that are curved and can fit into each other with the use of little or no cement, thus saving significantly on construction costs of the school extension. The school now also sells these bricks locally, thus adding to its self-generating income. (The construction of a small house is one of the major life goals of many African families).

The school also grows maize, operates its own maize mill and raises pigs. The manure from the pigs is utilized both to fertilize gardens and coat the bottom of the fishpond.

It is important to add that a significant portion of the students are physically disabled. And finally, Sister Placida, at 64, is still a powerhouse of creativity and energy. Her high quality vocational school is fully certified by the Vocational Education Training Authority of Tanzania and brings a very significant contribution to the development of the region.

Laureates 2008

Thushari HEWAPATHIRA



Sri Lanka

NEW BREAKTHROUGHS IN MICRO-FINANCE LENDING

Sewa Finance, of which Thushari Hewapathira (38) is the inspired and innovative Chief Executive Officer, is developing new approaches where personal economic development is dependant on the borrowers' own efforts. The methods include new approaches to credit and market risks, but to give just one example, one can mention awareness and training programs on credit culture and saving discipline conducted regularly for clients.

Sewa Finance was created to supplement the capital requirements of Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that had come into being under the guidance of the Sewa Lanka Foundation, one of the largest local development NGOs, in view of strengthening the capacities of CBOs to transit from relief to self sufficiency and sustainable development. For such efforts to succeed what they most need is financial assistance and to make such assistance available to them the avenue considered most suitable is microfinance. Just two examples:

Sewa Finance has been able to engage Muslim women who are usually culturally opposed to dealing with any interest based financial activities. The penetration of her institution into the otherwise closed Muslim women society opens new horizons for Muslim women beneficiaries.

Sewa Finance has also successfully ventured into the plantation sector where workers are rated as bordering on the hard-core poor, and where borrowers were reluctant to meet their commitments. The time formerly spent idling is now devoted to income-generating activities such as gardening, running small scale retail outlets, barber saloons, etc. A new culture of spending is being born, and money formerly spent on e.g. liquor is now devoted to more constructive pursuits.

Many studies have shown that access to credit is the major economic obstacle faced by the poor in most countries. Thushari Hewapathira provides a unique opportunity to institutions and lenders ready to try new approaches.

Laureates 2008

Zahra MOHAMED ATTAYEB



Niger

FIGHTING IGNORANCE AND GETTING GIRLS TO SCHOOL

Although she never went to school, Zahra Mohamed Attayeb can read, write and navigate on Internet. Her childhood in a Nomad campment convinced her to create an association to enroll nomad children in schools, as well as to restore the environment.

Zahra is originally from a Touareg community in the North of Niger. Due to insecurity in her country and to her courageous commitment, she has lived on several occasions in exile. She returned to her country in 1995 and has since then never stopped to work for the economic development of her community. She created in 1997 the association TIDAWT.

Cultivated and creative, Zahra started to sensitize the nomad women on the importance of their participation in the development of their country. The non-political association she heads aims for local and sustainable development via, and in particular, by educating the girls. She also focuses on information sharing and training and safeguarding the nomad culture. To try to resolve the grave economic problems, she organizes sales of artisan goods produced by women's groups. Funds received from paying members of her association have allowed the construction of water pumps and grinding mills.

Among the priorities of TIDAWT, we can mention capacity building of trainers as well as community health care. Since 1997, Zahra continues her energetic fight against poverty, which is the foremost obstacle to community stability.



Laureates from 2007

Laureates 2007

“Capuchinhas” Women’s Group



Portugal

REINVENTING A TRADITIONAL CRAFT

Twenty years ago, a few women decided to save Campo Benfeito, an isolated village threatened with extinction because there was little economic activity. In 1985, these women attended a training course in sewing, aiming to build on skills they had learned from their mothers. They intended to produce and market traditional capuchas. A capucha is a waterproof woolen coat (mantle), worn by women, that is warm in winter and protective from the sun in summer. It can last a lifetime.

Realizing that just making capuchas would not be enough to generate sufficient income, the women, now known as “Capuchinhas” trained themselves in management, budgeting and accounting and decided to innovate and modernize their production. Their models needed a contemporary touch and a wider promotion around the region. With determination and perseverance, they managed to find financial support to hire a fashion designer who, over 8 years, designed coats, skirts, blouses and sweaters that are now sold in fashion stores in Lisbon and Oporto. Keeping the traditional knowledge of the past, they are now able to produce a summer and a winter collection every two years.

For 20 years now, the impact of these women on the environment is worth mentioning:

- They included the community in their project, relying on the knowledge of older women in terms of weaving techniques and dyes.
- They learned how to use plants and tree leaves to dye linen and wool, ecological raw materials, which are treated with completely ecological techniques.
- They prevented their village from being deserted. They stayed in the village as well as their husbands. Six children are now attending school, the first ones in 20 years.
- They contribute to local development and bring customers as well as many visitors to Campo Benfeito.
- It is a great example of entrepreneurship, of women who stand up for themselves and who did not wait for things to come their way.

Laureates 2007

Agnes KARTIMAI



Liberia



ADVOCATE FOR RURAL WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Agnes (47) directs Zorzor District Women Care Inc. (ZODWOCA). One of the most dynamic women's organizations working in rural Liberia, ZODWOCA mobilizes women to demand their rights and participate in the political process. During Liberia's civil war, women particularly suffered as targets of rape and other human rights violations. Furthermore, rural women in Liberia have long been marginalized in traditional societies, with restricted access to education, economic opportunities and political participation.

Since 2004, ZODWOCA has conducted workshops for women in Lofa County concerning democracy, human rights and the right to education. Following these workshops, local women expressed an understanding of the importance of defending their rights. The organization also conducts workshops on gender-based violence and attempts to improve access to justice for rape victims - including avoidance of traditional "bush courts" that are comprised of only men. In 2005, Agnes encouraged 18 women to run for local chieftaincy positions in their villages and four of them won. Participants of these workshops also discuss peace building and HIV/AIDS prevention.

In addition to workshops, the organization uses innovative techniques to spread its message to women throughout Liberia. In collaboration with local drama troupes, it produces plays on different problems women face. It also publishes a quarterly newsletter which highlights the organization's activities and women's rights issues. To reach those who can't read, it creates and distributes posters, flyers and calendars featuring issues such as women's rights and inheritance rights in particular. ZODWOCA reports a decrease in gender based and domestic violence in the Zorzor District. More women are asserting their inheritance rights, more victims report rape cases to the police, and there has been an increase in the participation of women in the local decision processes.

In developing the organization, Agnes has shown tremendous energy and a deep commitment to promoting women's rights. While the Liberian government has passed new legislation that protects and promotes women's economic rights, only local organizations like ZODWOCA lobby so that these policy changes are translated into real improvement in rural women's lives.

Laureates 2007

Agrotouristic Women's Cooperative of Mesotopos



Greece



REVIVING CUSTOMS TO FIGHT UNEMPLOYMENT

In December 1998, 25 members established the Agrotouristic Women's Cooperative of Mesotopos in the Southwest of the island of Lesbos, with the objective to engage women in professional production and promotion of traditional products. Women attended seminars on proper nutrition, health and small business activities, and with a lot of creativity and desire for innovation, they started their project. They chose to conserve sweets (made of fruits and vegetables), baked sweets, jams, liqueurs, handmade pasta and other delicacies. All of their products taste like traditional flavours known in the past and remaining in women's memory.

The Cooperative has created an incentive for village tourism and promotes Mesotopos as a fancy destination for tourists passing through. A shop to sell their famous local products was created as well. An additional activity is providing catering services with full equipment for a maximum of 600 people with the ability of also providing traditional music bands or dance groups.

Today, the Cooperative of Mesotopos has 36 members. That means that 36 families out of a village of 1050 residents draw part of their income directly from this cooperative. Also, since the members buy their raw material from local producers, many others in the community benefit from the Cooperative. Their ambition - through these activities - is to make the Cooperative a model for business development and contribution to society. Some of the member's children, who went away to study, have now returned to the village, drawn by the interesting activities of the cooperative and a new conviction that their future lies in their village.

The Cooperative's contributions in term of sustainable development are outstanding: Socially, it has strengthened the role of women in the local community but also in the wider society of Lesbos. Economically, it has contributed to the decrease of unemployment in the area. And environmentally, it consists of an economical activity that takes advantage of local resources and is interested in preserving the identity of the region.

Laureates 2007

Amalia CALAMANI de QUISPE



Bolivia

VALUING ANCESTRAL PRODUCTS

Amalia (37) always lived in the rural community of Llachuni where she received a primary and secondary education and obtained a technical degree. Married, she raised six children, all of whom are students now.

She has devoted countless hours to her work in the community. In 1998, she created an economic unit named Alpaquita Andina for which she was responsible for the commercialization of charqui, which is dried alpaca and llama meat. This product, rich in protein and low in fat and cholesterol, has always been a traditional food of the people. When dried, it can be kept and transported easily or even used as an exchange commodity. During the 70s', this kind of meat was considered second rate and reserved for the indigenous. Its commercialization was prohibited and the supplies were confiscated by the police. Thanks to the fight of producers like Amalia, the dried meat has finally been revalued and is now accepted by people in urban areas.

Because of her experience and quality of leadership, Amalia was asked to train other women to use modern and hygienic techniques to produce charqui and to use solar energy to dry the meat. Her enthusiasm was acknowledged and she is known as a woman leader against poverty.

Today, Amalia is responsible for the sales in Alpaquita Andina, where she sells charqui and other products derived from alpaca wool in La Paz markets. Her innovative activity generate selfemployment in the community and prevented migration. Amalia promotes the utilization of natural resources, mixing ancestral and modern techniques, thereby raising the income of poor families in this cold region of Bolivia.

Laureates 2007

Association pour la Promotion des Femmes de Gaoua (APFG)



Burkina Faso



COURAGE IN TRANSFORMING TRADITIONAL PRACTICES PROMOTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Initially, the members of the Association for the Promotion of Women from Gaoua were mothers who joined together to do activities for the improvement of the school's environment for their children.

Their success permitted an increase of activities and initiatives of the association. Today, more than 400 women are members and APFG developed multiple activities in favor of women. Economically, it encourages the production and sale of soap and herb perfumed creams, production of local beer, runs a restaurant, encourages the processing of groundnuts and pork rearing. Socially, the association offers micro credit to its members, organized in small groups, mutually ensuring reimbursement.

Concerned with the environment and conscious of the dangers associated with the overexploitation of wood, the association promotes improved stoves and solar cookers as well as tree planting. But the most innovative program of APFG is its campaign to fight Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), which reduces the woman's right to physical integrity. APFG organized a regional meeting with 420 participants, including 48 FGM practitioners, local authorities, traditional leaders, other associations, human rights organizations and trade unions. 30 out of the 48 FGM practitioners renounced the FGM practice and realized that they could benefit from APFG's support.

The real innovation is an original approach to the problematic blood ritual. The aim is to transform an act that is bloody, dangerous, inhumane and painful into a symbolic act, in which practitioners only simulate the ritual. This is a particularly compelling example of how APFG uses culture and regional traditions to find ways for transformation of rituals and social practices in general.

Laureates 2007

Cameroon Young Jurists Legal Resource Center (CYJULERC)



Cameroon

GIVING WOMEN HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

CYJULERC, unique among Cameroon's women's organizations, is comprised of professional jurists focusing on improving the lives of rural women and children. The organization has exhibited exceptional courage and creativity in the long-term strategic projects it has initiated. The impact of CYJULERC's work extends from grassroots communities to the highest policy level of the Cameroonian society (Ministries and Parliament). Below are two examples:

A **"Ten Year Campaign for the Eradication of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Cameroon"**. The eradication of FGM was socially neglected in Cameroon despite the WHO statistics revealing that 20% of women still undergo FGM in the country. The project started with intensive awareness-raising campaigns at the grassroots level. CYJULERC collected testimonies of victims and practitioners from the field and presented these testimonies to some of the female members of parliament who were in tears upon hearing them. They also presented a draft law against FGM to be tabled for adoption. The law is still pending at the National Assembly (March 2007).

Environmental Protection and Economic Empowerment. CYJULERC conceived an incomegenerating activity that involves women in forest conservation, provides protein for their households, and also provides an alternative source of income to FGM practitioners. Snail farming was initiated to replace the source of income usually generated from the practice of FGM. Due to an overwhelming response and a lack of a regular and affordable sources of protein, it was not feasible to limit the project to FGM practitioners only. It has since become a project that helps women in providing food for household consumption and in improving the quality of their lives.

Laureates 2007

Diana DELARONDE-COLOMBE



Canada

ASSURING FOOD SECURITY TO HER COMMUNITY

Diana (39) is an indigenous woman and a resident of the community of Wabowden (Manitoba). Married and with four children, she is active in all aspects of the community - from school, sports and recreation to spiritual life. As a Community Animator of the Bayline Regional Roundtable (BRRT, a group of communities, located along the same railroad line and joined together to address similar concerns and challenges), Diana has provided leadership and mentoring in the establishment of community garden projects, for the "northern freezer initiative" and the Manitoba Food Charter. Due to high transportation costs, rural and isolated aboriginal communities in northern Manitoba had problems acquiring healthy, nutritional food at a low cost. The BRRT has been working to deal with this challenge through various initiatives. For example, BRRT issued the Manitoba Food Charter, a one-page document addressing what Manitobans want in their food system and what their concerns are. In all other areas of Canada, food charters are elaborated by municipalities, but the Northern Manitoba is so isolated that communities decided to do a provincial one. As part of this dynamic group, Diana established community gardens where young people were taught all aspects of gardening as a step toward long-term sustainability.

She also initiated a pilot project in a northern isolated community accessible only by air and by road for a short time during the winter months. Freezers were purchased and distributed to residents who wish to enter into a short-term repayment plan.

Diana is a natural leader and nurturer, demonstrated repeatedly through her grass roots level work within northern communities. She has become a mentor and role model for many food security agencies, and willingly partners with them offering human, material, and financial resources to help them build capacities.

Laureates 2007

Joyce ONEKO



Kenya



EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN

Since 1998, Joyce (54) has implemented multiple projects through her NGO Mama na Dada Africa (MnDA) with the mission of strengthening capacities for grassroots women. These include multiple “Modeling Opportunity” templates for economic development, childcare, healthcare, education and recreation. These templates are designed to teach new techniques and concepts in rural areas while, at the same time, addressing tangible needs.

All of the MnDA's programs strive to provide greater self-sustainability to all villagers with whom it works, although specifically reaching out to girls and women. For example, MnDA started a Demonstration Farm to educate the community to return to planting traditional vegetables and crops that they stopped growing when new crops such as corn were introduced. It reintroduced sweet potatoes, cassava, sorghum, pumpkins, and indigenous vegetables, as well as beginning a goatrearing project to provide desperately needed protein.

A recent example of Joyce's extraordinary commitment to rural women is the creative capacity-building project represented by the December 2006 “Grassroots African Women's Conference” in Kenya. Joyce was the main force in organizing this conference, which brought together over 500 women mostly from East Africa, but also from other African countries and North America. She maximized all of the resources available to her locally, regionally and internationally and handled fundraising as well as logistical challenges. For example, she coordinated overland travel for hundreds of women from their rural villages in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania - a daunting task given the lack of infrastructure in this region. All of these women, hungry for this kind of connection, were relieved to discover that they were not alone in facing similar problems and challenges, and were excited to discover new ideas and resources that could be utilized in their local programs. The women became more empowered and confident each day of the conference and returned to their communities with a new sense of themselves as viable community leaders and valuable contributors to their culture.

Laureates 2007

Maria Isabel ALVES



Cape Verde

WHEN “REBELS” BECOME INNOVATORS

Maria Isabel (44), affectionately called Misa, lived with her grandmother in a village in the mountains of Cape Verde's Santiago Island until the age of 11, when she moved to Switzerland to live with her mother. The departure was difficult for the young girl who never stopped thinking of her native rural world.

In 1996, at age 34, she decided to return to Cape Verde. She intended to meet the mysterious Rabelados a “rebel” community that had fled to Santiago's inaccessible mountain region in the 1960s after years of persecution for defying the strict Catholic doctrine imposed by the colonial regime.

Isolated and determined to preserve their traditional religion and culture, they resisted contact with others and with modernization (education and school, occidental medicine, technical progress). As the first person to show interest in the Rabelados, Misa initially faced misunderstanding, prejudice and mockery by the people of Cape Verde. It also took time and patience to win the trust of the Rabelados. However, respecting their way of life and beliefs, she gradually gained their confidence and began working with them on various development projects based on their traditional art. This approach has led to a range of improvements, from infrastructure to healthcare. She promoted their weaving tradition and bamboo houses (funkus) and also developed painting, drawing, sculpture, sewing and ceramics. By creating a handcraft oriented village, the Rabelados opened themselves to the world and now accept visitors with whom they share their ancestral knowledge, cultural and spiritual traditions.

Today, after ten years of working to enhance the lives of the Rabelados by promoting their spiritual and cultural traditions through art, Misa wants to develop an exchange between this community and the rest of the world.

Laureates 2007

Mercy KIYAPYAP



Kenya



CAMELS AND BEES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mercy (27) was born into poverty in the Pokot area of Kenya. She lost her father at the age of 6 and experienced Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) at the age of 11. Despite these challenges she decided to fight for her education. As a child and in an area where 90% of the population was illiterate, she raised vegetables, goats and hens to bring money to her family and saved enough for a school uniform and books. After receiving her education, she decided return to her home region and help bring about change while raising awareness of women's rights.

Today, Mercy plays a leadership role in carrying out innovative ideas to empower women and bring about peace. For the "Cabesi" (Camel-Bees-Silk) project, she is responsible for the training of 1000 farmers, mostly women, in bee keeping and silk production. In addition, the project is a means to encourage the rearing and using of camels instead of less drought-tolerant cattle. Camels endure dry periods significantly better than cattle or goats and their soft hooves preserve the delicate ground. They receive their nourishment from leaves instead of sparse grass, do not damage the already over stressed environment, and produce much more milk.

The traditional honey production in the West Pokot area was an occupation only men were allowed to have. They used hollowed out tree trunks that were placed high in the trees. In harvesting the honey, men used fire to chase off the bees, which often resulted in the destruction of the bee population and devastating bush fires. The "Cabesi" project promotes a gentle modernization of honey production. Bee boxes are made of simple wood with frames that bees use to build their honeycombs. These frames are easily removed to harvest the honey and can be reused. This way, bees survive the harvesting, the resulting honey quantity is increased, and the quality improved. In contrast to the traditional method, the modern boxes can be used on the ground, which allow women to become bee-keepers, along with men, promoting gender equality.

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Mercy also promotes the education of girls and women, advocates for women's rights in general and for the elimination of FGM. She is now recognized as a role model within the community and is so well respected that traditional chiefs and leaders involve her in difficult social cases and ask her for advice.

Laureates 2007

Paula SANDOVAL ELISEO



Mexico

A LONG LIFE DEDICATED TO HER COMMUNITY

When a community lacks structure, self-organization is necessary. Paula was born in 1922 in La Cebolleta, Montemorelos Municipality, Nuevo León. At that time, a child's priority was to help in housework. She was forced to quit school early on, barely knowing how to write her own name. As a young married woman, she moved with her husband to the community of La Unión where she worked in order to help feed her family.

In the 70s', women from the community decided to organize themselves in order to improve their living conditions and they chose Paula as President of the new Communal Women's League. The beginning was not easy, but Paula did not give up. She empowered the organized women to raise money for the installation of electricity and drinking water, two urgent needs for the community. They also built a grocery store, gave cooking classes and fought for the establishment of a health center.

Having learned the ancestral tradition of midwifery, Paula expanded her knowledge through training with the municipal doctor. This enabled her to obtain an official certificate, allowing her to deliver basic medication to help women in six different communities. Moreover, she was of great help to doctors on many occasions, especially when the community faced malaria. With her activities, Paula gained public recognition and today, at the age of 84 years old, still assists pregnant women. After a long life of service she continues to support community projects and shows great enthusiasm and desire to dedicate herself to others for the improvement of life in the community.

Laureates 2007

Rupa Manel SILVA



Sri Lanka

A BANK BY WOMEN, FOR WOMEN

Rupa (49) was born into a family of farmers in Bandarawela, in the hills of Sri Lanka. Despite the death of her father when she was 16, she continued her education through high school level. Due to lack of economic means she stopped her education and married at the age of 19. In 1978, she moved with her husband to Colombo. Facing unemployment herself, she decided to create the first women's bank group in the area. Her strategy was to encourage poor women to begin saving regularly, no matter how small the amount, to establish a basis for loans.

The saving system initially started with a deposit of Rs.5 (\$US 0.12) per person and per month. The project idea was for a group of 5 to 15 women to select a leader, who was well aware of the background and needs of each family member, and who took responsibility to give the loans for a deserving purpose. The Women's Bank (Sri Lanka's Women's Development Service Cooperative Society), bringing together all the groups, was officially formed in 1989 with branches in 18 districts.

The total of the deposits to date stands at \$US 6 million for 37'000 members. By 1994, Rupa was able to extend the network to rural areas and support the establishment of women's groups in areas where life for most women meant only housework, cooking and raising children.

The last 12 years have transformed many lives, including Rupa's. Mud houses have been changed into brick homes with electricity and running water. Many women have learned to read and write as well as the importance of environmental protection. Most of these women in the informal sector cannot imagine the concept of retirement, but with assistance from the Women's Bank, for the first time, women can imagine the possibility of a pension in an old age. At the end of a member's loan period, a program will calculate her monthly pension based on her savings and the number of years of membership, with the same interest rate as in the other banks.

Rupa's words: "A bank that protects our hopes and dreams, that is made up of our own hopes and dreams is vital for rural women like me. It is an immense social and financial net that protects these dreams".

Laureates 2007

Veronica FRANZEN



Argentina



A SCIENTIFIC APPROACH FOR THE RURAL AREA

In 1992, after obtaining an education degree, Veronica (45) became a teacher in a rural community. Totally new to rural life, she faced loneliness and sacrifice, living without a telephone or car. In time, however, the relationships with nature and rural people changed her life in ways that made her profoundly grateful for her relocation and work. In addition, her family offered great support: her three children moved with her and went to rural schools, while her husband worked in town.

For the last five years she has worked in the rural school of Guillermo Hudson in Pozo de Chaja and on evenings, she gives adult literacy classes. Now, she has a car and delivers 40 liters of water every day for the school's needs. When she started to teach in Pozo de Chaja, the school had just reopened after four years of closing due to a lack of pupils. Today, there are 45 students and the school has become a respected community institution.

Veronica insists on the importance of educating rural children to rural science. Her students were honored many times for their projects presented at scientific fairs. A few examples include the production of a natural hand and face lotion, of regional foods like "pickles" and "escabeches", the development of natural glue, insecticide and mosquito repellent, etc. Veronica's class was invited to present its natural products at the International Book Fair in 2004 where her students were named "Women of science" and received numerous distinctions. Veronica promotes a scientific approach and guides her students with enthusiasm and looks for utility in every object she finds. She succeeded in improving the quality of rural life and created a harmonious relationship with nature.

Laureates 2007

Women Farmers Network / www.baeuerinnentreff.de



Germany



AN INTERNET NETWORK FOR RURAL WOMEN WORLDWIDE

What do women farmers around the world want?

The Internet network www.baeuerinnentreff.de provides answers to many questions. This women farmers' network or BT, as it is called by insiders, is an indispensable international empowerment network.

It all began with an idea by a farmer living near Passau (Germany) who dreamt of a discussion platform for women like herself. What became of this idea, is unique and exemplary. Beginning as an Internet network for women farmers, the idea grew into an association, which has set high goals for the well being of women farmers. These goals include, via the use of the Internet:

- increase of communication for education
- support in the use of new technologies
- development of culture
- development of understanding between nations and one's land of origin
- development of animal rearing and plant production
- development of home gardens and traditional knowledge

Since the launch of the home page www.bauerinnentreff.de in December 2001, the site has attracted more than 1,5 million visitors, setting the stage for unique solidarity. Describing the enthusiasm women farmers have for www.baeuerinnentreff.de, E.A. from B* says: "If we did not have www.baeuerinnentreff.de something would be missed in a big way. The www.bauerinnentreff.de is for me real empowerment. I came to meet many women farmers via this network and unique friendships have developed and special knowledge shared". For E.S. from N*, who lives isolated in the mountains, the network is a precious door to the wider world. Moreover, she says, "I consider it also positive that taboo issues can be discussed such as AIDS and how to protect oneself, as well as problems with parents-in-law". Thanks to BT, today women farmers can keep in touch.

* Names chosen by the publisher.



Laureates from 2006

Laureates 2006

Angeline MUGWENDERE



Zimbabwe

WOMEN'S EDUCATION, THE TIGER IN THE TANK OF DEVELOPMENT

Angeline Mugwendere (26) comes from an extremely poor rural family in Zimbabwe. She often went hungry during her school years, fighting both the jeers of better-off schoolchildren and the usual prejudices of the system against the poor. Thanks to the CAMFED organisation of Britain (Cambridge Female Organisation Trust), she was able to finish her studies brilliantly and become the heart and soul of CAMA. This organization is doing outstanding work empowering rural girls and women. In seven years, CAMA, with Angeline as Director, has not only expanded across the African continent, but in Zimbabwe has set up a highly original micro-credit scheme, the Seed Money Scheme promoted legal literacy in rural areas to enable women to understand their basic rights trained its members to deliver community health programs (70'000 have heard their message in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Ghana and Tanzania).

In the past year (2005) alone, CAMA has:

- trained 5215 young women in economic life skills
- helped set up more than 870 small businesses
- and trained more than 3000 young women in leadership and advocacy.

Angeline helped set up CAMA in Zimbabwe in 1998. By 2003, the network included 2000 members with new applications flooding in by the hundreds. These educated young women are now agents for change in their own areas. Under Angeline's leadership, CAMA has developed strong relationships with local and national government authorities. It has also organised a series of campaigns against sexual abuse and domestic violence, working with the courts, police, local chiefs and community elders. These campaigns against sexual abuse reached over 40'000 people in 2003 and contributed to changes in bylaws on protection of girls. Angeline Mugwendere is regarded as a uniquely passionate, committed and inspiring leader at all levels made her the first women in her rural area to drive a car. Ever since she has become a role model for girls and women in Kianjai.

Laureates 2006

Eleni BANDA



Zambia



JUSTICE FOR ALL THROUGH PARALEGAL TRAINING

A modern country functions on the basis of statutory laws - laws passed by the Parliament. However, in most African countries, statutory law coexists with customary law, which often takes precedence due to illiteracy, ignorance of statutory rights, corruption, male dominance and especially lack of training of both local justices and the police, called to enforce statutory law.

Since the mid seventies, Eleni Banda (52) has been a leading figure in her community and province both in the organisation of women's groups for development and championing women and children's rights. She spearheaded the creation of a unified body of women's groups, by founding the Chiparamba Area Women's Development Association in 1991. For the first time ever, women in the region were unified under a common umbrella body which coordinated and monitored the activities of its groups and facilitated the sharing of experiences. Later, in 1996, the Eastern Province Women's Development Association (EPWDA) was formed. Since 2001, this association has been undertaking pioneering work training paralegals that are taught the basics of law and human rights and then return to spread the information in the villages.

Now rural women are not only learning the basics of law but also passing on their knowledge to chiefs, village headmen and other key members of society. This has for instance significantly reduced the incidence of property grabbing, a traditional custom which enables the relatives of a deceased husband to claim the totality of his property and throw his wife and children out of their home with only a few pots and pans to their name.

Laureates 2006

Gauriben Raysinghbhai KOLI



India

Water is life!

Water is growingly scarce in many parts of the world today, and that is certainly the case in the village of Bharada, Gujarat State. The State Water Supply and Sewerage Board invited SEWA to undertake the work of pipeline repairing in the area - formerly strictly a man's job. "We will die of thirst if you undertake this job" the men told the women.

However, led by Gauriben (39), the women of the SEWA group (Self-Employed Women's Association, India's largest organisation of poor self-employed women), participated in a seven month training programme during which they mastered the techniques of leakage repair of the iron and PVC pipelines, chlorination of water, the functioning of operating valves and various motors, keeping records of stocks for water tanks, etc.

Beginnings were not easy. An earthquake broke the pipeline in many places, but the women were able, thanks to their creativity and drive, to maintain uninterrupted water supplies, to the great surprise of the villagers. The leader of one of the villages supplied by the pipelines systematically broke the pipelines to prove his point that women were incapable of running such a job. Undaunted, the women would immediately repair every break till the village head finally gave up.

In addition, the SEWA team teaches villagers a more hygienic use of the water supply and how to save water. As a result, water born diseases are receding and water is used more carefully.

Gauriben is now a highly respected local leader.

Laureates 2006

Hongxia REN



China



GREENING TREELESS MOUNTAINS

Early 2000, the Chinese government issued a policy accelerating the development of deserted mountains, wild slopes, waste- and swampland; especially encouraging civil servants to take up the challenge of reforestation and developing these areas. Ren Hongxia (40), who was born and brought up in rural areas, was familiar with the living conditions of rural women in such regions. With great courage, she contracted to develop 313 hectares (over 1200 acres) of a bald mountain - the first woman civil servant to accept such a challenge. The mountain she contracted to reforest was in a remote area with no roads or electricity. People and animals used water from the same ponds. Villages were isolated and the standard of living was extremely low.

Hongxia Ren started by organizing the people to build a 17 km road, one pump station for water and 42 wells. She then organized 200 young people to plant over a million trees. There are now 1.19 million trees, including 253 hectares of ecological forest (i.e. trees planted essentially to stabilize and regenerate the landscape) and 60 hectares planted mainly with fruit trees of different varieties (peach, apricot, walnut, pear, etc). She met major disasters with equanimity and courage, such as the 2000-2001 drought, which almost wiped out the project right at the onset. But the area is now covered with trees, and an aging, balding mountain is now a source of great activity and significant income.

Just as important, Hongxia Ren helped women significantly increase their income. Through her example, she became a role model for women who have come out of their families to start their own businesses in areas as varied as transportation and processing of local produce.

Laureates 2006

Josiane MULOWSKI



France



PRESERVING MENACED HORSES

It has been estimated (FAO) that as many as 2'200 domestic animal races could become extinct in the next 20 years - already 1000 have taken the sad trail of extinction in the past century.

On their farm of 113 ha, Josiane Mulowsky (53) and her husband Guy practice integrated agriculture, a "soft" form of environmentally friendly agriculture less radical than other forms such as permaculture, but which for that reason attracts a larger number of farmers. One of their key activities, which is Josiane's speciality, is raising the famous French "percheron" horse, a descendant of crossbreeds of Arabian pure breeds and local breeds, dating back to the Arabian invasion of Southern France in the 8th century. The Percheron is one of 14 menaced French breeds today.

To make the venture economically viable, Josiane has proved extremely creative in opening the family farm to the public, transforming it into what is called a "discovery farm" which welcomes people from all walks of life (children, the handicapped, retirees - in addition to the general public). This has entailed taking numerous specialised trainings in the field of human relations, security, etc. "Horses are an excellent way of getting people to meet us and become environmentally literate", explains Josiane standing next to a beautiful white horse.

As dedicated practitioners of integrated agriculture, the Mulowskys have for instance reintroduced close to seven miles of hedges in their fields, started intercropping, adopted fertilisation techniques and adapted their buildings - all with sustainable development in mind. Since 2005, the farm produces its own rap seed based motor fuel and the oil cake from the rap seed is sold locally to other farmers as cattle feed. With the escalating prices of oil, this seems an intelligent and even prophetic activity. As believers and practitioners of a future-oriented, environmentally respectful agriculture, both Josiane and her husband are extremely active in numerous citizens and professional organisations both locally, regionally and nationally, making their fellow citizens aware of the fact that "the future is in our hands" and that it starts at home.

Laureates 2006

Liberia Crisis Center for Abused Women and Children (LCC)



Liberia

THE RIGHT TO DIGNITY

LCC is an educational, non-profit organization, founded in 1989 out of concern for the increasing forms of violence, especially rape and sexual abuse against women in Liberia.

A native of Liberia, West Africa, Beverly Goll-Yekeson (36), a survivor of sexual assault, an experience that inspired her unwavering dedication to establish and promote the LCC, formally called the African Crisis Centre for Empowerment. Today, a devoted wife and mother, she is a full time environmental planner and advocates for the rights of women and children in Liberia. During the 14-year Liberian civil war, approximately 60.70% of females of all ages in Liberian refugee camps suffered some form of sexual violence. Realizing the dire need for formal representation, advocacy and rehabilitation for these victims, LCC was established to empowering victims recovering from the trauma of abuse and rape. the LCC provides services in both rural and urban areas of Liberia, fostering economic selfsufficiency by providing emotional and financial support, educational campaigns, and advocacy to individual groups and the general public in the prevention of rape, domestic violence and sexual assault against women and children.

Activities include: A safe shelter for women and children for up to 30 days; A 24-hour crisis phone line; Counselling for survivors; Court and legal services; Assistance with reporting to police; Accompaniment to court, hospital, and other agency appointments; Transportation to shelter and other services; Advocacy, i.e. promoting educational awareness campaigns, including distribution of materials; Seminars, workshops, consultative conferences and meetings; Other assistance in the form of food, clothing, personal hygiene items, household goods and help to relocate and training in business development and entrepr neurial skills. The LCC also sponsors numerous activities to raise awareness of widespread sexual violence via video screenings and organized alert teams in 15 rural and 10 urban communities through Liberia.

Due to the atmosphere of apathy in the persecution of rapists, the stigmatisation associated with rape violence, and the tolerance for the rape crisis in Liberia, the challenge of giving a voice and raising awareness for these victims has been one of the many hurdles faced by LCC.

Laureates 2006

Lijuan XIANG



China

A KINDERGARTEN FOR RURAL CHILDREN

There are not many places where rural children have access to kindergartens, especially in Third World countries. After successfully working in the city kindergarten of Dongyue Township, Xiang Lijuan (30) of Dong Yue Xiang Ping Qiao village (Sichuan Province) decided to return home to open a kindergarten for rural children.

Obstacles were immense. She had the care of an elderly mother and a two year old child. With no classrooms, no teachers, no equipment and no money, all she had was a dream and an unbending, unrelenting will. First, she had to negotiate with local schools and government. Then she approached banks and large city kindergartens for support. After endless efforts, she secured a 60'000 yuan loan (US\$ 7'500), which enabled her to open her Sunflower Kindergarten in 2002 with adequate equipment and professional teachers.

Under her expert leadership, each teacher became a loving mother to the children. After only three years, the success was so striking, she obtained a much more important loan, enabling her to expand to a larger, more professional set-up in a better environment, allowing her to better incarnate her dream that rural children, too, have a right to the best.

Laureates 2006

“Mama” Margaretha SAKO



Indonesia



TOGETHER WE ARE STRONG

Margaretha Sako (54), usually called Mama Margaretha, is the founder and driver of the Saku Maju Group in the Manumean Village (East Nusa Tenggara Province), which has played a key role in the development of her community and served as a model for other regions of her country.

After completing junior high school, she worked with her family, then later with her husband, using slash-and-burn cultivation. In this system trees are cut down, burned, then seeds are planted for two or three years before one moves on to another area where the process starts again. However, this approach is highly damageable to the land, and after observing other villages where agroforestry was used, she became determined to encourage her community to make changes. She followed courses given by a local NGO, and then decided to start a group in her village.

This was not an easy thing. Women in her village were even afraid to talk to strangers, and rarely had any say in decision-making. However, with great perseverance she finally managed in 1994 to get seven women together to start the Saku Maju (“enjoy moving forward”) group. The aim of the group was both to start developing new agricultural techniques and a village food kiosk. With continued perseverance, three other groups were born in the following years, and later on, a network (called Lopotani Manumean Lestari) comprising all the groups, came into being, all with a view to promote sustainable development.

Groups from as far away as East Timor, Philippines, even Australia, and other provinces in Indonesia, have visited this model group. Because the roles of women in this group were so advanced, a local government organisation donated a small solar power plant.

The practice of agro-forestry has substantially increased the income of families practicing this approach to sustainable development.

Laureates 2006

Margaret Ntuti AKWALU



Kenya

EDUCATE A GIRL AND YOU EDUCATE A NATION

Chairlady of the Kieni Gia Nkoro Women's Group in the rural district of Kianjai, Mama Ruth (65), as Margaret Ntuti Akwalu is fondly and popularly called, has made tremendous contributions towards community development in many areas. Her teaching in agriculture and development farming methods enabled her to sell the idea of cash crop growing to unwilling peasants in this rural community which resulted in a big increase of coffee plantation acreage. This became one of the greatest economic activities in the area that fed, educated and employed many people. She also uses her agricultural knowledge to improve her own farm that yields today the highest results. Margaret also preaches good hygiene practices and as a volunteer with the Kenya Family Planning Association, she strongly campaigns against retrogressive cultural practices like girl circumcision (FMG) and advocates for smaller families. Among her achievements, we can share that Margaret

- organized circuit women's fellowships to start a saving plan in the value of one full day's work in the form of cereals, bananas, cassavas, etc. to be sold every month at circuit level
- arranged home visits to promote personal hygiene among women, church members and the entire community
- introduced kitchen gardening and started successful educational meetings where women learned how to read, knit, embroider, type and dye, repair and sew
- actively participated in the construction of the Kianjai circuit women's Boarding primary school and raised funds
- presently guides the construction of a conference centre in Kianjai.

Margaret is a source of inspiration to many in word and deed. Characteristically she never shies away from taking on daring and bold initiatives where many would not tread. Way back in 1960, when most people in Kenya (including men) were afraid of tampering with machines, she drove a Land Rover, which made her the first woman in her rural area to drive a car. Ever since she has become a role model for girls and women in Kianjai.

Laureates 2006

María Brigada GONZALEZ de CARTAGENA



Colombia

NON-VIOLENCE SUBDUES TERROR

It takes an extraordinary measure of creativity, courage and faith to maintain a non-violent, environmentally friendly community in a region where state and guerrilla terrorism kill and maim daily, especially when your own child and spouse have died as victims of this terror. (Her beloved 15 year old daughter was brutally murdered in December 2005 by a grenade thrown into a small group of members of the community accused by the army of being “terrorists”).

Maria Brigada (52), mother, artist, farmer and educator, is a leading member of the Peace Community of San Jose de Apartado since 1996. Such peace communities are a new event in the 60 year Colombian Civil War, the oldest on the planet. It involves the civilian population deciding to have nothing more to do with any of the armed groups, and working together to build healthy, self-sufficient communities practicing the principles of sustainable development and non-violence. Such communities need international support as they are being deliberately targeted by the Colombian government and its paramilitaries, who do not want to see other models of social or economic development.

As a mother and farmer, Maria provides the food for her own family. (The community is 80% self-sufficient in food needs). As an educator, she teaches in the local school and is one of the main organizers of the Farmer's University, a one-month activity where members of rural communities meet in San Jose to discuss how best to preserve their environment in a war torn zone. The communities run workshops on organic gardening, herbal lore, politics, peace, setting up rural businesses, etc. In her own community, Maria Brigada has set up with a few others a medicinal herb garden so that members of the community have access to natural remedies for all minor ailments. Amazingly, the community is entirely alcohol free, which has a significant incidence on the decrease of violence in families.

An artist also, her naive-style creative paintings have travelled the world, saying more than many swords could. Finally, living in a very “male dominated culture”, she had to fight hard to create respect in her community.

Laureates 2006

Maria LINIBI



Papua New Guinea



INNOVATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

Maria Linibi (51) has become one of the most outstanding role models for women farmers in PNG. Rural women play a key role in this still essentially rural country and economy. However, as in many other areas of the world, rural women often live in the shadow of their spouses. A highly competent business woman in her own right, Maria and her husband have developed their own farm and she tirelessly uses the experience gained there to stimulate and encourage other women farmers.

This has been done under trying circumstances. PNG is a struggling developing country, and rural areas are often neglected in terms of services, communication and transport. It is a testament to the laureate's courage and persistence that she has been able to achieve such a lot. Born in 1955, she worked as a public servant for many years before leaving this job to work on her own farm in 1990. Thereafter she became a successful farmer, trailblazing the production of crops unknown to the area, and tirelessly working to disseminate this knowledge among women farmers of the region. She became a farmer trainer of many food crops now successfully grown in the Markham Valley where she has her home.

A particular success of her husband and herself has been the introduction of the African yam to the area. Other plants they have successfully promoted are peanuts, rice, sweet potatoes, etc. She has trained 500 farmers individually in rice, vegetables, bulb onion production, watermelon and many other varieties. She has organized women farmers in the region and has also pioneered the production of plant-based organic products such as oil and locally medicated soap.

Laureates 2006

Marta PREKPALAJ



Kosovo

LEARNING FROM LIVING AND BUILDING WITH THE PEOPLE

Lao Tzu wrote: “Go to the people, love them, live with them, learn from them. Start with what they know, build with what they have, and with the best leaders. When the work is done, the people will say: we did this ourselves”.

Marta's whole life is a living illustration of this famous statement. Born in 1967 in the village of Zym in the isolated mountainous Has region on the Albanian border, she had to fight to go to secondary school, a two hour walk from her home which girls were not permitted to do. At 23, she became involved in a literacy campaign and soon after cofounded an association for the education of women, Motrat Qiriaz, becoming in 1995 the first woman school director of her region.

Lao Tzu's statement became the working motto of Motrat Qiriaz. From the start, all members of the community were invited to the meetings. However, as in this profoundly patriarchal culture, women did not speak much in the meetings, Marta started by organizing separate meetings for women. When the whole community came together again, women were for the first time capable of not only clearly defining their needs, but defending them too. Somewhat unique among women activists, Marta included men in her work, fully realizing that no gender equality could exist without their willing participation.

She has supported women regardless of ethnicity, political or other affiliations that so often divide women. She linked with Serbian women (“the enemy”) during the civil war, even Roma. She has served as a role model for rural girls, working side by side with them to reduce child marriage, dowries, lack off access to schools. Under the oppressive Serbian regime of Slobodan Milosevic, Marta's activism entailed immense risk to her personal safety. For instance, she set up libraries and clinics when both were illegal. Her impact on her region is immense, she has established 3 secondary schools, 11 libraries, getting roads paved, creating 2 community centres, to mention a few initiatives that have transformed this essentially rural area of Kosovo.

Laureates 2006

Rufine KOUKOU



Benin



PROMOTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Rufine Koukou, 67, a secretary by training, was forced to leave her job at 52. An active promoter of women's rights, she decides to create a cooperative to produce and promote quality soap based on local, biologically produced raw materials such as palm and coconut oil, sesame seed, neem and other plants. Challenges faced the cooperative right from the start. It received the first prize of the Rural Fair for its production. The prize had formerly been monopolized by the cooperatives' palm oil supplier, who reacted badly by cutting off all supplies of palm oil! Undaunted, Rufine Koukou organised the women in the villages to produce.

Production remains relatively small-scale, due to a lack of machinery. However, despite this bottleneck, progress has been substantial, and production has passed from 4,5 tons in 1996 to 34 tons in 2005. The cooperative has also diversified its production, and produces four kinds of soaps: toilet soap, soaps with healing properties to heal skin problems, fatigue, as well as antiseptic soaps, beauty soaps (for skin dehydration, anti-wrinkle, etc.) and laundry soaps.

The impact of these high quality organic products has been immediate. Four-fifths of the cooperative's production is exported to Europe (Italy, France) and other African countries. The cooperative employs 24 persons, and works with thirteen producers groups essentially composed of women.

Rufine Koukou has achieved multi-pronged results through her untiring efforts:

- the creation of jobs both for the women she employs and producers of raw materials
- she has put on the market high quality products
- she has promoted the concept of organically based, environmentally safe goods
- the "health line" products enable people to decrease medical expenses
- she has harmoniously allied tradition and modernity in regions where modern development too often cuts people off from their cultural roots.

Laureates 2006

Waltraud SCHWIENBACHER



Italy

AN EXPLOSION OF CREATIVITY

To meet Waltraud Schwenbacher (62) from St. Walburg in Ultental (South Tirol) is to meet someone who is not only constantly bursting with ideas, but who also has the drive to give them life.

She is deeply concerned with strengthening the best of traditional values, arts, crafts and lifestyles, while reminding people that they need to function in harmony with nature, not against it, and of doing this in an economically viable manner that enables the farmers of this mountainous region to keep their farms rather than having to wander off to the city for jobs. In her own words, her efforts are centered on “our valley itself, the people of the valley, the quality of life which cannot be expressed in money, and insuring the farming way of life and its survival”.

One of her key projects has been the creation of a winter school, which aims at restoring traditional knowledge of handicrafts, working with traditional raw materials, living close to nature and developing an environmentally balanced economy. The courses enable the local population and farmers to widen their skills while appreciating the local materials and develop their creativity. Founded 12 years ago with 20 students, the school now runs numerous courses with close to 470 students from Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Only a quarter of the students are locals.

A Summer Academy completes the winter school, offering a host of nature-oriented courses. Waltraud's latest brain child is the transformation of sheep dung into potash for further use in the creation of art objects out of glass, an old Venetian tradition, which she already sees happening in her region.



Laureates from 2006

Laureates 2005

Agnéle Delali Christine MENSAH



Togo

EDUCATIONAL SKETCHES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Born in 1958 in the village of Tohoun (South- West Togo) in the Adja tribe, and teacher by training, Christine (now 47) very rapidly became aware of how key elements of local culture created tremendous obstacles to women's advancement. Among these are forced marriages, the young girl's submission to fetishistic practices, forced marriage of widow's to the husband's brother, lack of communication between parents and children, etc. Christine rapidly realized that education was the key to these problems. But how do you communicate messages that go against the grain of traditions in a semiliterate society? So she set up a theater group which started transmitting new messages relating to women's empowerment and development. She rapidly transformed her theater group into an NGO (nongovernmental organisation) to reach a much larger audience. Very soon, the impact of her activity became measurable, e.g. a substantial increase in the number of girls attending school, and a decrease of forced marriages in the region. Among other customs Christine has successfully fought one can mention:

- Forced marriages of girls: in the Adja culture, girls can be given to a creditor to eliminate a debt. He then can give her to one of his sons, or even marry her himself, despite the fact that he might be of an advanced age
- Fetish convent: for various reasons, a young girl can be taken out of school and put in the fetish convent. Frequently she will lose her virginity, the master of the convent having complete control over her. Such customs and others are formidable barriers to women's emancipation and development. In a highly traditional, male dominated society, it needs great courage, intelligence and perseverance to fight such practices

Laureates 2005

Association IDL Jeunesse Deguena



Mali

PREVENTING ILLS OF RURAL EXODUS

Deguena is a small village in the Kounari commune of Mopti Circle (Mali). Its economy is based on rice cultivation, cattle raising, fishing and picking wild fruits. So as to help prevent the massive exodus described under the ESSEM Association and its ills, the Swiss Idées'Elles Woman's Association (IDL), in collaboration with the local Malian NGO, Prométhée, developed a highly original micro-credit project for youth. Thanks to this credit, girls and young women of IDL Jeunesse buy and sell in the markets of the neighbouring villages rice, baobab and tamarind leaves, ground nuts and various spices. They fatten sheep and cattle for sale, and take also part in pond fishing. A recent evaluation showed that thanks to this petty trade, the girls concerned, could dress decently, purchase at least a lamb, the male descendants of which will be sold to produce additional income, and start preparing their dowry. Not a one single one of the dozens of girls concerned had left for the city. And they are unanimous in claiming that they no longer have any reason to migrate to the city, as they have all they need locally. The IDL Association plans to start training activities in basic literacy, family planning, Aids prevention, sowing and dress making, etc. "Necessity is the mother of invention" says a wellknown proverb. More and more, grassroots groups all around the world are discovering that more important still than financial means are creativity, intention, motivation and commitment.

Laureates 2005

BARBARA BURZYNSKA



Poland



GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY: FROM POLITICAL SLOGANS TO FUNCTIONING REALITY

By training an agricultural engineer, 60 year old Barbara Burzyska's job as head specialist of Rural Development and Agriculture in her region (Pomorskie Voivodeship), constantly brought her face to face with rural Poland's main challenges: dramatically high unemployment, growing income gap between cities and countryside, a high rate of rural urban migration, very weak democracy and great suspicion toward politicians, weak public infrastructure, etc. Study trips to France and Ireland convinced her that rather than attempt to apply development plans on the level of a "gmina" (the Polish equivalent of a commune), they should be implemented on the level of individual villages. So she developed a concept called the Pomeranian Village Renewal Program which she was delegated to implement. The program trains representatives of a village in basic concepts such as strategic local development planning, fundraising, leadership, conflict solving, etc. After the training, inhabitants gather together and prepare a Local Development Plan. Thanks to the inhabitants participation in the process, they take responsibility for its implementation. It is important to stress that the program includes not only material aspects such as job creation, public infrastructure, access to services, the environment, but also immaterial aspects such as traditional customs, respect of the local cultural inheritance, community life, etc. The physical aspects of this program include modernized and well-equipped village community rooms, new or renovated parks, village centres and squares, sport centers, playgrounds, to mention but a few. The social effects of the program are just as important.

One can mention a stronger sense of local identity, more active participation in public life, a sense of controlling one's own environment, a sense of being needed.

Laureates 2005

Jagran Jan Vikas Samiti INSTITUTE Cofounder Bhanwar Dhabhai



India

EMPOWERING TRADITIONAL RURAL HEALERS

Because of its pioneering work in an area so critical for sane development, and its major impact on the lives of families, WWSF is for the first time awarding an Institute with its Prize: The Jagran Jan Vikas Samiti (JJVS) Institute, co-founded in 1986 by Bhanwar Dhabhai and Ganesh Purohit which is doing exceptional work to empower innumerable traditional healers of both sexes to maintain and improve their art. JJVS provides health services of excellent quality at prices most can easily afford. After a three year drought had taken an intolerable toll among children in a small village near Udaipur (Rajasthan), Bhanwar Dhabhai (46) started looking for new approaches to the furnishing of health services. She discovered the existence of many indigenous doctors deeply knowledgeable about medicinal plants and healing. These healers historically treated people free, regardless of caste. With the help of local villagers, the Institute started to identify these healers (called “gunis” or sages by the JJVS) in view of setting up alternative village health care programs. In the close to twenty years since the foundation of the Institute, the developments have been truly spectacular. The JJVS staff has located well over 1100 skilled “gunis” (both male and female) from different tribal regions who treat ailments without any side effects. The Institute is promoting a revised version of the gunis’ traditional health system as a viable medical alternative to costly, inaccessible Westernstyle care. To summarize,

JJVS is helping to:

- broaden the knowledge base of local healers and cataloguing plants used
- set up rural/urban clinics and medicinal plant gardens and seed banks
- enhance diagnostic skills and expand therapeutic practices
- organize local and national workshops and camps
- develop new plant-based medicines based on Ayurvedic and local lore, to name a few.

Laureates 2005

DHULIBEN KHANT



India



A GRASS ROOTS ENGINEER BEATS THE PROS

Water issues are becoming more and more critical in rural areas of India. Dhuliben (45) a semi-literate farm laborer, is currently active as the spearhead of a water campaign. The economic condition of her family was extremely difficult, as it was engaged in raindependant agriculture. Water was the major problem of her community. After meetings and discussions, it was found that existing hand pumps could be repaired and recharged. After only three days training in water management, and as many in handpump repairing, she organized 14 women in her village and the neighbouring community. First, they repaired 10 old handpumps. Then she and her team undertook the complex oiling of 200 hand pumps which technicians had given up as not feasible. This was a major achievement in her life. "It was not easy for me when I started". What an understatement! One can imagine the challenge: questioning the monopoly of technical specialists, working in front of a group of men making ironical comments on "women engineers" and laughing sarcastically, while refusing to help. A highly versatile person, a respected community leader and an active SEWA (Self- Employed Women's Association), leader at the grass roots, she is also the leader of a savings group. She tirelessly moves from village to village, motivated by her dream that all villages have access to the most fundamental of all human needs which well over a billion people in the world are still deprived of: clean drinking water.

Laureates 2005

Dure-e-SHAHWAR



Pakistan



ESTABLISHING WOMEN'S SELF-HELP GROUPS

After a long and distinguished career at the grass roots with the Rural Women Welfare Organisation, the laureate created her own grassroots empowerment organization for rural women, "Hand to Woman" in November 2004. In a very short time Dure-eshahwar (35) initiated the following activities:

- she motivated single-handedly 900 young girls to take literacy courses by going door-to-door
- she developed an innovative curriculum for education in literacy centers which included women's rights in the context of religion and law, and education in gender development
- she established a computer learning center for underprivileged girls and women in the Sanghar district (Sindh) where her NGO operates
- developed capacity building in the field of conflict prevention, intervention and resolution for women's self-help groups.

She has a long and courageous history of combating numerous forms of violence against women, including the infamous "Karo Kiri" (honor killing). In this ancient custom, men, usually close members of the family, kill a woman or girl in the name of family honor for forced or suspected sexual activity outside marriage, even when the women have been victims of rape. The murderers are sometimes even treated as heroes. In Pakistan, this is essentially a rural custom. In the sole province of Sindh, an average of 500 cases are reported by the media per year, and it is well known that many other cases go unreported. It has needed great courage by women militants and activists like Dure-e-shahwar to oppose this brutal custom, which the government of Pakistan has finally outlawed (on the books - but it will certainly take years to completely eliminate the practice of these killings).

Laureates 2005

Elba Rivera URBINA



Nicaragua

BIOLOGICAL AGRICULTURE FOR THE POOREST

Born one out of eight children of a poor campesino family of Nicaragua, Elba (41) had an erratic school career, missing many years of schooling. But her deep thirst for learning, hard work and personal sacrifices not only enabled her to catch up the lost years (she returned to primary school at 16) but soon led her to teach others. This deep belief in education as a major tool of development has been the driving force of her life. In 1984, when only 20 years old, she co-founded La Esperanzita, the first organic agriculture centre in Nicaragua. In 1998, she participated in the foundation of Sano y Silva (Safe and Sound), the first peasant association for ecological culture and production in the autonomous Atlantic coastal regions of her country, developing a curriculum enabling campesinos to become certified organic farmers. She continued her collaboration with La Esperanzita, and became the core pedagogical figure of both organizations. Her special contribution as an educator has been to show that the small farmer's perception of reality is a special one, and that hundreds of well-meaning development projects fail because the people in charge only trained farmers but did not educate them, while also neglecting to include women and children in the knowledge transfer process. She very much stressed learning by doing, and that doing is DOING and not only seeing others do it! A point she constantly stresses is that education has to start as early as possible, that the fixed mentality of adults is a major obstacle to change. This led to her to create and found "eeJAC" - Escuela experimental Jan Amos Comenius - a new school which saw itself as an experimental school on the way to becoming the first Montessori school of her region, in the year 2001. This school, directed by Elba, has been accredited by the Ministry of Education.

Laureates 2005

Elmira Sultanovna IBRAIMOVA



Kyrgyzstan

COMMITMENT, INTEGRITY CHALLENGE NEPOTISM

Elmira Ibrahimova (43) has occupied top positions in her country, one of them being ambassador to the UN. She now is Executive Director of the Village Investment project which aims at stimulating development in the country's 470 rural communities, by empowering people in rural communities, providing them with necessary skills and some basic means. She is constantly approached by powerful people who want money and influence. In refusing them, she displays physical and emotional courage beyond the call of duty, and has to live with the loneliness such courage implies. With a small team of local experts, she travels tirelessly from one community to another, informing them of the basic concepts of the project and soliciting their views and inputs. She is determined and effective in bringing together as many voices as possible. Ms. Ibrahimova's immense sincerity and kindness, her ability to listen, her patience and negotiating skills have been key factors in this revolutionary project.

Everything is driven by community decision rather than outside experts. The decision making is highly participatory. Communities have to provide at least 25% in matching contributions of their own. A tribute to the success of this approach is that the average contribution is 40%. The project began with 50 communities in 2003, and 21 months later, already 205 communities were involved (out of a total of 470 for the whole country). These achievements are in very large measure attributable to Elmira Ibrahimova, who has been visiting every project community and every village. Many Krygyz women have named their newborn daughters after this outstanding public servant.

Laureates 2005

ESSEM Association



Mali

HEALING ILLS OF RURAL EXODUS

Possibly the most hard hit of all categories of rural-urban immigrants are young teenage- or even preteenage girls whose families send them to the city to have one mouth less to feed, or even hoping they will be able to send a few extra pennies to the families staying back home. ESSEM is a grass roots women's organisation supported by a most original Malian NGO, Prométhée, which, from its base in Mopti, is pioneering in the field of grass roots support to women's village organisations. The nomination of ESSEM is a première for our prize, as it is town based in Mossinkoré, one of the districts of Mopti. However, one of its three main activities, and the one for which it is being nominated, is the education of the young rural girl immigrants, both to help them survive in the city, and to prepare them to return to their villages. Too often, these young girls (sometimes only 10-11 years of age), left to themselves in the hostile city environment, are poorly fed, poorly housed, paid almost nothing, abominably exploited, often beaten and sexually abused. They are modern slaves by almost any definition of the word. The legislation concerning them is never applied. Some return to the village without having been paid. A good many get pregnant, often through the works of their boss who then expels them. As it is out of question for them to return to the village with a child, the latter will be abandoned at night time on a dark street or put in a garbage can. Some of them then turn to prostitution. Through various evening courses in its five training centres, ESSEM teaches these girls their basic rights, key health notions, information on Aids prevention, avoiding or dealing with unwanted pregnancies, how to read and write, and prepares them to return to their homes in the countryside. They also receive basic healthcare.

Laureates 2005

Esther OPANGA-NDJOWO



D.R.Congo

GOOD SURVIVAL FIRST

This country, one of the richest of the African continent, be it for its mineral, agricultural or water resources, has been devastated by poverty and decapitalisation caused by catastrophic management and civil war. Whole sections of the administrative organisation of the country have disappeared, and the infrastructure (schools, hospitals, roads, etc.) has fallen into grave neglect and disrepair. Without the spontaneous mobilisation of the population, one wonders what might have happened. For most, life is a daily fight to simply survive. This is the context which saw the creation of the CODEFER NGO in 1993 (Coordination for the Development of Rural Women), impelled by its dynamic founder, Esther Opanga Ndjowo. This NGO is active in the rural areas and the periphery of Kinshasa. Its basic approach consists in identifying, with the help of the people concerned, the needs and key problems in the field of development, and then to define with them specific actions to fulfill these needs. To reach her aims, Esther Opanga needed great courage. Without any personal means of transport, she did not hesitate to travel through rural areas on top of trucks, despite her fifty years. Among the realisations of this NGO, one can mention:

- technical and other assistance to women farmers in rural and semi-urban areas
- the encouragement of vegetable production which in times of crisis saved many lives
- repairing and improving rural roads
- rebuilding of schools
- communal organisation of sales of the produce of women farmers to prevent them from being exploited by unscrupulous merchants
- creation of a market to sell agricultural produce.

Laureates 2005

Geta HEREDEA



Romania



BUILDING HOPE WITH HANDS AND HAMMER

The matriarch of the poorest family in her village, Geta (36) was born with one leg shorter than the other. The spine compensates such handicaps in a manner that causes numerous other physical problems. Geta just had to live with them. She, her husband and two boys, had to live in a 25 m² dilapidated shack. No running water, bathroom or toilet. The meager income the couple earned barely kept the family afloat. Pitied in her community, socially isolated, life was very, very tough for the Heredeas. Enough is enough, Geta decided one day. So she made the 4km walk to the Habitat for Humanity office in the town of Beius to ask how to become a homeowner. Habitat's "sweat equity" offers a hand up (not a hand out) to families, which are required to build their own home. The Heredeas did just this. But then they decided to donate their land to Habitat for Humanity, so that two other families in the village could have a home. After that, Geta started baking traditional Roman "kozonak" sweetbread for foreign volunteer builders, and with them, her family and friends, she helped build other homes in the village. Since the day in 2003, when Geta decided to rebel against "fate", she has lifted her family from abject poverty to frugal dignity. Her home now serves as a social center - and source of running water - for her village of Mizies (450 inhabitants). Other families come to do their washing indoors. (As a result of Habitat's partnership with the Whirlpool company, home owners receive a washing machine). After school, children come to do their homework with her boys, in the warmth of their new home. She lobbied Habitat for Humanity for other families, and as a result an additional 25 families are becoming homeowners.

Laureates 2005

Mairam OMURZAKOVA



Kyrgyzstan

NOMADIC TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Kyrgyzstan, a small mountain country bordering East China in Central Asia, experienced a dramatic economic downturn after the collapse of the Soviet Union, characterized by de-industrialization and considerable emigration. Per capita income plummeted. It is in this extreme context that Mairam (57) started organizing families in the Naryn Oblast (region) of the country so they could offer “nomadictourism” activities (a “première” in her country) and so women could also revive the ailing carpetweaving tradition. Later, she founded two NGOs to encourage these activities, one called Shephard’s Life, for pastoral tourism, the other one “Altyn Kol” for the revival of handicrafts, especially weaving. The results have been most impressive. From 6 family members in 1997, the NGO has grown to well over 100 families which receive foreign tourists from over 20 countries (2003) in traditional “yurtas” or in their homes. They also organize cultural activities or horseback riding and trekking in the beautiful, wild plains and valleys of the region. Income has leaped from 72 US\$ per member in 97 to 185 US\$ today. As for the production of Altyn Kol felt rugs, they have also increased in an impressive manner. From 10 members in 1997, the NGO now counts 300 members producing the most beautiful traditional carpets. These women who normally have almost no cash generating sources, earned 41’500 US\$ in 2004, up from \$ 2900 in 1997. Additionally they created around 2000 jobs in 2004.

Laureates 2005

Mariam GRIGORYAN



Armenia



BUSINESS TO ENCOURAGE RURAL TRADITIONS

In 1999, when her country underwent tremendous challenges - a ruined economy, a blockade and then an earthquake - Mariam Grigoryan (49) with no precedent experience in the fields of business or manufacturing, set up in 1999 a company involved in production of high quality sheep wool yarn and unique handmade traditional Armenian rugs in the town of Stepanavan. A sizeable fraction of the population of the small rural township was involved in agriculture. Mariam realized that her undertaking would enable her to employ dozens of women. In addition she planned to employ traditional materials - the famed Balbas-Merino wool - which today is collected from 200 - 300 sheep raisers. The company uses pure natural dyes based on plants gathered by 100-150 plant collectors. It needed great courage, vision and an exceptional motivation for Mariam, whose training was in the field of literature, to throw herself in her forties into an area in which she had not the slightest experience: business and manufacturing.

Her company is now involved in processing alpine zone sheep wool, knot yarn production for rugs and carpets, and traditional Armenian handmade rugs. These are woolbased with no chemicals. Her company is expanding its activities toward finer thread production to be used in the textile/garment/knitwear industry and plans to employ up to 200 people in the near future.

Indirectly, it will boost small sheep farms in the whole region and even in other areas of Armenia. Courage, creativity, perseverance and sheer grit are but some of the qualities this outstanding selfmade woman entrepreneur needed to succeed. nce and perseverance to fight such practices.

Laureates 2005

Maryim SHADEED



Palestine

EMPOWERING RURAL WOMAN

Because her studies were interrupted by the first Palestinian Intifada at the end of the eighties, 36 year old Maryim Shadeed, who came from a family with modest means, worked in factories after graduating from high school. When she had saved enough money, she paid her own way through university. In 2001, she volunteered in a variety of national and local organizations, including becoming a member of her local municipality. Her volunteer work in the Allar Rural Women's Development Center, lead to her becoming the first women's coordinator in 2004, a job she has been undertaking with immense creativity, drive, imagination and commitment. Activities of the Center include amongst others:

- educational activities for women dropouts whose studies were interrupted by social, political and economic challenges
- computer training courses for women
- activities for children and their mothers
- community lectures and health check ups given at the center
- activities to encourage women's income generation.

She has significantly increased the profile of the Center, which has become a venue for NGOs, workshops and seminars for both men and women., One of the greatest challenges is represented by the very rigid stereotypes her society holds about women, and which Maryim is challenging through her work. As an outstanding manager and planner, she has the gift of finding meaningful solutions to problems facing the centre and is constantly coming up with new ideas to give it visibility in Allar/Tulkarim.

Laureates 2005

Revaben BARIYA



India

GRASSROOTS FORESTER SHOWS THE WAY

Being a woman in India is not an easy role. 46 year old Revaben, from Bangapura village, Vadodara district in the state of Gujarat, the eldest daughter of her family, passed her childhood working hard and shouldering responsibility for her younger brothers. Married at 12, she had to take on the dual responsibilities of field- and housework. When her son was born, due to a dispute, she returned to her father's home. Soon after, her father died, and she was once more saddled with the responsibility of the family. Having heard of the SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association), Revaben immediately grasped its value in helping her organize the village women. She first organized a savings group, then joined a forestry campaign, having grasped the vital importance of this activity for the environment and for the prosperity of the farmers. She took a series of trainings where she learned the basics of forestry techniques.

Revaben quickly started moving with a team from village to village with saplings for sale, explaining - through songs, posters and rallies - the importance of this activity. With the profits she created a revolving fund with the view of helping women interested in nursery raising to take loans. Having mastered the demands of local markets, Revaben now grows medicinal plants as well as fruits such as mangoes and lemons. Above all, she campaigns to organize other women, and as the leader of a forestry campaign, moves from village to village, initiating women farmers to make them aware of nursery raising, vermin composting, mushroom cultivation and other related activities. She has developed an exceptional ability recognized by all. "SEWA is my inspiration and mentor", she repeats often of the organisation which gave her her initial training and became a springboard for her later activities.

Laureates 2005

Sohorati THARU



Nepal

EMPOWERING WOMEN TO FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

Sohorati (now 60) was approaching her fifties when she started organizing the poorest women of her rural communities, Tharu and Musehar. Most were landless, illiterate, and exploited by the local landlord. When a Nepali NGO, WATCH (Women Acting Together for Change) started being active in her region, she organized a first woman's group of which she became chairperson. The first thing she did was to set up literacy classes, then help poor children to get fee reductions or scholarships to go to school. She then helped the local landless laborers (many of them women) who were cruelly exploited, working from dawn to dusk for 60-80 cents a day, to organize a boycott. The landlord was forced to negotiate with the women's groups, and now wages have more than doubled. The laborers now work eight hours per day and in addition they get snacks. Sohorati also encouraged bonded laborers to seek their rights. 39 of these families lived with the landlord who exploited them mercilessly.

vDespite threats by the landlord and his goons, Sohorati fearlessly educated the bonded laborers about their situation and organized literacy classes for the wives. All these people now have their own huts and independent activities. In recognition of her tireless activities, Sohorati was elected in 1999 Chairperson of the newly formed Women's Awareness Support Group, a Federation of 151 women's groups. She was re-elected in 2004. Sohorati is an outstanding example of the fact that it is never too late in life to become a community organizer, be one illiterate or poor.

Laureates 2005

Sutisnawaty NANDO



Indonesia



AT THE HEART OF THE TSUNAMI

Tisna Nando (35), a person who demonstrates exceptional creativity, courage, innovation, and a lasting impact on sustainable development in her region, is a combination of passion, intelligence of the heart, inspired leadership and compassion. Tisna works in the Aceh region of Indonesia (the worst hit region by the tsunami of December 2004) on a highly innovative program of conservation education for RARE, a non profit conservation organisation based in Arlington, Virginia, (USA).

Galvanizing support around the popular flagship species of the Sumatran elephant, Tisna's campaign encourages intense community participation in the preservation of the environment. An outstanding example of this creativity is Tisna's outreach to the religious community and her collaboration with the imams of various mosques in her region to promote this message. After the tsunami, despite the fact that she herself had lost family, friends and co-workers, and that a great deal of her target population had disappeared, she immediately rallied to the needs of the day and started organising humanitarian aid and helping reconstruct the school system, including the establishment of 12 emergency schools.

With a rare sense of à propos, she managed to work conservation issues into the emergency school curriculum. She was sensitive enough to realize that it was necessary to modify her campaign slogan, so as to stress first and foremost forest protection and how conservation helps to prevent natural disasters. Tisna is restoring a sense of hope while at the same time bringing material help fresh and new approaches to communities that had been totally devastated both physically and humanly.

Laureates 2005

Tara Aryal KARKI



Nepal

REPORTING FOR CHANGE AND DIGNITY

Tara Aryal Karki (32), working for the past 10 years as a social worker and journalist for a national weekly “Jana Dharana”, focuses on the hidden issues of women at the grassroots. She has been making vital contributions for poverty stricken and conflict affected widows. Married at the age of 16 and with little education, Tara realized that she had to do something in order to change the future awaiting her. She started to struggle against conservative ideologies, anti-women thinking,

discrimination and exploitation of women in the society, including in her own family. She got involved in social work. She spreads awareness on issues of human rights, law, education, literacy, politics, income generating and resource activities and skill development, not only to women afflicted by conflict, but also to illiterate women working on farms in backward areas. Via her writings, she has made remarkable and praiseworthy contributions to fight superstition and other social evils related to bitter inequalities of women's lives. Among the many policy changes Tara catalyzed in her country via her reporting, one can list the government's decision to give widow allowance (monthly Rs 100) to all widow women, and not only to those over 60 as was previously the case. This decision was included in the 10th Five-Year Plan of the country after Tara's reporting on the situation. The government also decided, that women can get a passport without the signature of male realtions and travel to foreign countries without the permission of husbands. The situation of women journalists in Nepal is very challenging due to the patriarchal structure of society. Tara's work has brought about a significant change in Nepalese society in terms of highlighting the issues of widows and rural women by her hardhitting and factual reporting.

Laureates 2005

Wang SHUXIU



China



SELF-MADE MILLIONAIRE RETURNS TO HER VILLAGE ROOTS

Born in Mancheng County (Hebei province), Wang (now 42), was adopted by two poor peasants when she was three months old. Due to poverty, she only had one year of schooling. She worked hard in the fields to help support the family, and at 15 went to work as an unskilled laborer on a Beijing construction site. After her apprenticeship she went on to become an entrepreneur, building houses and apartment buildings. By the time she was 31, Wang was a millionaire. Rather than rest on her laurels, Wang decided to go back to her home village. She was appalled by the poverty she saw, the degraded conditions and environment. Despite considerable opposition, she decided to change things.

She leased four bulldozers, provided jobs to 70 peasants, and worked day and night for two months, after investing the equivalent of \$ 66'000 out of her own pocket. By 2002, she had built 20 greenhouses and leveled 30 acres of ground. The first harvest was just about to mature when a tremendous storm destroyed all of her greenhouses. Tears don't build projects. Rather than cry about her losses, Wang started again, more than doubling the number of greenhouses (50), planting dates on 13 acres, producing high quality fruits and vegetables. To help the villagers get out of poverty, she subsidized 40 households to build their own greenhouses, enabling them to multiply their income tenfold. Wang offers dozens of women fixed jobs, and many more temporary ones. Wang knows the goal of prosperity for all is still far away, but progress has been immense. And education, she knows, is the key.

Laureates 2005

Zheng BING



China



A STRONG ROPE IS MADE FROM MANY STRANDS

Zheng Bing (37) is chair of the Peasants Association of Zaizi village (Shanxi Province). Her husband was director of the local Center of Science and Technology, and in addition to her teaching job, she would occasionally help her husband in her spare time. She rapidly became aware that farmers often did not even have the basics for intelligent management of their small fields. For instance, they had a quasi superstitious belief in the power of fertilizers, which they would overuse. So Zheng invited professors from neighbouring villages to train the farmers. The first session, planned for an hour, lasted four hours and was organized on a road, in mid winter, with 400 farmers. This made Zheng realize the importance of knowledge input to raise the conditions of farmers. Despite strong opposition from her husband and family, she decided to quit her secure job to throw herself into the field of grassroots training. It was all but easy, and the couple often had to put their own money into her projects. She organized women to raise chickens, but because the company providing chicken feed lowered the quality of its product, the project failed. She became convinced that the main problem was the women's lack of organization.

Simply to get the women to undertake something together was a major challenge. So Zheng caught on to the idea of teaching a popular traditional rural folk dance, yangge. Very soon, this became a huge success which she used to organize rural women into debate groups, so as to help change fixed mindsets. Soon, the farmers households were organizing to clear the garbage in the villages, and improve village roads. Women started getting together to weave and make arts and crafts, households pooled their resources, even forming small companies. Now there are 3800 members from 35 villages in the Association, learning to take their fate into their own hands.



Laureates from 2003

Laureates 2003

All Women Farmers Club



India



WHEN WOMEN DRIVE TRACTORS

Women, in more than 50 villages in Thanjavur Dt. of Tamilnadu, were not permitted to participate in public functions or take part in any of the development programs. This was the situation in the village of Illupakorai until a group of progressively thinking women formed a farm women's group, led by Mrs. G. Reeta. Mother of two, she was a schoolteacher when she resigned to assist her husband on the farm. She was frustrated by the discrimination against women and girls in the village, and formed a women's group, despite stiff opposition from men and a few conservative women of the village. Moved by the enthusiasm and motivation of the group, the Center for Ecology and Research (CER), with the assistance of the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD), started an All Women Farmers Club in the village of Iluppakorai with 20 farm women whose objective was to create confidence, involve themselves in banking activities and modern methods of agriculture. The All Women Farmers Club met every month to initiate a number of activities for the betterment of the village in general and for the women's group in particular. At present there are 20 self help groups with 20-25 members each in the village.

Laureates 2003

Amina BIO YAU BIO NIGAN



Benin



GOOD PRODUCTS AT LOW PRICES

Amina Bio Yau Bio Nigan (39) from Gomparu, directs the “Bio Nigan” project since 1994 in Parakou. Tired of her profession as a secretary and concerned about the preservation of traditional biological resources, she decided to create her own micro-enterprise for the transformation of exclusively local products (such as fruits, vegetables, spices and roots) into syrups, jams and cosmetics. Without any training in agro-food production, Amina had to overcome criticism, lack of funding and lack of material. The methods of transformation that she uses are essentially traditional and organic. She doesn't use any food coloring or preservatives. Using the different parts of plants is a model for sustainable use of natural resources in Benin. Amina's fair prices for high quality products make them accessible to social groups with a low purchasing power and are much appreciated in rural areas. “Bio Nigan” products are now well known and sold, even in neighboring countries (Togo, Burkina Faso and Niger). Amina demonstrates that courage and perseverance help overcome obstacles imbedded in traditional society where women occupy a secondary position. In overcoming major sociological and cultural barriers, especially in Northern Benin known for its conservatism, Amina succeeded in creating an enterprise that generates admiration and enables the poor to consume quality products.

Laureates 2003

Association of Austrian Mountain Farmers



Austria

A PLAY ON RURAL LIFE: CABARET "MISTSTÜCKE"

In 1998, during an educational seminar, eight women farmers had the idea to create a "Cabaret" to portray with humour their lives and sensitise the public on the agrarian political situation in Austria. Together they created and studied 50 sketches based on the background of their daily lives with a focus on the very contradictory demands that a woman-farmer has to cope with today. They combined these scenes into their first play and performed four times in 1998. The group of women use their creativity to educate the public about the often difficult situations of a woman farmer juggling work on the farm, child care, household chores and the current structural changes in agriculture and the emotion of powerlessness they generate. Topics such as conflicts between generations, identity, tourism and agricultural policies are addressed. Beside the fun of performing, the eight women (plus one more who joined recently) have to make numerous sacrifices to continue this educational activity, including leaving their farms for long hours. Their clever use of humour and talent to get their messages across has brought them ever increasing success. By February 2003, they had performed no less than 40 times congratulate the actors Maria, Gansch, Maria Vogt, Monika Gruber, Evi Katzensteiner-Barth, Christine Gattringer, Helga Krickjl-Stricker, Annemarie Pühringer-Rainer, Annemarie Steyrl and Gusti Leitner, their art-supervisor, Beate Leyrer and Monika Mlinar, administrator.

Laureates 2003

Aurora CARMONA



Colombia



THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

Aurora Carmona (64) lives in the rural mountain area North of the Antioquia region. Under guerilla warfare control until the 90s, this area since became the scene of constant violence and slaughter under paramilitary control. In order to overcome her son's death (killed at the age of 20), and put an end to the vicious circle of war, Aurora chose to promote forgiveness and non-violence. She founded in 1991 the "Association of Canon del Porce women: Awakening to progress" to help numerous war widows and orphans via a social re-education process based on respect for life, non-violence and environment. Aurora established many projects including the creation of community and family gardens which enables the locality to approach food self-sufficiency; the creation of guava cooperatives the surplus production of which is sold to acquire school material, and the creation of a fish breeding pond. Food security projects are complemented with education on recycling and treatment of organic waste. The Association offers programs for children and adults, and women's training in family planning and contraception programs.

Due to the fact that police and paramilitary forces are not very appreciative of the Association's activities permitting farmers access to some autonomy, Aurora's life has been threatened several times. Today, the Association counts more than 400 members, 40 committees and 33 women coordinators spread over more than 10 rural districts with an impact on more than 20'000 people.

Laureates 2003

Betty MAKONI



Zimbabwe



THE VILLAGE OF HOPE

Betty Makoni (32) was teaching English in Harare when she organized an informal meeting with her girl students to talk about their daily problems. It appeared that most of the girls were victims of sexual abuse. Betty Makoni created a club where abused girls could exchange their traumatizing experiences and encourage each other to testify and sue the guilty. The club concept became so popular that it spread over the whole country and 166 clubs (representing more than 3000 girls) were formed. Betty regrouped them in 1999 into an association, the “Girls Child Network”, which provides legal assistance to rape victims and organized a 15-day march covering 200 km to claim justice for sexually abused victims. Realizing the urgent need for empowering the rural girl in the face of sustained abuse, Betty Makoni decided in 2001 to build a “safe village” in a rural area that would serve as an information dissemination centre as well as a service- and relief centre. Betty received funds for the construction of the empowerment village and after an extensive consultation with local chiefs, she obtained land located on the mighty rock of Chitsotso.

The Rusape Girls Empowerment Village was inaugurated in August 2002, comprising an administration block, counseling room, study room, computer centre, mini-clinic, four girls’ homes and a ‘Womemas Role Models’ Museum. Local people and girls were actively involved in the project design and the implementation and program activities reflect their real needs. The Rusape Girls Empowerment Village re-emphasizes the inherent worth and dignity of the girl child and thus facilitates their socio-economic development by giving them free space to walk in the fullness of their potential, and the opportunity to work in turn for the development of their communities. Betty Makoni changed the life of more than 2000 sexually abused girls and sensitized the whole country about the issue of sexual abuse.

Laureates 2003

Byatshandaa JARGAL



Mongolia



COMBATING MALNUTRITION

Byatshandaa Jargal (45) knows what it is to be poor. Her mother died when she was sixteen and she brought up her five younger brothers and sisters as well as her own four children, sewing at night to support them. Even in these very hard conditions she managed to study and obtained a Masters degree in Agronomy from the University in Hovt. With the traditional Mongolian diet consisting mainly of meat, dairy products and flour, most Mongolians have no experience of vegetable growing. Convinced that an effective way to combat poverty and malnutrition is to teach rural families to feed themselves, Byatshandaa founded in 1999 the Mongolian Women Farmers Association (MFWA) to promote vegetable growing and small-scale farming in Mongolia. She first obtained a small land plot and established a demonstration and training farm. She then obtained another six hectares from the governor and established a community garden where every year 400 poor families are provided with individual small plots and are trained to grow vegetables. Byatshandaa runs a soup kitchen which daily provides approximately 35 people with a hot meal, mostly women and children.

Byatshandaa also offers training on health, nutrition and basic life skills and has recently started to teach local handicrafts to generate income. Other activities include a three year vocational course in small scale farming for children; a TV program on small scale farming broadcast weekly on National Mongolian TV, and the writing of two books on vegetable growing. The Mongolian Women Farmers Association currently has 15 local volunteers and 1 international volunteer, assisting Byatshandaa who works seven days a week, 12 hours a day, to improve rural peoples' lives.

Laureates 2003

Dina Emilia MORALES LLERENA



Peru

AN INDIGENOUS LEADER - “RICCHARI WARMI” (“WAKE-UP WOMAN” IN QUECHUA)

Dina Emilia Morales Llerena (57), an indigenous woman from Andahuaylas in the Apurimac province, comes from a family of 10 who lived in a house without water nor electricity. Very early in life she experienced extreme poverty. At 20, seeing the discrimination, marginalisation and inhuman life conditions her indigenous community was suffering from, Dina organised and led the local Infrastructure and Works Committee in order to facilitate access to sanitary services. She dedicated her life to the development of her people and has been active in several local associations and foundations.

She defended in particular the rights of marginalized women and housewives. In 1973, she launched the first community radio of the region, and in 1985, managed to get a grant to study social sciences in Moscow. Once back in Peru, she transformed her own house into a sewing workplace, an alphabetisation centre, a popular restaurant (50 housewives cook daily for 160 women and children), and established quail breeding to provide jobs to migrant women fleeing violence in cities. Quail breeding was not part of the local culture and Dina had to teach herself how to do it before teaching it to others. Today, several women have an income from quail breeding and villagers have access to a good protein source at a fair price.

Laureates 2003

Eugénie Nouale NKORO



Cameroon



DEFENDING PYGMIES' RIGHTS

Eugénie Nouale Nkoro (42), is a Bakola pygmy woman from Nkouonguio (Lolodorf, South Cameroon Province). Pygmies (as many indigenous peoples in the world) are torn between preserving their traditional culture, including their deep connection to the forest on one hand, and adapting to the values of a modern consumer society on the other. In addition, they suffer from being rejected and marginalized and are often used as cheap labour.

Eugénie believes in integrated development via agriculture and cattle breeding, the promotion of indigenous traditional medicine, and lobbying the political party in power. She actively encourages women to engage in diversified sustainable agriculture as their forests are cut down depriving them of their traditional livelihood. As a traditional healer, Eugénie is keen to transmit, especially to the youth, indigenous knowledge and traditional medicine based exclusively on local plants. In order to promote participation in politics, Eugénie Nouale Nkoro organised awareness raising activities for pygmy women to obtain identity cards allowing them to vote, and encouraged them to get actively involved by putting their names on voting lists for visibility, and to be heard. She also acts as negotiator in land conflicts with the neighbouring Bantu tribe to ensure space for Pygmies. Eugenie had to overcome many obstacles in fighting for Pygmies' rights and had to face blackmail. She is a true leader and role model.

Laureates 2003

Francisca Eugenia MILANÉS GARCÍA



Peru



FROM GARBAGE DUMP TO ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Francisca Eugenia Milanés García (37) from the Granma province, was inspired by the National movement of urban agriculture which aims at encouraging fruit and vegetable consumption. Francisca decided to clean up an unofficial dump of 246 square meters and transform it into an organic agricultural plot. Despite the villagers' criticism and disbelief, she started to eliminate solid waste with the help of volunteers and her husband. Then, professionals from the agricultural enterprise for which Francisca used to work, conducted soil analysis to ensure that the former waste dump was healthy. Rapidly she was able to sell and deliver her products in the village with her "Byci-charge" (a bicycle with a trailer, a cheap and ecological transport, requesting great physical effort and usually only used by men). Francisca also sensitised villagers during exhibitions and fares on the necessity of consuming more fruit and vegetables, and created circles of interest for pupils at the village school. Thanks to her creativity and hard work, some 600 women and children and 66 elderly receive each day Francisca's organic fruits and vegetables. Waste is now collected by the local administration and disposed of in specifically equipped areas.

Laureates 2003

Haoua BARAZÉ



Niger



STANDING UP FOR GIRLS' SCHOOLING

Haoua Barazé (50), from the Karakara Province, married a rich trader and discovered material wealth on one side and the hell of confinement on the other. Mother of three, she escaped her golden cage when her husband died in a plane crash. Traumatized by the event, Haoua found some joy in life again by teaching school. She also got involved in politics and was elected Deputy in 1993 and 1994. Sick of political games and the machismo of men politicians, she decided to serve the women's and girls' cause by fighting for girls' schooling. She travels to villages convincing parents to send their daughters to school and allow them to complete their studies. She also has to convince the teachers of the importance of educating girls, and convince the girls themselves. Haoua doesn't hesitate to fight when necessary and lodged complaints against parents who, attracted by material goods, wanted to take their daughters out of school to marry them off. Haoua carries out these activities some times alone and at other times with local organisations she helped create. She is President of the Taémakon Ilimin Mata Association (ATIM), and, thanks to her, girl's school enrolment rates are up 50 per cent in the 26 schools which are part of the education program implemented by ATIM. A number of development partners seek Haoua's advice and support.

Laureates 2003

Hadjara HASSANE



Niger

DON'T KILL THE "MOTHER OF TREES"

Hadjara Hassane (40) lives in the M'Botche village. From a traditional healers' family who knows the value of each plant, her love for trees led her to become warden in the nearby natural reserve, home to hundreds of palmyrah trees (*Borassus aethiopum* Mart). This tree growing in dry and subhumid areas can reach 20 meters high. The palmyrah is of crucial importance to rural people because all of its parts are useful. Its very solid and dry wood is a source of income for many artisans and craftsmen; its leaves are used for roofs and basket making; its fruits are an important source of food; and its sap and roots have multiple medicinal virtues, making it a real natural pharmacy. But palmyrah trees are threatened by over-exploitation.

Three times a week, Hadjara wakes up before sunrise to surprise poachers or shepherds whose animals eat young flowers and shoots. She does this until 7 AM. At 4 PM she returns until dark. It demands a lot of courage to keep up this rhythm, walking hours across woods and convince the guilty of the damage they cause to this "mother of trees" (as the local call it) and to themselves. She also amends repeated offenders and conducts them to the village chief. Because of her staunchness and efficiency, Hadjara represents the pride of village women and is listened to in men's closed circles. She is now responsible for training all wardens in Parakou in neighboring Benin.

Laureates 2003

Khalida Bibi AWAN



Pakistan



CREATING A LOCAL SEED BANK

Khalida Bibi (39) from Takya village (North West Province of Pakistan) married at 17 and has six children. To increase the family income she created flower sketches to decorate clothes and bed covers. In 1996, she benefited from a development program which empowered her to apply for credit to buy three sewing machines in order to open a small vocational center in her own home. So far, Khalida has trained 40 women. She is also very active in biodiversity conservation and her great knowledge of indigenous seeds made her popular in the village. She can evaluate seed quality and water requirements by only holding them in her hands. Her household became a village seed bank with more than 70 kinds of seeds from different crops. She grows both indigenous and hybrid seeds to test their productivity and conserve only the best quality that she then distributes to other women farmers in the village. Khalida is now an example in her village where women see that they can benefit from their indigenous knowledge and that even an illiterate woman can generate income and improve family living conditions.

Laureates 2003

Leela S. RAJSEKHAR



India

EDUCATING TRIBAL WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Leela S. Rajsekhar (42) joined the Intercultural Cooperation Foundation (ICF) India in 1991 as secretary. ICF's objective is rural development, women's empowerment and educational programs for deprived people. Leela has been playing a major role in educating and motivating women in Amboth Tanda, a village inhabited by the Lambada tribe, 60 km South-East of Hyderabad. When she started in 1991, only 3 per cent of the tribal women were literate, average number of children per family was 6.74, and rural exodus was high due to lack of housing and job prospects. Leela organized community meetings to motivate the tribal people to participate in development activities initiated by ICF, with a special focus on women's participation. Her first challenge was to control the rural exodus of villagers to the overcrowded city slums. She convinced inhabitants to stay in the village by organizing a self-help house-building program and villagers built about 100 environmentally friendly mud-houses. Leela then addressed family planning by educating parents on the importance of having fewer children, but in better health. In 1992, ICF started a part-time school in Amboth Tanda but initially parents were reluctant to send their children to school as they did not understand the importance of education, which deprived them of valuable help on farms and households. In 1993, a regular primary school was established and today 690 children are enrolled.

Leela also conducted vocational training classes in embroidery, handicrafts, masonry, etc. to open up job opportunities to village youth. With her tactful approach and dedication, she transformed the future of the tribal people of Amboth Tanda, now seen as a model project to be duplicated in other villages.

Laureates 2003

Lilian MARTINEZ DE KRONG



Paraguay

MOBILISING HOUSEWIVES FOR A BETTER LIFE

Lilian Martinez de Krong (39) from the rural community of Obligado, is mother of four and now lives in Natalio where she works as a volunteer. In 2001, Lilian decided to organise housewives and coordinate efforts to improve living conditions, education and the environment. She created the Association "Souls of Houses" (Amas de Casa) with 425 women regrouped in 17 committees. Each committee has a specific program, e.g. fruit and vegetable cultivation, natural soap and shampoo production, and jam preparation.

The new strength born of this unity enabled Lilian to create the first Association of milk producers of Natalio which daily distributes milk to seven schools in the district, a total of 1310 children. The Association also organizes information days on critical themes for women (sex education, breast cancer, etc.) and gives training workshops to rural women on cloth production, sewing, silk painting, food, and recycling. On their way to success, Lilian and association members had to face and overcome criticism and sarcasm of community members, and men in particular, who didn't believe (or didn't want to) in housewives' potential. The "Ama de Casa" showed them they needed to revive their stand.

Laureates 2003

Luz Margarita ROMERO RAMOS



Peru

NATURAL MEDICINE AVAILABLE TO ALL

Luz Margarita Romero Ramos (38) grew up in a very poor family. Her parents didn't have the chance to have any education and their life was precarious. But Luz Margarita was thirsty for learning and decided to continue her secondary studies by migrating to the city of Arequipa without any financial assistance or help from her family. Today, Luz Margarita is married and is mother of two. She lives in the Cotahuasi province, located at 2'500 meters altitude. 99 per cent of the Cotahuasi people live in extreme poverty. For several years, Luz Margarita dedicated all her spare time volunteering in different grassroots women's organisations. In 2001, she founded the Association of Cotahuasi Women (Asociación distrital de mujeres de Cotahuasi - ADIMUC) that regroups more than 10 grassroots organisations. Its objective is to form groups of women wanting to dedicate their spare time to handicraft activities for income generation. Luz Margarita, having learnt from her mother the use of medicinal plants since she was a child, decided to use her knowledge and skills for the well-being of the community (many women and children could not afford to buy medicines) and created the "Llankac Warmi" committee, an organisation where women collect and traditionally transform medicinal plants into oil extracts, healing pomades and other derived products that they sell on local markets.

Laureates 2003

Marcelina PONCE HANCCO



Peru



FIGHTING FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Marcelina Ponce Hancco (32) is an indigenous woman from the “Alpaqueras” tribe. At the age of 9, with her mother seriously ill, Marcelina had to assume the tasks of a housewife in addition to helping her father in the fields. Terrorism (which raged in the region for many years) later killed her father and her husband. More than 5000 people have been assassinated between 1980 and 1993, leaving behind widows and orphans. Despite being emotionally destroyed by these events, Marcelina decided to organise orphans and widows to help claim their rights, and organised women victims of social violence to have their voices heard. Marcelina also courageously fights against mining companies that contaminate community fields, making them useless for farming and killing livestock. She created the first association of indigenous women in the region (l'Asociación Mujeres Alpaqueras Indigenas de la Region - AMAR” (meaning “to love” in Spanish) to enable them to defend their rights as well as those of other women in the region. In March 2003, Marcelina organised the first congress of Alpaqueras Indigenous Women from the Puno's region.

Laureates 2003

Marta BENAVIDES



El Salvador

CREATING A CULTURE OF PEACE

Marta Benavides (57), works on social transformation through culture in rural and urban areas and has several times been forced to exile because of her commitment to peace and justice due to her work for and with indigenous communities. Since the signing of the Peace Accords, Marta worked directly with rural peasant cooperatives settled on land mortgaged as part of land reform. She organized trainings for adults and youth on soil management, water quality, organic farming, conflict resolution, etc. She also educated campesinos on legal and monetary arrangements regarding settlements. In 1998, on a small farm North of San Salvador, Marta led the construction of a demonstration permaculture farm in collaboration with local communities and the University of El Salvador. The farm is now an education center for schools, teachers and families on ecology and sound agricultural practices including community building, education for a culture of peace and conflict resolution. Nearly 400 people received training so far.

In the small community of Nahuizalco, Marta developed an ecological house where youth and adult training sessions are held on ecological sustainability, water quality, organic farming, etc. Rural men and women participate regularly and 700 people have been trained to date. Her commitment to peace and justice has meant years of personal sacrifice, including money, career advances and personal possessions.

Laureates 2003

Mbirika CHOKRI



Tunisia



A BIOLOGICAL BROODER

For many year, Mbirika Chokri (74) from El-Karia village, Sidi Aïch Region Gafsa), earned her livelihood with agriculture, livestock- and especially poultry breeding. The whole region is very poor, the soil is dry and living conditions are harsh. Five years ago, Mbirika's only hen suddenly died, leaving behind eggs ready to hatch. Not knowing what to do with these eggs that represented an important source of food, Mbirika put them in the dung. After a few days she discovered that the chicks were hatching. Delighted with her discovery, Mbirika decided to re-do the experiment and developed a method used till today. She puts the eggs with a bit of straw and feathers in plastic bags (to keep the humidity) and places the plastic bags containing 16 to 20 eggs each in holes in the dung, covers them with a piece of cardboard and adds a thin layer of dung on top. Mbirika was so successful that soon her house was full of hens and she started to offer some to her neighbors. Her innovation became famous in the region and she has been invited to present her technique on local TV and on the radio. Mbirika took this opportunity to call for partnerships in order to commercialize her innovation. Since then she has been working together with researchers and developers to build premises adapted to her technique. A local development program is being set up by specialists from the Training Center of Sidi Thabet to disseminate her innovation in other rural areas.

Laureates 2003

N'Dew SÉNE



Senegal

FIGHTING UNAUTHORIZED TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

N'Dew Séne (60) from the Lébou tribe, is President of the women's group of the local committee of fisheries and development in the village of Sendou (Commune de Rufisque, coast of Senegal). Sendou is under strong land pressure from the elites in the capital and foreign tourism promoters who want to build hotels and bungalows which would chase away the local inhabitants. Tourism development has a negative impact on coastal communities, in particular on fishermen and women, who are traditional fish transformers. Aware of this plight, N'Dew Séne sensitized local authorities, NGOs and the population to raise awareness concerning the problems caused by tourism in terms of land and resource access. N'Dew Séne organized women in the village and together they managed to regain a valuable area formerly set aside for tourist development. This "reserve", located between two major tourist areas, is exclusively dedicated to women's activities in fishery and agriculture. Thanks to Ms. Séne, Sendou women can ensure the necessary income for their families to survive and guarantee sustainability of traditional activities. This local initiative is also an example for other local communities threatened by mass tourism.

Laureates 2003

Neela Thangavelu PRIYESH



India



FIGHTING FOR THE LAND

Neela Thangavelu (36) from the Salem district of Tamil Nadu, was inspired by Mother Theresa's work and decided to work with downtrodden people in rural areas. Being a single mother (a huge handicap in India) and suffering from a physical disability never discouraged Neela. Alone, she formed no less than 141 women's self-help groups, representing more than 3000 women living under the poverty line who benefited from Neela's training. Her other main battle was the land issue. In rural areas of the Salem district, local politicians illegally occupied many acres of unused land leaving many rural people homeless. Neela, with the help of local and district governing bodies, managed to get back the land, although the illegal occupants threatened her life. Today, more than 500 poor families own their plots of land and many of them built houses with bank loans negotiated by Neela. In addition, she organized numerous awareness campaigns on the rampant issues of alcohol, tobacco and female infanticide. She also fights child labor and gives numerous free empowerment trainings to the most disadvantaged rural community members (handicapped, widows, illiterates). Neela is a powerful combination of staunchness and dedication.

Laureates 2003

Nyuiemedi KOUGBLENOU



Togo

HELPING HANDICAPPED RURAL PEOPLE

For many years, Nyuiemedi Kougblenou (44) dedicated her time and an important part of her meager income to a category of people ignored by all in rural areas, the handicapped. In 2002, aware that she alone could only give very limited assistance, she contacted the local NGO “Association for sustainable promotion of disadvantaged women” (l’Association pour la Promotion Durable de la Femme Défavorisée NPDFD) to draw attention to the very harsh living conditions of the handicapped and the economic burden put on their families, mainly women who are the sole care-givers in Togo. By doing this, she succeeded in mobilizing the necessary funds to buy 5 wheel-chairs and crutches for the handicapped of her village. Nyuemedi’s action generated collaboration between APDFD and “Joni and Friends”, an international NGO focusing on the handicapped. This partnership permitted the acquisition of 12 additional wheel-chairs and 6 pairs of crutches for four other rural communities. Nyuemedi had to overcome many cultural, logistical and financial obstacles so as to be able to fulfill the basic needs of disabled people. Her perseverance and courage finally opened the eyes of local organisations and the Church and they are now joining forces to promote human dignity.

Laureates 2003

Ossipowa Tatjana VIKTOROWNA



Russian Federation

“WE CAN DO IT”

Born in 1950 in the village of Illjinka (District of Jaroslaw), Tatjana Viktorowna founded in 1997 the farm “Sibirjatschka” and accomplished the impossible. Not only was she able to establish a model farm, she also showed the whole village how much can be done if things are undertaken creatively. In 1993 the Ossipow family returned to their home village after the Kolchoses closed down. Although Tatjana had been a teacher, she started to milk cows on the farm of a local farmer and committed herself to the farm life. Her husband had to stay in Nowosibirsk and was not able to leave before he had finished his job with the army. When he returned to the village, he found that Tatjana was already managing a dairy farm where the whole family is now involved. The farm income enables her family not only to live, although in difficult conditions, but also to support neighbors and other village people with food. Tatjana also organized a community center where women could learn from each other and also discuss problems, exchange experiences and give help to one another. Many farms in the village have improved since then as well as the quality of life. Other women are following her example because Tatjana’s saying “we can do it” inspired them. Tatjana is an example for all who wish to start an enterprise from scratch. Her perseverance and creativity engineered her success.

Laureates 2003

Rosa SELL



Brazil

REVIVING TRADITIONAL FARMING METHODS

Rosa Sell (40) learnt very early in life to value simple things. Married at 18, together with her husband and three kids, she cultivated small crops and vegetable gardens to give their children a healthy upbringing. But city life was not fulfilling their need for a healthy life-style. In 1997, they heard about a government program assisting rural people to go back to the countryside. Rosa and her family moved to Paulo Lopes, a small town where they started organic farming based on traditional methods such as moon phases and values such as respect for the earth. For the other farmers of the region, Rosa's methods were considered "obsolete" while using pesticides and GMOs were considered "modern". These beliefs were an obstacle for selling their products. Rosa realized that she had to complement what she knew intuitively with academic arguments. She went back to school at 38 and learned about agro-ecology and the dangers of genetically modified products. She then initiated an Organic Farmers' market in the center of Florianopolis where local farmers trade since 1999 for self-sufficiency. She now leads a movement for organic food production. Furthermore, Rosa Sell was one of the main supporters of a bill passed in Congress which states that all public schools should provide organic food meals for children.

Laureates 2003

Rural Women's Association "Alga"



Kyrgyzstan

TAKING CONTROL OF OUR LIVES

The independence of Kyrgyzstan and its transition to the market economy had some negative impacts especially on rural women living in the least favorable conditions and representing 70 per cent of the poor population of Kyrgyzstan. Olga Janaeva, together with one or two friends, day after day, methodically visited the town's new establishments to get acquainted. In January 1995, the Rural Women's NGO "Alga" (meaning "forward" in Kyrgyz) was founded as a voluntary public organization. Its mission: to improve rural women's status and standard of living via stimulation of women's awareness of their realities, develop their capacity for personal development, strengthen their participation in development activities, and advocate for their rights. Olga Janaeva, Founder and Director of Alga, sees a source of leadership in these women which needs only to be tapped. The Alga organization has three main programs: prevention of violence against women; training in leadership development and women's rights; and reproductive health and family planning - all part of the rural women's empowerment program. In addition, Alga created an information-consultation educational center where women can access services that were not available before. It is not exaggerated to say that Alga radically transformed the life of many rural people. In addition to these numerous activities, it has helped bring attention to this region, and shows that a wealth of motivated people await the chance to take control of their lives.

Laureates 2003

Shameem Araa J. RAJPOOT



Pakistan



WHEN WOMEN CROSS THE DOORSTEP

Shameem Araa J. Rajpoot (30) lives in the hilly village of Keyan where the very conservative culture restricts women's mobility between 14 and 35 years. This means that they are socially excluded and cannot work outside the house. But Shameem is a single-minded person who fought her family and the tradition for two years to marry the man she chose. Led by her desire to gain some independence and generate some income, Shameem started breeding a goat and sold the offspring. When she heard that a development foundation had created a local women's committee in a nearby village she contacted the organization and mobilized women so that in 1997, the "Rahber Welfare Society for Women" was established in Keyan.

Women benefited from different training programs, such as knitting, preventive health care, civic rights and social mobilization. Through this program and committee, 20 women received loans, learnt to raise their voices and were even able to influence local decision-making. The Women's committee opposed the construction of a garbage pit in a location they considered inappropriate and managed to block its construction for two months while negotiating with the men in the village. Because of Shameem's determination and energy, Keyan women crossed the doorstep to the benefit of all villagers.

Laureates 2003

Silvia PANAITE



Romania



HELP TO HELP THEMSELVES

Silvia Panaite (53) is Director of a local NGO “EU-RO Consult” whose mission is to assist people in rural areas to apply for programs launched by the Public administration and to find funds for the improvement of the quality of life and communication between the Government, public administration and citizens. Silvia first started to look for representatives (mainly local counsellors and mayors) in each of the 56 rural communities in Galati county (a rural area of 43'000 people) who would become development promoters. With the assistance of EU-RO volunteers they prepared local economic and social development plans and identified the most urgent needs. Silvia Panaite organised an important information campaign about rural development plans, and conducted training for writing project proposals to the Public administration. She always ensured that women were included in training programs, helping them to access positions never dreamt of in rural Romania. In each village Silvia worked individually and in small groups to determine their capabilities. Silvia was able to motivate local mayors to actively engage in development activities, raise funds for their projects and include rural people and especially women in the decision-making process. Silvia often gives assistance to the Roma gypsies who are the very marginalized nomads of Romania.

Laureates 2003

Theresa Secord HOFFMAN



USA

REVIVING NATIVE INDIAN'S BASKETRY

Reviving native Indian's basketry It behooves the Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life that the first laureate from the United States be an American Indian - of the Penobscot Nation, one of four surviving Indian tribal groups living in Maine. Theresa's Master of Science degree in Economic Geology landed her a comfortable and very well paid job with a multinational oil company. But she dropped everything to respond to a call from her tribe which had just won a land claim settlement. One of her most impressive accomplishments was defeating a U.S. Department of Energy proposal for a nuclear waste dump on tribal land. (All round the planet, governments have dumped such waste on tribal lands, at an immense health cost to tribal populations). When Theresa moved to the Penobscot reservation in 1984, traditions were declining rapidly, and the native language was almost extinct except among the elderly. After following a training in basket weaving, she founded the Main Indian Basket Weavers Alliance (MIBA). The decision to set up an inter-tribal organisation was highly unusual, given the very independent nature of local tribes, and many people prophesied failure for the experience. However, thanks to Theresa's vision, political acumen and first-hand knowledge of basketry, the venture blossomed beyond people's fondest hopes. The success of MIBA can be measured not only in the revival of an imperilled art, but also the renaissance of the tribal language and culture, not to mention the renewal of self-confidence and pride. The following figures tell a small part of the story :

- average age of MIBA members has dropped from 63 to 43, i.e. more and more young women are learning the art,
- MIBA has created a vigorous program of one year apprenticeships, the publication of a 86-page guide to traditional basketry,
- average value of baskets has almost increased tenfold, passing from \$10 to \$90, making basketry a viable career option. This has been a huge economic turnaround for basket makers, who, like the majority of Indians in the state, had been living below the poverty line.

Laureates 2003

Thresiamma MATHEW



India



BUILDING WALLS OF CONFIDENCE

Thresiamma Mathew (57) graduated in Home Science and Social Development in Canada, returned to Kerala and became Health Education Officer at the Socio Economic Unit of Kerala at Thrissur. Her mandate: to implement water and sanitation projects through community participation. Under this scheme, hundreds of latrines were built. Traditionally, male masons would have done this with women as helpers. Thresiamma noted that in the construction sector, while women were performing hard tasks such as carrying stones, sand and cement, they did not earn half the wages of the masons and faced social stigma and endured abuses of all kinds by male superiors. Thresiamma decided to rescue them from this revolting situation and created the Jeevapoorna Women Masons' Society (JEEWOMS), Kerala, to train women as professional masons, to become independent, claim their right to equitable wages, and eventually gain respect from male colleagues. Thresiamma's first challenge was to break traditional taboos and face women's incredulity and disbelief. Since its inception in 1989, 1200 women have been trained as masons and allied workers, most of them illiterate and previously living below the poverty line. Together, they built over 15'000 latrines and 100 houses. Thresiamma also included a social training program on personal development, social awareness and literacy as an integral part of masonry training.

Thresiamma's initiative has dented the existing gender stereotype image and socio-economic relations by equipping poor women with non traditional skills and confidence as well as with means to earn a decent living.

Laureates 2003

Victoria ADETONA



Nigeria



MICRO-CREDIT FOR RURAL WOMEN

Victoria Adetona (54), from a poor family, managed to get an education and worked for more than 15 years for the Women and Development Committee in the local government in Oke Ogun. While working as a secretary she mobilized women to get involved in community development projects. Her skills and commitment led her to attend training programs including one on credit management skills. This encouraged Victoria to create Rural Searchlight Nigeria (RUSEL) in 1997, a non governmental organisation focusing on women and aiming at poverty alleviation at the grassroots.

Her strategy is to provide micro credit to the poorest of the poor, especially women in the Oke-Ogun area of Oyo State. The organisation lends to groups (10-25 people) that in turn lend to their members and manage repayments. Despite communication obstacles encountered in this rural area, RUSEL now provides micro credit to 62 groups (75 per cent women's groups) which represents about 1000 people who have been enabled to establish businesses and projects. Victoria's approach differs from other cooperative societies by charging monthly interest rates, rather than one time rates, which makes loans more attractive. Today, many unemployed women who benefited are now farmers and traders. In addition RUSEL provides training in credit management, marketing, and HIV/AIDS awareness for group members. Victoria is living proof that women can rise to top positions and accomplish a lot even in a society where gender discrimination is dominant.

Laureates 2003

Wang FENGYAN



China



BREEDING ANGLEWORMS FOR PROSPERITY

Wang Fengyan (43), lives in Yuelong Town, in the Ninghe County of Tianjin. She lived as a simple and humble peasant until her life drastically changed in 1991 when she read a magazine article on the many advantages of angleworm breeding. Angleworm, also called earth-dragon, is an earthworm that improves soil fertility. It happens to be an efficient organic fertilizer generating a growing interest on the international market. Wang Fengyan contacted agricultural experts in the universities of Tianjin and Beijing, who gave her their technical support and provided her with 5 kgs of angleworm grubs free of charge to start her small-scale angleworm breeding experiment. In the first year she bred 100 kg angleworm in her 200 m² backyard.

She often consulted with the Tianjin Agriculture University when she faced problems. After two years of experiment, she expanded the breeding area to 300m² and learnt about angleworm marketing. She took a bank loan and enlarged her feedlot to an area of 50'000 square meters. Her business was so successful that one year later she could reimburse the loan and was generating income. Wang Fengyan then created an Angleworm Business Website (www.qiuyin.com.cn) to set up an angleworm-breeding network with rural women. Even some unemployed urban women came to the rural area of Ninghe to learn and work on Wang's feedlot. With her assistance, 200 local women and families began to breed angleworms and work their way out of poverty.

Laureates 2003

Wang ZHILAN



China



WORKING AGAINST ODDS

Wang Zhilan was born to a poor peasant family in Ding Xian County, Shanxi Province, in 1960, married a widower with two children and gave up teaching to be a full time mother and wife, with her husband working as a carpenter to support the family. To improve their lives, the couple decided to raise sheep and bought about 100 Xinjiang sheep with fine wool in 1989. The number of sheep doubled within three years. Then Wang started raising pigs and tried to grow corn on her 6 hectares of land with the use of plastic sheets. Production doubled. She then bought a fodder grinder and made her own fodder. Gradually she combined farming, breeding and processing and became more successful. In 1999, Wang and her husband made up their minds to contract about 1476 hectares of barren hillsides and poor land: about 810 hectares for growing trees and 660 hectares for grass. They wanted to turn their hometown into a rich and prosperous place. Every year Wang provides part time jobs for more than 40 people and encourages villagers to actively participate in planting trees to improve the local environment and increase their income.

Laureates 2003

WOMEN'S GROUP DETERMINED TO WIN GRUPO DE MULHERES DECIDIDAS A VENCER GMDV CULTIVATING



Brazil

CULTIVATING ORGANIC FOOD FOR HEALTHIER LIVING

In 1995, Francisca de Lourdes da Silva, from the Mulungunzinho settlement, formed The 'Group of Women Determined to Win' (GMDV). Struggles started within every home, facing opposition of husbands who did not understand the need for meetings and refused to take care of the children during the short periods when the women were absent from home. Coming from rural areas, ranging from 25-45 years, they had all been impacted by drought and were torn between a working day at home and in the fields. Their most important step toward self-determination came with an incomegenerating project in Mulungunzinho. By clearing 1.5 hectare of land, they started meat production and poultry raising. Then, in 1999, after some technical advice and TV news, came the idea of growing organic vegetables. It was a pioneer project in their State and the small number of women putting it into practice was in itself a challenge. On this 1.5 ha piece of land, initially planned for poultry, now grow beds of salad, spinach, carrots, sweet peppers, onions and various fruits and vegetables. In addition the group of women deliver weekly baskets with a variety of vegetables to consumers, thereby uniting producers and consumers. Thanks to the Women's group, Mulungunzinho counts today 112 families, an agricultural village, a school, and receives regular visits from a mobile health centre and rainwater tanks.

Laureates 2003

Zeng GUANGLAN



China



CHANGING MENTALITIES

Zeng Guanglan (50) from Le Du County of Qinghai Province, was concerned about the obstacle to development caused by the conservative way of thinking of women in her village, Da Zhuang. She started to organize cultural activities on International Women's Day. At first, few women attended but gradually women enjoyed meeting together and began to express their opinions in public. Zeng planted coat potatoes and taught other villagers how to do so. She then started sheep husbandry and offered lambs to poor villagers, so they could start their own husbandry activities and thus generate income. Zeng sensitized the villagers on the need to conserve the environment by planting trees on a barren hill that covered 20 hectares. By joining forces, they planted an area of 100 hectares. In 2002, Zeng was elected Deputy Director of the village committee, the first woman ever elected to this position in the village. With her determination she helped women gain confidence in themselves and demonstrated to men that empowered women can make a difference.



Laureates from 2002

Laureates 2002

Agrita GAILITE



Latvia



RESCUING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF MEDICINAL PLANTS

As a child, Agrita Gailite (38) learned to use herbs for their medicinal value, a skill handed down to her from her parents and grandparents. She studied pharmacy and, in 1992, established the first pharmacy in her village of Kalsnava (Madona District), an ecological pharmacy selling herbs grown on her small certified organic farm. To do this meant overcoming many legal barriers due to the dominance of chemical pharmaceuticals in modern life. Last year Agrita also founded a local health club to promote healthy life styles in her village. She educates the villagers on the use of herbs, healthy food and the use of the traditional sauna for health reasons. She initiated the local branch of the Asthma Patients Association and organises activities to improve their health, such as walks in the mountains, and summer camps for asthmatic children. In addition, Agrita opened up a bookstore called "Herbs for your Health".

Laureates 2002

Amber BALOUCH



Pakistan

FIGHTING WOMEN'S EXCLUSION FROM EDUCATION

Amber Balouch (25), from the village of Ketti Khushk (Teshil Kandiaro, Khaipur, Sindh), grew up in a culture where women are not allowed to get an education. Lucky to have parents who rejected these customs and allowed her to study, Amber decided to dedicate her life to uplift rural women and began working in 1995 with non-governmental organisations. In 1999, she created the Society for Women Development, working in the Khaipur district of Sindh. Working day and night scheduling meetings with villagers, she created the "Project for the establishment of Non-formal Basic Education Community Schools". She opened non-formal basic education schools in 37 villages, serving 420 boys and 825 girls, and created two vocational training centers for training women in sewing, dressmaking, embroidery, glass and fabric painting thus enabling them to earn an income.

This demanded courage and perseverance to motivate men to allow the women to attend these trainings. Little by little the success of her programs ended up convincing them. Amber has also opened a display center to sell handicrafts made by the women.

Laureates 2002

Annapoorni T. MERCY



India



OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Annapoorni T. Mercy (37) began to help rural women of the Virudhunagar and Sivakasi area (Tamil Nadu) by organising awareness programs, action oriented workshops and vocational training sessions to enable them to seek employment other than in the fire and match industries or the sex industry. Six thousand women were thus organised into self-help groups. As a result of her activities, women have more confidence in themselves and show leadership qualities, and are able to save money. Some have taken up non-traditional employment such as running minibuses. Many freed themselves from bonded labour and bought land to farm. Annapoorni's creative communication skills through the use of people's theatre have enlightened many on critical issues such as family planning, reproductive health, AIDS prevention, environmental issues and labour rights. This technique has made it easier for illiterate people to reveal and discuss certain personal and hygiene problems. Annapoorni has given special attention to children employed in the match industries, by means of schools and non-formal education centers leading to alternative employment. She also established a HIV/AIDS Care and Support Center and a Family Counselling Center.

Laureates 2002

Anthoniammal AROKIASAMY



India



INNOVATIVE VERMICOMPOSTING FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Until 1996, Anthoniammal Arokiasamy (51) from Tiruvalarsolai village (Trichy District, Tamil Nadu), a farmer woman with limited formal education, was not making much income from her two acres of land. After attending a one-day course in Vermi-composting, she experimented for three years developing a new methodology utilizing pre-digested leaf waste and cow dung slurry, which is easier to handle than the conventional method. Her method has been adopted all over Tamil Nadu and Anthoniammal now trains other women and was even invited by the State Department of Agriculture to train agricultural officers at the state level. She never uses chemical pesticides and fertilizers and is a source of information on vermicomposting and organic farming in Tamil Nadu.

Laureates 2002

Apéfa KOUNETSRON



Togo

REVIVING ANCESTRAL SOAP MAKING METHODS

Apéfa Kounetsron (47) from Kpodzi (Department of Kloto) created a small soap factory all on her own by rediscovering an ancestral method using palm oil as a base to produce natural soap which is very effective for cleaning without irritating the skin. Together with 14 other women she produces 100-250 kilos of soap a day. In addition to her soap business, Apéfa is a seamstress and makes free school uniforms to encourage neglected children and adolescents to continue their schooling. With her own money she organises prizes to reward students for their achievements. She also counsels couples in an attempt to prevent domestic violence thus acting as an advocate for homemaker's rights.

Laureates 2002

ARTCAMP Cooperative



Mexico

MASTERING INTERNET TECHNOLOGIES TO MARKET THEIR ART

Artcamp is a cooperative of women from the village of Tecapulco (Guerrero State) who, having been abandoned by their husbands and losing their jobs due to the closing of a foreign-owned company, were determined to make it on their own. They formed a cooperative to continue the jewelry handicraft tradition of their village. Not only did they teach themselves English but they got their daughters to learn HTML computer language in order to create a website - www.artcamp.com.mx - to market their products directly through Internet. The women carry out the entire process themselves from the creation of designs, mold making, soldering, finishing and marketing. Village girls who have never seen a computer are trained to use the Excel spread sheets to track production and cost/price analysis. Artcamp is also involved in humanitarian projects. For example it obtained medical equipment for the local hospital and a water project for the village. The women also produced a website for teachers to present the Aztec calendar, a symbol of the Mexican Indian culture and history.

Laureates 2002

Bandara Menike WEERASEKERA



Sri Lanka

LEADING WOMEN TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

At age 20, Bandara Menike Weerasekera (43), presently a teacher in the rural community of Bandara Dampitiya (Pihimbiya Ratmale, Hettipola), created a thrift and credit society in her village, mobilised villagers to grow their own food thus teaching women to be self-sufficient. She taught villagers to prepare nutritious food based on vegetables and locally available fish products. Bandara Menike launched a program to make men aware of the negative effects of their drinking habits on women, educated youth in environmental conservation, and published articles on environmental topics.

She has been instrumental in obtaining government services for her community and has worked with banks to obtain credit facilities for women. Bandara Menike Weerasekera has also been very active in peacemaking efforts in her community, which was affected by political riots and civil war.

Beginning with meetings and workshops with rural women in her community, she organised a Women's front to demand peace, a movement that extended to a national level. She also promoted inter-religious dialogue and non-violence, helped war widows organise income generating activities, and provided foodstuffs and clothes to poor people displaced by war.

Laureates 2002

Catarina Eleuterio GOMEZ IXMATA



Guatemala

EDUCATION FOR THE MAYAS

Catarina Eleuterio Gomez Ixmata (39) from a poor Mayan family from the village of Nahuala, was lucky to be offered an education through a nun for whom her mother washed clothes. This was not easy as it meant being away from her family until grade six. Returning to her village of Nahuala, Catarina worked by day and studied by night to finish high school. In 1992 she joined the Mayan NGO Pop Atziak and created an education project, which provides scholarships to young Mayans, including training in the Mayan language and culture so they do not lose their cultural identity. Priority is given to students committed to their communities. In 1992, Catarina also organised an association to include the participation of women in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the village despite opposition from the men and also from the Catholic and Evangelical churches. The association also revived traditional music and mime groups and created a weaving exhibition to promote high standards in weaving and help find market outlets. Catarina also organises seminars for women on basic hygiene, nutrition, Mayan culture and public speaking. Two years ago she became a Mayan priestess and is called upon to conduct healing ceremonies. She is pursuing a degree in social work while at the same time attending to all her other activities.

Laureates 2002

Diell SMAKAJ



Albania



A HELPING HAND FOR THE RURAL BLIND

Diell Smakaj (40) from the village of Bratash (Malesia e Madhe district) having been born with very poor eyesight, decided to dedicate her life to helping the blind people of her isolated mountainous district which lacked infrastructure and social support for them. In 1991 she created the Association of Blind people in her town and convinced the authorities to give them office space. With the help of CAFOD-Albania she organised and partially taught courses in Braille, insisting that women from remote villages be included in the training and not only men. Thanks to her efforts, many blind people in rural areas have had access to disability pension schemes. Diell has been promoting the rights of blind people by means of dialogue with local authorities, government and non-governmental institutions, and raises public awareness of the problems and needs of the blind. She ensures that blind people's health needs are addressed, often taking them herself to the hospital for check-ups. Diell visits blind people in their homes irrespective of their age, gender or ethnicity, giving them hope and courage. She is ensuring that the needs of blind people are not neglected due to the remoteness of their rural areas.

Laureates 2002

Durgaben JAISWAL



India



IMPROVING RURAL LIFE

Durgaben Jaiswal (40) from Bilasia village (Daskroi Taluka, Ahmedabad District, Gujarat State) married into a very poor family. Determined to escape hardship, she got work as a labourer and began saving a little bit every month. Despite the opposition of her husband's family, she cultivated a wheat field producing three crops per year, which enabled her to repay her debts. When the non-governmental organisation SEWA suggested women start a milk co-operative, Durgaben was the only one to volunteer to take up the leadership despite opposition from her family and harassment of the middlemen who bought milk at low prices to sell at great profit. She learned to keep records for the cooperative and encouraged other women to take various training courses to improve their abilities. She started a childcare center and began visiting the panchayat (local government). By means of small loans she was able to improve her home and buy her husband a rickshaw to earn an income, as he didn't have a good job. Little by little her life began to improve and also that of the village as women followed her example. Women in the village now know that with courage, patience, enthusiasm and some training, they can accomplish much to uplift themselves and their village.

Laureates 2002

Edelmira BARRIOS DE CENTELLA



Panama

WHERE THERE IS A WILL THERE IS A WAY

Edelmira Barrios de Centella (55) from Macaracas (Los Santos Province) was raised to love and protect agriculture and nature. Her community work began as a young school student when, as class president, her petition to a local politician for a well be dug in her town, was rewarded with a positive answer. Due to economic difficulties she left school at 14. Married at 17, her husband left her to fend for herself and her five children. Despite these setbacks Edelmira, although struggling to raise her family on low paying jobs and sewing articles to sell, was always active in community affairs and doing volunteer work. She housed 10 students under her own roof thus enabling them to finish school, watched over her deaf neighbour, and was active on the Health committee, helping the town to acquire an ambulance and improve the hospital. Serving as secretary of the housing committee, Edelmira was instrumental in building housing for the poor. Between 1990 and 2000 she worked with various projects within the Rural Women's Programme. Completing secondary school late in life, at 51 years of age she won a scholarship to take a university course in Agroforestry. With her new degree she went all over the country, training women in organic agriculture, soil conservation, nutrition and related subjects. Together with 19 other volunteers she opened an adult night school in which she taught for free many years. Her activities helped improve the quality of life of many rural people.

Laureates 2002

Eliza NGWENYA



Zimbabwe

CREATING SOLIDARITY FOR FOOD SECURITY IN A TIME OF CONFLICT

Eliza Ngwenya (59) was raised in the tradition of the Ndebele tribe, which has long been marginalized by the government. After marrying she left rural life to settle in Luveve where she got used to modern commodities such as running water and electricity. On seeing her native Bulawayo area (Matabeleland) suffering economically due to the political situation, she decided to return to rural life. At nearly 50, she left the city with her young children for Mataopos. There Eliza got the people and local chief to set aside land for community fields and she became the leader of a group of women starting to plough the fields and grow crops without chemicals. Ultimately she organised the distribution of harvests equitably among community members. Thanks to her leadership, enough food is grown to ensure household food security with sometimes an excess to sell. This collective work brought people together at a time when the land issue was crucial in the country, and is inspiring other women to follow her model. Eliza also directs tourist infrastructure, which serves not only to gain some income but gives space for craftsmen, herbalists, and traditional healers to practice and teach their art thus helping to stem the loss of traditional knowledge.

Laureates 2002

Gladys CHIKA



Kenya

FIGHTING POVERTY THROUGH AIDS PREVENTION

Gladys Chika (69) returned to her rural home in Ruma in 1991 (Mandiany Division, Bondo district, Nyanza province) after retiring from her job as a social worker in the slums of Nairobi's Pumwani. Upon discovering that local male administrators had grossly mismanaged the Ruma Women's Group, initiated in 1983, she immediately began to revitalize it making women aware of their managerial potential. One of her first efforts was to seek funds to build a water tank providing clean drinking water thus preventing water-borne diseases. Women are now running the project independently from its original sponsors. Negotiating a grant to rebuild the Ruma primary school, she mobilised the community to provide the labour. Her most important contribution is the Ruma AIDS awareness project, started in 1994, benefiting an estimated 50,000 people and serving as a model which has been very successful in the context of a rural environment where issues of sexuality are governed by strict tradition. Through this program the youth are trained as peer educators, AIDS clubs are formed in schools, AIDS counsellors are trained, AIDS widows are assisted with income generating activities, community AIDS awareness meetings are held regularly. In addition a family-based orphan project was initiated making it possible to keep AIDS orphans in the community. Furthermore, Gladys spends almost all her retirement benefits to educate and feed disadvantaged children, she counsels women and girls in difficulty, and hosts international students wishing to learn about rural development.

Laureates 2002

Hirbaiben Lobi IBRAHIMBHAI



India



A SIDDI COMMUNITY LEADER

Hirbaiben Lobi Ibrahimbhai (46) was born in the village of Jambur (Talala Taluka, Junagadh District, Gujarat state), a Siddi community of tribal people mainly descendants of slaves brought centuries ago from Africa. Orphaned as a child, she was raised by her grandmother. Although inheriting a large debt, she refused to sell her tiny piece of land. Rather, she encouraged her husband to work harder, and with help from listening to radio programs on agricultural development, eventually succeeded in freeing the land from creditors. In 1992, Hirbaiben began motivating women to form women's development groups creating three groups that deal with issues of health, hygiene, savings and credit, and agricultural improvement. Realising the importance of education, Hirbaiben set out to find funds for a day care center and primary school, and convinced the village to assign land that had been allotted to private housing, to be used for a school so village children could study past the primary level. Together with other Siddi women she manufactures and sells organic compost proving that women can prepare a high quality product that can compete on the market. She also had the courage to contest the position of Sarpanch (head of the village government) and, although she lost, she is called the "Sarpanch" of the village and even senior government officials listen to her.

Laureates 2002

Hu MEIYING



China



TURNING HILLSIDES GREEN

Hu Meiying (54) from Zhuozuo village (Danzhai County, Guizhou Province), realised that the environment had deteriorated due to the indiscriminate felling of trees. Due to extreme poverty, local communities saw no other means of survival than to cut trees for cash. Hu decided to lease eight acres of land and planted trees including pear, Chinese chestnut, mulberry and pine, and tea bushes. Building a hut on the hills in order to be nearby to tend to the trees, she worked diligently to ensure their survival turning the hills green after three years. She then organised 263 women encouraging them to do the same on neighbouring hillsides. Under her leadership and with support from UNICEF, the women planted over 600 acres of tea, 50,000 pear trees, 30,000 mulberry trees, and 50,000 pine trees. Hu held village meetings to educate people on the importance of protecting the forests. They worked out rules and regulations with clear rewards and punishments for their implementation. Not only are the once barren hillsides now green but the tree crops provide income for the villagers.

Laureates 2002

Huashun Feedlot Enterprise



China

RAISING RABBITS FOR PROSPERITY

Huashun Feedlot Enterprise in Xiao Huangzhuaug village (Shuangzha town, Jianan district of Tianjin) is a rabbit breeding enterprise run entirely by 18 women. It was initiated by Ji Qinghua who, after having succeeded in becoming prosperous by raising chickens and pigs, wanted to help other women of her village. Purchasing 300 rabbits with her own funds and training to learn how to breed rabbits, Ji Qinghua then shared the knowledge with others.

After some initial failures, the women are now earning good profits and expanding to include more women. They also encourage, train, and provide free seed rabbits for women to begin their own breeding operation. A rural science programme based on their experience was aired on Chinese television for the benefit of all rural women in China. The women are now starting to process rabbit meat and fur for added value and provide employment for local women.

Laureates 2002

Innocentia Edwige A. GUEDEGBE



Benin

MOBILISING WOMEN FOR DEVELOPMENT

Innocentia Edwige A. Guedegbe (41) a rural woman from Bopa with university studies in law, economics and political science, created the Association for the Promotion of Rural Women APFEM in 1992. She encourages women to participate in the development of their community, making them aware of their situation and getting them involved in decision-making. Now women are members of parent-teacher associations and fight for their girls to have access to schooling. Innocentia helped women get training in labour saving technologies in order to lighten their heavy workload, and she created a cereal bank in five villages and a community bank for women to take out loans. She mobilised women in a campaign to prevent city merchants from depleting their natural resources, and encouraged them to plant trees for firewood, use fuel-efficient stoves, and plant kitchen gardens. She educates women on laws and agreements ratified by the government and lobbies for their implementation especially regarding sustainable development.

Innocentia also conducts awareness training on family planning using films and other strategies while making sure that men are also involved. Thanks to her efforts the villages of Agbessikpè, Kpota, Azonlihoué, Godonoutin, Hounsa, Kpinnou, and Henhave each have committees for the management of their resources, their homes have latrines, cereal banks help to prevent famine, and local children go to school. Innocentia also coordinated the World Women's March of 2000 in Benin.

Laureates 2002

Johanna DANZ-GILLARDON



Switzerland



FARMING FLOWERS FOR PROSPERITY

Johanna Danz, a woman farmer on the family farm Birkenhof (Heinzenberg, Canton Chur) was challenged in her creativity when the amount of land they could lease was reduced by one third: an additional source of income needed to be found. Starting out by growing strawberries, which was unusual at the high altitude of the farm, Johanna decided to build a greenhouse to grow flowers. Innovatively combining the different colors and varieties of flowers grown in her greenhouse and garden without any imported ingredients, Johanna makes unusual decorative arrangements which she sells. Although she has no formal training as a florist, her work flows from the heart and inspires people. Persevering in her endeavour despite discouraging comments at the beginning, Johanna faced many obstacles before the Chur Authorities gave her permission to exercise her activity as a legally recognised business in her rural community. From May till October she can be found at the weekly market place in Chur where many customers enjoy buying her home produced varieties and bouquets. In addition to working long hours with little free time, Johanna also offers flower arrangement- and decoration courses to other women, inspiring them with new ideas and products to sell on their farms. Johanna treats her flowers with great respect as living creatures that bring love and joy to many homes in the region. With flowers and courses, Johanna promotes the beautiful Heinzenberg region.

Laureates 2002

Julia Damiana RAMOS SANCHEZ



Bolivia

FIGHTING EXCLUSION AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

Julia Damiana Ramos Sanchez (39) from the community of Ancon Grande (Aviles Province, Department of Tarija), the eldest girl among seven children, grew up with the responsibility of helping to care for her younger siblings. As early as 14 years old, Julia felt the need to participate in the organisation of her community and assumed various responsibilities in community leadership. At 22, realising that her literacy skills from primary school, the only schooling available in her community, were inadequate, she attended night school in Tarija while continuing to practice her leadership abilities within the peasant union. As a leader, she focused mainly on the importance of the environment and its relation to community health, and on environmental education at a time when little was being said on these topics in her country. In addition to taking many courses to improve her knowledge in order to better help rural women, Julia decided to go to university and succeeded in getting a degree in Nursing in 1994. This was a courageous step as she suffered discrimination due to her traditional dress. Her excellent performance, however, gained her the respect of teachers and fellow students, thus proving that, despite being dressed as a countrywoman she was an excellent student. She is now Executive Secretary of the National Federation of Peasant Women of Bolivia "Bartolina Sisa" through which she fights for food security in rural areas, sustainable ecological agriculture, and education for rural women.

Laureates 2002

Leonila ESCOTO DE ZELAYA



Honduras

A MODEL ORGANIC GARD

Leonila Escoto de Zelaya (52) from the village of Manzaragua (Guinope Municipality, El Paraiso Department) left primary school after second grade due to economic factors. As the eldest child she helped her widowed mother raise her siblings and tend to the garden and animals. She married at 23 and, when, in 1981, a non-governmental organisation, World Neighbours, began to offer classes on agricultural techniques in her community, she pushed her husband to attend the classes which were at first only open to men. Later when classes on preventive medicine and nutrition were being offered to women, Leonila, realising the importance of learning, was quick to take advantage of the opportunity to learn as much as she could, and actively encouraged other women to attend, both giving and hosting classes in her home.

The women started vegetable gardens Leonila's garden being among the biggest and most diversified, incorporating all the techniques the men had been taught such as terracing, minimum tillage, green manure and live barriers. After the NGO left her village, and seeing the necessity to keep on educating the villagers, Leonila continued to organise classes for them herself and also began to go every two weeks to other towns to do the same. Throughout the years Leonila's farm has become a model experimental organic farm on which she tries out medicinal plants, vegetables to improve the nutrition of the community and innovative technologies. Productivity and nutrition in the rural communities have greatly improved thanks to Leonila's innovative spirit and willingness to experiment.

Laureates 2002

Mariama DIOULDE DIALLO



Guinea

EMPOWERING WITH SEWING

In 1985 Mariama Dioulde Diallo (42), a woman from the Peul ethnic group, created the Tagama Seamstress Association in Dalaba just as the country was coming out of a brutal military dictatorship. The association began when Mariama, together with five friends, decided to teach each other skills such as sewing, embroidery, weaving and dyeing in order to make their own clothes and sell a part of them for income. Beginning with one old sewing machine in the open air and using wool recycled from used sweaters, they now have 20 sewing machines housed in a building together with a school for their children, as well as a family planning centre. They also train others in dressmaking, offer courses in literacy, nutrition, AIDS prevention, simple accounting and marketing. Furthermore they organise a course in the French language in order for women to communicate with increasing numbers of tourists who are among their major clients. Mariama Dioulde Diallo's activities have directly and indirectly benefited 2.500 people and enabled over 250 women to start their own dressmaking business. Mariama is also the founder of the Union of Women Dyers of Middle Guinea.

Laureates 2002

Mateso NYOTA MWAVITA



Democratic Republic of Congo

DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COLLECTIVE WORK

Mateso Nyota Mwavita (36) from Fizi (South-Kivu province) has been working since 1984 to combat malnutrition and lighten the heavy workload of women in the region. By organising women into groups, she encouraged them to plant vegetable crops that mature in three months to replace the long season cassava crops often ravaged by insect pests. Mateso Nyota motivated peasant leaders so that men, traditionally only dedicated to fishing, also got involved in heavy fieldwork. She proposed a strategy of “work share” by which a group of 5-7 families join forces to cultivate the fields of each family in turn, in order to maximise the amount of land cultivated per family in a minimum of time. This system of collective work was also used to build “development towns”, residential quarters with lanes and avenues shaded by trees in which women can thrive and contribute to development.

Mateso Mwavita mobilised women to work towards the purchase of a grain mill and to plant trees for firewood around the village. She sensitised traditional rulers to allow newly wed couples to acquire their own land, rather than having to move in with in-laws, in order to free women from domination by in-laws. Matesi Nyota Mwavita also set up literacy circles and improved micro credit schemes for women.

Laureates 2002

Nadezhda MIKHAILOVNA MARTINOVA



Russia



CREATING AN ENVIRONMENTAL UNIVERSITY

Nadezhda Mikhailovna Martinova (51), a teacher from Penza (Povolzie region), has been working successfully to improve the environment in rural areas of her region, an area scattered with stores of chemical weapons and industrial waste, and having serious problems of air pollution, deforestation and soil erosion common in Southern Russia. Noticing the lack of environmental awareness in Russia, Nadezhda decided that the most important step needed was education, and she created a university in which all the subjects taught focus on the environment. This took enormous courage, as these issues were not popular with the government. After many months of paperwork and planning, the Penza branch of the International Independent University of Environment and Political Science opened up in a few dilapidated classrooms of the Pedagogical College with a few dozen students who had failed to gain entry into the famous State universities. Today, eight years later, it has around 1000 students who study ecology, foreign languages, computer science, psychology and law, focusing mainly on human nature, socio-economic issues, politics and the environment. They do individual research on environmental problems in the region presenting their results at a prestigious economic conference initiated by Nadezhda. Companies from all over send their engineers to train at the University. Its impact is manifested by less air and water pollution, more environmental farming techniques, a growing awareness of hazardous wastes, and a sense of environmental sensitivity among youth. Rural students are given much leeway in paying for their tuition or get help to find sponsors. Students are sent into rural areas to organise seminars, shows and concerts promoting the environment. Nadezhda fought a system that no one dared to challenge, creating the first environmental institution, the first private institution, and becoming the first woman University Director in the area.

Laureates 2002

Navakasobu Women's Group



Fidji



SAVING A WETLAND ECOSYSTEM

For years, native women have been using Kuta (*Eleocharis dulcis*), a plant used traditionally in weaving, to make objects that are essential to their ceremonies, culture and daily life. In Tikina Sasa (Macuata Province), however, Kuta was disappearing as a result of the destruction of its wetland habitat because the government had leased collectively owned land in the 1970's for sugarcane plantations without consulting the women or informing them of the agreements in their own language. Women were then obliged to travel long distances to find Kuta. Determined to restore its wetland habitat, the women formed the Navakasobu Women's Group. With the help of WWF, the university and the Fiji government, the women put together a plan to restore the habitat and involved the men also making them realise that the wetland habitat is a resource for the village, their children and their future. They also produce handicrafts for income with leftover materials, and plan other projects such as raising fish in the now clean pond. In addition, the local and national governments are now more aware of the need for wetland conservation and management and the importance of consulting local populations.

Laureates 2002

Peace BYANDUSYA



Uganda

MUSHROOM GROWING BRINGS INCOME

Peace Byandusya (35) from a peasant family in Bukinda village (Rukiga county, Kabale district) could not pursue studies beyond High-School due to lack of resources. In 1995 while making her living selling second hand clothes in rural markets, she attended a course at the agricultural research station on how to grow Oyster mushrooms. An activity requiring limited land and using a variety of locally available materials, yet yielding a relatively high priced quality product, growing mushrooms turned into a good income generating activity which Peace decided to share with other women. Using her own resources she set up a demonstration garden in her home, which became a training center for Oyster mushroom growing. As part of the training Peace teaches women how to prepare delicious meals with mushrooms and educates them on their high nutritional and medicinal value. Peace also lobbies for women to have access to micro credit institutions to help them begin and maintain their mushroom growing businesses and also carry out other projects.

Laureates 2002

Radha VIJAY



India

HELPING WOMEN TO HELP THEMSELVES

Radha Vijay (33), a social worker in the Malpura District of Rajasthan, has helped establish 98 self-help groups in 15 villages, empowering women through income-generating activities. Among the successful programmes initiated with her help are: a dairy unit providing milk and milk products, training in patch work on clothes and leather which turned into a rural industry, and carpet weaving which was an activity previously only done by men. Radha led an anti-smoking campaign which resulted in all the women of a village giving up their smoking habit, and created a night school for girls in a village where girls were excluded from education. She organised a common wedding ceremony for 15 young couples as a model to stop the dowry system, and ensured that 100% of the children in a village were properly vaccinated. Radha Vijay believes that with the help of education and income generating opportunities, women can fight the social evils oppressing them and claim their rights.

Laureates 2002

Rosita ANGULO ANGULO



Costa Rica



DEFENDING COMMUNITY WATER RESOURCES

Rosita Angulo Angulo (37) has been working for the past eight years on different development projects, particularly in the area of environmental protection, in her community of Lorena de Santa Cruz in the coastal area of Guanacaste, one of the poorest regions in Costa Rica. Although it appears to be a green valley due to the rivers present, it is actually an area that suffers water scarcity. Rosita's latest activity has been the fight for preservation of water resources from depletion through unsustainable development. In 2000, a hotel company began to bore a number of deep wells in the area, installing disproportionately large pipes without an official permit to do so. Rosita motivated the community to request the municipality not to give the hotel a permit to dig the wells. The municipality, however, did not listen, so Rosita mobilised 150 people to physically block pipe installation, organised two demonstrations in the center of town, and took all the other legal measures available to put a stop to the project. In response to the municipality's indifference to their plea, she got people from 12 neighboring communities to form a physical block to the construction over a period of one month, finally succeeding in getting the Hotel to remove its machinery.

Even after succeeding in getting an environmental impact assessment done, the municipal authorities refused to go back on its initial agreement to allow water extraction by the Hotel. Therefore, Rosita took the case to the highest authority possible, which ruled in the community's favour. In order to continue monitoring the situation and to represent the community's water interest in the future, Community Council was formed. Rosita won a major battle for her community, despite facing all types of pressure, and managed to keep people unified in a struggle against powerful economic interests, which continually tried to create divisions among them.

Laureates 2002

Sangeeta SAWALANKHE



India



PROMOTING BIOLOGICAL CONTROL OF INSECT PESTS

Sangeeta Sawalankhe (34), having grown up in an agricultural family, noticed the deleterious effects of heavy pesticide use on the environment and on the health of rural women who comprise 85-90 percent of the agricultural labour force in the Yavatmal district (Vidarbha province, Maharashtra State).

Besides affecting women's health through their use in the field and contamination of food handled in the kitchen, pesticides were no longer effective as pests developed resistance. This motivated Sangeeta to study Agriculture specialising in the field of biological pest control. On completing her studies, she established, in 1995, the Vidarbha Biotech Lab to mass-produce various insect parasites and viruses for use as biological control agents against insect pests. In order to make farmers aware of the benefits of these biological methods, Sangeeta organised seminars, field demonstrations, guidance camps, workshops, exhibitions and competitions, delivered radio talks and published articles. Thanks to her efforts, farmers are beginning to adopt her methods. She has trained around 3,000 rural women and over 4,000 men in the handling of these bio agents and these farmers are in turn training others. As the only woman entomologist in the region to mass-produce biological pests and offer training in their use, Ms. Sangeeta is considered to be the Mother of Integrated Pest Management in her area.

Laureates 2002

Tekla WANJIKU MBIRIRI



Kenya



TEACHING RURAL WOMEN MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Tekla Wanjiku Mbiriri (56) from Kiserian (Kikuyu Division, Kiambu District) could only attend primary school due to economic factors. Tekla, however, did not let this handicap her but on the contrary decided to use the little knowledge she acquired by seeking employment as a primary non-trained teacher in 1964. After getting married and working at a number of different jobs, she decided to return to farming in order to have more time for her children. Noticing the economic dependence of women on men, she began to engage women in her area in revolving funds to which women would contribute money to be given once a month to one of the group members on a rotational basis. To effectively communicate with the women, Tekla even learned the Maasai language of the predominant ethnic group in the region. Due to the long waiting period before a woman could benefit from the group fund, there was a high dropout rate. Therefore, Tekla trained them on how to mobilize savings, develop rules and regulations, elect group officials, and keep records of loans. She created 32 groups this way, with an average of 20 members per group, making it possible for women to start small businesses and pay for school fees and health care needs. Tekla also found ways for women's groups to access micro finance institutions.

Laureates 2002

Urner Wollhandwerk Team



Switzerland



INNOVATIVE PRODUCTS SUSTAIN MOUNTAIN FARMS

On the occasion of the International Year of the Mountains, WWSF is happy to award the Prize to the Urner Wollhandwerk Team in the Urner mountain region. Sheep rearing, one of the best practices for steep mountain prairies, was economically unattractive with little profit to be made, as generally only the meat was marketable; the wool was burnt as it found no outlet in the market. Judging this practice wasteful and environmentally unacceptable, Elsbeth Arnold, from the steep hills in the Schachten valley (Canton Uri), together with a number of mountain farm women from the region, all convinced that sheep wool could contribute to the quality of life and survival of mountain farm families, formed a co-operative to transform it into various marketable products. They took classes to learn to produce good quality bed covers which little by little generated interest and profit.

Sending the wool outside the region for processing proved costly. Therefore they bought a second-hand carder to treat the wool themselves turning it into felt. Together the group now produces many attractive felt products, such as hats, various decorations, toys and mats, which are selling well along with the woollen bed covers. Their dream is for progressively less wool to leave the valley for external processing, and to transform all the wool produced locally into finished products. The future of the whole region may well depend on the development of such micro enterprises thus enabling mountain farm life to survive the increased globalisation of cultures and markets.

Laureates 2002

Women's Federation of Pingluo County



China



INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES HELP THE RURAL POOR

The Women's Federation of Pingluo County, made up of 7 women, have carried out extensive women-oriented activities, trained rural women in many subjects such as greenhouse vegetable culture, poultry raising, and mushroom cultivation, thus empowering them to improve their quality of life.

Among the innovative aspects of their projects is a telephone hotline for advice on how to tackle any problems. This is often followed by a helpful field visit of a federation technician. They established moveable greenhouses, which are less expensive than conventional ones, require less land and are easier to operate thus offering a quick profit. Targeting the poorest of the poor, the Federation followed a "hand-in-hand" policy, matching two skilled women to help out one poor one, formalised by the signing of an agreement for technical advice, information exchange, and other services for poverty alleviation. The Federation also conducted a reforestation program to improve the harsh environment of the Northwest, planting thousands of trees along the Yellow River, in Qu Kou Township and Tou Zha Township, among others.

Laureates 2002

Xiji County Women's Federation



China



SKILL TRAINING FOR RURAL WOMEN

Xiji County Women's Federation is a group of six women from the Ningxia Hui Ethnic Autonomous region who provide many different kinds of skill training for rural women. In 2001 alone, 67 training sessions were organised on subjects such as agriculture, animal husbandry, literacy, tailoring, and education on legal issues. In order to ensure that the sessions were pertinent and successful, they went from house to house to find out what women needed, while at the same time convincing them to attend. They invited experts in the field, designed the courses carefully, studying late into the night, so that the program taught would be easy to learn and apply. They also actively raised money from various sources to provide micro credit for women and help them to identify good projects. The Federation also lobbied the government and private companies to build water tanks to collect and store rainwater for irrigation as the area suffers from water scarcity. Assistance with legal issues is also part of the Federation's activities.



Laureates from 2001

Laureates 2001

Alcira ESTRADA



Bolivia

DETERMINED TO SAVE THE FOREST

Alcira Estrada (58) is a representative of “The New Hope of Chiquiacá”, the mother’s center of Chiquiacá (Department of Tarija), a community situated in the middle of a once dense forest in the northeast section of the national reserve of Tariquía. Being totally isolated from the rest of the province, the community had a road built in the hope it would contribute to their development. The road, however, rapidly brought on excessive and illegal exploitation of the forest. In 1994, Alcira Estrada contacted an NGO working in environmental protection to help them evict a lumber company that had initiated activities without the consent of the community. After a year of confrontations between the community and the lumber company, under Alcira’s leadership, at a time when Bolivia had no official forest legislation, the community successfully evicted the company and elaborated a forest management plan. Alcira intervened again in 1995 when a city dwelling landowner was unjustly claiming land. In appreciation, the land was finally given to the mother’s center. In 1999, some landowners opposed to the forest management plan, took advantage of the temporary absence of Alcira, to call for a community meeting convincing the people to dissolve the plan. Upon her return, however, appalled at this decision, she called for another meeting and succeeded in reinstating the plan. Alcira is an example of what the courage and commitment of one woman can accomplish.

Laureates 2001

Bao CAILUAN



China

GREENING THE HILLS

In the winter of 1990, Bao Cailuan (59), a rural technician in Shaolian village (Xi County, Anhui Province) contacted women in 16 households to lease together three hectares of barren fields and plant 19,700 fir trees thus turning the land into a forestry center. They did the same to another 17 hectares the following year. In 1995, despite the slump in the tea market, Bao Cailuan leased another 20 hectares planting them in persimmon, ginkgo and greengage for tea production. She bought tea processing machines and managed the production, processing and marketing of teas making a good profit. Today, thanks to the efforts, courage and persistence of Bao Cailuan, a total of 53 hectares of once unproductive hills are now flourishing with trees, tea and vegetable gardens, and food processing sites.

Laureates 2001

Christa OFF



Germany

PERSEVERANCE PAYS

Christa Off (57), mother of three, and leading woman farmer of her region in the village Sindelsdorf, Pfaffenwinkel (Upper Bavaria), offers "vacations on the farm". Being responsible for adult education in rural areas, Christa is also member of the regional council. At the same time, for the past 15 years she has been Vice-President of the Bavarian Women's Farmers Union on an honorary basis. Ten years ago when Christa created the Country Union (Landesverband) "Vacations on farms", she was elected first chairwoman. At first, however, she faced great difficulties, as the farmers were reluctant to accept the positive aspect of her new idea due to the large membership expenses involved. Christa travelled from region to region, and village to village to convince farmers and their families of the benefits of joining the union. Her slogan was "Together we are strong".

Today, ten years later, all the different regional associations are members of the country union and are publicized in a countrywide catalogue "Vacations on the farm". Membership fees no longer pose a problem to the farmers, the project is well known, well appreciated, and managed by guests and the farmers' families themselves. Income has increased and life on farms is more balanced.

Laureates 2001

Christine ZOLLINGER



Switzerland

SAVING SWITZERLAND'S SEEDS

A few years after completing an apprenticeship in horticulture, Christine Zollinger (48) heard about the phenomenon of disappearing plant varieties. On returning from a two-year stay in Nepal with the Food and Agricultural Organisation during which she was initiated to techniques of seed production, she began to carry out her dream of creating a business producing seeds of traditional old varieties according to principles of organic agriculture. As any pioneer project, it required great determination, courage, effort, intelligence and love. Today, together with her husband, their catalogue proudly displays some 120 varieties of vegetables, 50 flower varieties and four of cereals. Her vegetables, which are of exquisite taste, keep much better than many commercial varieties. The family run business in Evouettes near Aigle (Canton of Valais) covers four hectares and serves over 3000 individuals and around 100 organic food shops.

Laureates 2001

COMIXUL Mixed Cooperative of United Women



Honduras

IN UNION LIES STRENGTH

COMIXUL, a women's cooperative, is an example of what women can accomplish by joining forces, despite being poor single mothers. Among the only economic opportunities for young single mothers with a poor education was to become an agricultural labourer, a factory worker or a market saleswoman, all jobs with little future or chance of advancement. In 1986, a group of 12 single mothers from the rural communities of San Pablo and San Juan (Province of Siguatepeque) got together to form a communal bank. Using a seed capital of \$1000 from their own savings, they gave out loans of \$25-200 per member to use for the development of their market business selling products from the countryside in Siguatepeque. Gradually more women joined the group and in 1991 they became the Mixed Cooperative of United Women (COMIXUL) with 100 members. In 1995, due to inflation and other financial problems beyond their control, they decided to take out their first loan, which allowed them to acquire a building in which to have meetings and training sessions, and initiate new projects such as a programme for agricultural training and food security by diversifying food products, agroforestry projects, health insurance for members, and cultural activities. The group has now grown into a large organisation of 5000 women throughout 6 municipalities of Honduras.

Laureates 2001

Do Thuy DIEN



Vietnam

HELPING HER COMMUNITY BEGIN AGAIN

Do Thuy Dien (37) had to start anew in the village of Muong Lay (Lai Chau province) in a mountainous area near the border with Laos where the government had moved them after they had lost everything in a flood. Although her husband had given in to gambling, rather than give in to grief and despair, Do Thuy Dien courageously encouraged the village women, showing them it was possible to progress out of catastrophe. She started a small carpentry shop building furniture for the village and employing eight workers including her husband. With a small loan she was able to purchase simple machinery. Realising that the noise and fumes were polluting the village, she moved her workshop to the outskirts of the village and always made sure to choose the lumber judiciously to avoid soil erosion. She planted an orchard to improve the nutrition of the local people and was very active in the establishment of a primary school. Do Thuy Dien has contributed to the re-establishment of her community not only with her ideas and perseverance but also with strenuous physical labour.

Laureates 2001

Georgina PEREZ MARTINEZ



Cuba

TRANSFORMING WASTELANDS INTO VEGETABLE GARDENS

Georgina Perez Martinez (62), a graduate in Geography from Havana, began, in 1988, to transform a piece of communal wasteland in the rural community of Arroy Arenas into a vegetable farm. In 1992 a group of 40 vegetable growers selected her as president of the group despite her being the only woman. By organising workshops in the community to train people in soil conservation and agroecological techniques she has been creating a culture of environmental protection in the area. The farm has been designated as a national reference for its productivity and social impact. It is an example of how unused land can be made productive. The consumption of vegetables has increased, and traditional methods of food conservation have been revived.

Laureates 2001

Helen MANOHARAN



India



CHALLENGING THE CASTE SYSTEM

Being a girl in a country where girls are not valued, and the loss of a sister who was beaten and burned to death by parents-in-law, motivated Helen Manoharan (40) to work for the upliftment of vulnerable women. To this purpose she joined the Madurai Non-Formal Education Center (MNEC). Careful to choose a husband who shared her views, she decided to only have one child so that she could better dedicate herself to others. As secretary of MNEC, Helen established training centers in 30 villages, training 3000 women in tailoring and 300 rural women in making articles of jute; 2010 families were provided with housing in 10 villages and 200 children have received food supplements. In order to cross caste lines and promote peace, Helen enabled inter-caste and inter-religious marriages, sometimes arranging them herself through legal entities in the presence of government officials despite threats to her life. She also counselled couples in an effort to stop atrocities towards women, despite having been beaten once after standing as a witness in court during an enquiry about such atrocities. An active mobiliser of women to fight for their rights, she gathered, for example, 100 women in a village to openly break down utensils, ovens, and other equipment used for making alcohol thus eliminating its production. Helen also taught women to create self-help groups for savings and credit, and started schools and learning centers for children.

Laureates 2001

Honorine POIDI



Togo

REVIVING CULTURAL IDENTITY AND NATIVE \$ _SESSION['LANGUAGE']UAGE

Honorine Poidi (41), a linguist from Ahlon Sassanou and native of the Bogo people, has been working to improve life for the isolated Bogo communities in Ahlon through health education, literacy classes and the translation of educational literature into the local \$ _SESSION['LANGUAGE']UAGE. The Bogo people of Ahlon, being the smallest minority in Togo, numbering only 6000 and totally isolated from the rest of the country by mountains, have been neglected by development pro-grams. As a result they suffered an inferiority complex and were cut off from any information. Honorine Poidi initiated activities to teach them to read and write and provided them with training manuals, textbooks, news materials, information on AIDS prevention and other topics including fiction and the bible in their own \$ _SESSION['LANGUAGE']UAGE. This has helped the Bogo minority to appreciate their cultural values while at the same time giving them access to deve-lopment activities in order to improve their lives. She also established a small village library for the benefit of the community.

Laureates 2001

Joyce VIDA DONKOR



Ghana



BEE KEEPING SAVES BEES AND BRINGS BUSINESS

Since 1985, Joyce Vida Donkor (48) has been involved in educating the Nyame-So community (Breman Anhwiam) of peasant farmers on environmental health in an attempt to prevent diseases through cleanliness and incorporating backyard vegetable gardens to improve the nutritional quality of their diet. In 1998, she attended a bee-keeping workshop in order to find an alternative source of income, and also to protect the bees from local extinction resulting from the existing practice of burning hives to kill the bees and harvest honey. Using local materials, together with other women, she designed a beehive. With the participation of men also, they built some hives, baited them, monitored them and, within five months, collected the first harvest of honey, some of which was shared with the community, the remainder being sold to buy materials for more hives. Joyce Vida Donkor proved to her reluctant community that this safe and eco-friendly project provided a quality product that could be sold with high returns thus providing extra income.

Laureates 2001

Kassena Building Women



Burkina Faso

PERPETUATING TRADITIONAL ART FORMS

By honouring the Kassena “Femmes Batisseurs”, Cécile Katiana, Aneyan Aouygade and Kougnedipe Kaye, for their know-how and creativity in the decoration of traditional homes, know-how that has been transmitted to them from preceding generations and that they continue to transmit, initiating young women in its practice, the Women’s World Summit Foundation hopes to contribute to valuing and protecting traditional knowledge and indigenous creativity at the local and international level. The style of the Kassena home and the meticulous workmanship of the design are rich in symbolism: a rectangular shape, for example, represents man and the bi or trilobed shape represents woman. The orientation of the house is also symbolic: for instance West where the sun sets represents woman. The relationship to the environment, the materials used, the presence of animals and the relationship with the ancestors as well as rituals, together make up an important cultural space characteristic of this heritage, which can be defined as “the link between the sky and the earth”.

Laureates 2001

Kusum JAIN



India

GIVING HOPE TO THE HELPLESS

Kusum Jain (38) from Jaipur has been working for 13 years as project director for women's empowerment in rural areas of Rajasthan. Among the many services she has performed, she contacted a group of leprosy sufferers walking along the road, motivated them to give up begging, trained them in weaving and other skills, and provided them with shelter and medical treatment, thus rehabilitating over 500 lepers. She conducted awareness training of men and women in civic rights, women's rights, the environment and other issues. Kusum Jain helped eight villages solve their water problem by getting the old dried-up wells deepened and repaired. With help from col-leagues, she planted 70, 000 saplings of various tree species thus fighting deser-tification. The HIV/AIDS prevention program she designed for tribal communities involved in prostitution is being implemented in 21 villages.

Laureates 2001

Maria de Jesus COLAJ CHAL



Guatemala



EDUCATION EQUALS EMPOWERMENT

Being a girl, Maria de Jesus Colaj Chal (34), a Mayan native from the village of Simajhuleu San Juan Comalapa (Department of Chimaltenango), did not have the opportunity to attend school as a child, but decided to do so in her 20's, completing third grade of secondary school despite financial and social hardship. Getting an education enabled her to play a leadership role in various development projects in her own and in other communities in the fields of health, hygiene, nutrition, forestry, conservation, environment, gender issues, Mayan language and literacy. Due to her dedication, responsibility and respect for nature, she was chosen to be president of a number of organisations including the Community Bank of Simajuleu, and Women for Development and Conservation of the Orient-Women Get Ahead. This year Maria de Jesus was elected the first woman Assistant Mayor of her community for the promotion of community projects.

Laureates 2001

Mariana HERNANDEZ



El Salvador



FROM EXCELLENCE TO LEADERSHIP

Mariana Hernandez (41), from Monte San Juan municipality (Department of Cuscatlan), due to financial constraints was only able to complete her primary education. After receiving some training in reforestation, nutrition, hygiene and sanitation, she has been active in rural development since 1980. Mariana's excellent community work got her elected manager of the mayor's office from 1994 to 1997 and invited as part of the board by the Salvadoran Center for Appropriate Technology to the fourth regional Peasant-to-Peasant meeting. In 1995, she served as a promoter of agricultural projects. In this capacity Mariana was able to develop many projects for the improvement of the municipality and the environment, such as a pharmacy using natural products, agroecological plots, schools, transportation, sports fields, training in soil conservation among others. One particular environmental project was the construction of manure-producing latrines, which not only are more hygienic and avoid the contamination of groundwater, but also produce organic fertiliser for vegetable gardens.

Laureates 2001

Martina LINTNER



Italy



PRESERVING THE RURAL WAY OF LIFE

Martina Lintner (59) runs the mountain school “Schorhof” near the village of Aldein in Southern Tyrol. For years she has been advocating sustainable farming methods in the Southern Tyrol Women Farmers Organisation. She developed a qualification course for young rural women and is always encouraging them to keep learning, to diversify their products, improve quality, produce their own seeds and protect biodiversity. She supports projects to bring more income to farms such as “Living and Caring”, through which senior citizens are taken care of on farms. Martina is also involved in publishing a rural magazine with useful information for women farmers. Not only concerned with preserving traditional rural culture, she keeps up to date and is an outspoken critic of gene-technology in agriculture and its threat to biodiversity.

Laureates 2001

Mawulawoe Association



Togo

STRUGGLING TO PROVIDE IODISED SALT

Mawulawoe is a group of eight women from Kpele-Adeta who dedicated themselves to providing their community with a source of clean high quality iodised salt. To begin, they first had to accumulate some savings, which took them two years. Despite several setbacks in which they lost the salt due to theft and storm damage, the women persisted. Besides enabling the members of the group to pay for the schooling and health care needs of their own children and contribute to the family income, their initiative has created employment opportunities for other rural women who can purchase salt from them on credit and resell it in small shops for a profit. By providing a source of affordable iodised salt they contribute to prevention of goitre, which was endemic due to lack of iodine. The group also participate in making people aware of the essential need for iodine in the diet.

Laureates 2001

Meimanbu TASHIEVA



Kyrgyzstan

A TIRELESS TEACHER PROMOTES SELF-HELP GROUPS

Meimanbu Tashieva (51), a science teacher in Boz-Karagan village since 1971, apart from her classes, led the school's women's organisation, teaching hygiene, respect for the elderly, honesty, solidarity and instilled in them a desire to learn. A highly devoted professional, she is constantly striving to improve the level of education by seeking better teaching methods and improving her own skills. In 1972, Meimanbu was appointed Deputy Director of Education and in 1976 Director of another school. Always ready to share her experience with young teachers, she participated actively in extracurricular activities. In 1982, health problems forced her to quit the directorship but she continued to work as a teacher and as head of a local trade union. In 1998, Meimanbu formed a non-governmental organisation "Ata-Jurt" in the aim to help poor villagers get out of poverty through the formation of Self-Help groups working with micro credit within the Participatory Poverty Alleviation Project of UNDP. Her skills to mobilize the poor, provide the necessary training and assist them in the preparation of business plans and credit applications, plus following-up on credit repayments, resulted in the creation of 15 Self-Help Groups, including 116 members with a repayment rate of 100%. This has contributed to the improvement of life, increased income and skills especially for women.

Laureates 2001

Mohinee MAHARJAN



Nepal

MAKING WOMEN AWARE OF THEIR LEGAL RIGHTS

Mohinee Maharjan (37), from a farming community in Kathmandu, was lucky to get a chance to study, in a country where few girls are sent to school, becoming one of the first women lawyers in her country. It was during her Law studies at university that she realized that women's rights were not respected due to lack of awareness, poor education and economic dependency on men. In 1993, together with like-minded friends, she created the Women Guidance Association (WGA) to help uplift women's status. WGA conducts programmes in the fields of literacy, legal awareness, micro credit, vocational training, and computer skills. Small libraries have been established in several villages. Mohinee Maharjan has written booklets on legal issues related to women, in order to teach women about their rights, and has created an audio-tape called "Legal Violence" which concentrates on women's property rights and includes interviews with judges, lawyers and victimized women in order to help prevent women from being unjustly deprived of their property. Working as a lawyer parttime, she dedicates herself on a voluntary basis to WGA.

Laureates 2001

Petrona PEREZ BASILIO



Nicaragua

EDUCATION, THE KEY TO EMPOWERMENT

Meimanbu Tashieva (51), a science teacher in Boz-Karagan village since 1971, apart from her classes, Petrona Perez Basilio (46), from Telepaneca, lost both parents when a baby. Her only schooling was learning the alphabet from her husband when she married at 14. At age 26 she learned to read and write during a 6-month Sandinista Literacy Campaign. This brought out the leader in her, and, realising that all the children in her village were illiterate, she raised money from the village in order to build and staff a primary school. Later Petrona became a literacy campaign leader despite the dangers involved. Eventually, because of threats from the “Contra” rebels, she was forced, together with 30 families, to flee to Northern Nicaragua where they created the village of Santa Rosa on vacant land. Petrona led the community in establishing a sanitation system, taught the villagers about hygiene, and educated them about contraception despite much resistance. Convinced that education was essential for development, with the help of an NGO, she built a library for the village where adults can attend training courses and children can supplement their schoolwork. Petrona also weekly leaves the village to meet with organisations, in the search for new opportunities for her village to become self-sufficient, being careful to turn down programs the village does not really need.

Laureates 2001

Prema NARASIMHAN



India



INNOVATIVE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Prema Narasimhan (50) comes from an agricultural family in a remote village of Kerala. Although her father never went to school, he was supportive and enabled her to complete university in the field of food and nutrition. Proving to be very innovative during her 28 years of rural service in which she traveled long distances on rural transport systems facing threats from landlords, government agencies and politicians, Prema invented models of waste recycling, lowcost latrines and rain harvesting techniques using local materials among other things. She helped the women of the entire village of Pillayar-natham to organise themselves to work, initiating innovative training programmes leading to economic self-sufficiency. Prema developed methods of teaching entrepreneurship to rural women through participatory business games and live case studies, benefiting over 1000 women who are now earning \$50-\$250 a month, and creating employment for over 10, 000 rural women thus stemming rural exodus.

Laureates 2001

Rajeswari KARTHIKEYAN



India



ELIMINATING CHEMICAL PESTICIDES

Prevented from pursuing her education past 12th grade due to economic difficulties, Rajeswari Karthikeyan (36) from a peasant family from Pasupathikoil (Thanjavur district, Tamil Nadu), initiated a nursery school in her home teaching village children free of charge. She created the Bharathi Women's Group through which she trains women in tailoring and educates them about their rights. After participating in a Women's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Farmers' Field School (FFS), she became an IPM trainer. As a result she has eradicated the use of pesticides in the area for the last five years.

Spearheading a group of 30 women from the FFS, they approached the police and were successful in eradicating the illicit sale of liquor in the village. She mobilised over 100 women to provide micro finance through the formation of self-help groups to help women start small businesses. Rajeswari has become a role model for the empowerment of rural women in her region.

Laureates 2001

Robertine DEMBETTE



Chad

WOMEN TAKE CHARGE

Due to the lack of resources to continue her studies past middle school, Robertine Dembette (31) moved back to her village where she dedicated herself to cultivating the land together with her husband. Noticing the poor education of the children and the scarcity of seeds, she decided to raise awareness on these issues in order to elevate the educational level of the village and increase household food security. She organised information and training sessions for women and their husbands in seven villages of the canton. Thanks to her efforts couples get along better and are better able to manage the family bud-get. Child education, especially that of girls, has improved, and the products of local wild harvesting are more valued. The women themselves take charge of the teachers' salaries and the construc-tion of classrooms, silos for food sto-rage, a health and literacy center, and a cereal bank with credit given in kind.

Laureates 2001

Rufina Edith VILLA HERNANDEZ



Mexico

FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Rufina Edith Villa Hernandez (44), an indigenous Nahuatl woman from a poor family from San Andrés Tzicuilan (Cuetzalan, Puebla), as most women in her situation, only finished primary school and was married off young. As a child she learned about medicinal plants and the love of nature from her grandmother. Having also learned to embroider and to make her own clothes she joined, in 1986, the first indigenous women's group of the Northern Sierra, in order to sell clothes at a fair price. Not only did she take care of marketing, but noticing that women were discriminated against, she also began to fight for women's rights. In 1992 Rufina founded Maseual Siuamej Mosenyolchicauanij, a women's group to promote projects such as vegetable gardens, small animal breeding, home improvement, health programmes, production of drugs and medicines from local plants, and the creation of a Botanical Garden with local plants. She also invented a latrine appropriate for the local climate, terrain and available resources. Rufina's organisation is also part of the Ecotourism Project Taselotzin consisting of 10 cabins, two hostels, and a restaurant serving local foods. Since 1994, she leads women to denounce incidents of domestic violence against women to the Municipality and other officials. As an active participant in the National Indigenous Congress, Rufina is pushing for adoption of the Law for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples headed by the Zapatista movement. Thanks to her efforts, women in her region now know they have alternatives, their important role is being recognized and valued in their homes and communities, and domestic violence has diminished.

Laureates 2001

Selline OTIENO KORIR



Kenya

A CRUSADER FOR PEACE

For the last seven years, Selline Otieno Korir (36) has been taking daring risks in North Rift province (Rift Valley) to empower women and children to be active participants in building peace, rather than remaining passive victims, in an area which has experienced much politically instigated fighting since 1992. Courageously working alongside hostile government officials and civic leaders, Selline began forming a women's group network, which cut across regions and ethnic groups and became the foundation of the National Council of Churches of Kenya peace programme. Through a system of rotational leadership, "Rural Women Peace Link" targets women's groups rather than individual leaders and ensures that every woman gets a chance to lead. The Network develops intervention measures to curb violence, for example refusing to assemble war equipment when asked to do so by men, and responding quickly to acts of violence mobilising community leaders to investigate the matter. The different women's groups share knowledge and technology such as fuel-saving stoves. This interaction has strengthened relationships between ethnic groups, for example between Maasai and Kisii, and between Sabaot and Bukusu. Women are urged to interact despite their differences, and appreciate each other through their diversity. Another achievement of the Network is the creation of a primary school to take care of children victims of war.

Laureates 2001

Veronique THEVE



France

WORKING TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE RURAL LIFE

Véronique Théve (42), after having worked as a nurse for 13 years, took a course in farm management in order to play a role in the rural area of Lille. She generated three important initiatives: a hands-on farm experience in which the child is actor and can follow an agro ecological project that the child is responsible for, a farm visit for the public at large in which people of all socio-economic backgrounds are invited on the farm to better understand agriculture, and learn to value the periurban landscape. The last initiative consists in a project “ACTIVER”, whose objective is to make farmers actors in their environment through concrete actions such as planting hedges, fruit trees, integrating agriculture into the landscape, and the mobilisation of secondary education so that students are involved. Through these three initiatives, Véronique Théve is contributing to the development of sustainable agriculture with the active participation of all generations, and linking city and countryside.

Laureates 2001

Victoria BOSEDE DUNMADE



Nigeria

APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY FOR WOMEN

Having experienced during childhood the laborious tasks involved in processing foods in rural areas, Victoria Bosede Dunmade (59) from Oro (Kwara State), launched an effort to develop food-processing technologies designed for women. She created the Center for Appropriate Technology (CAPTEC), which attempts to ensure that the needs of women are taken into account in the development, operation, maintenance and management of appropriate technology. CAPTEC networks with other institutes involved in food processing, trains women, helps women form cooperative groups that make up their own rules, provides micro credit, and liaises with interested funding agencies. Indigenous technologies in use are taken into account in order to make sure that the new ones do not displace women but complement and improve upon them in order to liberate women for other occupations. Women are involved from the start, ensuring that the technology is tailored to their traditional way of doing things, which results in its being readily accepted. Women are also trained in operation and maintenance of equipment, which not only saves money but has the additional benefit that women, with a thorough knowledge of the equipment, are able to convert it to other uses as well.

Laureates 2001

Vikas Mahila Multipurpose Cooperative Society



India

ORGANISING FOR CHANGE

Vikas Mahila Multipurpose Cooperative Society, a tribal women's society of poor women from Muniguda, Ahandrapu and Bissam Cuttack (Rayagada district, Orissa State) with over 1500 members, is the largest women's cooperative in the district. Although many of the women's husbands harassed them for attending meetings, they had the courage to withstand, and are now no longer afraid to leave their homes, travel and meet with officials. One of their achievements was the ending of illicit alcohol brewing as they rallied through many villages destroying pots of liquor with the support of police officials. Another one of their achievements was to win better wages for women, who were being paid less than men. The Society has trained women in different income generating activities and organises exchanges in order to share and learn from other societies and groups working for socioeconomic development. The society has given birth to many women leaders.

Laureates 2001

Women on Rural Development WORD Association



Northern Ireland (U.K.)



WORKING TOGETHER FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

Women on Rural Development WORD is an organisation of rural women from South Armagh, a rugged mountainous region situated in north eastern Ireland, on the border between north and south, notorious as 'bandit country' and having suffered much political violence. In 1987, in response to seeing their young people leaving due to lack of opportunities, the women of the Crossmaglen area decided to work together to improve their communities. Some of the projects initiated include an environmental education center, an adult education programme, farm diversification projects including an organic garden, a craft fair and country market, an information technology training programme, a community leadership course, and a women's health needs assessment. Among WORD's early successes was the production of post-cards of the area to counter decades of negative media coverage. In isolated areas lacking transportation WORD funds the childcare and transport costs of women to enable them to follow training and education. WORD challenges government policies that discriminate against women in rural areas. One of their most important initiatives is to encourage groups from across religions to join the movement in order to include the entire community and thus contribute to peace in the area.

Laureates 2001

Zarin GUL



Afghanistan

KNITTING BRINGS HOPE

Zarin Gul (46) is from the small town of Paghman at the foot of the mountains that separate the valley of Kabul from the West. Although her name means Jewel Flower, her beauty remains hidden beneath the veil imposed by the Taliban. For a widow with three daughters and four sons, making a living is a feat in a country where women are only allowed to work outside the home in hospitals and clinics. To earn money Zarin Gul devised a creative and innovative system. She buys wool sweaters from Kabul's vast used clothing bazaar, unravels the wool, and knits woolen items such as socks and baby clothes with intricate patterns. Zarin Gul did not keep this idea to herself but has taught this skill to other women in her community so they too can earn some income. Knitting needles must be made by the knitters themselves from wood or wire, as there are none for sale. This ingenious technique also illustrates how, through women's creativity, one person's throwaway can become another person's treasure.

Laureates 2001

Zoila VALDEZ CHAUPI



Nigeria

PROMOTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Zoila Valdez Chaupi (40) grew up in the high Andean rural district of Machaway (Castilla province, Department of Arequipa) at 3200 meters altitude.

Although her parents had no schooling, they taught her responsibility and ethics and sent her to school. Married at 20, she left her abusive husband to raise her three children on her own, managed to complete a degree in Literature and get a job as a teacher. As such she visited the mothers of her students and began organising Mother's Clubs. At their weekly meetings, Zoila talked about women's rights and initiated communal projects to improve the school and clean the village streets. The Mothers Clubs also became training centers to learn skills such as sewing and knitting, and served as the starting point for the formulation of complaints and demands to the local authorities, and also the revival of folkloric traditions and the initiation of sports activities, including even a girls soccer team. Her popularity won her an invitation to run for local elections and she became the first woman Lieutenant Mayor of the district. As such, Zoila makes sure that the budget is equitably distributed among the villages and towns of the district, despite having at times to oppose the Mayor, and ensures that women participate in community affairs.



Laureates from 2000



Association of Women of Yolombé (AMOY)

The Americas – Colombia

Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

AMOY is a group of 100 rural women from Yolombé municipality who initially got together to exchange ideas and experiences in order to identify their needs and find solutions as well as mutual support. As their area is a zone that has suffered several incidents of paramilitary incursion, an immediate concern was solidarity with the women who had lost a husband or son, and to find alternatives to violence. The group also created a revolving fund to provide loans for projects. They conduct agro-ecological projects to ensure food self-sufficiency, income generating activities, and projects related to the preservation and sustainable use of natural resources. One such project was a bio-digester to transform pig waste into organic fertiliser. They also run awareness campaigns on domestic violence and women's rights.

Organising for peace and the environment.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

AMOY est un groupe d'une centaine de femmes de la municipalité de Yolombé réunies pour identifier leurs besoins, chercher ensemble des solutions à ces derniers, et se soutenir mutuellement. Dans une région qui a souffert d'incursions répétées de groupes paramilitaires, leur première préoccupation était pour les femmes qui avaient perdu un mari ou un fils, de trouver des alternatives à la violence. Le groupe a créé un système d'épargne par rotation pour la réalisation de leurs projets. Elles réalisent des projets agro-écologiques pour assurer l'autosuffisance alimentaire, des activités génératrices de revenus, et des projets reliés à la préservation et l'usage renouvelable des ressources naturelles. Un projet de ce type est représenté par un bio digesteur qui transforme les déchets des porcs en engrais organiques. organisé des campagnes de sensibilisation sur la violence domestique et les droits de la femme

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Natalia BESPALA
Europe – Ukraine
Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Natalia and her husband were the first in their village of Kolomak to privatise their farm, which they run organically, when Ukraine gained independence. Their success motivated Natalia to help others do the same and they enabled other farmers through personal loans, equipment and seed. Natalia created a non-governmental women's organisation with 300 members to help them finance their farms. She also developed a new tomato variety and gave seed to neighbours. She was the first woman to head the town council and, as such, did much to preserve the history of the community and provide cultural and recreation facilities. Natalia has developed and implemented many functioning projects and continuously strives to improve the quality of life in her village.

Helping others achieve success.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

À l'indépendance de l'Ukraine, Natalia et son mari ont été les premiers de leur village de Kolomak à privatiser leur ferme, qu'ils exploitent en recourant à l'agriculture biologique. Leur succès a incité Natalia à donner à d'autres les moyens d'en faire autant; ils ont donc aidé des exploitants au moyen de prêts personnels, de matériel et de semences. Natalia a créé une organisation non gouvernementale de femmes, qui compte 300 membres, l'objectif étant de les aider à financer leurs exploitations. Première femme à présider le conseil municipal, elle a beaucoup fait pour conserver la mémoire de la communauté et assurer la mise en place d'installations pour la culture et les loisirs. Elle a créé une nouvelle variété de tomate et a donné des graines aux voisins. Elle a conçu et mis en œuvre de nombreux projets qui marchent et elle s'efforce en permanence d'améliorer la qualité de vie de son village.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."



Mioara BOANTA
Europe – Romania
Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Mioara used Norwegian laws as a model for setting up non-governmental organisations in Romania (Romania did not have laws for this). She translated the laws from Norwegian to Rumanian and got them officially approved. She then formed a women's organisation of which there are now five branches working on several issues including disabled children, agrotourism, domestic violence, the rights of rural women, and education for girls in rural areas. In 1995 she organised a conference for rural women's groups on obtaining legal recognition and advice on ways to manage their organisations. She also created a project to teach computer skills to rural girls. Mioara has written documents to help people legally reclaim the lands that had been taken away 45 years ago, thus helping over 7000 people regain their land.

Enabling women to organise and regain land.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Mioara s'est inspirée des lois norvégiennes comme modèle pour la création d'ONG en Roumanie (le pays n'en avait pas). Elle a traduit les lois et réussi à les faire approuver officiellement. Elle a alors créé une organisation de femmes, répartie en cinq sections qui travaillent dans le domaine des enfants handicapés, du tourisme en milieu rural, de la violence familiale, des droits des femmes et de l'enseignement des filles des régions rurales. En 1995, elle a organisé une conférence pour les groupes de femmes rurales pour enseigner la manière d'obtenir une reconnaissance juridique et les conseiller sur les façons de gérer leurs organisations. Elle a également créé un projet pour enseigner l'informatiques aux jeunes filles. Elle a écrit des textes pour aider les personnes à récupérer légalement des terres confisquées 45 ans en arrière, permettant à plus de 7'000 personnes de recouvrer leurs terres.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



**Ch'aska Palomas Awaj
Warmis**

The Americas – Bolivia

Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Ch'aska Palomas Awaj Warmis is an association of 300 women weavers distributed in 11 women's groups from Calcha, Yawisla and Ara communities who have organised themselves to produce high quality items using traditional designs and natural dyes. The beautiful designs reflect elements of Calcha history and culture. Their artwork is threatened by modern ideology, ethnic discrimination, alienating forms of education, rural exodus and difficulties in obtaining raw materials. The articles are sold through well-established museums. Their project not only provides income, but also provides a space for the women to unite to express themselves and develop leadership skills, which enable them to participate in decision-making at the community and municipal levels and to become actively involved in the development of their communities.

Weaving for development.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Cette association de 300 tisserandes est distribuée en 11 groupes de femmes des communautés Calcha, Yawisla et Ara. Elles se sont organisées pour offrir des produits de haute qualité en utilisant des motifs traditionnels et des teintures naturelles. Les motifs superbes reflètent des éléments de l'histoire et de la culture calcha. Pourtant la survie de leur art est menacée par l'idéologie moderne, la discrimination ethnique, une éducation culturellement aliénante, l'exode rural et la difficulté à obtenir des matières premières. Les articles sont vendus dans des musées du pays. Ce projet produit un revenu et fournit aux femmes un espace pour s'exprimer et développer des compétences dans le domaine du leadership, leur permettant de participer aux processus de décision au niveau tant communautaire que municipal et de s'impliquer de plus en plus dans le développement de leurs communautés.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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**Santos Felicita Salcedo
CUEVA**

The Americas – Peru

Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Santos Felicita, due to food scarcity, formed groups and obtained funds for a dining hall to serve the neediest. From a "Mother's Club" in her house, she managed aid from a national food aid organisation. When the funds ran out, Santos Felicita convinced the women to continue to come to knit sweaters and other articles. To improve their quality and turn a profit, she selected the 30 finest workers and payed them herself. She now exports to Japan and The Netherlands. She is also a leader in the Central Committee of the Mashcon Valley, working to care for roads, drinking water and the environment. She created the Women's Association for Life and Peace, where women are trained in textiles and dyeing. Her organisation also fights mining pollution, and she was invited to workshops on strategic planning for the Regional Development Plan 2000-2005.

Persistence pays off.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Vu la rareté de nourriture, Felicita forma des groupes et obtint des fonds pour construire un réfectoire qui servait des repas aux plus nécessiteux. À partir d'un club de mères, elle supervisa un programme d'aide alimentaire et fit venir les femmes pour confectionner des chandails, des gants et d'autres articles. Pour améliorer la qualité de la production, elle sélectionna les trente meilleures ouvrières, qu'elle paya elle-même. Elle exporte maintenant à l'étranger. Avec le Comité central de la vallée de Maschon, elle travaille pour l'amélioration des routes, de l'eau potable et de l'environnement. Elle créa l'Association des femmes pour la vie et la paix, où les femmes sont formées en tissage et teinture. Son organisation se bat également contre la pollution causée par les compagnies minières. Elle a été invitée à participer à des ateliers sur la planification stratégique pour le Plan de développement régional 2000-2005

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Ashilde DALE
Europe – Norway
Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Ashild returned to Norway with her husband to run the farm where she was born, following the old traditions of mountain farming, raising goats and making brown goat cheese. In 1997 she initiated a centre for information and training on mountain farming in order to revive the disappearing tradition of moving up to the mountains in the summer with the animals. She began a project called "Green Care", through which she hosts children and youth on her farm for a week at a time so they can learn about nature. She is also involved in farm tourism, which led to the creation of the Norwegian Centre for Mountain Farming Culture. Ashild is active in the Norwegian Organisation for Small Farms and other organisations which promote family farms as well.

Reviving mountain farming.**WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©**

Ashilde est revenue dans ses montagnes natales où, avec son mari, elle exploite la ferme où elle est née, suivant les anciennes traditions de l'agriculture de montagne, élevant des chèvres et faisant du fromage de chèvre cendré. En 1997, elle a été à l'origine d'un centre d'information et de formation sur l'agriculture de montagne destiné à ranimer la tradition en voie de disparition, consistant à partir dans la montagne en été avec les animaux. Elle a démarré un projet appelé « Accueil Vert » et reçoit dans son exploitation les enfants et les jeunes pour leur apprendre à mieux connaître la nature. Elle s'implique également dans le tourisme agricole, ce qui a débouché sur la création du Centre norvégien pour la culture de l'agriculture de montagne. Ashild s'occupe activement de l'Organisation Norvégienne pour les Petites Exploitations et d'autres organisations qui encouragent l'agriculture familiale.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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**Kalawati DEVI****Asia – India**

Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Kalawati mobilised women to organise and demand electricity in their village of Bachher. After succeeding, they turned to protecting the dwindling forest. Through contributions from each household, they hired a watchman to monitor the forest to prevent the felling of trees. Volunteers inspected the state of the forest twice a month. Rules for use of the forest were established and followed by the villagers. Infractions were taken to court. As the guilty parties were often men of power, even from the forest department, the women ran for election and for the first time a woman was elected a village head. Now women are at the centre of village development activities and engaging in other societal needs, such as village hygiene and schools. Recently Kalawati succeeded in destroying the illegal distilleries of liquor and set up a milk co-operative.

Promoting the environment & women's needs.**WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©**

Kalawati organisa les femmes de son village du Bachher à demander l'électricité. Ayant réussi cette tâche, elles se tournèrent vers le sauvetage de la forêt déclinante, et décidèrent de ne plus permettre l'abattage des arbres. Les familles se cotisèrent pour embaucher un gardien. Des volontaires inspectaient la forêt deux fois par mois. Des règles furent élaborées et suivies par les villageois pour l'utilisation de la forêt. Les personnes coupables d'infractions aux règles furent amenées devant les tribunaux. Comme c'était souvent des hommes au pouvoir, les femmes se décidèrent à se faire élire, et pour la première fois une femme fut élue chef de Bachher. Maintenant les femmes sont au centre des activités de développement du village, et s'engagent dans d'autres domaines comme l'hygiène et les écoles. Récemment Kalawati réussit à fermer des distilleries illégales de liqueur et mit sur pied une coopérative agricole.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."

**Manohari DOSS****Asia – India**

Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Manohari has been the programme director of Women's Development Resource Centre in Madurai for the last 20 years. She has campaigned for the rights of rural women, especially those of dalits and tribal women, the most destitute. She convinced the government to provide better housing for the rural poor and provide documents giving property rights to women. She has created rural credit unions, literacy classes, and awareness programmes for women's rights. She has campaigned for laws to protect women from atrocities, and to get more women into Parliament and State legislation. She has fought to stop the illegal alcohol brewing, and organised women to stop the waste and pollution of water resources. She has also obtained the freedom of many tribal, dalit and adivasis from bonded labour and lobbied for their land rights.

Vigorously campaigning for women & the poor.**WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©**

Directrice des programmes du Centre féminin pour le développement des ressources de Madurai depuis vingt ans, Manohari se bat pour les droits des femmes rurales, surtout les femmes Dalit et tribales, plus pauvres. Elle obtint du gouvernement des meilleurs logements et les documents les droits de propriété. Elle créa des caisses d'épargne et de crédit, mis sur pied des classes d'alphabétisation et des programmes d'initiation au droit. Elle milita pour une législation protégeant les femmes de diverses atrocités et pour que plus de femmes siègent dans les corps législatifs. Elle s'est battue contre la production illégale d'alcool et organisé les femmes contre la pollution et le gaspillage des ressources aquatiques souvent déniées aux pauvres. Elle a aussi obtenu que de nombreux travailleurs tribaux, Dalit et Adivasis, soient libérés du servage et qu'ils reçoivent des terres.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Ethel Nne EKEKE
Africa - Nigeria
Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

In 1987, Ethel, realising that poverty and archaic traditional practices were affecting women's self-esteem and fulfilment, decided to mobilise them. As most of the women, including herself, were accomplished weavers, she brought them together to form the Umuagbai Women's Weaving Co-operative Society. She was instrumental in diversifying the cloth into many useful household products resulting in increasing demands and thus providing employment for girls and women including the handicapped. In 1990 the local government, recognising their creative industry, built them a weaving centre, which has become a great tourist attraction. Ethel also trained to be a paralegal and organises seminars on women's rights for chiefs, men and women and she is now able to mediate and oppose harmful traditional practices

Empowering through weaving.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

En 1987, ayant pris conscience combien les pratiques archaïques et la pauvreté affectaient l'estime et l'épanouissement des femmes, Ethel décida de mobiliser ces dernières. Comme la plupart des femmes, elle-même comprise, étaient des tisserandes accomplies, elle les réunit pour former la coopérative de tissage féminine d'Umuagbaï. Elle sut diversifier l'utilisation des tissus, conduisant à une demande accrue et fournissant un nombre croissant d'emplois pour les femmes et les filles, y compris des handicapées. En 1990, le gouvernement local, reconnaissant la dimension créative de cet artisanat, construisit pour la coopérative un centre de tissage qui est devenu une attraction touristique. Ethel organise des séminaires sur les droits de la femme pour ses consœurs, mais aussi pour les hommes et les chefs encore puissants dans cette société. Elle arrive ainsi à supprimer les pratiques traditionnelles nocives.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Aïssata GUINDO

Africa - Mali

Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Aïssata became a teacher at the time the new Republic of Mali was being formed and taught for 27 years. She then became the person in charge of the technical approach for the Training Centre for Rural Development whose goal is to improve the lives of rural women and children through training, information and support in the fields of health, income-generating activities, new technologies, savings and credit, and the environment. Thanks to her original and creative methods of approaching problems, she is able to get women to express themselves even on subjects that are taboo. She uses proverbs, anecdotes, drawings and caricatures to illustrate themes and make illiterate women understand concepts. Now, life has been improving for the women in the area.

An exceptionally creative teacher.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Aïssata devint enseignante lors de la fondation de la République du Mali. Elle pratiqua son métier pendant 27 ans, avant de devenir responsable de l'enseignement technique dans un centre de formation pour le développement rural, dont le rôle est d'améliorer les vies des femmes et des enfants du milieu rural par la formation, l'information et le soutien dans les domaines de la santé, les activités productrices de revenus, les nouvelles technologies, l'épargne et le crédit. Grâce à ses approches originales et créatives, elle permet aux femmes de s'exprimer sur des sujets tabous. Elle utilise des proverbes, des anecdotes, dessins et caricatures pour permettre aux femmes analphabètes de comprendre de nouveaux concepts. Aujourd'hui, on remarque une réelle amélioration de la qualité de vie des femmes de la région.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."

**Ghulam Sughra KUBAR****Asia - Pakistan**

Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

When the Agha Khan Foundation initiated an NGO resource centre in the village, Ghulam was among the two women to break with the practice of "Purdah" (a strict confinement for the women) and attended a seminar on savings and credit together with men. She then motivated women to participate in the development process and as a result women are now the majority in the Kubbar Welfare Association (KWA) which was first created by men. She also helped launch a campaign against sexual abuse of children, initiated the women's section of the agricultural development program, taught women about their human rights, and was recently given the responsibility of a vocational centre. She has paved the way for women in her community to be full participants in development, proving that they can be even more skilful than men.

Proving women's worth.**WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©**

Quand la fondation Agha Khan inaugura un centre pour ONGs dans le village, Ghulam fut une des deux seules femmes à rompre la pratique du «Purdah» (confinement strict des femmes) et à participer en même temps que des hommes à un séminaire sur l'épargne et le crédit. Elle motiva des femmes à participer au processus de développement et maintenant, les femmes sont majoritaires dans l'Association de Bien-Être de Kubbar (KWA), créée à l'origine par les hommes. Elle aida à lancer une campagne contre l'abus sexuel des enfants, initia la section féminine du programme de développement agricole, enseigna aux femmes les droits de la personne, et reçut aussi la responsabilité d'un centre de formation professionnel. Elle a montré aux femmes de sa communauté la voie d'une pleine participation au développement, prouvant que les femmes peuvent être encore plus habiles dans ce domaine que les hommes.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."**"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."**



Ma XUEFENG
Asia – China
Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Ma, noticing two waste ponds, decided to use them for fish farming. She approached the Aquatic Product Bureau to consult specialists for guidance, obtaining technology and equipment to clean the ponds and produce fish for food. Her first successes inspired her to enlarge the ponds and invent new fish farming techniques, introducing new varieties of fish, establishing a policy of ratios between species, and controlling diseases with Chinese herbs. Her high yields made her rich, enabling her to open a restaurant and a company. Having achieved prosperity, she then turned to helping others, training them and offering them employment, guidance and capital and encouraging many to develop their own projects. The land in Hu Yang village has become a colourful garden with trees, flowers, nursery stock, vegetable, fish and animal farms.

Fish ponds bring wealth.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Remarquant deux étangs inutilisés, Ma eut l'idée de faire de la pisciculture. Elle obtint du Bureau des produits aquatiques des conseils, des technologies et de l'équipement pour nettoyer les étangs et produire du poisson. Inspirée par son succès, elle agrandit les étangs et inventa de nouvelles techniques de pisciculture, introduisant de nouvelles variétés de poissons, établissant un système de régulation des proportions des différentes sortes de poissons, et contrôlant les maladies à l'aide de plantes chinoises. Les taux élevés de productivité qu'elle atteignit la rendirent riche, ce qui lui permit d'ouvrir un restaurant et une entreprise. Elle se tourna vers ses voisins, les formant, leur offrant de l'emploi, du capital et des conseils, les encourageant à développer leurs propres projets. Les champs dans le village ressemblent désormais à un jardin multicolore d'arbres, de fleurs, de légumes, d'étangs et de fermes.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Rebecca MULWANA
Africa – Uganda
Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Rebecca learned handicrafts and agriculture through the YWCA. After working with the government supervising cooperative businesses, she resigned, acquired land and began dairy farming, even though this was traditionally a male occupation. She also practices organic farming, using the waste products from her farm for compost, liquid manure and urine for pesticides. The neighborhood was impressed with her results, and she organised training sessions and demonstrations. Now most of the community organically grows vegetables. Rebecca has expanded to pig and poultry farming and learned to make fuel-saving stoves. Due to her activities urban exodus has decreased, families are food secure with even a surplus available for sale, and organic farming has gained in regional popularity.

A model organic farmer.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Rebecca a fait son apprentissage de l'artisanat et de l'agriculture grâce à l'Union chrétienne de jeunes filles. Après plusieurs années de travail pour le gouvernement dans la supervision d'entreprises coopératives, elle démissionna, acquit un peu de terrain et commença un élevage, même si c'était une activité traditionnellement masculine. Elle pratique l'agriculture biologique, utilisant les déchets de sa ferme comme compost. Pour ses voisins, impressionnés par ses résultats, elle organisa des sessions de formation. Toute la communauté pratique désormais le maraîchage biologique. Rebecca a étendu son activité à l'élevage porcin et de volaille et construit des fourneaux à basse consommation. Comme conséquence, l'exode rural a diminué et les familles assurent leur sécurité alimentaire en réalisant même un petit bénéfice. L'agriculture biologique gagne en popularité dans la région.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Loyce OGOLLA
Africa – Uganda
Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Loyce, headmistress at Mudodo Primary School (Tororo district, West Budama County) and mother of seven, initiated the Mudodo Women Tree Planting Project in 1990, through which she contributes to development in all aspects of rural life. Not only does she train members in seed multiplication and tree planting, but she promotes fuel-saving cookstoves, encourages women to engage in income-generating activities, hosts seminars in her house, and lobbies for financial assistance from governments and non-governmental organisations. She also initiated a health clinic and raises community awareness of sanitation, educational, environmental and other issues through music, dance and drama.

Planting trees for development.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Loyce, mère de sept enfants, dirige l'école primaire de Mudodo (district de Tororo, comté de West Budama). Elle initia le projet de reforestation des femmes de Mudodo, par lequel elle contribue au développement de nombreux aspects de la vie rurale. Parmi ses nombreuses activités, mentionnons : la production des semences et la reforestation, la production de fourneaux à basse consommation de combustibles et l'encouragement d'activités génératrices de revenus pour les femmes. Elle organise des séances de formation chez elle et fait du lobbying pour l'aide financière auprès du gouvernement et des ONG. Elle a également encouragé la création d'une clinique pour la santé et fait un travail de prise de conscience dans sa communauté sur l'hygiène, l'environnement, l'éducation par le moyen de la musique, de la danse et du théâtre.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Mayandi PASUMPON

Asia – India

Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Mayandi belongs to the Kallar caste, which has been discriminated against due to their reputation as petty thieves. She founded the Village Women Development Association, initiating various income-generating activities such as gem-cutting and tailoring. She helped 50 families build houses, distributed specially nutritious food to malnourished children and organised women's self-help groups in 15 villages. These groups pool their savings for health and educational needs and for members to start small businesses. Through these groups, women also learn to approach the government to demand facilities for their villages. Mayandi also distributed tree saplings for planting and implemented literacy centres. She organises health camps and seminars to make people aware of their rights, and has been fighting alcohol consumption.

A tireless village activist.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Mayandi de la caste des Kallar, discriminée à cause de leur réputation de voleurs, fonda l'Association des femmes pour le développement villageois, initiant diverses activités comme la taille des gemmes et la couture. Elle aida 50 familles à bâtir leurs propres maisons, distribua des aliments à haute valeur nutritive aux enfants sous-alimentés et aida les femmes de 15 villages à s'organiser en groupes d'auto-développement qui mettent en commun leurs ressources pour démarrer diverses activités économiques, de santé et d'éducation. Les femmes font également l'apprentissage de la démocratie active, approchant le gouvernement pour que ce dernier fournisse divers ressources à leurs villages. Mayandi s'occupe également de reforestation et a mis en place des centres d'alphabétisation. Elle organise des camps de santé et des séminaires pour éduquer les gens sur leurs droits, et lutte contre la consommation d'alcool.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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"PUEBLO GRANDE" Cultural Organization

The Americas - Argentina

Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

"Pueblo Grande" Cultural Organisation is a group of women from Villa Rio Icho Cruz whose goal is to provide popular education and training, preserve local culture and history and promote the rights of women and the community. Since 1990 they have conducted workshops in the visual, plastic and musical arts, communication, community organisation, gender issues and reproductive health. This led to the formation of several autonomous groups travelling the country to exhibit and sell their creations. They produced a publication on cultural, economic, environmental and gender issues, and a local radio programme. They also wrote the first tourist guide and documented history of the area from testimonies of local inhabitants. They help provide both income-generating activities and a cultural identity for this area neglected by the government.

Establishing a cultural identity.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

« Pueblo Grande » est une organisation de femmes de Villa Rio Icho Cruz qui a pour but de fournir une éducation populaire, préserver la culture et l'histoire locales, et promouvoir les droits de la femme et de la communauté. Depuis 1990, "Pueblo Grande" donne des formations sur beaucoup de thèmes : arts visuels plastiques et musicaux, santé reproductive, communication, organisation communautaire et problèmes de genre. Ceci conduisit à la constitution de plusieurs groupes autonomes qui voyagent pour montrer et vendre leurs créations. L'organisation a produit une publication et un programme de radio. Elle a publié un guide touristique sur l'histoire de la région. L'organisation a contribué non seulement à fournir des activités économiques génératrices de revenus, mais également une identité culturelle à une région négligée par les programmes gouvernementaux.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Yatta SAMAH
Africa – Sierra Leone
Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Yatta organised the women of the Moawoma community in response to poor living conditions of the people displaced by war. The Moawoma Rural Women's Development Association, with a membership of over 10'000 women and girls, is the most active women's group in the Eastern region. They work in agriculture, and organise literacy classes and income-generating activities such as embroidery, basket weaving, gara tie-dyeing, and soap making. A Rural Women's Centre was established. This led to the acquisition of land for a multipurpose store, to serve as a grain store, restaurant and literacy school. Yatta also sensitises women to their rights, and provides trauma healing, counselling, and non-violent communication skills. Under her leadership the government was successfully lobbied to celebrate World Rural Women's Day, beginning in 1999.

Healing the wounds of war.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Yatta a organisé les femmes de la communauté de Moawoma en réponse à la détérioration des conditions de vie après la guerre civile. Le Mouvement de développement des femmes rurales de Moawoma, regroupant plus de 10'000 femmes et de filles est le groupe le plus actif de la région de l'Est. Les femmes travaillent dans le domaine agricole, organisent des cours d'alphabétisation et des activités génératrices de revenus comme la broderie, la vannerie, la teinture et la fabrication de savon. Un centre féminin rural fut fondé et un centre polyvalent, servant de grenier, de restaurant et d'école fut édifié. Yatta sensibilise les femmes sur leurs droits, offre une thérapie aux personnes traumatisées, donne des conseils psychologiques et enseigne la communication non-violente. Grâce à ses efforts, le gouvernement accepta, pour la première fois de célébrer la Journée mondiale de la femme rurale en 1999.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Ngatini TARMUJI

Asia - Indonesia

Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Ngatini, in whose village the military seized the land of local farmers in 1991 for palm oil plantations, led an 8-day demonstration in 1993 in front of Parliament, obtaining a meeting and an empty promise that the land case would be resolved. Ngatini was arrested on a false charge but continued the struggle by correspondence, appealing to institutions such as the local National Board of Land Affairs, the Police and Military Departments and the Army Headquarters despite threats and her village being attacked by the paramilitary. In 1994 she led another large demonstration in front of the House of Parliament and even in the capital, and a solution was finally reached. Ngatini became the leader of a local woman's group, successfully lobbying the government for irrigation, electricity, a public school, a mosque and transportation facilities.

Fighting illegal expropriation of land.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Les terres appartenant aux paysans locaux du village de Ngatini furent saisies par des militaires pour y établir des plantations d'huile de palme, transformant les villageois en simple main d'œuvre. Elle dirigea une manifestation devant le Parlement et obtint la promesse (non-tenue) que le conflit pour les terres serait résolu. Elle fut arrêtée sans charge, mais continua la lutte par correspondance, s'adressant à des institutions comme le Bureau National des Terres et même l'état-major de l'Armée, malgré des menaces et une attaque paramilitaire sur son village. En 1994, elle dirigea une autre grande manifestation devant le Parlement et jusque dans la capitale et une solution fut finalement trouvée. Ngatini devint alors la responsable d'un groupement de femmes dans son village et réussit à obtenir du gouvernement l'irrigation, l'électricité, une école publique, une mosquée et des transports publics.

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Thavrin THONG
Asia – Cambodia
Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Thavrin was nine years old when the Khmer Rouge put her in a children's work group. Her family had to scavenge for food, and she had to care for her baby brother after her mother, and later her father and grandfather, died due to the regime. After the fall of the regime she sold candy to pay her own school fees. A teacher helped her get work with the local Women's Association. She is now the Director of Aphivat Satrey, a NGO that OXFAM considers one of its most successful, strong and well organised projects in Cambodia. Thavrin's efforts have led to women's inclusion in all community organisation processes and enhancing their leadership skills. Her talent in participatory techniques helps identify issues and develop strategies; the economic activities developed address practical needs, giving families a chance to become self-sufficient.

Extreme hardship shapes a leader.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Thavrin avait neuf ans quand les Khmers Rouges la mirent dans un groupe de travail forcé composé d'enfants, Sa famille devait trouver la nourriture à la sauvette et elle s'occupait de son plus jeune frère après que sa mère et son père meurent victimes des excès du régime. Après la chute du régime, elle survécut du petit commerce ambulancier. Une enseignante l'aidera à travailler avec une association locale de femmes. Elle est aujourd'hui directrice de l'ONG Aphivat Satrey, considérée par OXFAM comme l'une des mieux organisées. Maintenant, les femmes améliorent leurs qualités de leadership. Les talents de Thavrin dans le domaine des techniques participatives permettent de mieux identifier les problèmes et de définir des stratégies pour les résoudre. Les activités économiques développées donnent une chance aux familles de devenir économiquement autonomes.

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R. VASANTHA

Asia – India

Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

R. Vasantha founded a non-governmental organisation, GUIDE, in 1985 to empower the rural women of Tamil Nadu. GUIDE provides training in human rights, literacy, leadership skills, and health. It promotes women's associations, conducts role playing exercises to help women assert themselves, organises activities to prevent suicide, rehabilitates victims of rape and encourages women to run for elections. Women have organized in 230 villages, their participation in village courts has reached 40%, and 500 women leaders have emerged. Through GUIDE, Ms. Vasantha has also fought alcohol abuse, promoted low input sustainable agriculture, campaigned against appropriation of community forest and water resources, and fought water pollution. GUIDE is also one of the pioneers of the Tamil Nadu Women's Movement.

Helping women become leaders.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

En 1985, R. Vasantha fonda GUIDE, une ONG visant à aider les femmes du Tamil Nadu à accéder à plus de pouvoir. GUIDE fournit une formation en droits de la personne, alphabétisation, leadership et en santé. Elle promeut les associations féminines, organise des formations basées sur les jeux de rôle pour permettre aux femmes d'exiger que soient couverts certains besoins de base, organise des voyages d'échange et la prévention du suicide, elle aide aussi à la réhabilitation des femmes victimes de viols et encourage les femmes à se faire élire. Elles se sont organisées dans 230 villages, et le pourcentage des femmes dans les tribunaux a atteint 40%. Grâce à GUIDE, R. Vasantha a également pu lutter contre l'abus d'alcool, encourager l'agriculture durable, faire campagne contre l'appropriation par des privés des ressources forestières et aquatiques communautaires, et lutter contre la pollution des eaux.

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**Norma Patricia Saucedo
VILLALBA**

The Americas – Mexico
Laureate 2000

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Norma, as coordinator of environmental education in rural communities of Aguascalientes, started a program in 1995 in which children take field trips and are sensitised to the need to reduce waste and separate the garbage for recycling, and learn about the fauna and flora, learn the importance of saving water, and create their own recycled objects from discarded materials. She has organised recycling centres and vegetable gardens in schools and, with the participation of 105 children and 22 parents, performed clean-up activities in three communities, collecting over 8 tons of garbage. In 1997 she founded a non-governmental organisation, Integral Training for Excellence. They organise workshops, courses, discussions and conferences to train poor people in income generating activities, such as locally-traditional dress making.

Teaching respect for the environment.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

En 1995, comme coordinatrice de l'éducation à l'environnement des communautés rurales d'Aguascalientes, elle initia un programme où les enfants sont sensibilisés au besoin de réduire les déchets et de séparer ces derniers en vue du recyclage. Ils apprennent aussi à connaître la faune et la flore, apprennent l'importance d'une bonne gestion de l'eau, et créent leurs propres objets recyclés à partir de matériaux jetés. Elle a organisé des centres de recyclage et des potagers dans une série d'écoles et, avec la participation de 105 enfants et 22 parents, ils ont fait une grande opération de nettoyage ramassant plus de huit tonnes de déchets. En 1997, elle a fondé l'ONG « Formation Intégrale pour l'Excellence » et organise des stages, des cours, des discussions et des conférences pour former les pauvres à générer des revenus, grâce à la confection de robes, une tradition dans la région.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Laureates from 1999



Elizabeth ABAKAH

Africa – Ghana

Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Elizabeth began her development work by organising rural women to start cleaning up the towns of garbage, thus gaining recognition among the local women who selected her to champion their causes in the villages. She was instrumental in contributing to peace through her role in reconciling two chiefs during a dispute. She has been effective in reducing poverty in her area by volunteering for an NGO growing crops for children from deprived homes (including orphans, abandoned children and elderly women). Following her example, many women have taken up farming activities. She also gives literacy classes in the evening and presides over a women's cooperative society aiming to mobilise microcredit funds for women. Thanks to Elizabeth, women are more respected.

Working for health and respect.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Élisabeth a commencé un travail de développement en mobilisant les femmes rurales afin qu'elles débarrassent les ordures de leur village, gagnant ainsi la reconnaissance des femmes autochtones qui l'ont choisie pour défendre leur cause dans les villages. Elle réussit à ramener la paix entre deux chefs qui se disputaient le pouvoir. Elle put réduire la pauvreté de sa région en tant que bénévole dans une ONG responsable de la culture de 20 hectares de terres pour des foyers déshérités, des orphelins, des enfants abandonnés et des femmes âgées. Suivant son exemple, beaucoup de femmes ont commencé à cultiver la terre. Elle donne également des cours d'alphabétisation et préside une coopérative dont le but est de rassembler des fonds destinés à accorder des microcrédits aux femmes. Grâce à elle, les femmes sont mieux respectées.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Mercy Agu ANAGBOGU

Africa – Nigeria

Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Mercy began her creative activities in 1985 when she presented a paper at a conference on the psychology of Igbo women. Since then she has organised seminars and rural workshops on survival, food preservation and strategies for the alleviation of poverty in Anambra State. She led AWAC (a women's organisation providing counselling and legal services for women), encouraged women into decision making processes, got the town's constitution modified to enable women to be appointed to the village council, and got women appointed in two villages. She organised sensitisation workshops on archaic widowhood practices and got funeral rites reduced from 28 to 4 days, eliminating harmful, traumatizing, and degrading practices traditionally required of widows.

Restoring the dignity of women.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Mercy a commencé ses activités liées au développement en 1985, en présentant à une conférence une étude sur la psychologie des femmes Igbo. Depuis lors, elle organise des séminaires et des ateliers en milieu rural sur la survie, la conservation de la nourriture et les possibilités de pallier à la pauvreté dans l'Etat d'Anambra. Elle dirigea l'AWAC, une organisation qui prodigue des conseils juridiques aux femmes. Elle fit aussi modifier la constitution de la ville afin de permettre aux femmes de siéger au conseil municipal et en a fait élire dans deux villages. Elle organisa des ateliers de sensibilisation sur des pratiques de veuvage archaïques et obtint la réduction des rites funéraires de 28 à 4 jours, éliminant par là des pratiques traditionnelles douloureuses, traumatisantes et dégradantes subies par les veuves.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Petty ANGIDA-OMAGOR

Africa – Uganda

Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Petty, a woman with little education from a poor family of the village of Agaria, is an advocate for poor rural women and children. After a rebellion in her area in 1986, during which all the inhabitants had been put into camps by the government and the villagers returned to find that they had lost everything, Petty began to organise the women into groups. She taught them how to nourish their children and start vegetable gardens. In 1995 she founded the Komolo Development Association, carrying out projects in child welfare, health, and sustainable agriculture. Through her creativity, many children escaped malnutrition.

Providing vegetables for war victims.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Issue d'une famille pauvre du village d'Agaria dans l'est du pays et malgré son manque d'éducation, Petty se fait l'avocate des paysannes et des enfants. En 1986, à la suite d'une rébellion, tous les habitants avaient été mis dans des camps par le gouvernement. A leur retour chez eux, ils constatèrent qu'ils avaient tout perdu. Petty organisa alors des groupes de femmes afin de leur apprendre comment nourrir leurs enfants et cultiver un jardin. En 1995, elle fonda l'« Association de Développement Komolo » et gère des projets concernant le bien-être des enfants, la santé et l'agriculture durable. Grâce à sa créativité, beaucoup d'enfants ont pu échapper à la malnutrition.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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The National Articulation of Female Agricultural Workers The Americas – Brazil

Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

The National Articulation of Female Agricultural Workers (ANMTR) is made up of various women's movements, the Small Farmer Movement, the Landless Peasant Movement, The Female Rural Workers Movement, the Pastoral Land Commission and the Rural Youth Pastoral and Fishing Pastoral. In 1995 it participated in the first national female rural workers meeting of the country, in which 12 women's organizations from every part of the country (representing 22 states) launched action objectives. The entity's aim is to unite the national women's struggle, provide training, and stimulate the exchange of experiences. Some of the accomplishments of the ANMTR include retirement and maternity pay, and documentation for female rural workers. The main victory, however, is that women now participate in decision-making in a society dominated by male symbols.

Organising for women's rights.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

L'Organisation Nationale des Ouvriers de l'Agriculture (ANMTR) est constituée de divers mouvements de femmes : le Mouvement des petits paysans et des paysans sans terre, le Mouvement des ouvrières agricoles, la Commission pastorale de la terre et la Pastorale des jeunes ruraux et des pêcheurs. En 1995, l'ANMTR participa à la première réunion nationale d'ouvrières agricoles du pays, au cours de laquelle 12 organisations de femmes de chaque région du pays (représentant 22 Etats) adoptèrent un plan d'action. L'objectif de cette entité est d'unifier la lutte des femmes au niveau national, d'offrir de la formation et de stimuler les échanges d'expériences. Parmi les réalisations de l'ANMTR : la retraite, l'assurance maternité et la documentation pour les ouvrières agricoles. Mais, la principale victoire, est la participation des femmes dans le processus de décision, au sein d'une société dominée par les hommes.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Bai CAINONG

Asia – China

Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Bai Cainong was illiterate for many years until she learned to read and write with the help of the local women's federation in 1991. She studied hard to attend classes and learned to raise pigs and grow hybrid wheat, corn and rice. In 1992 she persuaded 47 illiterate women to attend literacy classes she began in her home and also helped 8 other villages to set up literacy classes, benefiting over 400 women. She assisted all the women of the village to engage in income generating activities and helped 90 families start their own pig-raising and crop-growing business; this helped alleviate poverty in 70% of the farming households. She also helped to prevent illegal logging and hunting and sponsored the cultivation of forest and fruit trees to improve the environment. The respect she gained won her appointment to be deputy to the People's Congress of her county.

An illiterate woman becomes a deputy.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Bai Cainong était illettrée quand en 1991, elle apprit à lire et à écrire avec l'aide de la fédération locale des femmes. Elle étudia avec ardeur ce qui lui permit de suivre des cours pour s'initier à l'élevage des cochons et à la culture du blé, du maïs et du riz. En 1992, elle commença à donner des cours chez elle, apprenant à 47 femmes à lire et écrire et aida les villages à organiser des cours dont 400 femmes purent bénéficier. Elle s'engagea à aider les femmes du village à entreprendre des activités rémunératrices et apporta son aide à 90 familles pour l'élevage des cochons et la culture des céréales, permettant à 70% des fermiers de sortir de la pauvreté. Empêcher la coupe illégale dans la forêt et s'opposer à la chasse fait aussi partie de ses actions, elle stimula d'ailleurs, l'arboriculture forestière et fruitière. Respectée de tous, elle fut élue députée du congrès du peuple de sa région.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Khatima BIBI
Asia - Pakistan
Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Khatima, after being abandoned by her drug addict husband, decided to form a women's organisation in her village. She got training in health care, midwifery and family planning, microenterprises and mushroom cultivation. She worked and trained other women in these fields, formed a second organisation and contacted women from five other villages. Although illiterate, she keeps the records of the organisation by dictating to a literate man, becoming the first woman in the region to look after finances. She made it possible for the organisation to accumulate savings. With the self-confidence she gained, she attends conferences and visits other organisations. She is now being trained to be the future forestry motivator of the community.

A model woman activist.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Khatima, abandonnée par son mari toxicomane, décida de former une organisation de femmes dans son village. Elle suivit une formation en matière de santé, étudia pour devenir sage-femme et s'occuper du planning familial, créa des petites entreprises et s'adonna à la culture des champignons. Elle forma d'autres femmes dans tous ces domaines, créa une deuxième organisation et prit contact avec des femmes dans cinq autres villages. Bine qu'analphabète, elle tient les comptes de son organisation en les transmettant à un homme lettré, devenant ainsi la première femme de la région à s'occuper de finances. De ce fait, l'organisation a pu faire des économies. Ayant pris confiance en elle, Khatima assiste à des conférences et établit des contacts avec d'autres organisations. Elle se dorne actuellement à la promotion de la sylviculture dans sa communauté.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



**Severa Luque Bogarin de
COODEÑE**

The Americas – Paraguay

Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Severa and a friend initiated the idea of cooperativism in Paraguay, an idea priest Padre Frederico Schiaron brought from Chile. She was able to get 113 people to join and contribute 72000 Gs. total to create a savings and loan cooperative. She went door to door in Pilar to promote and talk to poor people about cooperativism, a new concept in the area, and was instrumental in allowing many poor people to access the benefits of the cooperative. She ensured that farmers from Umbú island benefit from technical assistance and farm inputs and that the traditional fishermen of Pilar organise to obtain equipment and market their products with the help of loans. By organising sewing workshops for the women, she got the wives of the farmers and fishermen involved. She is currently expanding the membership of the cooperative to other districts.

Cooperative organisation benefits all.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Severa et une amie initièrent le coopératisme au Paraguay, concept que le Père Frederico Schiaron avait amené du Chili. Elle réunit 113 personnes et 72'000 Guaranis pour fonder une coopérative d'épargne et de crédit. En faisant du porte-à-porte chez les pauvres de Pilar, elle réussit à implanter l'idée coopératisme dans la région. Elle s'assura que les paysans de l'île d'Umbu bénéficient de programmes d'assistance technique, obtiennent d'autres revenus et que les petits pêcheurs artisanaux de Pilar s'organisent pour obtenir de l'équipement afin de vendre leurs produits sur le marché grâce des petits crédits. En organisant des ateliers de couture pour les femmes des paysans et celles des pêcheurs, elle réussit à les faire participer aussi au développement. Actuellement, elle étend l'adhésion des membres de la coopérative à d'autres districts.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."

**Sangrami DEVI****Asia – India**

Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Sangrami, a widow supporting 5 children and her parents-in-law, saw the flourishing centre of Belakuchi on the opposite side of the Upper Alaknanda basin disappear overnight in 1970 due to a flood. This motivated her to leave her village to attend an eco-development camp to educate herself about the relationship between the forest and the flood. Through her planning, the barren slopes have been reforested, the river banks protected, and women do not have to climb dangerous cliffs and neglect their children to find fuel and fodder. She convinced the organisers to conduct a camp in her village so that the youth would know how to prevent floods in the future. She organised women and convinced the men to build village resources. She launched a school, and pushed for a pedestrian path so that people could bring goods to market.

Transforming a poor village.**WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©**

Sangrami, veuve avec cinq enfants et ses beaux-parents à charge, vu le riche village de Belakuchi, situé en face du bassin du Haut Alaknanda, disparaître en une nuit suite à une inondation en 1970. Elle décida alors de suivre un séminaire sur l'éco-développement pour comprendre la relation entre la forêt et les inondations. Grâce à ses projets, les pentes dénudées ont été reboisées et les bords de la rivière protégés de sorte que les femmes ne risquent plus leurs vies et ne négligent plus leurs enfants pour trouver du combustible et du fourrage. Elle a convaincu les femmes, et même les hommes à organiser leurs temps de loisirs pour tirer parti des ressources du village. Elle mit sur pied une école et encouragea la construction d'un chemin pédestre, plutôt qu'une route qui aurait déstabilisé les pentes, afin que les villageois puissent aller vendre leurs marchandises au marché.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Swarnalata DEVI

Asia – India

Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Swarnalata has struggled relentlessly for the past 25 years to improve the quality of life in the remote area of coastal Puri. She mobilised the villagers to use latrines, helped provide them with safe drinking water via innovative water filters, and encouraged people to plant fuel and fruit trees in wastelands along roadsides and river banks, thus creating a beautiful green belt. She supported the poor in saving their land and trees from rich land holders by getting publicity for their plight. She adapted a waterlogged wasteland into one acre plots for poor farmers. She encouraged people to renovate water tanks for irrigation and aquaculture, pushed the construction of the first road, introduced an innovative irrigation system, and encouraged people to install bio-gas plants and use solar cookers. These are just a few examples of her work.

Non-violently defending land.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Swarnalata lutte sans répit afin d'améliorer la qualité de vie de la région côtière de Puri. Elle a mobilisé les villageois pour qu'ils utilisent des latrines et les a aidés à s'approvisionner en eau potable à l'aide de filtres à eau et encouragée les gens à planter des arbres sur des terres abandonnées, créant une magnifique ceinture de verdure. Rempart des pauvres contre l'attaque des riches propriétaires terriens, elle écrit des articles pour sensibiliser l'opinion publique. Elle a transformé un terrain désolé et marécageux en parcelles de 0.4 hectares destinés aux pauvres fermiers. Elle a encouragé la rénovation des réservoirs d'eau pour l'irrigation et la pisciculture, encouragé les villageois à construire la première route et mis en place un système d'irrigation. Elle encouragea l'installation de systèmes d'approvisionnement en bio-gaz et l'utilisation de cuisinières solaires. Voilà quelques réalisations de son travail.

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Narki DOKU
Africa – Ghana
Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Narki grew up in the remote village of Teteman. After training to be a midwife, she organised the women of the village to educate them in nutrition and reproductive health. On her initiative the women began to practice community farming, while Narki took advantage of the opportunity to give information on AIDS, family planning, and the special education of the girl child during breaks in the farm work. As the number of women involved increased and the farm expanded, she created a nursery where the youth and elderly took care of the children. Thanks to Narki, life in the village is improving, the birth rate is decreasing, fish ponds are adding protein to the diet and a corn mill saves women from a 14 km walk to grind corn.

Educating villagers for better health.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Narki a grandi dans le village de Teteman. Après avoir reçu une formation de sage-femme, elle a enseigné aux femmes de son village, les principes de base touchant à la nutrition et la reproduction. Sur son initiative, les femmes se sont regroupées pour cultiver ensemble les terres et Narki en a profité, pendant les moments de pause, pour leur donner des informations sur le SIDA, le planning familial et l'éducation des filles. Comme ces femmes étaient de plus en plus nombreuses et que la ferme s'agrandissait, elle créa une crèche où les jeunes et les aînées s'occupaient des enfants. Grâce à Narki, la vie du village s'améliore, le taux de natalité diminue, l'organisation de la pisciculture permet d'enrichir en protéines les repas et l'existence d'un moulin évite aux femmes de marcher 14 km pour moudre les céréales.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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Anita HAYES
Europe – Ireland
Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Anita is the founder of the Irish Seed Savers Association (ISSA), a voluntary non-commercial organisation dedicated to the location and preservation of traditional varieties of fruits and vegetable. Its purpose is to conserve genetic material, preserve local history and bring biodiversity back into the lives of ordinary people. According to the FAO, 75% of the genetic diversity of agricultural crops has been lost since 1900. Locating rare varieties often involved reaching out to the older rural populations to tap their knowledge and experience. The seeds found and preserved are not for sale, but ISSA members may choose up to 5 varieties to try in their own gardens. ISSA is also planning a school program to offer schools samples of native apple varieties as a living educational tool on local agricultural history, biology and insect life, as well as a healthy snack.

Saving scarce seeds for culture and health.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Anita est la fondatrice de l'Association irlandaise pour la sauvegarde des semences (ISSA), une organisation de bénévoles à but non lucratif vouée à la découverte et à la préservation d'espèce traditionnelles de fruits et légumes. Elle souhaite conserver le matériel génétique pour réintroduire la biodiversité dans la vie de tous les jours. Selon la FAO, 75% de la biodiversité des plantes agricoles ont été perdus depuis 1900. Découvrir des espèces rares implique la création de liens avec la population plus âgée pour sonder leurs connaissances et profiter de leur expérience. Les semences retrouvées ne sont pas à vendre, mais les membres de l'ISSA peuvent choisir jusqu'à cinq variétés à tester dans leur jardin. L'ISSA prépare un programme visant à offrir aux écoles des variétés indigènes de pommes comme un outil d'éducation de l'histoire agricole locale, de la biologie et de la vie des insectes, autant qu'un délicieux goûter.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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Hind AL HADJA
Asia - Jordan
Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Hind Al Hadja, after marrying a formerly nomadic Bedouin and motivated by the feeling of being less knowledgeable than the wives of her husband's colleagues, began to educate the village women in order to improve her own knowledge. She established the first Women's Committee, which became the core for social activities in the town. They published a magazine as a pioneer method of expressing the views of local women; they established a women's youth centre which benefited over 200 youth with awareness programs, a handicraft centre enabling over 125 women to generate additional income and dairy production unit of which 20% of the profit go to support activities at the centre. Appointed to the Municipal Council, she works to raise awareness on family planning, public health, the environment and literacy.

Learning by doing.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Hind Al Hadja, après avoir épousé un ancien nomade Bédouin, commença un travail éducatif auprès des femmes du village, puis créa le premier Comité des Femmes qui devint le cœur des activités sociales du village. Le Comité publia une petite revue, ce qui constituait une innovation importante permettant aux femmes d'exprimer leurs opinions. D'autres activités suivirent : un centre de jeunesse féminine, un centre artisanal permettant aux femmes de générer des revenus supplémentaires et une unité de production de produits laitiers, dont une partie des bénéfices finance le centre. Nommée au Conseil Municipal, elle est très active dans de nombreux domaines touchant à l'éducation. Dans la région, ses activités ont créé plus de 300 emplois, éduqué des milliers de personnes et conduit à la quasi disparition de l'analphabétisme chez les femmes de moins de 70 ans.

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Krishnammal JEGANNATHAN

Asia – India

Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Krishnammal became a social worker and has fought tirelessly for the poor and outcasts in Thanjavur. For 30 years she worked with Vinoba Bhave's Land Gift movement. She worked with women and children to strengthen the social base of communities through women's groups and other projects, and organised processions on behalf of the landless poor. She responded to the massacre of 44 agricultural families in Kilvenmani by forming "Land for the Tiller's Independence" (LAFTI), which uses bank loans to purchase land (over 4000 acres) from the rich in order to distribute it to the poor. By organising, visiting, and talking, she has appeased violent social conflict. She has been actively fighting the environmentally devastating prawn farming by multinationals. Despite having been imprisoned for her actions, she struggles non-violently for justice and equality.

A Gandhian "Joan of Arc".

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Krishnammal est devenue assistante sociale et lutte sans cesse pour les pauvres et les déshérités. Pendant 30 ans, elle fit partie du mouvement « don de la terre » de Vinoba Bhave. Elle a travaillé avec les femmes et les enfants pour renforcer les bases sociales des communautés (par le truchement de groupes de femmes et de projets) et organisé des marches pour les pauvres sans terre. Après le massacre de 44 familles d'agriculteurs de Kilvenmani, elle fonda LAFTI (la terre pour l'indépendance du laboureur) qui, grâce à des prêts bancaire achète la terre des riches (plus de 1600 ha) et la redistribue aux plus pauvres. Elle apaisa beaucoup de conflits sociaux grâce à ses contacts. Elle s'opposa farouchement à l'élevage intensif de crevettes, système anti-écologique des multinationales. Bien que ses combats l'aient menée en prison, sa lutte pour la justice et l'égalité est toujours non-violente.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Naomi JERUTO
Africa – Kenya
Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Naomi began a career in social work and continued to serve her community with strength and determination as a volunteer after losing her paid job due to budget cuts. Recognising the low participation in development and in particular the heavy drinking habits of the men, Naomi organised 16 self-help groups, 12 women's groups and 9 youth groups that engage in a variety of income-generating development projects, including crafts and farming activities combined with educational programmes in literacy and health, and promotion of sports activities for the youth. She has also led AIDS awareness and eradication of female genital mutilation campaigns and lessons on family planning. Also carrying out social welfare and vocational rehabilitation programmes, Naomi has been instrumental in the human and economic development of the area.

A super social worker.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Naomi a commencé à travailler dans le social et a continué à servir sa communauté avec encore plus de force et de détermination comme bénévole lorsqu'elle perdit son travail suite à une réduction de budget. Constatant le peu d'intérêt chez les gens vis-à-vis du développement de la région et le grand nombre d'alcooliques chez les hommes, elle créa 16 groupes de « self-help », 12 groupes de femmes et 9 groupes de jeunes qui se sont engagés dans un certain nombre de projets à but lucratif (artisanat, culture et élevage), combiné avec des programmes éducatifs. Tout en gérant le planning familial, Naomi a tenu des campagnes d'information sur le SIDA et contre l'excision des femmes. Parallèlement, elle mena à bien des programmes d'aide sociale et de réhabilitation professionnelle. Elle a contribué de façon très significative au développement humain et économique de sa région.

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Dolphine M. A. OKECH

Africa – Kenya

Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Dolphine began her creative work as a rural school teacher and administrator introducing innovative educational programs. She founded Kenya Female Advisory Organisation, (KEFADO) which finances itself by offering typing and photocopying services, in order to help rural women in Nyanza and western provinces of Kenya become self-supporting. Women were able to successfully practice farming skills gained through the integrated learning approach used at KEFADO, bringing about collaboration with agricultural experts. The increased productivity achieved as a result is evidenced in the competitive community shows Dolphine introduced. She has also written several books on the education of girls and is very active in the fight against female circumcision.

The "Exemplary Educator".

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Dolphine a commencé son travail d'institutrice et d'administratrice d'écoles rurales en introduisant de nouveaux programmes d'éducation. Elle a fondé KEFADO (Kenya Female Advisory Organisation), une organisation féminine de conseil qui s'autofinance en offrant des services de dactylographie et de photocopie afin d'aider les paysannes du Nyanza et des provinces de l'Ouest du pays à devenir financièrement autonomes. Ces femmes ont maîtrisé avec succès de nouvelles techniques agricoles, apprises grâce à l'approche du savoir intégré, vulgarisé par le KEFADO en collaboration avec des experts agricoles. L'accroissement de la productivité dans sa communauté s'est manifestée dans divers concours agricoles. Dolphine est également l'auteur de plusieurs livres sur l'éducation des filles et mène une lutte active contre l'excision des femmes.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Radhaben Bhanabhai

RATHWA

Asia – India

Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Radhaben had to begin anew after her village was submerged due to the construction of the Sukhi Dam. In compensation, her family was given 5 acres of a wasteland with no facilities or services. When the Self Employed Womens' Association began economic rehabilitation of these resettled families, the villagers did not trust anyone at first. Radhaben convinced the women in her village to start a savings group and took responsibility for it. She realised that if a village is united, their collective voice is stronger. She now calls the women in her village to meetings when there is a need for a collective decision. She is a member of the Sukhi Executive Committee and knows how to talk with government officials about their problems. People now have access to electricity and food and water, and economic development programmes have begun.

The power of new beginnings.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Radhaben a dû tout recommencer à zéro lors de la construction du barrage de Sukhi, car son village a été noyé. Sa famille reçut en contrepartie deux hectares de terre aride. Lorsque la SEWA (une association de femmes pauvres du Gujarat) se lança dans la réhabilitation de ces familles déracinées, les villageois ne leur firent pas confiance. Elle créa alors un groupement d'épargne pour convaincre les femmes. Si le village était uni, leur voix collective aurait plus d'impact. Maintenant, elle convoque les femmes quand il faut prendre une décision commune. Elle est membre du Comité exécutif de Sukhi et sait comment exposer leurs problèmes aux officiels. Grâce à Radhaben, les gens ont accès à l'électricité, la nourriture et l'eau et des programmes de développement économique ont été mis en place.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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**Agnes RUDRAPATI****Asia – India**

Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Agnes, from an untouchable family, was lucky to have a mother who wanted her to go to school. After finishing school she was obliged to get married, but her husband left her. Agnes began organising women to compel the men to stop drinking and to force her husband to pay her compensation. By organising health camps, she began to educate women and youth about AIDS prevention and reproductive health, food poisoning and diarrheal disease. She encourages women to save and trains them in income generating activities, such as tailoring and producing leather goods, baskets and lace. She organises literacy campaigns and motivates high-school students through essay and quiz competitions. She has succeeded in getting equal wages with men for women working in quarries and was able to end child labour in 5 villages.

Working to abolish child labor.**WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©**

Agnes, issue d'une famille d'intouchables eut la chance que sa mère l'envoie à l'école. Obligée de se marier, son mari la quitta tout de même. Elle commença à mobiliser les femmes pour obtenir de leurs maris qu'ils arrêtent de boire et obligea le sien à lui verser une indemnité. En organisant des camps sur la santé elle apprit aux femmes et aux jeunes la prévention contre le SIDA, contre les intoxications alimentaires, la dysenterie et les soins gynécologiques. Elle apprit aux femmes à épargner les forma à diverses activités lucratives telles que la confection de vêtements, la production d'objets en cuir, de paniers et de dentelle. Elle organise des campagnes d'alphabétisation et motive les étudiants au collège par des concours littéraires. Elle parvint à obtenir l'égalité des salaires entre les femmes et les hommes travaillant dans les carrières et réussit à abolir le travail des enfants dans cinq villages.

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Valentina SHAPOVAL

Europe – Ukraine

Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Valentina worked on a collective farm after graduating from the college of Agriculture. She organised cultural and educational activities for youth while raising her 3 children. These activities were so successful that she created several groups for youth, the elderly, married couples, families and one for cultural studies. In 1995, when she encountered resistance from the authorities while attempting to register a new women's group, she went all the way to the Ministry of Justice to get the right for registration. Now, women in her village get assistance with poverty and unemployment and learn about their rights. Because the business community refused to help, she financed her NGO herself until finally obtaining funds, which she used to provide computer and sewing courses. She has been active without financial compensation, despite suffering from skin cancer.

Organising for development.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Valentina, une fois diplômée de l'école d'agriculture, travailla dans un kolkhose. Tout en élevant trois enfants, elle organisa des activités culturelles et éducatives pour les jeunes. Elle eut tellement de succès, qu'elle créa plusieurs sections destinées aux jeunes, aux personnes âgées, aux couple mariés et aux familles, ainsi qu'un cercle culturel. En 1995, en voulant faire enregistrer une nouvelle ONG de femmes, elle fit face à la résistance des autorités de son village et c'est au Ministère de la Justice qu'elle obtint gain de cause. Grâce à elle, les femmes du village obtiennent de l'aide pour surmonter la pauvreté et le chômage et sont informées de leurs droits. Devant le refus d'aide des commerçants, elle finança elle-même cette ONG avant de trouver des fonds pour des cours de couture et d'informatique. Elle est active et financièrement indépendante, malgré un cancer de la peau.

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Raimunda GOMEZ DA SILVA

The Americas – Brazil

Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Raimunda, from Maranhao State, organized people through the church to improve the health and lives of women who were discriminated against and abused. Later, when she moved to Tocantins State, she participated in the struggle for land despite her fear of the big land owners. She balanced this with working in the fields and raising her 7 children. She was coordinator of a union, which led to the formation of the Federation of Agricultural Workers. She joined the Association of Women Agricultural Workers of Bico de Papagio (ASMUBIP), communicating with other women's organizations and travelling as a representative to talk about the struggle of rural women, even talking to the President Cardoso. As of 1999, she was active with the Women's Secretariat of the National Council of the Rubber-Tree Workers, pursuing the struggle for women's rights.

Fighting for land and rights.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Raimunda, de l'Etat de Maranhao, regroupa les gens par le truchement de l'église, afin d'améliorer la santé et la vie des femmes discriminées et abusées par leurs partenaires. Plus tard, elle déménagea dans l'Etat de Tocantins où elle participa à la lutte pour la terre, malgré la terreur qu'inspiraient les grands propriétaires terriens. Elle s'occupa de tout ça en cultivant sa terre et en élevant 7 enfants. Coordinatrice d'un syndicat, elle créa la Fédération des Ouvriers Agricoles. Elle rejoint l'Association des Ouvrières Agricoles de Bico de Papagio, communiquant avec d'autres femmes rurales et voyageant comme représentante afin de parler de la lutte des femmes rurales, allant jusqu'à parler avec le Président Cardoso. Depuis 1999, elle est active au sein du Secrétariat des Femmes du Conseil National des Ouvriers du Caoutchouc et poursuit sa lutte pour les droits des femmes.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Vera SOLOVIEVA
Europe – Russia
Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Vera began to work in forestry at age 18 and completed her degree at the Institute of Economy and Finance in Moscow. As director of a kolkhoze she became the manager of the rural economy of her village. During perestroika she was a pioneer in the market economy in Russia. She formed a diversified agricultural enterprise cultivating cereals, sugarbeet, forage and raising beef; it became a success and now has 3 shops, a mill and a bakery. At the same time she improved the quality of life of the local inhabitants by approaching the authorities to create a new bus itinerary, asphalt the roads, obtain telephones, open a new school and obtain a line for natural gas. She provides moral and material assistance for the poor, handicapped and elderly. She has also paid for the restoration of the Cultural Centre of the village with her own money.

Pushing development and humanitarianism.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Vera a commencé à 18 ans à travailler dans la sylviculture. Elle termina ses études à l'Institut de l'Economie et des Finances à Moscou. À la tête d'un kolkhoze, elle commença à diriger l'économie de son village. Pendant la perestroïka, elle fut une pionnière dans l'adoption de l'économie de marché en Russie. Elle créa une entreprise agricole diversifiée de céréales, betterave à sucre, de fourrage et d'élevage de bétail. Ce fut un succès et elle possède maintenant 3 magasins, un moulin et une boulangerie. Elle fait tout pour que la qualité de vie des villageois s'améliore, en faisant pression sur les autorités afin qu'elles créent un nouvel itinéraire de bus, bitument les routes, posent des lignes de téléphone, créent une école et fournissent du gaz naturel. Elle donne aussi une assistance matérielle et morale aux pauvres, aux handicapés et aux personnes âgées. C'est avec son argent qu'elle a financé la restauration du centre culturel.

**"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."**



**Subbiyyeh KAMEL ASAD
GHANNAM**

Asia – West Bank

Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Subbiyyeh's parents paid for her schooling with wheat kernels. Although she married early, she continued her education becoming the first woman from her village to obtain high school diploma. She established a teaching centre through which she taught 25 women to read and write. She helped establish a kindergarten, travelled to different villages teaching about infant nutrition, public health and child development. She worked with the disabled and began to work for women to be aware of their rights. Becoming more politically active, she ran for election to the Palestinian Legislative Council in order to give voice to issues relating to women and the disabled. Although she did not win, she is planning to enter local council elections.

A rural woman activist.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Les parents de Subbiyyeh payèrent son école avec des semences de céréales. Bien que mariée relativement tôt, elle poursuivit sa scolarité devenant la première femme de son village à obtenir un diplôme d'études secondaires. Elle créa un centre d'alphabétisation où elle enseigna à 25 femmes à lire et à écrire. Elle contribua à la création d'un jardin d'enfants et, par le canal d'une organisation humanitaire, s'occupa d'éducation en santé publique dans une série de villages. Elle ajouta des activités au niveau des handicapés et de la mobilisation des femmes. Après être devenue plus active politiquement, elle se présenta aux élections pour le Conseil Législatif palestinien, en vue de faire entendre la voix des femmes et des handicapés. Même non élue, elle continue son activité politique au niveau local.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Rosa TZAROUKYAN

Europe - Armenia

Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Rosa created a cooperative with her family from their savings. Starting with sheep breeding, then cattle breeding, the farm now includes many different animals. Due to Rosa's will power, knowledge, entrepreneurship and enthusiasm, production increases every year. The animals reproduce very well thanks to the cleanliness, care and concerned attitude toward their well being. The farm is able to provide constant employment with high salaries to 30 families. Rosa is planning to produce high quality baby milk, which will create even more jobs. She assists needy families and hosts future veterinarians and animal husbandry technicians. She is an example of a woman manager who, by her nature and activities is the guarantee of community development.

A model animal farm.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Rosa créa une coopérative avec les économies familiales. Elle commença d'abord avec l'élevage de moutons, puis de vaches et maintenant sa ferme inclut nombre d'autres animaux. Grâce à la volonté, le savoir, les capacités de gestion et l'enthousiasme de Rosa, la production s'accroît chaque année. Les animaux se reproduisent très bien grâce à la propreté et aux soins qui leur sont prodigués. La ferme procure un emploi stable et de bons salaires à une trentaine de familles. Rosa prévoit la production de lait de première qualité pour bébés, ce qui créera encore plus d'emplois. Elle aide des familles en détresse et forme de futurs vétérinaires et techniciens préposés à l'élevage. Elle donne l'exemple d'une femme manager qui, par sa nature et ses activités, est la garante du développement communautaire.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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VONONA
Africa – Madagascar
Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

VONONA (meaning "ready and decided" in Malagasy), is an association of 36 women, mostly mothers without husbands, in the town of Andranofasika. VONONA carries out an activity that is not only economically viable, but lessens the pressure on natural resources and increases the chances of preserving the biodiversity in Ankarafantsika National Park. With financial and technical assistance they created a small fruit-drying factory for local fruit, confronting difficulties such as climate, time commitments, accounting, packaging and marketing. They sell dried mangoes, dried bananas and tamarind jelly. They also pool their resources to help each other in times of need, and provide entertainment for their isolated community. Their activity has created an enormous demand for fresh fruit and provided jobs for villagers who collect fruit to sell to the women.

"Ready and decided" to save the forest.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

VONONA, qui signifie «prête et résolue» en malgache, est une association de 36 femmes, la plupart mères sans maris, de la ville de Andranofasika. VONONA poursuit une activité, non seulement viable économiquement, mais qui freine la surexploitation des ressources naturelles et préserve la biodiversité du Parc National d'Ankarafantsika. Grâce à une aide financière et technique, elles ont pu créer une petite entreprise de séchage des fruits tout en faisant face à des difficultés liées au climat, à la nécessité de travailler nuit et jour, à la comptabilité, l'emballage et le marketing. Elles mettent en commun leurs ressources pour s'entraider en cas de besoin et organisent des loisirs pour la communauté isolée. Leur activité a entraîné une énorme demande de fruits frais, tout en procurant du travail aux villageois qui cueillent et vendent les fruits aux femmes.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Rape WEIZAJ
Europe – Albania
Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Rape, the eldest child of a poor family of 7 from Ngraçan, grew up in a hut without a bed or ceiling. She became a teacher in the elementary school 5 km away, travelling by foot for 18 years through rain and snow. After coming home from work she gave literacy classes to adults in her village and taught women how to prepare food for the children, bathe, and wash clothes. Thanks to her, the villagers began to sleep in beds, eat at a table, build houses from stone and with a ceiling, and keep their animals outside the home. By 1975, 500 adults and 50 children were enrolled in middle school and her former pupils are educators, doctors and nurses.

Teaching villagers life skills.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Rape, aînée d'une famille pauvre de Ngraçan, grandit dans une hutte sans lit, ni plafond. Elle devint institutrice d'une école primaire à 5 kilomètres de chez elle où elle allait tous les jours pendant 18 ans, par tous les temps. De retour à la maison, elle donnait des cours d'alphabétisation aux adultes de son village et enseignait aux femmes les bases de l'alimentation infantile et de l'hygiène. Grâce à elle, les villageois ont commencé à dormir dans des lits, à manger à une table, à construire des maisons en pierre avec plafonds et à garder leur bétail hors de la maison d'habitation. En 1975, 500 adultes et 50 enfants étaient inscrits à l'école et parmi ses anciens élèves, on trouve des infirmières, des éducateurs et des médecins.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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Yang XIANGLIAN

Asia – China

Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Yang Xianglian, from Yanling County (Henan province), used a loan of 2000 yuan (240\$) to open a garment factory in a three-room thatched house in the 1980's. After 18 years, it developed into an area of 1824 square meters employing 106 people and making over 1 million yuan (12'000\$) in profits annually. Through various forms of skill-training sessions both in and outside the factory she has trained more than 9000 workers in tailoring and sewing, including 386 disabled persons. She strictly adheres to environmental standards in the running of the factory and established a forestry company to beautify the local environment. The factory has become a training base in garment making for rural women and provides local employment for the rural people. She was also elected deputy of the People's Congress of Henan Province.

Village tailor spreads success.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Dans les années 80, Yang Xianglian du comté du Yanling, démarra, grâce à un prêt de 2000 yuans, une usine de confection d'habits dans une mansarde de trois pièces. 18 ans plus tard, l'usine s'étend sur 1824 m², emploie 106 personnes et fait plus d'un million de yuans de bénéfice par an. Par l'intermédiaire de diverses sessions de formation, tant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur de l'usine, elle a formé plus de 9000 ouvrières, y compris des handicapées, tant dans la confection de vêtements que dans la couture. Cette usine est maintenant un centre de formation pour la confection de vêtements destinés aux paysannes et fournit localement du travail au milieu rural. Yang Xianglian est devenue députée du Congrès du Peuple de la Province du Hanan.

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Zou CHUNLIAN

Asia – China

Laureate 1999

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Zou Chunlian established a horticultural farm to help herself out of poverty, learning the basics through experimentation and practice. Her efforts gained her entry to the agricultural college, to and from which she cycled 40 km every day. Her education enabled her horticultural business to flourish as she successfully introduced flowers and plants into China from The Netherlands, Japan, the USA and Canada, and set up an experimental production base providing over 200 jobs. After sharing her knowledge with villagers and providing funds to help poverty-stricken households, over 1000 families began growing flowers and nursery plants. Her plants also beautify and protect the environment. By joining the China national flower industry computer network, she now has access to more information and markets.

Flowers help the poor.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Pour sortir de sa pauvreté, Zou Chunlian a mis sur pied une ferme horticole en apprenant les bases du métier sur le tas. Grâce à ses efforts, elle fut admise à l'école d'agriculture en section horticulture et vergers, faisant tous les jours à vélo 80 km aller et retour. Ses connaissances lui permirent d'agrandir son affaire et d'introduire en Chine avec succès des fleurs et des plantes venant des Pays-Bas, du Japon, des Etats-Unis et du Canada. Elle mit sur pied une station expérimentale et fournit plus de 200 emplois. En faisant bénéficier les villageois de son savoir et en donnant de l'argent à des ménages pauvres pour les aider, plus de 1000 familles sont devenues horticultrices. Grâce à Internet et à son intégration au réseau national chinois de l'industrie des fleurs, elle a maintenant accès à plus d'informations et à de nouveaux marchés.

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Laureates from 1998



Rose ADAMU
Africa – Nigeria
Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Rose, a farmer with seven children, is president of the Ntyang Women's group of Razek Fan, a remote area of Plateau State in Nigeria, and has distinguished herself in the fields of health and community organization. She started by running a volunteer health worker's program to address some of the severe reproductive health problems of her district, especially AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. This meant overcoming the vigorous opposition of opinion leaders in a region where teaching and using contraceptives was taboo. Her group also created a village pharmacy which generates fixed incomes for employees and built a maternity center. Rose is a dynamic, selfless, honest and hard-working leader.

Overcoming traditional taboos.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Rose, paysanne mère de sept enfants est la présidente du groupe de femmes de Ntyang à Razek Fan, une région isolée de l'Etat du Plateau au Nigéria. Elle s'est distinguée dans les domaines de la santé et de l'organisation communautaire. Elle débuta en mettant en place un programme de santé pour bénévoles afin de régler quelques uns des graves problèmes de santé de son district, en particulier le SIDA et les maladies sexuellement transmissibles. A cet effet, elle a dû lutter contre l'opposition vigoureuse des leaders d'opinion dans une région où parler des contraceptifs et expliquer comment les utiliser était tabou. Son groupe a également créé une pharmacie de village qui génère des revenus fixes destinés aux employés et construit une maternité. Rose est une dirigeante dynamique, désintéressée, honnête et laborieuse.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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**Women's Cooperative for
Hope (AMAL)
Africa - Mauritania
Laureate 1998**

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

The Amal cooperative was established in 1975. Due to the drought in the 70s the men left the rural areas and migrated to the cities. The women then came together and established "AMAL" which means *hope*. Through "Amal", women were empowered to plant trees using traditional tools and ways and could feed their families. The women are fighting desertification of the area and demanded that the governor open a school for illiterate adults. Rural women are now able to learn to read and write and do their own accounting. AMAL President, Mariam Bint Moustapha (63), once illiterate herself, now teaches at the school. AMAL has become a model in the local area.

Fighting desertification and illiteracy.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

La coopérative AMAL a été fondée en 1975. En raison de la sécheresse des années 70, les hommes ont quitté les régions rurales et ont émigré dans les villes. Les femmes se sont alors rassemblées et ont fondé AMAL, qui signifie *espoir*. AMAL a encouragé les femmes à lutter contre la désertification et à planter des arbres en utilisant des méthodes et des outils traditionnels, ce qui leur permettait ainsi de nourrir leur famille. Elles ont demandé au gouverneur d'ouvrir une école pour les adultes illettrés. Les femmes du milieu rural peuvent maintenant apprendre à lire, à écrire et à tenir leur propre comptabilité. La présidente d'AMAL, Mariam Bint Moustapha (63 ans), ancienne illettrée, enseigne maintenant dans cette école. AMAL est devenu un modèle dans la région.

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Ameyolotzil Women's Group

The Americas – Mexico

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

This group of Nahuatl-speaking indigenous women, with no prior experience in business, trading or organization, took up the challenge of starting a small clothing business with a government loan. They took literacy and sewing classes, purchased sewing machines and raw materials, paid off their debt, and started attending fairs in other states of the country. Despite heavy resistance from their spouses and their lack of experience in the field, their clothing embroidered with traditional designs is now attracting the interest of large stores. This is a rare example of rural women reaching success thanks entirely to their creativity, courage and persistence.

Pioneers in self-reliance.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Ce groupe de femmes indigènes, parlant le Nahuatl, n'ayant aucune expérience des affaires, du commerce ou de l'organisation, a relevé le défi de commencer une petite affaire de vêtements avec un emprunt du gouvernement. Les femmes ont d'abord appris à lire et à écrire, puis ont pris des cours de couture. Elles ont acheté des machines à coudre et des matières premières, ont remboursé leurs dettes et ont commencé à faire les marchés dans d'autres Etats du pays. Malgré une forte résistance de leurs maris, et n'ayant aucune connaissance dans le domaine, leurs vêtements brodés avec des dessins traditionnels attirent maintenant l'intérêt de grands magasins. C'est un exemple rare de femmes rurales ayant eu du succès dans un domaine où elles n'avaient aucune expérience, uniquement grâce à leur cran et leur persistance.

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Gania Ali al BASHIR

Africa – Sudan

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Gania, from a very poor family in Amaara Daloo village in the blue Nile State, established a cooperative and women's group and works hard to improve local women's skills through adult educational programs. After undergoing extensive training in adult education and nutrition, she now gives courses in nutrition and is first to participate in project activities concerning women. She has a deep commitment to reducing the suffering of her people, especially those suffering from hunger and malnutrition.

Committed to serving her people.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Issue d'une famille très pauvre d'Amaara Daloo, village dans l'Etat du Nil Bleu, Gania a créé une coopérative et un groupe de femmes et n'épargne pas ses efforts pour améliorer les aptitudes des femmes grâce à un programme d'enseignement destiné aux adultes. Après avoir suivi elle-même une formation et des cours de nutrition, qu'elle dispense maintenant, elle est la première à participer à des activités concernant des projets féminins. Elle s'est profondément engagée à soulager la souffrance de son peuple, particulièrement dans les domaines de la sous-alimentation et de la malnutrition.

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Anne-Grethe BRUSTAD

Europe – Norway

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Anne-Grethe, her husband, and her children are authentic biological farmers, using no concentrated cattle feed, fertilizers or pesticides. To do this and remain debt-free in a country with such a short growing season requires a combination of creativity, hard work and simple living. Anne-Grethe's non-medicated cows live for an average of 10-12 years, 2-3 times longer than the national average considered "normal" for medicine-fed cows. It has taken many years of struggle to convince dairies to take her bio-milk, but now demand is outstripping supply as people are becoming more and more aware of the need for genuinely healthy food that corresponds with nature's rhythms and laws.

An authentic biological farmer.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Dans un pays avec une saison agricole aussi courte que celle de la Norvège, être agriculteur biologique authentique n'utilisant pas de nourriture concentrée pour le bétail, pas d'engrais chimiques ni de pesticides, en évitant de s'endetter, demande une combinaison de créativité, de dur labeur et de vie simple, qu'Anne-Grethe a pratiqué avec son mari Kalle et ses enfants pendant de nombreuses années. Ses vaches non-traitées arrivent en moyenne à une longévité de 10 - 12 années, 2 -3 fois plus que la moyenne considérée comme "normale" pour des vaches traitées. Il lui a fallu beaucoup d'années pour convaincre les laitiers de prendre son lait biologique, mais maintenant la demande dépasse l'offre, car les gens deviennent de plus en plus conscients du besoin d'une nourriture saine qui corresponde aux rythmes et lois de la nature.

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Georgina Lee CHEU
Oceania – Australia
Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Georgina, a shy indigenous rural woman has become a remarkable community leader in Chillagoe, a small rural district in Far North Queensland. A member of the Queensland Country Woman's Association, she is leading her fellow indigenous people to greater self-esteem and has played a key role in promoting cultural activities and income-producing craft work that reflects aboriginal life. She has developed programs for illiterate tribal elders and other semiliterate community members to improve their literacy skills. She also established a nursery of native trees and shrubs.

Promoting culture for self-esteem.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Cette australienne aborigène très timide est devenue une dirigeante communautaire remarquable à Chillagoe, un petit district rural dans le Queensland du Nord. En tant que membre de l'Association des femmes rurales du Queensland, elle apprend aux membres de sa communauté aborigène l'estime de soi. Elle a joué un rôle clé en promouvant des activités culturelles et des métiers artisanaux lucratifs, produits de la vie aborigène. Elle a développé des programmes afin de permettre à des personnes âgées illettrées des tribus et d'autres membres semi-illettrés de la communauté d'améliorer leurs aptitudes à lire et à écrire. Elle a aussi fondé une pépinière pour des arbres et arbustes originaires de la région

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Maria Margarita Maldonado

CRUZ

The Americas – El Salvador

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Maria has undergone significant difficulties in her life, but managed to achieve a successful livelihood. She was forced to become the partner of a man who never married her, but gave her eight children. This illiterate and courageous woman had to overcome many hardships to become manager of a model farm on her small property. Since 1994, thanks to a modest government loan, training and technical assistance, she has diversified her crops, acquired a few heads of cattle, and started commercializing her own produce. Due to her success, a Center for Rural Training was set up on her land where she demonstrates various ecological and land-conservation techniques for the benefit of other small farmers.

Overcoming illiteracy to run model farm.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Maria a connu un dur début dans sa vie. Elle a été obligée de devenir la compagne d'un homme qui ne l'a jamais épousée, mais lui a donné huit enfants. Cette femme illettrée et courageuse a dû surmonter beaucoup d'épreuves avant de devenir dirigeante d'une ferme modèle sur sa petite propriété. Depuis 1994, grâce à un modeste emprunt, une formation et une assistance technique de son gouvernement, elle a diversifié ses produits, acquis quelques têtes de bétail et commencé à commercialiser ses propres produits. Grâce à son succès, un centre d'entraînement rural a été installé sur sa terre, où elle fait, pour le bénéfice d'autres petits paysans, la démonstration de diverses techniques écologiques pour la conservation de la terre.

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Elvia DAGUA

The Americas – Ecuador

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Elvia is a Quichua woman from the Amazon jungle. Abandoned by her husband at 18, she had to fend for herself and her children. She, with other women, founded an alphabetization center where she taught, and later the group constructed a school for their children. In 1992, she was chosen to be the first woman leader in her community responsible for the financing of community needs in health and nutrition. She initiated workshops for traditional dance and songs, and programs to prepare traditional foods. Funds thus raised go to people in need. She also fights against domestic violence, and helps women living in remote rural areas organize small farms for commercial use.

Leading women to dignity.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Elvia est une femme Quechua de la forêt Amazonienne. Abandonnée par son mari à 18 ans, elle lutte pour survivre et pour ses enfants. Avec d'autres femmes, elle a fondé un centre d'alphabétisation où elle enseignait, et plus tard elle a construit avec son groupe une école pour leurs enfants. En 1992, elle était élue première femme dirigeante de sa communauté responsable du financement dans les domaines de la santé et de la nutrition. Elle a créé des formations dans le domaine de la danse et du chant traditionnels et des programmes pour la préparation de la nourriture traditionnelle. Les fonds ainsi obtenus vont aux gens dans le besoin. Elle a combattu contre la violence au foyer et a aidé des femmes habitant dans des régions retirées à organiser des petites fermes permettant une exploitation commerciale.

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Sister Stella EDDATU

Asia – India

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Sister Stella is a member of the all-Indian religious order Daughters of Mary. Since 1975, she has transformed the lives of many rural women through community development programs initiated by the Assisi farm she founded in Tamil Nadu. Serving as a people's learning center where poor farmers are introduced to sustainable and ecologically sound agricultural practices, the training center caters in particular to girls from very poor families. At the end of the training, each girl is given a cow or other animal worth \$ 250 and is expected to pass on the knowledge she has acquired to at least 10 other women.

Transforming rural women's lives.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Soeur Stella est membre de l'ordre religieux indien des Filles de Marie. Depuis 1975, elle a transformé la vie de nombreuses femmes rurales grâce à des programmes de développement communautaire mis sur pied par la ferme d'Assise qu'elle a fondé au Tamil Nadu. Centre d'enseignement pour la population où des fermiers pauvres sont initiés à des pratiques écologiques durables en agriculture, il s'adresse particulièrement aux filles issues de familles très pauvres. Après l'apprentissage, chaque fille reçoit une vache ou un autre animal d'une valeur de 250 dollars et doit transmettre ces connaissances à au moins dix autres femmes.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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El Despertar
Europe – Spain
Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

El Despertar is a self-financed, apolitical organization comprised of 700 women belonging to several independent women's groups in Cadiz. With over a third of the population unemployed and/or illiterate, this region has serious development problems. El Despertar's activities are cultural and include the revival and preservation of local traditions and crafts, preservation of local music, and music workshops for children. They organize conferences on education, literacy, professional training, and employment. With their support, several small-scale businesses were initiated with zero-interest loans.

Culture and sustainable development.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

El Despertar est une organisation autofinancée et apolitique, réunissant 700 femmes appartenant à différents groupes de femmes indépendants à Cadiz. Le chômage touche 37% et l'illétrisme environ 35% de la population dans cette région qui a des sérieux problèmes de développement. Les activités de El Despertar sont culturelles et comprennent la renaissance et la préservation de traditions et de formes d'artisanat d'autrefois, la préservation de la musique locale et des ateliers de musique pour enfants. L'organisation met sur pied des conférences sur l'éducation, la littérature, l'enseignement professionnel et l'emploi. Avec son soutien, plusieurs PME ont obtenu des prêts sans intérêts.

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Alice EWUME
Africa – Cameroon
Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Alice, who lives in Likoko Membea in Buea, is an herbalist with treatments so effective that doctors from a local hospital send her chronic cases that they cannot cure. Alice treats women and couples with sexually transmitted diseases, which are frequent in this part of the continent, most of whom are too poor to pay for modern medicine. Her patients pay what they can. Most treatments take only one to four weeks and are confirmed by a medical check up. Alice's practice stresses the key role of traditional herbal medicine in countries where often modern medicine is often either unavailable, too expensive inappropriate, or effective.

Healing with herbs and love.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Les traitements dispensés par Alice, cette remarquable botaniste qui vit à Likoko Membea (Bouéa), sont si efficaces que les médecins d'un hôpital régional lui envoient des cas chroniques qu'ils ne peuvent pas guérir. Alice traite, chez les femmes et les couples, les maladies sexuellement transmissibles, fréquentes dans cette partie du continent, car la plupart d'entre eux sont trop pauvres pour assumer les frais engendrés par la médecine moderne. Ses patients paient à la mesure de leurs moyens. La plupart des traitements ne durent qu'une à quatre semaines et un contrôle en confirme la validité. Le choix de cette femme montre le rôle clé de la médecine traditionnelle à base de plantes dans des pays où souvent la médecine moderne n'est pas accessible, trop chère et pas toujours appropriée ou efficace.

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Rasma FREIMANE

Europe – Latvia

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Rasma is a veterinarian with a private practice and a mother of five who also devotes her time and energy to community work. She is the founder and chairperson of a dairy-farming cooperative society which offers free advice in farming, veterinary practices and small business economics. She has also founded a credit union in order to support small local entrepreneurs and is engaged in efforts to renovate an old canteen into a bakery and a recreation center for the local people. Rasma develops solutions to community business problems without spending huge sums of money on technical facilities and planning.

Runs a dairy farm cooperative.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Rasma est une vétérinaire privée, mère de 5 enfants, qui donne beaucoup de temps et d'énergie au travail communautaire. Elle est fondatrice et présidente d'une société coopérative de producteurs laitiers qui offre des conseils (gratuits) en agriculture, en pratique vétérinaire et en économie pour PME. Elle a aussi fondé une caisse d'épargne afin d'offrir un soutien à de petits entrepreneurs locaux. Par ailleurs, elle s'est engagée dans la transformation d'une vieille cantine en une boulangerie et en centre de récréation pour les habitants de la région. Rasma Freiman garde une vision globale, tout en développant des solutions aux problèmes de la communauté, sans dépenser de grosses sommes d'argent pour des aménagements techniques et la planification.

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Han BAOJING

Asia – China

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Han Baojing graduated from a vocational medical school in 1962 and settled down in Sunbao village, Shaanxi Province. She found that people in her area were suffering from a local disease caused by the drinking water, which lacked trace elements. Being a people's deputy, she appealed repeatedly to the local government on behalf of her constituents and finally got her voice heard. It was decided that people in the village would migrate to another place. Once the problem of housing was solved, Han Baojing raised funding to have a well drilled to enable people to drink clean water. In 1996 she raised 200'000 yuan (24'000\$) to buy 2000 acres of land for cultivation. She works to further improve the quality of drinking water and solve problems of irrigation for the community.

Clean water is the key to good health.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Han Baojing, diplômée d'une école de médecine en 1962, s'est installée au village de Sunbao, dans la province de Shanxi. Ayant remarqué que les gens de la région souffraient d'une maladie due à une eau pauvre en oligo-éléments et tant que députée, elle fit appel plusieurs fois aux autorités locales et finalement sa voix fut entendue. Il fut alors décidé que les gens de son village émigreraient à un autre endroit. Lorsque le problème de l'habitat fut réglé, Han Baojing obtint des fonds pour creuser un puits afin que les gens puissent boire de l'eau potable. En 1996, elle obtint 200'000 yuans (24'000\$) pour acheter environ 810 hectares de terrain pour la culture. Elle continue ses efforts pour améliorer la qualité de l'eau potable et pour résoudre des problèmes d'irrigation.

**"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."**



Sonia HARDNECK
Africa – South Africa
Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Sonia, an educator of enormous creativity, teaches 210 desperately poor children in the apple farming area of Grabou, a poverty-stricken community whose workers are 80% illiterate and often alcohol dependent. Despite huge difficulties, Sonia established a pre-primary-school. She also developed a "Whole-School Development Curriculum" including the establishment of a code of values for the school that became the vision, mission and foundation for the growth of the entire school community. These values include caring, sharing, consideration, living peacefully with one another, honesty, hard work, etc. Sonia has extended the curriculum to include basic swimming and computer skills and assisted mathematics, chemistry and art.

Teaching values for life.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Sonia, éducatrice d'une grande créativité, s'attache à instruire 210 enfants extrêmement pauvres de la région de Grabou, où sont cultivés des pommiers. 80% des travailleurs de cette communauté sont illettrés et souvent alcooliques, mais malgré d'énormes difficultés, elle a créé une école pré-primaire. Elle a aussi instauré un « Programme global de développement scolaire » avec un code des valeurs de l'école qui devint la vision, la mission et la base pour la croissance de toute la communauté scolaire. Ces valeurs incluent le souci d'autrui, la notion de partage, l'idée de vivre ensemble en paix, la loyauté, la valeur du travail, etc. Sonia a aussi élargi le programme scolaire afin d'y inclure la natation pour débutants, les connaissances en informatique, les mathématiques, la chimie et l'art.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Hu CHUNLIAN

Asia – China

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Hu Chunlian, now the General Manager of Liu He Township Sheng Le Tea Corporation Ltd., signed in 1984 a 15-year contract with the Chang Le-Village committee to grow tea on 5.8 acres of waste land. After 13 years of hard work, her tea farm expanded to 17.5 acres. She learnt how to process quality tea and her tea is among the best in the Hunbei province. She became the first female tea sampler in Yi Cheng city, sharing her success with others by using her own tea processing equipment and skills to process the tea grown by poorer women. To help girls and women from poor households, she recruits them to work on her farm to learn advanced methods in tea growing. Every year she offers a 10-day training workshop to tea growers. Due to her initiative, there are 2310 acres of land growing tea in the township.

Topping the tea trade.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Hu Chunlian est la dirigeante de la Liu He Township Sheng Le Tea Corporation Ltd, contrat de 15 ans signé en 1984 avec le comité du village de Chang Le pour cultiver du thé sur 2,35 hectares de terrain vague. Après 13 ans de dur labeur, sa ferme s'étendit sur 7 hectares et elle apprit à produire du thé de qualité ; son thé est parmi les meilleurs de la province de Hubei et elle est devenue la première femme échantillonneur de thé dans la ville de Yi Cheng. Hu Chunlian partage son succès avec d'autres et utilise son propre équipement de traitement et son savoir-faire pour aider à traiter le thé cultivé par des femmes issues de ménages démunis. Pour aider ces filles et ces femmes, elles leur enseigne des méthodes modernes. Chaque année, elle offre une formation de 10 jours aux planteurs de thé. Grâce à son initiative, il y a 935 hectares de plantation de thé dans toute la bourgade.

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Irula Tribal Women's Welfare Society (ITWWS)
Asia – India
Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Although Irula Tribal women are among the financially poorest people on earth, they are rich in knowledge of plant and animal life. It is this knowledge that they are using to transform their lives. Mostly landless, the Irula rarely have access to adequate drinking water, decent housing or schooling. The women of ITWWS are working hard to change this. They have planted hundreds of acres of barren land with medicinal, food and fodder trees, and above all are taking positive steps toward self-improvement in the form of literacy, numeracy and acquiring rights in the village government framework, which was unheard-of until recently.

Asserting human rights.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Bien que les femmes des tribus Irula soient parmi les habitantes les plus pauvres de la terre, leur connaissance de la vie des plantes et de celle des animaux est riche. Ce sont ces connaissances qu'elles utilisent pour transformer leur vie. La plupart n'ayant pas de terres, les Irula ont rarement accès l'eau potable, à l'habitat et à l'école. Les femmes de ITWWS n'épargnent pas leurs efforts pour changer cela. Elles ont planté sur des centaines d'hectares de terrain aride des arbres à valeur médicinales, des cultures vivrières, du fourrage et surtout, elles prennent des mesures pour parvenir à l'auto-amélioration de leur condition grâce à l'alphabétisation et la comptabilité élémentaire. Elles ont acquis des droits dans la structure gouvernementale du village, ce qui était jusqu'alors inconcevable.

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Lata KACHHAWAH

Asia – India

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Although born into a wealthy family, Lata decided that her life goal would be serving the poor. After a few years of grass roots experience, she became a founding member of the non-governmental organisation SURE (Society for the Uplift of Rural Economy). She has managed to win the collaboration of the rural poor. She has formed over 20 village groups of women artisans, slowly helping them to become economically self-sufficient through embroidery and patchwork and teaching them organizational skills and marketing. Thanks to her role as an awareness raiser, women of this desert area are acquiring increased confidence, an ability to master their lives, and economic viability.

Helping desert women survive.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Bien qu'issue d'une famille fortunée, Lata décida que servir les pauvres serait le but de sa vie. Après avoir acquis quelques années d'expérience à la base, elle devint membre de l'ONG SURE (Société pour le relèvement de l'économie rurale). Elle a un véritable don pour obtenir la coopération des pauvres en milieu rural. Jusqu'à ce jour, elle a formé plus de 20 groupes de femmes artisans dans autant de villages, en les aidant patiemment à devenir économiquement auto-suffisantes par la broderie et le patchwork et en leur donnant des notions de gestion et de marketing. Grâce à ses efforts pour stimuler une prise de conscience, les femmes de cette région désertique ont de plus en plus confiance en elles-mêmes, en leur aptitude à gérer leur vie et connaissent un succès économique croissant.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Martha KILEY-WORTHINGTON

Europe – Great Britain

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Martha grew up in Kenya, where she was aware even then of the conflict between agriculture, food production and wildlife conservation. Back home, she embarked on her first eco-farm in 1972 on the Sussex Downs, then moved to a more hostile climate on the Isle of Mull and finally started a third farm on Dartmoor National Park. There she has developed her theories on eco-farming, including new ideas on multispecies living. She now trains students from around the world in eco-agriculture, continues research in agriculture, animal behavior and cognition, and travels the world to study and share her experience. Martha also published *Eco-Agriculture: Food First Farming-Theory and Practice*, which describes her pioneering techniques.

An ecological farmer, teacher, & writer.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Martha a grandi au Kenya où elle était déjà consciente du conflit entre l'agriculture, la production alimentaire et la protection des animaux sauvages. De retour en 1972, elle créa sa première ferme écologique dans le Sussex, puis a déménagé vers un climat plus hostile sur l'île de Mull et a finalement commencé une troisième ferme dans le Dartmoor National Park. Elle y développe ses théories sur l'agriculture écologique, comprenant de nouvelles idées sur la cohabitation des espèces. Elle enseigne actuellement l'agriculture écologique à des étudiants du monde entier, continue ses recherches en agriculture et sur le comportement et la connaissance des animaux, et voyage autour du monde pour étudier et partager son expérience. Martha a publié "Eco-Agriculture: Food First Farming - Theory & Practice" (priorité à la production alimentaire - théorie et pratique), qui décrit ses techniques d'avant garde.

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Amavi KOSSIDONKO

Africa – Togo

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Despite a serious physical handicap, losing her husband and then her parents, and finding herself responsible for her 13 younger brothers and her own child, Amavi decided to live from the soil - despite her fields being a daily 14km. walk from the village in the Kpélé-élé region of Togo. She convinced neighbours to start collective farming, and after 15 years of community work, this led to the creation of a "tontine", an African revolving saving scheme, as well as a self-help organization called Elemawusi, which has its own granary with a 100 ton capacity.

Her courage has overcome all obstacles.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Malgré un handicap physique sérieux, ayant perdu son mari, puis ses parents et se retrouvant responsable de ses 13 plus jeunes frères et soeurs et de son enfant, Amavi a décidé de vivre des produits de la terre – bien qu'elle ait à marcher chaque jour 14km pour atteindre ses champs dans la région de Kipélé-élé au Togo. Elle a convaincu ses voisins de se lancer dans des projets agricoles collectifs et au bout de 15 ans de travail communautaire, elles ont créé une « tontine » (un système africain d'épargne), et une organisation de secours mutuels appelé Elemawusi qui possède son propre grenier avec une capacité de 100 tonnes,

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Monika LUGMAYER
Europe – Austria
Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Monika, with her husband and two sons, ran the family farm and discovered herself how painfully little societal and legal recognition exists for professional women farmers. Co-founder of AGB (a rural women's working group with over 45'000 members) and, since 1985, head of the Association of Women Farmers of Lower Austria, Monika works for a more just situation for women farmers. She contributed to an important reformed social law to benefit them, and Austrian farm women now act on their farms as self-employed agricultural entrepreneurs and benefit from health and old-age insurance policies. In 1996, she became president of the European Association of Rural Women within the CEA (European Commission for Agriculture) and represents them in the European Union. She continues to fight for better understanding of their problems in agriculture and society.

A strong advocate for women farmers.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Monika dirigeait la ferme familiale avec son mari et ses fils, quand elle prit conscience qu'une femme fermière professionnelle était mal reconnue du point de vue légal et social. Co-fondatrice d'AGB (un groupe de femmes rurales qui compte 45'000 membres), et depuis 1985 à la tête de l'Association des Femmes Paysannes de la Basse Autriche, Monika oeuvre afin d'améliorer la position des fermières. Elle a obtenu la légalisation d'une importante réforme sociale de leurs prestations. Ces femmes travaillent maintenant sur leurs terres comme agricultrices indépendantes, avec le même statut que leurs maris et ont droit à une assurance maladie et une pension de retraite. En 1996, Monika a été élue présidente de l'Association européenne des femmes rurales au sein de la Communauté européenne. Elle continue sa lutte afin de faire reconnaître la charge excessive de travail des femmes agricultrices.

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Tawa (Nena) Baltazar LUGONES

The Americas – Bolivia

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Tawa (Nena) runs a wildlife reserve, the Inti Wara Yassi Wildlife Refuge and Rescue Center, with almost no resources. Only her exceptional courage, unflagging devotion and steadfastness enable this young woman to work 16-17 hours a day, seven days a week, without days off. Nena works as a volunteer for Inti Wara Yassi Society, a local ecological and social NGO. She has shown that balanced sustainable development in rural areas can only be reached in close collaboration with nature. Nena stresses that "...when animals are hurt, we are hurt. When nature is hurt, we are hurt."

Queen of the forest.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Tawa (Nena), entretient une réserve naturelle (le refuge d'Inti Wara Yassi) avec des moyens dérisoires. Seul son courage exceptionnel, sa dévotion inlassable et sa ténacité permettent à cette jeune femme de travailler 16-17 heures par jour, sept jours sur sept, sans aucun jour de congé. Nena travaille comme volontaire pour la Société d'Inti Wara Yassi, une ONG locale écologique et sociale. Elle a démontré qu'un développement durable dans les zones rurales, n'est possible qu'avec une proche collaboration avec la nature. Nena dit que : « Quand des animaux sont blessés, nous sommes blessés. Quand la nature est blessée, c'est nous qui sommes blessés ».

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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Theresa MASINDE

Africa – Kenya

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Theresa, a grandmother with six children, is Chairperson of the Bukhaya West Joint Women's Groups (BWJW) and the tireless organizer of 60 women's groups fighting poverty, illiteracy and disease. As good trainers and mobilisers, BWJW groups are involved in micro enterprise activities, agro-based rural cottage industries, and in oil and food processing for household consumption. An original aspect of BWJW groups is that they have learned to incorporate youth initiatives in the women's groups, which play a major role in educating the community through drama, music and dance.

A tireless organiser.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Theresa, grand-mère avec six enfants et la Présidente des groupes associés de femmes de Bukhaya Ouest (BWJW) est l'infatigable organisatrice de 60 groupes de femmes luttant contre la pauvreté, l'analphabétisme et la maladie. Bons formateurs et mobilisateurs, ces groupes s'occupent d'activités liées aux micro-entreprises, dans des industries familiales rurales basées sur l'agriculture et la production d'huile et d'aliments destinés à la consommation des ménages. Un aspect original de ces groupes est qu'ils ont appris à incorporer des activités pour la jeunesse dans les groupes de femmes, activités qui jouent un rôle majeur d'éducation de la communauté par le théâtre, la musique et la danse.

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Espérance MUKANDEMEZO

Africa – Rwanda

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

After the genocide eliminated almost all of her immediate family members, Espérance gathered the dispersed widows in her region of Ntamara to bury the dead and to adopt the orphans, adopting 4 herself. Thanks to her courage, more than 30 women could come out of isolation and work together in the reconstruction of houses, the renewal of agriculture and artisanal work, and in development with a sense of solidarity. Becoming the local President of ASOFERWA and a representative of the Ministry of Family, this women effectively put in place, beyond the horrors of genocide, a project for the future which symbolizes her name 'Espérance' meaning "Hope".

Walking her talk and inspiring others.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Après le génocide qui élimina presque toute sa famille proche, Espérance a d'abord rassemblé les veuves dispersées de sa région de Ntamara pour qu'elles enterrent leurs morts et adoptent les orphelins, donnant elle-même l'exemple en adoptant quatre enfants. Grâce à son courage, plus de 30 femmes ont pu rompre leur isolement et travailler ensemble à la reconstruction de maisons, s'attacher à la relance de l'agriculture et de l'artisanat, dans un esprit de développement et de solidarité. Devenue présidente locale de l'ASOFERWA et représentante du Ministère de la Famille, cette femme a su, au-delà de l'horreur du génocide, mettre en place un projet d'avenir, que symbolise à lui seul son nom : Espérance.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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Virginia MUPANDUKI

Africa – Zimbabwe

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Virginia, a widow raising her eight children alone, is an energetic and innovative grass roots community leader who has been actively involved in mobilizing rural communities in the Mashonaland for many years. She has been most successful in empowering women in organizing gardening cooperatives and other income generating projects, in part as a response to high rates of suicide among women whose husbands were depleting family income. She is founder of the Zimbabwe Adult Learners Association, which has mobilized over 20'000 learners around the country.

Empowering women through garden cooperatives.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Virginia, une veuve qui élève seule ses huit enfants, est une leader énergique et innovatrice. Elle s'occupe depuis de nombreuses années de la mobilisation des communautés rurales de Mashonaland. Elle a obtenu un grand succès en encourageant les femmes à organiser des coopératives de jardinage et d'autres projets, sources de revenus. Ces coopératives constituent aussi une réponse à un taux très élevé de suicide chez les femmes dont les maris dilapident les revenus familiaux. Fondatrice de l'Association d'éducation des adultes du Zimbabwe, elle a mobilisé plus de 20'000 étudiants adultes dans tout le pays.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation "



Network of Rural Women of Uruguay

The Americas – Uruguay

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

The Network of Rural Women of Uruguay, founded in 1991, is an organization of groups and cooperatives of women who work and live in the countryside and who believe in expressing their opinions in direct interaction to initiate the changes that affect their daily lives. The network has organized a national meeting of dairy producing communities of the country, trained women in first aid and health care, offered technical training in business administration, helped to set up technical schools for young people in the area, initiated the first workshop for discussing the situation of rural women, and called the first national meeting for rural women and young entrepreneurs.

Influencing by organising.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Le réseau des femmes rurales d'Uruguay a été fondé en 1991. C'est une organisation de groupes et coopératives de femmes qui travaillent et vivent à la campagne, et qui croient qu'en exprimant leurs opinions en interaction directe, elles peuvent initier des changements qui affectent leur vie quotidienne. Le réseau a d'abord organisé une rencontre nationale des régions productrices de produits laitiers du pays. Puis il a enseigné aux femmes les premiers secours et les soins de la santé. Il a offert un enseignement technique dans l'administration d'une entreprise, aidé à créer des écoles techniques pour les jeunes gens de la région, initié la première formation pour la discussion de la situation de la femme rurale et la première rencontre nationale des femmes rurales et jeunes entrepreneurs.

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La Poza del Clavo Women's Group

The Americas – Mexico

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

A group of 15 women aged 24-60 from the state of Chiapas acquired, thanks to a grant, 43 heads of cattle for a cattle raising project. The resultant sale of meat, milk, and the commercialization of dairy products empowers them not only to improve their living standard and provide a more affordable source of food products for their community, but also enabled them to promptly repay the loan. On the basis of their success, they acquired a larger loan with which to expand their development project.

Entrepreneurship for survival.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Les 15 femmes âgées entre 24 et 60 ans de l'Etat du Chiapas au Mexique qui constituent ce groupe ont acquis 43 têtes de bétail grâce à une allocation pour un projet d'élevage de bétail. La vente de viande et de lait et la commercialisation de produits laitiers permettent au groupe non seulement d'améliorer son niveau de vie et de mettre à disposition de leur communauté une source de nourriture plus abordable, mais aussi de rembourser rapidement le prêt. Sur la base de leur succès, elles ont obtenu un prêt plus élevé, afin d'étendre leur projet.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Portia Nayve ROSSI

Asia – Philippines

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Portia has a highly original career. She chose rural life at the age of forty, after a highly successful academic career gave her the tools she now uses to improve life in rural areas. She runs a humane, organic demonstration animal farm. The project attracts 7000 visitors a year. Portia's day starts at 3:30 am, feeding her rabbits, and ends at 10 pm. She raises a very broad range of poultry and even owls for rat control. She has proved that a family farm on two hectares can lift the standard of living by ecologically intensive mixed organic farming.

Modeling organic and animal farming.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

La carrière de Portia est très originale, car elle a choisi la vie rurale à quarante ans, après une carrière académique couronnée de succès qui lui a donné les outils qu'elle utilise pour améliorer la vie des régions rurales. Elle dirige à titre d'exemple une ferme biologique où les animaux sont traités avec grand respect. Le projet attire 7000 visiteurs par an. La journée de Portia commence à 3h30 du matin pour nourrir les lapins et se termine à 22h. Elle possède un élevage de poulets et même de hiboux pour la chasse aux rats ! elle a prouvé qu'une ferme familiale de 0.8 hectares peut, de manière substantielle, relever le niveau de vie grâce à une agriculture écologique, biologique, intense et mixte.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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Thérèse SENGHOR
Africa – Senegal
Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Thérèse works in the field of traditional fisheries, fighting fish piracy by industrial fleets and supporting sustainable development. This outstanding woman, from the village of Joal, is a founding member of CNPS (Collectif National des Pêcheurs Artisans du Sénégal), the first nationwide organization of traditional fishermen in Senegal, and a tireless women organizer. Among her outstanding accomplishments are the commercial transactions she organized between women in Senegal and women importers in Togo that helped to boost regional trade. Despite constant travel in Senegal and the sub-region, this mother still manages to raise her four children by herself.

Combating fish piracy in coastal seas.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Thérèse travaille dans le domaine de la pêche traditionnelle, combat la piraterie menée par des flottes industrielles et soutient un développement durable. Cette femme exceptionnelle, originaire du village de Joal, est membre fondatrice du CNPS (Collectif National des Pêcheurs Artisans du Sénégal), la première organisation nationale de pêcheurs traditionnels au Sénégal ; c'est une femme infatigable qui a structuré le commerce du poisson. Parmi ses nombreuses réalisations, on peut mentionner les échanges commerciaux qu'elle a organisé entre des femmes du Sénégal et les femmes importatrices du Togo, stimulant ainsi le commerce régional. Bien qu'elle voyage constamment à travers le Sénégal et la sous-région, cette mère chef de famille réussit encore à élever seule quatre enfants.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Ewa SMUK
Europe - Poland
Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Ewa saw the need to bring change to the women and children of Grzybow, a village near Warsaw where she works with her husband in organic farming. Ewa and her friends started an environment/ecological centre called 'Ziarno' by converting an old barn into a meeting and training place where they hold concerts, exhibitions, poetry meetings, seminars, lectures, small festival performances, and pottery classes. Ewa's drive moved the project through and brought new life to the drab area. She introduced music and poetry to children and adults, encouraged vegetable growing and bread baking, and helped sell the products to raise money for poor women and for the development of their centre. Now they are empowered to develop a more sustainable and fuller lifestyle for themselves.

Reinvigorating village life.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Ewa a réalisé qu'il était important d'apporter de l'espoir et du changement aux femmes et aux enfants de Grzybow, un village près de Varsovie, où elle travaillait avec son mari et ses enfants. Avec des amis, elle a démarré un centre sur l'environnement et l'écologie, "Ziarno", en transformant une vieille étable en centre d'éducation et de réunions dans lequel des concerts, expositions, séminaires, conférences et cours de poterie ont été organisés. Elle a continué à faire avancer son projet et lui a donné un nouvel impact dans les quartiers défavorisés. Elle a proposé de la musique et de la poésie aux enfants et aux adultes, a encouragé la culture des légumes et la cuisson du pain, et a stimulé la vente des produits afin de faire rentrer l'argent nécessaire aux femmes pauvres. Elles ont maintenant les moyens de s'organiser un meilleur style de vie.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Ghulam S. SOLANGI

Asia - Pakistan

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Founder, catalyzer and president of the Marvi Rural Development Organization in the Sindh, Sughra has come a long way from the day she was forced at the age 15 to marry her cousin. Despite unrelenting male resistance, and even with women making fun of her, she went door to door to convince women of the need to organize so as to change their condition. She finally succeeded in convincing a small group of them. Since that humble beginning, the organization has initiated a series of economically and socially successful projects (credit and saving schemes, rose cultivation, health and family planning, etc.) and Sughra has become a respected, confident community leader.

A perfume of roses

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Fondatrice, catalyseur et présidente de l'Organisation pour le développement rural de Marvi au Sindh, Sughra a fait un long chemin depuis le jour où elle fut à l'âge de 15 ans obligée d'épouser son cousin. Malgré une résistance masculine sans pitié, et même contre les femmes qui se moquaient d'elle, elle allait de porte à porte afin de convaincre les femmes du besoin de changer leurs conditions. Elle a finalement réussi à convaincre un petit groupe de femmes. Depuis ses humbles débuts, l'organisation a initié une série de projets couronnés de succès économique et social (plans de crédit et d'épargne, culture de roses, planning familial et santé) et Sughra est devenue une dirigeante de la communauté, respectée et sûre d'elle.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Milena Ducara TAPIERO
The Americas – Colombia
Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Milena, a native Colombian woman of exceptional courage, determination and vision, has for many years worked hard to improve living conditions and human rights of indigenous women of Tolima. Her meetings to organize women in this patriarchal society started in an almost clandestine manner, rapidly reaching 10 communities. She joined the Tolima Regional Council, which enabled her to implement projects in animal farming, vegetable gardening, and handicraft making. After the murder of her husband, she fought to raise her family while continuing her activities. She has become the first indigenous woman community leader of her country.

Indomitable activist and women's leader.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Milena, une femme autochtone colombienne dotée d'un courage exceptionnel, de détermination et de vision a travaillé dur pendant de nombreuses années, afin d'améliorer les conditions de vie et le droit des femmes indigènes de Tolima. Ses rencontres pour organiser les femmes dans cette société patriarcale ont débuté d'une manière quasi clandestine, et ont rapidement atteint 10 communautés différentes. Elle est entrée dans le Conseil régional de Tolima, ce qui lui a permis de réaliser des projets concernant l'élevage des animaux, les jardins potagers et les travaux manuels. Après le meurtre de son mari, elle a dû combattre durement pour élever sa famille, pendant qu'elle continuait ses activités. Elle est devenue la première femme indigène dirigeante communautaire de son pays.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Sa-ing TAWAISINDH

Asia – Thailand

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Sa-ing has worked since the late 1980's as an environmental conservationist and activist for the betterment of lives of rural women in Thailand. A well known figure among NGOs, governmental agencies, and various communities, essentially for forest conservation, she organized people from 21 villages in the province of Kalasis to join efforts in tree planting, saving their community forest, and stopping the government from allocating the land for farm development. She was selected to attend the 4th UN World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, as a representative of rural women.

Saving the community forests.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Sa-ing a travaillé pendant une décennie comme activiste de la protection de l'environnement et de l'amélioration de la vie des femmes rurales en Thaïlande. Figure bien connue des ONG et des agences gouvernementales, en particulier dans la préservation des forêts, elle a organisé les habitants de 21 villages dans la province de Kalasis afin qu'ils unissent leurs forces pour la culture des arbres, pour sauver la forêt commune et empêcher le gouvernement d'allouer ce terrain pour le développement agricole. Elle fut élue représentante des femmes rurales pour participer à la conférence mondiale des femmes à Beijing en 1995.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Lois THOMPSON
Africa – Sierra Leone
Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

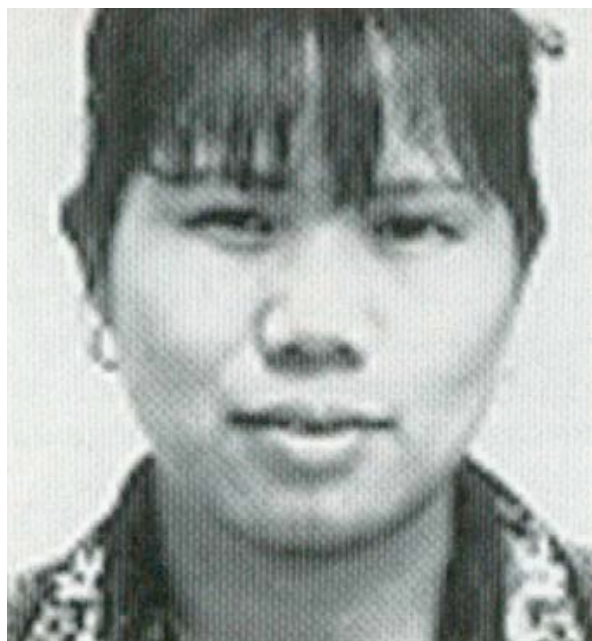
Lois has been involved in community development activities in her village for the past 30 years. When her village was invaded by rebels, she helped organize women to provide safety and humanitarian assistance for themselves and their children. She is founder and former President of the Young Women's Christian Association and leader of the Gloucester Development Association, which promotes adult literacy. She also supervises a day care center which provides hot meals for children from low income families, and helps to strengthen the relationship between villages and the market by pressuring local authorities to repair roads and water lines. Lois has also helped make pipe water available to women living in remote rural areas.

A beacon of hope in a war-torn area.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Lois a été impliquée dans les activités de développement de sa communauté durant les 30 dernières années. Dans son village occupé par des rebelles, Lois aida les femmes à s'organiser pour s'assurer ainsi qu'aux enfants, sécurité et assistance humanitaire. Elle est fondatrice et ancienne Présidente de l'Union Chrétienne des Jeunes Filles et dirigeante de l'Association de Développement de Gloucester qui encourage l'alphabétisation des adultes. Elle dirige également un centre d'entraide qui, la journée, fournit des repas chauds à des enfants de famille pauvres. Elle contribue à l'amélioration de l'infrastructure entre villages et marchés tout en exerçant une pression sur les autorités locales pour qu'elles remettent en état les routes et les conduites d'eau. Elle apporte également son aide aux femmes des régions rurales isolées pour obtenir de l'eau potable.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."

**Zhao XIAOJING****Asia – China**

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Zhao Xiaojing, now a famous pig farmer in Jiu Jiang Village, married and inherited a family debt. To pay back the debt and get out of poverty, she tried to grow watermelons but failed due to bad weather. She then tried to raise rabbits and chickens, but again she failed due to lack of experience. She then decided to try raising pigs. She bought 8 piglets and subscribed to magazines about farming and animal husbandry, educating herself on how to raise pigs and expanding her farm from 204 to 800 heads of pigs. She has not only improved her own livelihood, but also helped about 30 other fellow villagers to specialize in pig raising. She has made the Jiu Jiang village famous.

Creating prosperity through pigs.**WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©**

A son mariage, Zhao Xiaojing, célèbre par son élevage de porcs dans le village de Jiu Jiang, avait hérité d'une dette de famille. Pour rembourser cette dette et sortir de la pauvreté, Zhao essaya d'abord de cultiver des pastèques, mais ce fut un échec en raison des mauvaises conditions climatiques. Elle essaya alors d'élever des lapins, des poulets, mais échoua une fois encore à cause de son manque d'expérience. Nullement découragée, elle se lança dans l'élevage de porcs. Elle acheta 8 petits cochons et s'abonna à des revues sur l'agriculture et l'élevage, se formant sur le tas, elle augmenta son cheptel qui passa de 204 à 800 têtes. Non seulement, elle améliora son niveau de vie, mais elle aida environ 30 autres villageois à se spécialiser dans l'élevage de porcs, ce qui rendit célèbre son village de Jiu Jiang.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Zuo AIMING

Asia – China

Laureate 1998

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Zuo Aiming is now a famous chicken and duck breeder in Fei Xi County. After school, she worked in a duck roasting restaurant and slaughtered ducks. She came to know duck breeders and learned how to raise ducks. In 1993, she built her own duck farm and then raised 20'000 ducks. With money borrowed from the bank, she started her own small-scale hatchery, thus lowering her transportation costs and reducing the loss of ducklings through transport. She incubates 130'000 eggs annually and sells 110'000 ducklings. When she realized the success of the venture, she started to provide chicks for her neighbors. The survival rate of her ducklings and chicks is 98%. Zuo Aiming's farm has become famous and is now an experimentation station. Every year over 2000 visitors come to learn how to raise ducks and chickens in a more scientific way.

Raising chickens & ducks for China.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Zuo Aiming élève les fameux poulets et canards du comté de Fei Xi. Une fois terminée l'école, elle obtint un emploi dans un restaurant qui préparait des canards grillés et apprit à tuer les canards. Elle fit ainsi connaissance avec des éleveurs et apprit ce métier. En 1993, Zuo construisit sa propre ferme de volailles et l'année d'après, elle élevait 20'000 canards grâce à l'amélioration de ses connaissances. Elle créa sa propre petite couveuse mobile, afin de diminuer les frais de transport et la perte des canetons pendant le voyage. Avec cette couveuse, elle couve 130'000 oeufs chaque année et vend 110'000 canetons. Au fur et à mesure de son succès, elle commença à fournir des poulets à ses voisins. Le taux de survie de ses canetons et poulets est de 98%. Grâce à son initiative, de nombreuses personnes dans sa commune ont commencé à élever des canards et des poulets.

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Laureates from 1997



Saviben Debhabhai AAYER

Asia – India

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

When Saviben rose above misery, she pulled five villages up with her. Taking up SEWA-commissioned embroidery work, she shouldered the responsibility of motivating others to follow suit. The crafts cooperatives she organized function so successfully that, as of 1997, Saviben was providing steady work for 1000 artisans and guaranteeing production, quality, and schedule deadlines. Thanks to her leadership, at least 600 families in the region of Datrana have finally stopped wandering in search of odd jobs and earn a steady, decent living.

1000 wanderers become artisans.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Lorsqu'à 35 ans, Saviben réussit à s'élever au-dessus du seuil de la pauvreté, elle entraîna cinq villages dans son sillage. Acceptant le travail de broderie offert par SEWA, elle assumait la responsabilité de motiver d'autres à faire ce travail. Les coopératives artisanales que Saviben a organisées sont un tel succès, qu'aujourd'hui elle procure un travail régulier à 1000 artisans. Elle garantit la quantité et la qualité de la production ainsi que les délais de production. Grâce à son leadership, 600 familles dans la région de Datrana au Gujarat ont cessé leur vagabondage incessant à la recherche de travaux occasionnels et gagnent à présent un revenu décent et régulier.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Puriben Vaghabhai Kehu

AHIR

Asia – India

Laureate 1997

Human rights leader.

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Puriben successfully organized a SEWA cooperative where the traditional craft of embroidery has become an income-generating asset. She uses women's groups as a platform to start health care, education, and water projects in the region. Women from her region no longer have to break their backs digging water holes in the desert. In her campaign to usher in overall development, she has awakened political consciousness to such an extent that about 3000 rural women support her when she confronts the local authorities to fight for basic human rights and needs.

(Sharing one prize with Menaben H. Thakore, \$250 to each laureate).

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Puriben a organisé une coopérative dans le cadre de la SEWA où leur art traditionnel, la broderie, est devenu source de revenus. Puriben utilise les groupes de femmes comme un tremplin pour les soins de santé, l'éducation et des projets hydrauliques dans la région. Dans sa campagne pour un développement global, elle a su éveiller la conscience politique des femmes à tel point que lorsqu'elle doit confronter les autorités pour obtenir les besoins de base et la mise en oeuvre des droits de l'homme, elle a derrière elle 3000 femmes rurales pour la soutenir.

(Le prix est partagé avec Menaben H. Thakore, 250\$ pour chacune des lauréates).

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Kawkab Ibrahim MUTLAQ AL-GHNAMEEN

Asia - Jordan

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

In 1991, Kawkab started her first partnership project with 7 other women. Together, they leased land and planted Hava beans. The group's determination to bring about fundamental change in the quality of village life empowered and encouraged them to organize a rural market, which today has become a monthly event. Due to their success, they could lease more land and plant more vegetables. The number of village women joining them has drastically increased. With 165 active members, the training committees introduce food preservation and processing, literacy courses, sewing and knitting. The center has an important revolving loan fund and Kawkab's work concentrates on "Rural Women Empowerment Programs" which include setting up women study group on legal, social and marital rights within the islamic society.

Improving quality of village life.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

En 1991, Kawkab commença son premier projet avec 7 autres femmes. Elles louèrent de la terre et plantèrent des haricots Hava. La détermination de ce petit groupe à apporter une amélioration fondamentale dans la qualité de la vie villageoise, les encouragea à organiser un marché rural qui est devenu un événement mensuel. Grâce à leur succès, elles ont pu louer plus de terre et cultiver d'autres légumes. 165 membres actifs ont introduit la conservation des produits alimentaires et leur préparation industrielle, des cours d'alphabétisation, la couture et le tricot. Le centre dispose d'un important fond rotatif pour encourager les prêts. Les programmes incluent aussi des groupes d'étude sur le droit des femmes dans la société musulmane, la formation des femmes dans les techniques de gestion et l'octroi de crédits aux femmes nécessiteuses.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



ALONIOUNIOU

Asia – China

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Aloniouniou is a woman of the Yi minority from Sichuan Province. Fuel is a big problem in her area, and to find a solution and protect the environment, the local government encouraged people to grow trees, passing laws and regulations to protect the growers. Once Aloniouniou understood the importance of reforestation, she worked and managed to cover 155 hectares of barren hills with various kinds of bushes and trees. Aloniouniou is very socially conscious, and shares whatever she has with other villagers. With money earned through growing trees, she helped nine families living in poverty to pay their agricultural taxes. She acts as a model for many women in her area who grow trees to both protect the environment and generate income.

Growing trees for a healthy environment.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Aloniouniou est une femme de la minorité Yi, dans la province de Sichuan. Le combustible constitue un grave problème dans sa région. Pour le résoudre tout en protégeant l'environnement, le gouvernement local encouragea la reforestation et, en 1982, vota des lois pour protéger ceux qui plantaient des arbres. Lorsqu'elle comprit l'importance de la reforestation, Aloniouniou se mit au travail de façon acharnée et réussit à replanter 155 hectares de collines dénudées d'arbres et buissons divers. Elle partage tout ce qu'elle a avec les autres villageois. Avec l'argent gagné en plantant des arbres, elle a aidé neuf familles vivant dans la pauvreté à payer leurs taxes agricoles. Aujourd'hui, elle est un modèle pour nombre de femmes rurales de sa région, qui suivent son exemple et plantent des arbres, non seulement pour protéger l'environnement, mais aussi pour augmenter leurs revenus.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



**Emilia ALVES da SILVA
RODRIGUES**

The Americas - Brazil

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Emilia lives in the Tocantins State where agricultural cultivation is done on burned and reclaimed lands. Very soon, the lands were sold to business men from the South and families were threatened and removed. At the end of 1986, the land was reclaimed and 27 families could finally settle again. During all time, Emilia helped women in their struggle for greater equality. In 1992, she created the "Regional Association of Rural Women of Bico do Papagaio" (22 groups with 260 members), of which she is a general coordinator. Today, she is devoting her time in helping other women to develop their autonomy. A self-educated woman, Emilia passes on her knowledge and creativity to others to enhance overall well-being, friendship and solidarity.

Promoting rural knowledge and culture.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Emilia vit dans l'Etat du Tocantins où l'on pratique la culture sur brûlis sur des terres défrichées. Très vite, la région est atteinte du « grilagem » : les terres non défrichées sont vendues à des hommes d'affaires du Sud et les familles sont menacées puis expulsées. Finalement, une expropriation eut lieu fin 1986 et 27 familles purent se réinstaller. Pendant toute cette période, Emilia a très activement soutenu les femmes dans leur lutte pour plus d'égalité. En 1992, elle fonde « l'Association régionale des femmes travailleuses rurales du Bico do Papagaio » qui compte aujourd'hui 22 groupes et 260 membres. Elle en est la trésorière et la coordinatrice générale. Autodidacte, Emilia passe son temps à aider les femmes à se former et se développer.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



**Salvadorian Association for
Rural Health, ASAPROSAR
The Americas – El Salvador**
Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

In 1996, in Santa Ana, ASAPROSAR, a Salvadorian association for rural health care, broke the monopoly of credit and know-how by training 10 women in ecologically friendly farming techniques. By 1997, braving the opposition of husbands and fathers, they are marketing their products and earn respect and income. 25 year old Imelda, for example, became so successful in cucumber farming that her husband joined her business venture; 19 year old Yareli convinced her family to choose chilies over chemicals as a cheaper insecticide. Knowledge is being passed on, multiplying hope for a better future.

Rural women for a healthy future.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

En 1996, à Santa Ana, ASAPROSAR, une association salvadorienne pour la santé en milieu rural, brisa le monopole des hommes sur le crédit et le savoir-faire en formant 10 femmes dans le domaine de techniques agricoles respectueuses de l'environnement. Depuis 1997, bravant l'opposition de leurs pères et de leurs maris, les femmes commercialisent leurs produits et s'attirent le respect des hommes tout en augmentant leurs revenus. Ainsi, Imelda, 25 ans, eut tellement de succès dans la culture des concombres que son mari est venu travailler avec elle. Yareli, 19 ans, réussit à convaincre sa famille d'utiliser le piment rouge (bon marché) comme insecticide plutôt que des produits chimiques chers. La connaissance fait tache d'encre, nourrissant l'espoir d'un avenir meilleur.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



**Bamako Initiative Women's
Group**

Africa – Kenya

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

The Bamako Initiative Women's Group, formed in 1996, includes 15 community health workers. The group focuses on food security, health, nutrition, and water sanitation, and works by taking health care to rural people in their homes (often by bicycle). Following the Ministry of Health guidelines, community health workers are trained and supplied with medicines. They serve over 12'000 people and are widely known as "village doctors". Their policy is to sell drugs at a minimum profit. The group has incorporated many traditional birth attendants, all women, as well. The group has brought safer and more effective health services to people, drastically reducing the risk of maternal complications and mortality. They have also increased prevention of malaria, scabies and diarrhea, fought severe malnutrition of children, and promoted overall well-being.

Village doctors on bicycles.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Ce groupe, formé en 1996, inclut une quinzaine d'agents de santé communautaires. Le groupe est actif dans les domaines de la sécurité alimentaire, la santé, la nutrition et l'hygiène. Il atteint ses buts en amenant les soins de santé aux portes des gens (souvent en bicyclette). Suivant les directives du Ministère de la Santé, des agents de santé communautaires sont formés et un stock de médicaments est mis à leur disposition pour soigner plus de 12'000 habitants. Leur politique est de vendre les médicaments avec un profit minimum. Récemment, le groupe s'est adjoint le concours de 38 sages-femmes traditionnelles. Il peut désormais offrir des soins plus sûrs et plus efficaces et a donc fortement réduit le risque de mortalité maternelle et les complications à la naissance. Il a augmenté la prévention contre la malaria, la gale et la diarrhée, combat la malnutrition sévère des enfants et assure le bien-être des gens.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."

**Fatima BEN YUCEF****Africa – Algeria**

Laureate 1997

Where there's a will, there's a way.**WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©**

Issue d'une famille de Bédouins du Sud ouest algérien, Fatima (40) fut mariée et divorcée très jeune. Elle dut se battre avec sa famille pour pouvoir exercer un métier hors de la maison. Sa personnalité hors du commun s'est alors révélée, car elle n'hésita pas à porter plainte contre son frère qui lui déniait le droit de travailler à l'extérieur. Elle parvint ainsi à ses fins. Nourrir sa famille n'était pas suffisant : elle décida de créer en août 1990, avec le concours de 70 autres personnes, l'association Hassiba Ben Bouali, qui permettrait aux jeunes filles défavorisées d'avoir un métier et d'être capables de gagner leur vie. Fatima a mis toute son énergie et ses ressources dans l'Association qui a formé, en moins de deux ans, plus d'une centaine de jeunes filles n'ayant jamais fréquenté l'école ou jouissant d'un niveau scolaire très modeste.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
 "En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."

**Butthri Women's Organisation****Asia - Pakistan**

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

In the village of Butthri, BWO challenged poverty by leading women to collectively mobilize their resources, enlist the help of development agents and take decisions – a far cry from traditional patriarchy. They turned the extinct handicraft “jisti” into a business, initiated saving schemes, and members have secured loans to buy livestock enhancing their nutritional assets. Essential to their community efforts are solidarity, partnership and the advancement of all people. Community members are visibly benefiting from improved health practices and modern facilities. BWO plays an integral role in defining and prioritizing village health and sanitation needs. Through their efforts, the village has developed a new approach to health and sanitation issues, particularly sensitive to the participation of women.

Promoting health care.**WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©**

Dans le village de Butthri, BWO lança un défi à la pauvreté en montrant aux femmes comment mobiliser collectivement leurs ressources, engager l'aide d'agents de développement communautaire et prendre des décisions. Elles transformèrent un artisanat disparu, le « jisti », en source de revenu et initièrent des systèmes d'épargne. Certains membres obtinrent des prêts pour acheter du bétail, améliorant leur situation alimentaire. Leur démarche promeut la solidarité, le partenariat et l'avancement de tous. Les membres de la communauté profitent visiblement des pratiques améliorées dans le domaine de la santé et de locaux plus modernes. BWO joue un rôle primordial pour répondre aux besoins de santé et d'hygiène. Grâce à leurs efforts, le village a une nouvelle approche en ce qui concerne la santé et l'hygiène, domaines particulièrement sensibles aux femmes.

*"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."**"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."*

**Gladys CACERAS****The Americas - Nicaragua**

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Gladys dedicated her young years to teaching to rural women. After a successful career in the field of education, she returned to her hometown where she exclusively devotes her energy and knowledge to advancing the rural population. She has welfare kitchens and care centers in the district of Madriz, where the hungry can eat and war-battered children be sheltered. In 1990, Gladys founded an institute in Somoto to negotiate housing constructions and finance the education of children. Promoting kitchen gardens and livestock rearing, she also offers tools and training in sustainable organic farming to enhance farmers' self-sufficiency. She also makes health care accessible by specializing in natural medicine and trains and encourages midwives to help rural women during pregnancies.

A tireless leader.**WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©**

Gladys dédia ses jeunes années à l'éducation des femmes rurales. Après une carrière réussie dans l'enseignement, elle est retournée dans sa ville natale où elle consacre son savoir et son énergie exclusivement à l'avancement des populations rurales. Elle a mis sur pied des cuisines populaires et des centres de soins dans le district de Madridz, où ceux qui ont faim peuvent manger et les enfants victimes de la guerre être soignés. En 1990, Gladys fonda à Somoto un institut pour négocier la construction de maisons et financer l'éducation des enfants. Elle encourage les jardins maraîchers et l'élevage et offre aussi des outils et une formation dans le domaine de l'agriculture biologique en vue d'encourager l'auto-suffisance des paysans. Elle rend aussi les soins de santé plus accessibles en se spécialisant dans les médecines naturelles, forme et soutient les sages-femmes qui exercent en milieu rural.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."**"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."**



Maria Elena CRISOSTOMO de PEREZ

The Americas - Guatemala

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Maria Elena lives in Aldée Tituque, Olopa Chiquimula. For 20 years, Maria Elena organizes community groups: the promotion and development of training programs using a portable pharmacy for animal husbandry and leading a credit committee of the communal bank. 64 rural women actively participate in these groups and have succeeded in installing 150 stoves, constructing brick lodging and obtaining agricultural credits. Maria Elena also promotes coffee and basic seeds production, and participates in the promotion and production Nixtamal mills.

Barefoot pharmacy.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Maria Elena vit dans l'Aldée de Tituque, Olopa Chiquimula. Depuis vingt elle travaille à organiser des groupements communautaires. Un exemple : la promotion et le développement de programmes de soins vétérinaires. En utilisant des pharmacies portables. Elle dirige aussi le comité de crédit de la banque communale régionale. 64 femmes participent activement à ces groupes et ont réussi à installer 150 fourneaux, à construire des logements en brique et à obtenir des crédits agricoles. Maria Elena vulgarise aussi la production de café, de graines diverses et la production de moulins Nixtamal.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Fang XIULAN

Asia – China

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Fang Xiulan started a farm machinery repair shop in 1982. With money saved, she built a chicken farm in 1986. Her number of chickens increased rapidly, and she expanded her farm to include pigs and ducks; by 1996, her assets amounted to one million yuan (126'000\$) and the annual output value reached two million, including a net profit of 100'000 yuan (12'600\$). To help neighbors and the handicapped get out of poverty, she initiated the Ecological Breeding Cooperative, which raised one million yuan (126'000\$) from the local government and individual farmers. As of 1997, the cooperative had 5000 chickens and 13.3 hectares of fish ponds. Fang Xiulan also runs training courses to pass on her skills and donates chickens to her village and nine other villages.

Raising chickens to ease poverty.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

En 1982, Fang démarra un magasin de réparation de machines agricoles. Avec ses économies, elle monta un élevage de poulets qui connut un grand succès. Le nombre de poulets grandit très rapidement et elle put agrandir sa ferme pour inclure des canards et des porcs. En 1996, ses actifs se montaient à 1 million de yuans (125\$), la valeur annuelle de la production à deux millions, incluant un bénéfice net de 100'000 yuans (12.50\$). Pour aider ses voisins et des handicapés à sortir de la pauvreté, elle initia une coopérative d'élevage écologique qui réussit à trouver un million de yuans (125\$) auprès des paysans et du gouvernement local. En 1997, cette coopérative élève 5000 poules et exploite 13,3 hectares d'étang pour l'élevage de poissons, Fang organise aussi des cours de formation et fait don de poules pour aider son village ainsi que neuf autres.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."

**Jabeda Sattar KHAN****Asia – Bangladesh**

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Jabeda has been going from village to village since the 1970s, tirelessly mobilizing rural, landless women. Her conviction has drawn half a million of these women into an organization that operates over 80% of Bangladesh. Thanks to Jabeda, the Bangladesh Krishok Federation Land Settlement programs can count on heavy women's participation, which has led them to great success: by 1997 over 250'000 landless peasants were moving from starvation to self-sufficiency through access to fallow land. The total land occupied by the Bangladesh Krishok Federation at the time covered more than 100'000 acres where rehabilitated farmers cultivate their crops. The farmers prove that empowerment is an unavoidable stage in rural development.

Half a million women on the move.**WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©**

Depuis deux décennies, Jabeda se déplace de village en village pour mobiliser les paysannes sans terre. Sa conviction a attiré un demi million de paysans dans une organisation qui opère dans 80% du Bangladesh. Grâce à elle, l'organisation Bangladesh Krishok Federation Land Settlement Programs (qui installe les paysans sans terre sur des terres non cultivées de propriétaires absents) peut compter sur une forte participation féminine, garante de leur succès. 250'000 paysannes et paysans sans terre ont pu passer de la famine à l'autosuffisance grâce à leur accès à des terres en friche. Aujourd'hui, la Fédération Krishok occupe 40'000 hectares. Les paysannes et les paysans sachant s'organiser montrent que la maîtrise des conditions de sa vie constitue une étape indispensable du développement rural.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."

**Shantaben Lakhmanbhai****KOLI****Asia – India**

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Salt farmers of Surender-Nagar toil from dawn till dusk in the salt pans while their children wander aimlessly under the desert sun. Shantaben, a salt farmer and mother to four daughters and a son, wanted to protect them from the desert salt pans and give them an education. She joined SEWA for reasons of protection, medical care, and empowerment. When the government opposed SEWA's project to open a kindergarten, Shantaben confronted them. Eventually, she succeeded in defending the rights of children and founded a SEWA kindergarten where salt farmers' children can receive basic care, protection, and nutrition.

Salt farmer protects children.**WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©**

Les « fermiers de sel » de Surender-Nagar travaillent comme des forcenés du lever au coucher du soleil dans des cuvettes naturelles pleines de sel, pendant que leurs enfants se promènent sans but sous le soleil brûlant du désert. Shantaben a quatre filles et un fils et son espoir est de leur donner à tous une scolarité complète. Elle se joignit à SEWA pour des raisons de protection, de soins médicaux et pour apprendre à mieux maîtriser sa vie. Quand les autorités locales s'opposèrent au projet de jardin d'enfants de la SEWA, Shantaben releva le défi. Elle réussit à défendre les droits des enfants et à créer son jardin où les enfants des « fermiers de sel » reçoivent un minimum de soins, de protection et de nutrition.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Luo XIFEN
Asia – China
Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Luo Xifen, a woman of the Buyi minority, is Director of the Women's Federation of Majiang County. In 1993, she discovered that people loved her homemade thick pepper sauce and decided to set up, with her friends, a thick pepper sauce processing plant. Peasants were able to earn some income by selling their peppers to the factory and by 1996, hundreds of households were earning at least 650 yuan (78\$) from this practice. The factory has breathed life back into the village – the total output reached half a million yuan (63'000\$) in 1996. Luo Xifen paid back all her loans, and used 30'000 yuan to set up a scholarship program for the poor in the county. She has expanded her factory, and diversified the economy of the village, lifting people out of poverty.

A peppered path to prosperity.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Luo, de la minorité Buyi est responsable de la Fédération des femmes dans la région du Maijiang. En 1993, en découvrant que les habitants de son voisinage adoraient son épaisse sauce aux poivrons, elle mit sur pied une unité de production de cette sauce. Les paysans pouvaient gagner un revenu supplémentaire en vendant des poivrons à l'entreprise et en 1996, des centaines de familles en retiraient un revenu de 650 yuans (78\$). L'entreprise a ramené la vie au canton. Un profit d'un demi-million de yuans (63'000\$) permit à Luo de rembourser un crédit de 350'000 yuans qu'elle devait à la banque locale et de créer, avec 30'000 yuans un programme de bourses pour les enfants pauvres du canton. Avec un nouveau crédit du gouvernement local, elle décida d'agrandir son usine.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Mariam MAIGA
Africa – Burkina Faso
Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Mariam, the mother of four girls, coordinated the women's section within the well-known NAAM Movement (a nation-wide grassroots federation of 2000 village groups) for many years. In 1996, she set up her own association, "ZOODO", to promote women's issues and focus on rural women and their needs. Her goals: multiplication of rural women's training centers for family planning, ending female circumcision, and fighting AIDS and other diseases. Mariam also teaches soap production, batik and weaving to help rural women become more financially independent. Through ZOODO, she promotes nutrition and health education including traditional medicine, as well as solar power-based methods for fruit and vegetable conservation and water heating.

An exceptional rural women's leader.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Mère de quatre filles, Mariam fut coordinatrice des activités du mouvement NAAM (une fédération de 2000 groupements villageois). En 1996, elle crée sa propre association ZOODO, pour promouvoir la condition féminine et en particulier les besoins des femmes rurales. Son but : multiplier les centres de formation de planning familial en milieu rural, la lutte contre l'excision féminine, le sida et les autres maladies. Elle encourage également la production artisanale de savon, le batik et le tissage pour aider les femmes rurales à devenir financièrement plus indépendantes. Avec ZOODO, elle vulgarise l'éducation sanitaire et nutritionnelle, y compris la médecine traditionnelle et l'utilisation de méthodes de cuisson et de conservation basées sur l'énergie solaire.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Cecilia MAKOTA
Africa – Zambia
Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Cecilia, a school-teacher and a farmer, founded the *Zambian Women in Agriculture* organization numbering over 5'000 members. She took on this initiative after attending the first International Conference on Women in Agriculture (held in Australia) in 1994. In *Zambian society*, women farmers are voiceless and their contributions to household and national food security go unrecognized. In 1996, Cecilia launched the first "World Rural Women's Day" event, a parade, encouraging over 100 women farmers to join her. Because they now have their own organizational structure, rural women can directly address the Minister of Agriculture. Cecilia also helps widows and divorced women claim back their land, and as of 1997 was working on introducing a new concept of organic farming in Zambia.

Succeeding through good organisation.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Cecilia, enseignante et paysanne, a fondé l'organisation « Femmes zambiennes dans l'agriculture » qui compte 5000 membres. Elle prit cette initiative après avoir participé en 1994, en Australie, à la première conférence internationale sur « les femmes dans l'agriculture ». Dans la société zambienne, les paysannes sont invisibles et leurs contributions à la sécurité alimentaire de la famille et de la nation ne sont pas reconnues. En 1996, elle organisa la première « Journée mondiale de la femme rurale » avec une parade de trois heures à travers les rues de Lusaka, en compagnie de 100 dirigeantes paysannes de tout le pays. Et parce qu'elles ont leur propre structure, ces femmes rurales peuvent s'adresser directement au Ministère de l'agriculture. Cecilia aide aussi les femmes divorcées et les veuves dépossédées à réclamer leurs terres, Elle s'apprête d'ailleurs à introduire un nouveau concept d'agriculture biologique.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Miao CHANGLIAN

Asia – China

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Miao Changlian is the director of the Women's Federation of Enrong Village. She has also applied her considerable talent to growing rice. In 1996, she was able to produce two tons of hybrid rice seeds on her 0.6 acre plot of land and sold the harvest for an income of 20'000 yuan (US \$2400). She always helps others and offers loans to villagers to improve their living standard and move toward self-sufficiency. One such loan enabled a villager to set up a small processing factory to teach women practical skills. Miao Changlian is also an advisor to over 20 households, of which 12 had escaped poverty by 1997.

From rice growing to creative resourcefulness.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Miao est responsable de la Fédération des femmes du village d'Enrong dans la province de Jiangxi. En plus d'être une superbe organisatrice, elle est une excellente productrice de riz. En 1996, Miao réussit à produire deux tonnes de riz hybride sur 0.6 hectare de terre et vendit la récolte pour 20'000 yuans (2400\$). Elle est une personne qui aide toujours les autres et offre elle-même des crédits aux villageois pour les aider à améliorer leur niveau de vie et progresser vers l'autosuffisance. Ainsi, en 1992, aidée par un crédit de Miao, Lais mit sur pied une petite fabrique de transformation de produits en vue d'enseigner des techniques pratiques à des femmes. Miao est aussi la conseillère d'une vingtaine de ménages dont 12 ont échappé à la pauvreté.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Ema MIOCINOVIC
Europe – Rep. Croatia
 Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Ema, born into a rural worker's family, established in 1978 a peace initiative "Screm do Mira" (With heart to Peace). She paints and also writes on holistic agriculture and tales for children for a better future. The idea "screm do Mira" (supported by the net of Peace), which originated during the war in 1990, is meant to spread peace in everyone's heart. Ema started establishing the "Women's Group of Samobor" which is an expression of the need for selfless dedication to the universal sharing of peace and love and preserving everyone's dignity, in particular that of children. In 1993, she organized the first international assembly of Women in Samobor where the International Peace Initiative "Screm do Mira" was launched, encouraging women to put their heads together and brings peace on earth through the language of the heart.

Dedicates her life to peacemaking.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Ema, née dans une famille de travailleurs ruraux, créa en 1978 une initiative pour la paix « Screm do Mira » (avec le cœur vers la Paix). Elle est peintre et écrit sur l'agriculture holistique ainsi que des histoires pour un meilleur avenir des enfants. l'idée « Screm do Mira » (soutenue par Net of Peace) s'est développés pendant la guerre de 1990 et son but est de propager la Paix dans le cœur de chacun. Ema a créé et organisé le « Groupe des femmes de Samobor », manifestation d'un engagement personnel et désintéressé, d'un partage universel de la Paix et de l'Amour et de la préservation de la dignité de chacun, particulièrement des enfants. En 1993, Ema organisa la première Assemblée Internationale des Femmes de Samobor au cours de laquelle l'Initiative Internationale pour la Paix « Screm do Mira » a été lancée et encouragea les femmes à se réunir afin de créer la Paix sur la terre avec le langage du cœur.

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Oshitukafitu Women's Group

Africa – Namibia

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

The Oshitukafitu Group uses domestic skills to power projects such as the "Keep Namibia Clean" campaign, in which 100 members sewed textile shopping bags to make people in their region and the rest of Namibia aware of the dangers of plastic bags, which are hazardous to livestock and the environment. These rural women have also upgraded the standard of health by also introducing vegetables to a predominantly meat-eating society. They organize nutrition and cooking classes and prepare home-produced foods for sale in markets. Armed only with its household arts of sewing, gardening, and cooking, this group has been creating jobs that generate not only consumer income but savings as well.

Rural poor helping to educate society.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Le groupe Oshitukafitu utilise le savoir domestique pour soutenir la campagne « Gardez la Namibie propre », pendant laquelle une centaine de membres cousent des sacs à commissions en toile afin de sensibiliser les gens de la région au danger des sacs en plastique, non seulement pour l'environnement, mais également pour le bétail qui les ingère. Ces femmes rurales ont aussi amélioré le niveau de santé en introduisant les légumes au menu d'une nation ayant un régime très carné. Elles organisent des classes de nutrition et de cuisine et vendent au marché des produits alimentaires préparés à domicile. Armé de ses seules compétences de couture, ce groupe a créé des emplois qui produisent, non seulement des revenus, mais aussi des économies.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Farzana PANWHAR

Asia - Pakistan

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Farzana changed traditional life patterns when she hired 10-15 women on her farm and undertook a comparative study of work performed by men and women. Originally a bio-chemist, she reached the conclusion that women achieve better results when it comes to mowing grass for mulch, collecting leaves, twigs, barks, etc. This experiment led to the birth of "Sindh Rural Women's Uplift Group" which employs and pays women the same salaries as men. The full time employment of these women in sustainable agriculture changed the life pattern of families and traditions. At first, men would take away the salaries of women, but gradually women asserted and empowered themselves and now talk about sending their children to school – a revolution in this region. The attitude of men at home and in relation to women changed for the better.

Promoting sustainable agriculture.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Farzana changea les coutumes traditionnelles quand elle embaucha 10-15 femmes sur sa ferme et compara le travail des femmes et des hommes. Biochimiste de formation, elle aboutit à la conclusion que les femmes ont de meilleurs résultats dans certains domaines comme la récolte de l'herbe pour le paillis, la récolte de feuilles et d'écorces, etc. Cette expérience conduisit à la création du « Groupe des femmes rurales du Sindh pour l'amélioration de leur condition », qui emploie des femmes et leur paie les mêmes salaires qu'aux hommes. Les relations dans les familles et les schémas traditionnels ont été durablement changés. Au début, les hommes confisquaient les salaires, mais les femmes s'affirmèrent et parlent maintenant d'envoyer leurs enfants à l'école – une révolution dans cette région. L'attitude des hommes à l'égard des femmes s'est considérablement améliorée.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Amara PEERIS
Asia – Sri Lanka
 Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Amara, honorary president of the Sarvodaya Women's Movement (SWM), dedicates her volunteer work to the development of poor women and her time to designing activities to eradicate poverty. SWM, founded in 1987, targets the development of women in the disadvantaged rural and urban sectors and assists them in acquiring knowledge and skills through capacity-building. As part of the movement, thousands of trained young women render volunteer services in fields such as maternal and child care, family life, education in home economics, community savings and credit. They also promote women's and children's rights.

Ending rural women's poverty.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Amara, présidente honoraire du «Mouvement des Femmes du Sarvodaya» (SWM) consacre tout son travail volontaire au développement des femmes pauvres du milieu rural et urbain par la création d'activités visant l'éradication de la pauvreté dans le mouvement qu'elle dirige. Le SWM est une ONG fondée en 1987 qui aide avant tout à acquérir connaissances et compétences. Aujourd'hui, des milliers de jeunes femmes formées font du volontariat dans des domaines aussi divers que la santé maternelle et infantile, la vie familiale et les tâches domestiques, l'épargne, le crédit et la promotion des droits des femmes et des enfants. Tout le processus de développement est centré sur la famille et la communauté et inclut toutes les générations sans discrimination aucune.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
 "En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Mary PEKOKEH
Africa – Cameroon
Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Mary was able to open an account with the credit union with income generated through her farming activities, and acquired a corn mill in 1995. This self-help project developed under her leadership, becoming the only corn mill serving almost 3'000 people. Later, the group that Mary set up acquired more land, further developed the corn mill project, and set up a supervisory committee. Encouraged by her success, other groups have sprung up in the area and actively engage in farming for profit. Mary's effort, intelligence, and hard work have turned a neglected village into a small but self-sufficient town.

Helping a village become a small town.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Grâce aux revenus générés par ses activités agricoles, Mary put ouvrir un compte à la caisse d'épargne locale et acheta un moulin à céréales en 1995. Cette initiative profita à ses voisins et aux villages avoisinants, car c'était le seul moulin dans une région de 3000 habitants. Plus tard, le groupe qu'elle avait organisé acquit du terrain agricole très fertile, développa le projet de moulin et mit sur pied un comité de supervision. Encouragés par le succès de son groupe, trois autres groupements similaires sont nés dans la région et se sont activement engagés dans le développement d'activités agricoles. Les efforts, l'intelligence et le travail inlassable de Mary ont transformé un village négligé en une bourgade autosuffisante.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Ms. Rani
Asia – India
Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Rani left school at thirteen due to poverty and her gender but joined a handicrafts center in her village, which later led to the emergence of the Self Help Association for Rural Education and Employment (SHARE). Although there was much opposition to her work with women, her family happily accepted her additional income. Married at 15 to an unemployed man, her family tensions increased with her husband's inferiority. Rani's persistence, independence, and creativity caused her to be elected the first woman Secretary of SHARE in 1995. Committed to the future, Rani says, "My goal is still far reaching... but first and foremost, I will work to send my children to school..."

Persistence pays off.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

La pauvreté et le fait d'être une femme sont les raisons principales pour lesquelles Rani dut quitter l'école à 13 ans. Au lieu de poursuivre ces études, elle un centre artisanal dans son village au Tamil Nadu, à partir duquel l'organisation SHARE (acronyme anglais pour Association d'entraide pour l'éducation et l'emploi rural) fut créée. Bien qu'il y eut chez elle beaucoup d'opposition à l'idée qu'elle travaille avec les femmes, sa famille fut heureuse d'accepter le revenu supplémentaire. A l'âge de 15 ans, ses parents la marièrent à un chômeur. Les tensions familiales augmentèrent, car son mari se sentait inférieur. Grâce à sa persévérance, à son indépendance et à sa créativité, elle fut élue la première femme secrétaire de SHARE en 1995. « Mon but est encore loin » dit-elle, « mais avant tout, je veux envoyer mes enfants à l'école ».

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."

**Manchaba Kheraji RATHOD****Asia – India**

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Manchaba, married at 15 to a 60-year old, perpetually unemployed husband, courageously and resourcefully formed an embroidery group and turned her household skill into an income-generating activity. Tirelessly motivating others to do likewise, by 1997 she had organized no fewer than 20 workshops, grouping 500 women together. Conservative tradition forbids the women to work outside the home, so Manchaba has brought a lucrative activity inside their walls so they can support their families.

Needling women out of hunger.**WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©**

Jeune épouse de 15 ans, mariée à un homme de 60 ans perpétuellement sans emploi, Manchaba, une jeune femme pleine de ressources et surtout de courage, mit sur pied un groupe de femmes se spécialisant dans la broderie, transformant une activité qu'elle pratiquait à domicile en source de revenus pour elle et d'autres. Motivant inlassablement les femmes, elle a depuis organisé pas moins de 20 ateliers similaires regroupant 500 femmes dans le district de Kutch. Une tradition fort conservatrice interdisant aux femmes de cette région de travailler en dehors de la maison, la grande réussite de Manchaba est d'avoir su apporter une activité productrice de revenus au sein même des familles.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



RECIF/NGO
Africa – Burkina Faso
Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Founded in 1991, this network counts over 100'000 members from 15 different provinces and works to advance the status of women. As almost 90% of the population are farmers, RECIF/NGO aims at uplifting rural women. The RECIF/NGO network has organized public discussions and debates on taboo issues such as conditions of women, violations against children, and victims of early pregnancies (who are excluded from schooling). Also, thanks to the RECIF/NGO's financial and technical aid, rural women can transform their work efforts, such as peanut oil production or drying mangos, into income-generating enterprises.

Using information for empowerment.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Fondé en 1991, le réseau RECIF oeuvre pour l'avancement de la condition féminine et compte près de 100'000 membres dans 15 provinces. Partant de la constatation que 90% de la population totale sont des paysans, l'ONG RECIF vise à promouvoir le statut des femmes rurales. RECIF a organisé des discussions et des débats publics sur des sujets considérés comme tabous comme la condition des femmes, les violations des droits des enfants et les expulsions des adolescentes enceintes de l'école. Grâce à l'aide financière et technique de cette ONG, les femmes rurales peuvent transformer des activités telles que la production d'huile d'arachide et le séchage des fruits en activités économiques génératrices de revenus.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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**Rosario Ladies ANDRADES DE
QUISPE**

The Americas - Argentina

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Rosario from the Puna Jujena was born into a mining family and kept lamas till the age of ten. She then worked in the Puna district for five years as a community leader in favour of women and, after organizing collaboration among 208 artisans and herdswomen, she founded the "women's association of Abra Pampa". In addition, she raises her seven children and promotes social, agricultural and health programs for rural women. She fights for equal opportunities for women and for the establishment of cooperatives for small producers.

From lama herdswoman to community leader.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Rosario qui habite la Puna Jujena est issue d'une famille de mineurs et jusqu'à dix ans, elle a été bergère de lamas. Elle a travaillé comme animatrice communautaire pour les femmes de la Puna pendant cinq ans. Après avoir organisé la collaboration de 208 artisans et bergères, elle a fondé « l'Association des femmes de l'Abra Pampa ». non seulement elle élève ses sept enfants, mais elle encourage des programmes sociaux, agricoles et de santé pour les femmes. Elle se bat pour l'égalité de chances des femmes et pour l'organisation de coopératives de petits producteurs.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



**Rural Women Welfare
Organization-RWWO
Asia - Pakistan**
Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Imamzai is founder/president of RWWO, started in 1990. Going from door to door, she pulled uneducated, down-trodden women of Sanghar out of the fortress of feudalism. 500 women have mobilized their efforts into projects covering 50 villages. Under the slogan "Conserve nature – Share knowledge", RWWO has introduced health facilities, family planning and pollution control, while generating political consciousness and human rights awareness. Farmers have increased their incomes from goat rearing, dairy products, farming and improved cultivation technologies. This community has also started to build a new village. Villagers and school children have planted 10 acres with 100 trees and RWWO's success is heralding profound social changes. Equality has replaced the unnecessary male domination and wife beating has been eradicated from the community.

Bringing development to the people.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Imamzai est la fondatrice du RWWO qui a démarré en 1990. Par le porte-à-porte, elle arracha les femmes sans éducation et opprimées de Sanghar à la forteresse de la féodalité. 500 femmes, dans 50 villages ont uni leurs efforts dans différents projets. Sous le slogan « Conservez la nature – Partagez le savoir » RWWO a introduit des services dans le domaine de la santé, du planning familial et du contrôle de la pollution, tout en suscitant une conscience politique et une prise de conscience des droits de l'homme et de la femme. Les paysans ont augmenté leurs revenus grâce à l'élevage des chèvres, des produits laitiers et des technologies améliorées dans les cultures. Les villageois et les enfants des écoles ont replanté 1500 arbres sur 4 ha. Plus globalement, RWWO annonce des changements sociaux. L'égalité a remplacé la domination masculine et l'habitude de battre les femmes a disparu de la communauté.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Najwa SHA'SHA'A

Asia - Jordan

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Najwa turned the family farm into a success story. Through hard work and patience, she proved to many women living in the area that a woman farmer can be just as efficient as a man, as long as love for the land, motivation and self-determination prevail. She affirms that rural women are often the back-bone of agricultural societies and realizes that most rural women want to escape rural areas. The needs and sorrows of rural women have always occupied her and she started to seriously encourage, empower and motivate them. "The most important and fundamental requirement for rural women is to be confident in their abilities and develop their educational skills while maintaining their rural affiliation. Modernity is not only confined to cities but can be positively utilized in improving quality of life everywhere".

Self-confidence is the key.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Najwa a fait de la ferme familiale un grand succès. Alliant la patience à un dur labeur, elle a prouvé aux nombreuses femmes rurales de cette région qu'une femme paysanne peut être aussi efficace qu'un homme, tant que l'amour de la terre, une forte motivation et la détermination sont présents. Elle affirme que les femmes rurales sont souvent le pilier des sociétés agricoles, tout en réalisant que la plupart des femmes rurales veulent échapper à l'emprise de leur milieu. Les besoins et préoccupations des femmes rurales l'ont toujours préoccupée et elle a commencé un travail d'encouragement et de motivation à leur niveau. « La première exigence pour les femmes est d'être confiantes dans leurs capacités et de développer leurs compétences éducatives tout en demeurant à la campagne. La modernité n'est pas limitée aux villes et peut être utilisée positivement pour améliorer la qualité de la vie partout ».

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



**Sudanese Refugee Women's
Group**

Africa – Kenya

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

In 1992 and 1993, fifteen young Sudanese women found refuge north of Nairobi. Starved and haggard, they joined the rural slum settlement where they decided, out of desperation, to learn to sew and sell their clothing products. With the leadership and support of two literate refugee women, Grace Tire and Marcelline Narot, the women learned to count and measure. Donations of cloth and sewing machines allowed them to become proficient and sell their clothing in the Nairobi markets. In four years they earned several government trade test certificates in dress-making and tailoring and provided for their families (sometimes even neighbors). As of 1997, the women hoped to return to Sudan and help pull their communities out of destitution with the skills they have acquired.

Refugees strive for self-sufficiency.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

En 1992 et 1993, quinze jeunes femmes trouvèrent refuge au nord de Nairobi. Affamées et épuisées, ces jeunes femmes rejoignirent un bidonville où, en désespoir de cause, elles décidèrent d'apprendre à coudre et vendre leur confection. Avec le leadership et le soutien de deux d'entre elles, Grace Tire et Marcelline Narot, elles apprirent à compter et à mesurer. Des dons de tissus et d'une machine à coudre leur permirent de devenir compétentes et de vendre leurs habits sur les marchés de Nairobi. Après quatre années d'apprentissage, elles ont obtenu plusieurs diplômes de couture, sont auto-suffisantes, suffisent aux besoins de leurs familles et aident leurs voisins. De retour au Soudan, ces femmes deviendront des moteurs dans les communautés rurales, transmettront leurs compétences et montreront aux autres comment se sortir soi-même de la pauvreté.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



**WWSF
Prize**

Women's Creativity
in Rural Life®



**Menaben Harchandbhai
THAKORE**

Asia – India

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Menaben rose to the challenge in 1991 when SEWA suggested introducing a plant nursery to combat the encroaching desert in Lodra village. With technical training she mastered new skills that she passed on to other villagers. She managed to convince them to commit to planting saplings, an activity hitherto unknown. Thanks to Menaben, Lodra looks forward to a greener future and the villagers are earning a steady income initiating ecologically-sound regeneration programs. Menaben also fights rural indebtedness through her savings group, and by 1997 had helped over 46 villagers.

(Sharing one prize with Puriben V.K. Ahir, \$250 to each laureate).

Fighting the challenges of the desert.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Le désert qui menaçait le village de Lodra s'est arrêté, parce qu'il y a six ans, Menaben s'est dressée à l'appel de SEWA quand cette organisation suggéra l'introduction d'une pépinière pour les arbres. Ayant reçu une formation technique, elle maîtrisa parfaitement ces nouvelles compétences qu'elle sut transmettre aux autres villageois. Elle réussit à les convaincre de s'adonner à l'activité jusqu'alors totalement inconnue de la plantation de jeunes arbres et à persévérer à les soigner. Grâce à Menaden, l'avenir de Lodra est plus vert. Les villageois gagnent un revenu régulier, tout en initiant des programmes de régénération des terres écologiquement valables. Menaben lutte aussi contre l'endettement rural – dans son groupe d'épargne, quelques 46 villageois économisent 10 roupies (40cts) par mois – une somme considérable pour eux.

(Le prix est partagé avec Puriben V.K. Ahir, 250\$ pour chaque lauréate).

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Nirmala THAPA

Asia – Nepal

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Nirmala, employed by the community development program, stimulates social awakening in the isolated villages of the Khalicot district. She encourages rural women to fight illiteracy and poverty and organizes self-help groups where about 700 villagers unite to achieve things that are otherwise impossible: access to credit, income from kitchen gardens, sanitation with pit latrines, etc. Nirmala has raised overall awareness so that women become the main agents of their own development, considerably advancing their status and improving their living conditions. She has empowered women to help themselves.

Uniting and educating women for change.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

À 70 ans, employée dans le cadre du programme villageois de développement communautaire, Nirmala stimule l'éveil social des villageois isolés et arriérés du district de Khalicot (zone de Karnali). Elle encourage les femmes rurales dans leur lutte contre l'analphabétisme et la pauvreté et organise des groupements d'entraide où quelques 700 villageois réalisent ensemble ce qui est impossible à faire individuellement : obtenir un crédit, produire des revenus avec des jardins maraîchers, l'hygiène élémentaire dans les latrines, etc. Nirmala a su élever le niveau des consciences de telle sorte que les femmes deviennent les principales actrices de leur propre développement, avançant et améliorant considérablement leur statut et leurs conditions de vie. Nirmala aide vraiment les femmes à s'aider elles-mêmes.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



**Dobrila VASILJEVIC
SMILJANIC**

Europe – Yugoslavia Serbia
Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Dobrila worked for the past 35 years to revive the traditional weaving culture of women. More than 2500 weavers from more than 40 villages create with their ideas and needles walking pictures on woolen sweaters. Their success can be measured by their comfortable new homes and better living conditions in the rural communities which now have roads, running water and electricity. By revitalizing this tradition, Dobrila demonstrates her love for rural women and honors their creativity. She also established an open-air museum where the beauty of old architecture and life in ancient Serbian villages is preserved and exhibited.

WWSF is making an exception with this nomination since Dobrila already received international recognition for her work. WWSF hopes she will be a model for more village leaders around the world.

A unique example to be followed.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Dobrila a travaillé depuis 35 ans pour faire revivre la culture de tissage traditionnel des femmes. Plus de 2500 tisserandes de plus de 40 villages créent avec leurs idées et leurs épingles des tableaux sur les vêtements en laine. Leur succès peut être mesuré par des maisons confortables et par des conditions de vie meilleures dans les communautés rurales qui ont aujourd'hui des routes, de l'eau potable et l'électricité. En redonnant vie à la tradition du tissage, Dobrila démontre son amour pour ces femmes rurales et honore leur créativité. Elle a également créé un musée en plein air où la beauté de l'architecture de la vie ancienne des villages en Serbie est préservée et exposée.

La Fondation fait une exception avec cette nomination puisque Dobrila a déjà reçu des prix internationaux pour sa créativité. La Fondation espère qu'elle sera prise pour modèle par d'autres leaders villageoises.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."

**Hawa Adam YAGUOB****Africa – Sudan**

Laureate 1997

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Hawa rescued her village from famine by rearing sheep. Subsistence farming barely kept the village alive, so Hawa courageously ventured into cash farming and negotiated a loan to finance her sheep rearing project. She helped 60 women file for credit and join her, and by 1997 they were marketing hundreds of sheep. Enhancing development through a Cooperative Credit project, Hawa also organized training in literacy, health, and marketable skills such as sewing and making handicrafts. In addition to the income from sheep rearing, the sale of wool products like rugs and mats has helped the village to rise well above the poverty line and end famine in the area.

Using sheep to fight famine.**WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©**

À seulement 30 ans, Hawa sauva son village du Soudan occidental de la faim. L'agriculture de subsistance permettait à peine aux villageois de survivre, aussi se lança-t-elle courageusement dans la négociation d'un crédit pour un projet d'élevage. Elle aida 60 autres femmes à faire de même et à se joindre à elle. Le résultat est aujourd'hui probant : les femmes de son village vendent des centaines de moutons. Continuant sur sa lancée, Hawa mit sur pied une coopérative de crédit, organisa des formations en alphabétisation, santé, couture et en artisanat. En plus de la vente de la viande, celle des produits confectionnés avec la laine de moutons, comme les tapis, permet d'aider son village à s'élever bien au-dessus du niveau de la pauvreté. Avec ses moutons, sa créativité et son courage, Hawa a mis un terme à la famine de son village.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Laureates from 1996



Janet AKINBODE

Africa – Nigeria

Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Janet is the first woman to have formed a cooperative in her hometown. She introduced soya-bean seeds in Idoani, and production and consumption spread to the entire region. By 1996 the cooperative was producing over 20 tons annually, of which some were processed into soya milk, cake, yeast, and "gari", and other edible foods that were being sold in markets and shops all over the region. Janet's initiative has also greatly contributed to reducing malnutrition in the area.

Working to end hunger.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Janet est la première femme à avoir créé une coopérative dans sa ville natale. Elle a introduit des graines de soja à Idoani où leur production et consommation ont été diffusées dans toute la région. La coopérative en produit plus de 20 tonnes par an, dont une partie est transformée en lait de soja, en tourtes, en levure et en « gari » ainsi qu'en d'autres denrées comestibles que l'on trouve sur les marchés et dans les magasins de la région. Son initiative a beaucoup contribué à lutter contre la malnutrition dans cette région.

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Alkuvoima (Primal Force)

Europe – Finland

Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Founded in 1993 with 19 members, Alkuvoima is a non-registered association with no chairperson or administrative personnel located in Kymenlaakso. Two-thirds of their current member farmers are women. The members meet consumers at market places, discuss, listen, teach, learn, share their experiences, participate in public debates, and develop their own products with great energy and talent. In 1995, they created a cooperative and purchased their own bus in order to sell their products.

Their "primal force" is people.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Créée en 1993, avec 19 membres, Alkuvoima est une association sans président ou personnel administratif. Les deux-tiers de ses 40 membres paysans sont des femmes. Le groupe de Kymenlaakso (au sud-est de la Finlande) rencontre les consommateurs sur les marchés, discute, écoute, enseigne, apprend, partage ses expériences, participe à des débats publics et développe ses propres produits avec talent et énergie. En 1995, le groupe a créé une coopérative et acheté un bus pour vendre les produits de 20 fermes.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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Alganesh AWASH

Africa – Ethiopia

Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

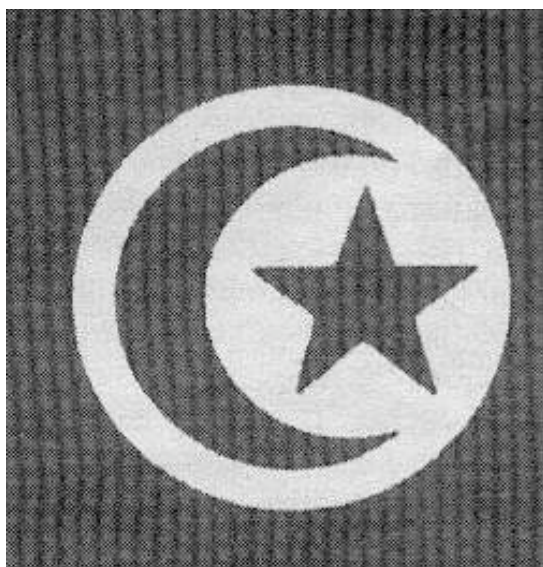
Alganesh, after 13 years of marriage, finally divorced her abusive husband. Rather than simply reacting as a victim, she used her suffering creatively and started a women's organization against violence, to which she was elected President in 1991. She has worked with local judges, negotiating on behalf of women and providing the women with precious advice and moral support. Since she has begun her activities, violence against women has substantially decreased in her village.

Ending violence against women.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Alganesh fut mariée pendant 13 ans, mais elle a demandé le divorce parce que son mari la battait constamment. Plutôt que de se poser en victime, elle s'est servi de sa souffrance de manière créative en fondant une association de femmes contre la violence, dont elle fut élue présidente en 1991. Elle a collaboré avec la justice locale, négocié au nom des femmes, leur donnant des conseils et un soutien moral. Depuis qu'elle a commencé ces activités, la violence contre les femmes a beaucoup diminué dans son village de la province du Tigré.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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**Latifa Meddeb BENT
MOKHTAR**
Africa – Tunisia
Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Latifa, of the Nahli rural area, is a very hardworking but illiterate widow. Her activities vary according to the seasons: she grows spices in winter; distills orange flowers, roses, and jasmine in the spring; dries dates and picks olives in autumn; and in the summer, she grows strawberries, lemons, oranges, and melons and produces fruit juices. She also manufactures a variety of cosmetics, which constitute her main source of income. Latifa is a model creative woman in the rural world.

A one-woman "body shop".

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Latifa de la zone rurale de Nahli, veuve et analphabète, est une travailleuse infatigable. Elle suit le rythme des saisons dans ses activités : culture des épices en hiver, distillation des fleurs d'orangers, des roses et du jasmin au printemps, séchage des dattes et cueillette des olives en automne et, en été, culture des fruits (fraises, citrons, oranges et melons) et la fabrication des jus de fruits. Elle produit divers produits de beauté qui constituent sa principale source de revenus. Latifa est la femme rurale créatrice modèle.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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Radha BHATTARAI

Asia – Nepal

Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Radha, a schoolteacher, joined the Adult Women's Literacy Programme as coordinator. In 1995, she succeeded in training 1200 illiterate women in the villages of Lohana and Banherwa (Janakpur District), which represents 30% of the illiterate women there. She has also conducted informal child education programs for over 300 underprivileged children. With Radha's help, 50 women have created Women's Savings Groups, which worked to establish a bamboo-related small cottage industry in 1996. She is an example of how a single courageous woman can change the life of other rural women.

Improving the quality of life through education.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Institutrice, Radha est devenue coordinatrice d'un programme d'alphabétisation des femmes et a éduqué 1200 femmes analphabètes des villages de Lohana et Banherwa (district de Janakpur), ce qui représente 30% du total des femmes analphabètes dans sa région. Elle s'est aussi occupée d'un programme d'éducation pour 300 enfants défavorisés. Grâce à elle, 50 femmes ont décidé d'établir, par le biais d'un programme d'épargne, une petite industrie villageoise travaillant le bambou. Elle est l'exemple d'une femme courageuse qui a changé la vie des femmes rurales.

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Cai SHUZHEN

Asia – China

Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Cai Shuzhen was an ordinary rural woman raising chickens and ducks in her village of Beilahao. She decided to study and master practical skills, and manage to win the title of agricultural technician. She was the first in her country to apply new technology in rice planting. She set up a research station to increase agricultural output, wrote a book on her experiences, and sent it to local farmers. She provided them with free rice seedlings, and has been named "Capable Woman" in the Campaign of Two Learnings and Two Contributions.

An agricultural researcher increasing productivity.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Cai Shuzhen était une femme rurale ordinaire qui élevait des poulets et des oies. Elle décida d'entreprendre des études afin de maîtriser diverses compétences pratiques, décrocha le titre de technicienne en agriculture et fut la première dans son district expérimenter une nouvelle technologie pour planter le riz. Elle organisa un centre de recherche sur la culture du riz, écrivit un livre sur ses expériences et donna gratuitement aux paysans des semences de riz. Elle a reçu une distinction officielle pour son mérite.

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**María Ana Angel de
CASTILLO**

The Americas – El Salvador

Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

María, from San Francisco Iraheta, was responsible for caring for her 6 children and disabled husband. She worked tirelessly on her land to diversify production, and has become a leader in her community. Her farm has become a Rural Development Center, where she has trained farmers in environmental protection, organic agriculture, and rural development. Under their mother's influence, her sons have become pioneers by working in fields traditionally left for the society's women.

A woman of indomitable spirit and courage.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Maria, de San Francisco Iraheta avait la responsabilité de ses 6 enfants et de son mari infirme. Elle a travaillé très dur sur sa terre pour en diversifier la production. Elle est devenue leader de sa communauté. Son exploitation s'est transformée en un centre de développement rural où elle forme les agriculteurs dans les domaines de la protection de l'environnement, de l'agriculture organique, et du développement rural. Sous son influence, ses fils ont entrepris des activités traditionnellement « bonnes seulement pour les femmes ».

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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Chen YUNLIAN
Asia – China
Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Chen Yunlian, from Taian Village in the Jilin Province, learned the technology of planting green peppers in 1985. She attempted to grow them on her own land, and after the venture proved successful she encouraged other villagers to do the same. She taught the farmers the technology and lent them the money to begin their projects. In addition, she helped other villages to plant green peppers and solved the problem of marketing that this expansion raised. Chen Yunlian has also been active in fields such as conflict resolution. She has been called "Pepper Chen", "Coordinator Chen", and "Civil Administrator Chen".

Prosperity from peppers.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

En 1985, Chen Yunlian du village de Taian dans la province de Jilin, apprend la méthode pour planter les poivrons verts. Elle appliqua ses connaissances dans son village avec succès, enseigna aux villageois à planter les poivrons et les encouragea en leur prêtant de l'argent. Elle aida aussi d'autres villages, mais l'expansion des plantations posa des problèmes d'écoulement, qu'elle résolut également. Sa capacité à résoudre les conflits est reconnue dans le village où les gens viennent la consulter pour régler leurs différends.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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CIRENZONGBA

Asia – China

Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Cirenzongba is a lame Tibetan woman, disabled by a hunchback, from village No 4 of Anrao Town in Tibet. Her family consists of her blind mother, her mute brother, and an adopted boy. She learned to read and write and to master farming technology and traditional handicraft skills. She is now able to make clothing and weave carpets, quilts, cushions, etc., helping her own family get out of poverty. She has also led other local women to improve their situation. She was named "Capable Woman" in the Campaign of Two Learnings and Two Contributions.

Overcoming disability and hardship to lead.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Cirenzongba est bossue et boîte. Trois autres personnes forment sa famille, une mère aveugle, un frère sourd et un enfant adopté de 14 ans. Elle a appris à lire et à écrire afin de maîtriser la technologie de l'agriculture et l'artisanat. Maintenant, elle coud des vêtements, tisse des tapis, couvre-lits, coussins, etc. elle aide ainsi sa famille à sortir de la pauvreté, mais conduit aussi les femmes locales du village n°4 d'Anrao Town au Tibet à améliorer leur situation. Elle a reçu une distinction officielle pour son mérite.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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Goaler VITA
Asia – Bangladesh
Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Goaler Vita is a pioneer women's group in the Kurigram District, formed in 1989 with the help of the Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service. Because of their outstanding courage and despite rigid social barriers and strong resistance from their husbands, the members of Goaler Vita have successfully formed a self-help group that has enabled them to participate in income-generating activities and improve their quality of life. Perhaps the most important success of the group is that it has brought them the respect of their husbands and the rest of the male community.

A pioneer rural women's group.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Goaler Vita est un groupe de femmes d'avant-garde du district de Kurigram, fondé en 1989 avec l'aide du «Service Rural de Rangpur Dinajpur». Grâce à leur courage exceptionnel et en dépit des barrières sociales rigides et de la forte résistance des maris, elles ont réussi à créer un groupe d'entraide qui leur a permis de participer à des activités rémunératrices qui ont amélioré leur qualité de vie. La plus grande réussite du groupe a été d'obtenir le respect de leurs maris et des hommes en général.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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Tatjana N. INOZEMTSEVA

Europe – Russia

Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Tatjana, brought up in an orphanage, built her house with her own two hands. She created a unique nursery-farm in Parfenjevskij, where she independently performs all the tasks. She has tested 60 kinds of potatoes, grown 5'000 seedlings per year and practiced selective breeding of stock. For many years she also headed a children's horseback riding school. Tatjana has written nine books of prose and poetry, and was elected a member of the Writers' Union of Russia in 1979.

Innovative famer, philanthropist, and poet.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Tatjana, qui a grandi dans un orphelinat, a construit sa maison de ses propres mains. Elle a créé une pépinière unique en son genre dans tout le district de Parfenjevskij (dans la région de Kostroma) où elle s'occupe de tout. Elle a testé 60 sortes de pommes de terre, produit plus de 5'000 semences par an et fait de l'élevage sélectif. Elle a aussi dirigé pendant plusieurs années un manège pour enfants. Tatjana a écrit 9 livres de poèmes et en prose et a été élue membre de l'Union des Ecrivains Russes en 1979.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Tulsi Devi JAIN

Asia – India

Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Tulsi Devi is a woman from the grass roots who has emerged within the tribal communities of Udaipur (Rajasthan) as an organizer, activist, and leader. She has encouraged and motivated the women of the Bhil tribe to join Mahila Mandals (women's groups) and to stand up for their own interests and rights in their relationships with their husbands, community elders, local bureaucracy, and police. Tulsi has served as a model with her outspoken and energetic advocacy.

Tribal woman turned activist.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Tulsi Devi, femme de la base, est devenue chef activiste et organisatrice dans les communautés des tribus d'Udaipur (Rajasthan). Elle encourage et motive les femmes de la tribu des Mahila Mandals (groupes de femmes) afin de manifester pour réclamer leurs intérêts et leurs droits vis-à-vis de leurs maris, des aînés de la communauté, de la bureaucratie locale et de la police. C'est une meneuse, qui montre la voie par son activisme énergétique et son franc-parler.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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KHADOUJ
Africa – Morocco
Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Khadouj has had a major impact on the lives of rural women home workers in her region. She has been President of the Women's Cooperative of Targha, providing the weavers with raw material and organizing the marketing of the finished products. For the first time in this region, women were able to receive interest-free loans, which guaranteed them some freedom. Khadouj is also a traditional midwife and has effectively defended women's basic human rights.

Giving loans for freedom.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Khadouj a un impact majeur sur la vie des femmes rurales de sa région qui travaillent à domicile. Elle est Présidente de la coopérative de femmes de Targha, qui fournit la matière première aux tisserandes locales et organise la commercialisation des produits finis. Pour la première fois dans la région, des femmes ont pu recevoir des prêts sans intérêt. Khadouj est aussi une sage-femme traditionnelle. Elle défend les droits fondamentaux des femmes,

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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KUNWARBEN

Asia – India

Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Kunwarben, from the village of Sayla Taluka, is handicapped with leprosy and lives on crutches. She is the wife of a small farmer with seven family members to support. After educating children and adults in her village, she initiated a women's organization to fight the rigid caste system in 1991. With their savings, the women managed to install pulleys in every well. On International Women's Day in 1996, Kunwarben shared her experiences of involvement in the development of her village with 300 women participants.

Handicapped woman overcomes leprosy and leads

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Lépreuse handicapée avec des béquilles, Kunwarben du village de Sayla Taluka, est mariée à un petit paysan et responsable des sept membres de sa famille. Après avoir enseigné aux enfants et adultes de son village, elle forma une organisation de femmes en 1991, bravant le système rigide des castes du village. Avec leurs économies, les membres installèrent des poulies dans tous les puits du village. À l'occasion de la Journée Internationale de la Femme en 1996, elle a partagé son expérience avec 300 participantes.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Lephina MAPANGA
Africa – South Africa

Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Lephina, of Kwazulu, Natal Province, was selected in 1978 to be trained as a fieldworker to help rural women. A rural woman herself and an incredibly hard worker, she has had phenomenal success over the years and achieved great improvements in the quality of life for rural women in her district. For example, she succeeded in getting more than 70 pre-school day centers opened. A remarkably purposeful woman, she is loved and respected by all. In 1996, at the age of 66, the suggestion of retirement made her laugh.

Helping others help themselves.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

En 1978, Lephina, originaire du Kwazulu, Province du Natal fut sélectionnée pour être formée comme animatrice. Femme rurale elle-même et travailleuse acharnée, elle a obtenu un immense succès au fil des années et une amélioration très nette de la qualité de vie des femmes rurales de sa région. Grâce à elle, plus de 70 jardins d'enfants ont été ouverts. Femme de caractère, elle porte allègrement ses 66 printemps et est aimée et respectée de tous. L'idée de la retraite lui paraît être une plaisanterie.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Sara MICHEL
The Americas – Haiti
Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

By 1996 Sara, from Chatard, had been practicing midwifery for a record of 81 uninterrupted years. In a country with only one doctor for every 50'000 inhabitants and one nurse for every 60'000, Sara has a major responsibility in helping mothers safely give birth to their babies. She has a perfect knowledge of traditional herbal medicine, and a rare and special sensitivity for the psychology of rural women. She has given an outstanding, lifelong gift to the women of her nation.

Record-making rural midwife.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Difficile de battre le record de Sara (de Chatard) qui compte 81 années de pratique comme sage-femme ! Dans un pays où il n'y a qu'un médecin pour 50'000 habitants et une infirmière pour près de 60'000, sa responsabilité, celle d'aider les mères à mettre au monde leurs bébés, est capitale. Elle a une parfaite connaissance de la médecine traditionnelle par les plantes et possède une rare compréhension de la psychologie et du corps de la femme rurale. Quelle existence hors du commun et quel don de soi à son pays !

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Victoria MIRA

The Americas – El Salvador

Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Victoria, from El Arco, is a widow responsible for 6 children. When guerrillas laid landmines on her land, she was forced to give up farming and turned instead to making and selling cheese and bread. She then trained herself to become the first midwife in her community. With the end of the civil war, she returned to farming and raising hens. A true innovator, Victoria educated herself in a variety of areas, ranging from environmental protection to nutrition, and has become a trainer in her community. Through her persistence and resourcefulness, she kept her family afloat under truly difficult circumstances.

Creativity and innovation despite old age.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Victoria, du village d'El Arco est responsable de ses 6 enfants. Quand les terres minées par la guérilla l'obligèrent à abandonner l'agriculture, elle se reconvertit dans la fabrication la vente de fromage et de pain. Elle entreprit alors une formation de sage-femme, devenant la première sage-femme de sa communauté. À la fin de la guerre civile, elle reprit l'agriculture et l'élevage des poules. Réelle innovatrice, Victoria s'est formée dans de nombreux domaines tels que la protection de l'environnement et la nutrition, puis devint formatrice dans sa communauté.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Godeliève MUKASARASI

Africa – Rwanda

Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Godeliève has refused to be discouraged by many obstacles and has shown an exceptional capacity to organize women. She is the founder of SEVOTA, a solidarity structure for rural widows and orphans in Taba district that, as of 1996, included 1246 widows in 74 groups. SEVOTA engages in agricultural production activities, as well as helping women who have been raped or otherwise traumatized. SEVOTA has served as a model for many women's organizations that deal with development issues in rural environments.

Determined to help women.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Godeliève est de la trempe de ces femmes qui ne se laissent décourager par aucun obstacle et qui font preuve d'une rare compétence dans l'organisation des femmes. Elle a fondé SEVOTA dans le district de Taba, une structure d'accueil et d'encadrement de veuves et d'orphelins, laquelle compte actuellement 1246 veuves réparties en 74 groupements. Outre la production agricole, SEVOTA apporte son soutien aux femmes violées et traumatisées. Cet organisme est aujourd'hui un modèle pour nombre d'organisations féminines à vocation de développement dans les zones rurales du Rwanda.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Sudaba MURADOVA

Asia - Azerbaidjan

Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Sudaba worked on a collective farm as a farmer and accountant during her early years. In 1994, she founded an agricultural farm with 19 other families that, as of 1996, employed 25 people in the Goranboy District. At the same time she organized training courses for refugees and used part of the farm's profits to assist widows, the disabled, orphans, and families in need. She is a model for women in other rural regions and has demonstrated that women's solidarity and cooperation are the only way to survive under situations of extreme hardship.

Organising solidarity for survival.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Sudaba a travaillé comme fermière et comptable dans une ferme collective. En 1994, elle fonde une ferme avec 19 familles et emploie maintenant 25 personnes dans le district de Goranboy. En même temps, elle donne des cours aux réfugiés et aide les veuves, les handicapés, les orphelins et des familles entières avec le bénéfice de sa ferme. Elle est devenue un modèle pour les femmes des autres régions rurales et a démontré que la solidarité des femmes est la seule manière de survivre dans des conditions extrêmes.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



**Abab Farhan (Umm NASSER
AL AZMI)**

Asia – Kuwait
Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Umm Nasser Al Azmi is a traditional weaver; she began weaving at the age of thirteen, watching and helping her mother dry, spin, and weave wool. At the age of fifteen, she was drawn to the intricate designs and striking colors of a beautiful tent partition. Through her keen observation, devoted practice and hard work, she has become a specialist in sadu weaving, Shagarah, the most complex of all traditional Bedouin patterns. She is a highly accomplished weaver with incredible creativity.

A special Association in Kuwait, teaches today others the traditional weaving skills, preserved by Umm Nasser.

Weaving Bedouin beauty.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Umm Nasser Al Azmi est une tisserande traditionnelle qui apprend le tissage à l'âge de 13 ans en aidant sa mère à sécher, filer et tisser la laine. À l'âge de 15 ans, elle fut très attirée par les motifs complexes et les couleurs très vives d'une magnifique paroi de tente. Grâce à son observation et à sa persévérance, elle est devenue spécialiste du tissage des dessins Shagarah, les plus compliqués des dessins traditionnels Bédouins. C'est une tisserande d'élite avec une incroyable créativité.

Une Association spéciale au Koweït, enseigne aujourd'hui aux autres les techniques traditionnelles de tissage préservées par Umm Nasser.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Paulina Diaz NAVAS
The Americas – Costa Rica
Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Paulina, a Bribri woman from the small town of Bolas, has succeeded in defending her rights as an indigenous woman to keep the land of her ancestors thanks to Feminist International Radio Endeavor (FIRE). For three years she was subjected to sexual harassment by police officers, until the Ministry of Security became aware of her situation through FIRE and offered her the necessary assistance. Because of her unfailing courage to fight back and the special support of FIRE and other women's organizations, Paulina has managed to win her battle.

Courage in the face of personal abuse.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Paulina, une Briri du bourg de Bolas a réussi, grâce à la radio féministe « FIRE », à défendre son droit, en tant que femme indigène, à conserver la terre de ces ancêtres. Elle fut victime de harcèlement sexuel par des policiers pendant trois ans, mais le Ministre de la Sécurité, ayant eu connaissance de son cas par « FIRE », lui a apporté toute l'aide nécessaire. Grâce à son courage, sa lutte obstinée, l'aide « FIRE » et d'autres organisations, Paulina a gagné sur toute la ligne.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Rosalía Jara ÑIRRIAM

The Americas – Chile

Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Rosalía, a Mapuche woman from Repocura-Deuco, started a rural health center. At this center, children, pregnant women, and mothers can receive medical care and people can receive food, health exams and gynaecological consultations. Rosalía has constantly increased her medical knowledge and has taught basic preventive health care. She has also created an association that teaches farming, gardening, and handicrafts and started a literacy program for adults.

Development depends on education.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Rosalía, femme Mapuche de Repocura-Deuco, a créé un centre médical rural où les enfants, les femmes enceintes et les mères peuvent être soignés et dans lequel on effectue des contrôles médicaux, des consultations gynécologiques et où l'on peut également recevoir de la nourriture. Elle a constamment amélioré ses connaissances et enseigne les soins préventifs de base. Rosalía a aussi créé une association pour enseigner l'agriculture, le jardinage et l'artisanat et a commencé un programme d'alphabétisation pour adultes.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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E. O. OLAWOLU
Africa – Nigeria
Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

E.O. Olawolu is a renowned traditional cloth weaver from Ondo State. She has headed Asoleso, a cooperative society whose main activities are the weaving and sale of traditional Nigerian apparel. She has devoted her time and private resources to train women, free of charge, in the weaving industry. Between 1982 and 1995, she trained over 500 women to preserve their culture while creating gainful employment, thereby reducing unemployment in her region.

Preserving tradition for tomorrow.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

E. O. Olawolu est une tisserande connue de tissus traditionnels de l'Etat d'Ondo. Elle est à la tête d'Asoleso, une coopérative dont l'activité principale est le tissage et la vente de vêtements traditionnels du Nigéria. Elle consacre son temps, et même ses propres fonds, pour former des femmes gratuitement à l'industrie du tissage. Elle a formé plus de 500 jeunes femmes dans le but de perpétuer leur culture, tout en créant des emplois rémunérateurs, réduisant ainsi le chômage.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



María Auxiliadora López
OLIVAS

The Americas – Nicaragua
Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

María, attended primary school before marrying at the age of 15. She is the founder of the Legal Defence Group against violence aimed at women, part of an empowerment program that helped women participate in the social and political development of their community. She has also served as Treasurer of the Savings and Credit Communal Bank, which empowers women to manage their own finances. In addition, she founded the Women's House in her community of Aranjuez.

Banking by and for the people.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Maria a suivi l'école primaire et fut mariée à l'âge de 15 ans. Elle fonda le Groupe de Défense Légale contre la violence dirigée contre les femmes, intégré à un programme visant à aider les femmes à participer au développement social et politique de leur communauté. Elle est aussi trésorière d'une banque communale d'épargne et de crédit qui permet aux femmes de gérer leur propre argent. Enfin, elle est fondatrice d'une Maison des femmes dans sa communauté d'Aranjuez.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Pei GUILIAN
Asia – China
Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

In 1982, the farming land of Pei Guilian's village, Hongshiya, was taken over by factories that employed the men, leaving the women four barren hills. Pei Guilian led the women to apply the method of irrigation by gravity and to plant 330'000 fruit trees. She then set up a technical school and helped 51 women become literate and learn some technology. By 1996, the average income per capita had increased from 1270 to 4290 yuan (\$159 to \$536), children had started going to school on the village commuting bus, and the elderly had begun to enjoy old-age pensions.

Increasing prosperity for all.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

En 1982, les terres cultivables de la commune de Pei Guilian à Hongshiya, province de Hebel, furent occupées pour construire des usines dans lesquelles les hommes partirent travailler ne laissant aux femmes que quatre collines pelées. Pei Guilian poussa les femmes à les cultiver et irriguer, et à planter 330'000 arbres fruitiers. Ensuite, elle a organisé une école de technologie et aidé 51 femmes à s'instruire et à apprendre de nouvelles techniques de travail. En 1996, le revenu par personne est passé de 1270 à 4290 yuan (1\$=8 yuan), les enfants vont à l'école en bus et les personnes âgées touchent une pension.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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Teresa de Jesus RAFAEL
The Americas – Guatemala
Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Teresa fled to Mexico after both her husband and father were killed by the army. Once there, she founded a refugee women's organization, Mama Maquin, that grew into a political force of which she is a regional coordinator. She educates both women and men about women's rights and organizes the village women of Cuarto Pueblo in community projects such as literacy programs, corn-grinding mills, and child-care centers. She is a leader and an international human rights activist who simultaneously cultivates her land single-handedly and raises her children.

Mayan farmer and political activist.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Après que son mari, puis son père furent tués par l'armée, Teresa s'enfuit au Mexique où elle fonda l'organisation de réfugiées « Mama Maquin » qui devint une force politique et dont elle fut élue coordinatrice. Elle instruit tant les hommes que les femmes au sujet des droits des femmes et organise des activités communautaires dans le village de Cuarto Pueblo : programmes d'alphabétisation, moulins à maïs, centres de soins, etc. C'est une vraie militante, qui travaille sa terre toute seule tout en élevant ses enfants.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Ethlyn RHOOMS

The Americas – Jamaica

Laureate 1996

Incredibly resourceful rural woman.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Travailleuse sociale et chrétienne, agricultrice, mère, grand-mère, artisane, couturière et leader dans sa communauté, Ethlyn a littéralement forcé son gouvernement à y envoyer des animatrices. Par la suite, elle est devenue éducatrice pour les nombreuses femmes sans instruction manquant de confiance en elles-mêmes. Sa plantation de café et son jardin potager à Mary's Village District, où elle vit, ont tous deux reçus le sceau d'approbation pour leur production agricole respectueuse de l'environnement.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
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Self-Help Savings and Credit Group

Asia – Viet Nam

Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

s As of 1996, this group was comprised of 14 relatively uneducated women from two ethnic minorities in the Yen Son District. The creative and resourceful usage and management of two loans brought great benefits to these women, who were enabled to improve their techniques, promote family planning, and successfully break rigid social barriers. They experienced a newfound understanding of the market-economy system, and have explained the way it functions to rural people. They have found a unique niche in this system, and successfully effected change.

Finding their niche in the market.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Le Groupe d'épargne et de crédit de la province de Tuzen Quang regroupe 14 femmes peu éduquées de deux minorités ethniques différentes du district de Yen Son. La gestion créative et intelligente de deux subventions fut très bénéfique aux femmes qui purent améliorer leurs techniques, promouvoir le planning familial et rompre avec succès les barrières sociales. Leur perspicacité à comprendre les nouveaux mécanismes du marché leur ont permis de s'y faire une place qu'elles ont su exploiter intelligemment.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."
"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Zhao QUNYING

Asia – China

Laureate 1996

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Zhao Qunying, from Lianhua Village, received 47 pure-bred breeding rabbits from the Dayi County Rabbit Association in 1985. These original 47 produced 500 young rabbits, and through 1986 and 1987 she continued to expand her herd until she had 6000 young rabbits and breeders. She provided 300 farmers with breeder rabbits, and at the end of 1991 decided to invest her rabbit profits in a metal mold factory. Zhao Qunying mobilized her entire family and provided employment for at least 12 villagers.

Prosperity from rabbit breeding.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

En 1985, la paysanne Zhao Qunying du village de Lianhua reçut 47 lapins de reproduction de la Dayi County Rabbit Association qui produisirent 500 jeunes lapins. En 1986 et 1987, elle continua à développer son élevage jusqu'à posséder 6000 jeunes lapins et reproducteurs. Elle fournit 300 autres paysans en lapins reproducteurs. À fin 1991, elle décida d'investir les bénéfices obtenus par son élevage dans une fabrique d'objets moulés en métal. Elle a mobilisé toute sa famille et engagé 12 villageois dans sa fabrique.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation."



Laureates from 1995



Joan AGBO
Africa - Ghana
Laureate 1995

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Joan comes from the Hohoe District of the Volta region.

She coordinates a group, which reaches out to rural women in farming and trading.

In her training workshops, Joan teaches planting methods and how to keep records of expenses, apply fertilizers and identify diseases, which attack rice.

Joan was one of the 10 prize winners awarded in 1995, the first year of the official Prize program for rural women. She was personally honored with the WWSF Prize during the 1995 UN World Conference on Women in Beijing. At a special prize award ceremony, many conference participants attended the event, including Queen Fabiola from Belgium.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Joan vient du district de Hohoe (région de la Volta). Elle est la coordinatrice d'un groupe qui fait de l'animation auprès des femmes rurales actives dans l'agriculture et le commerce. Dans les ateliers de formation qu'elle dirige, elle enseigne comment planter les cultures, l'utilisation des engrais, la tenue d'une comptabilité et comment identifier les maladies qui attaquent le riz.

Joan faisait partie des 10 lauréates récompensées en 1995, la première année du programme « Prix WWSF pour les femmes rurales ». Elle a été personnellement honorée par la WWSF pendant la Conférence mondiale sur les Femmes organisée par l'ONU à Beijing en 1995. Beaucoup de participants à la conférence, incluant la Reine Fabiola de Belgique, assistèrent à une cérémonie spéciale pour la remise du prix.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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Domitila BARRIOS
The Americas – Bolivia
Laureate 1995

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Domitilia Barrios, an internationally known grass roots leader, is famous for leading strikes against the Banzer dictatorship.

Despite being tortured, she managed to continue her successful fight for justice among some of the most oppressed people in the world.

Domitilia was one of the 10 prize winners awarded in 1995, the first year of the official Prize program for rural women. She was personally honored with the WWSF Prize during the 1995 UN World Conference on Women in Beijing. At a special prize award ceremony, many conference participants attended the event, including Queen Fabiola from Belgium.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Domitilia Barrios acquit une réputation internationale par son livre « Si on me donne la parole », où elle raconte ses luttes héroïques pour mobiliser les mineurs dans leur lutte contre une dictature sanguinaire (elle fut elle-même torturée).

Elle reste une des personnalités latine américaine les plus frappantes pour ses luttes en faveur de la justice sociale.

Domitilia faisait partie des 10 lauréates récompensées en 1995, la première année du programme « Prix WWSF pour les femmes rurales ». Elle a été personnellement honorée par la WWSF pendant la Conférence mondiale sur les Femmes organisée par l'ONU à Beijing en 1995. Beaucoup de participants à la conférence, incluant la Reine Fabiola de Belgique, assistèrent à une cérémonie spéciale pour la remise du prix.

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Huda ABDEL EL-HAMEID

Africa - Sudan

Laureate 1995

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Huda Abdel El-Hameid comes from Awila, near the White Nile. She learned the art of fishing from her father. In Sudan, this activity was traditionally reserved for men.

She became an expert in salted fish (fesiekh), preparing it in powder form with spices, for the first time in Sudan.

Huda was one of the 10 prize winners awarded in 1995, the first year of the official Prize program for rural women. She was personally honored with the WWSF Prize during the 1995 UN World Conference on Women in Beijing. At a special prize award ceremony, many conference participants attended the event, including Queen Fabiola from Belgium.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Huda Abdel El-Hameid d'Awila, une région proche du Nil blanc, apprit la pêche aux côtés de son père. Au Soudan, la pêche est une activité traditionnellement réservée aux hommes.

Huda devint une spécialiste du fesiekh (poisson salé), le préparant pour la première fois au Soudan sous forme de poudre, avec des épices.

Huda faisait partie des 10 lauréates récompensées en 1995, la première année du programme « Prix WWSF pour les femmes rurales ». Elle a été personnellement honorée par la WWSF pendant la Conférence mondiale sur les Femmes organisée par l'ONU à Beijing en 1995. Beaucoup de participants à la conférence, incluant la Reine Fabiola de Belgique, assistèrent à une cérémonie spéciale pour la remise du prix.

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Jia JUNQIAO
Asia – China
Laureate 1995

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Jia Junqiao from the village of Longju in the province of Hebei led women in her village to plant trees and orchards and created four large reservoirs. In this way, she reclaimed 167 hectares of barren islands. She now subscribes to journals on science and technology and teaches new skills to villagers including weaving and sheep-rearing.

Jia was one of the 10 prize winners awarded in 1995, the first year of the official Prize program for rural women. She was personally honored with the WWSF Prize during the 1995 UN World Conference on Women in Beijing. At a special prize award ceremony, many conference participants attended the event, including Queen Fabiola from Belgium.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Jia Junqiao du village de Longju, dans la province de Hebei, mena, avec les femmes de son village, une action de reforestation et de création de vergers. Elle créa quatre grands réservoirs et réclama ainsi 167 hectares de sol infertile. Elle enseigne aux villageois de nouvelles techniques comme le tissage et l'élevage de moutons.

Jia faisait partie des 10 lauréates récompensées en 1995, la première année du programme « Prix WWSF pour les femmes rurales ». Elle a été personnellement honorée par la WWSF pendant la Conférence mondiale sur les Femmes organisée par l'ONU à Beijing en 1995. Beaucoup de participants à la conférence, incluant la Reine Fabiola de Belgique, assistèrent à une cérémonie spéciale pour la remise du prix.

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Lai XIAO
Asia – China
Laureate 1995

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Lai Xiao is a Mongolian herdsman from Sumu (inner Mongolia). She was contracted to raise flocks and herds and pioneered a scientific strategy for breeding and raising sheep and increased the survival rate of newborn lambs to almost 100%.

Lai was one of the 10 prize winners awarded in 1995, the first year of the official Prize program for rural women. She was personally honored with the WWSF Prize during the 1995 UN World Conference on Women in Beijing. At a special prize award ceremony, many conference participants attended the event, including Queen Fabiola from Belgium.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Lai Xiao est une éleveuse mongole de Sumu (en Mongolie Intérieure). On la sollicite pour élever des troupeaux et elle fit un travail de pionnière en mettant au point une stratégie scientifique pour l'élevage des moutons qui permit d'atteindre des taux de survie de près de 100%.

Lai faisait partie des 10 lauréates récompensées en 1995, la première année du programme « Prix WWSF pour les femmes rurales ». Elle a été personnellement honorée par la WWSF pendant la Conférence mondiale sur les Femmes organisée par l'ONU à Beijing en 1995. Beaucoup de participants à la conférence, incluant la Reine Fabiola de Belgique, assistèrent à une cérémonie spéciale pour la remise du prix.

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Nakani SAMAKE et Aminata

SANGARE

Africa - Mali

Laureate 1995

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Nakani Samaké and Sangaré Aminata share one Prize.

Nakani raises sheep and Aminata is an agricultural laborer.

Both educated leaders in the poorer section of the outskirts of Bamako, they help women in a wide variety of concerns, including environmental issues.

Nakani and Aminata were two of the 10 prize winners awarded in 1995, the first year of the official Prize program for rural women. They were personally honored with the WWSF Prize during the 1995 UN World Conference on Women in Beijing. At a special prize award ceremony, many conference participants attended the event, including Queen Fabiola from Belgium.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Nakani Samaké et Aminata Sangaré partagent un Prix.

Nakani élève des moutons et Aminata est une travailleuse manuelle.

Elles dirigent une série d'activités éducatives parmi les femmes de certains quartiers pauvres de Bamako. Elles aident les femmes dans de nombreux domaines, notamment en ce qui concerne la sensibilisation aux problèmes de l'environnement.

Nakani et Aminata faisaient partie des 10 lauréates récompensées en 1995, la première année du programme « Prix WWSF pour les femmes rurales ». Elles ont été personnellement honorées par la WWSF pendant la Conférence mondiale sur les Femmes organisée par l'ONU à Beijing en 1995. Beaucoup de participants à la conférence, incluant la Reine Fabiola de Belgique, assistèrent à une cérémonie spéciale pour la remise du prix.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

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WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Madhuben Bhailal Solanki, an illiterate agricultural labourer from Vakharia, learned how to read and set up savings groups in villages.

She helped many families improve their living conditions and achieve greater financial security.

Madhuben was one of the 10 prize winners awarded in 1995, the first year of the official Prize program for rural women. She was personally honored with the WWSF Prize during the 1995 UN World Conference on Women in Beijing. At a special prize award ceremony, many conference participants attended the event, including Queen Fabiola from Belgium.

Madhuben BHAILAL SOLANKI

Asia – India

Laureate 1995

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Madhuben Bhailal Solanki, une simple ouvrière agricole illettrée du village de Valharia au Gujarat, apprit à lire et forma des groupes d'épargne dans une série de villages.

Elle aida de nombreuses familles à améliorer leurs conditions de vie et à atteindre une plus grande sécurité financière.

Madhuben faisait partie des 10 lauréates récompensées en 1995, la première année du programme « Prix WWSF pour les femmes rurales ». Elle a été personnellement honorée par la WWSF pendant la Conférence mondiale sur les Femmes organisée par l'ONU à Beijing en 1995. Beaucoup de participants à la conférence, incluant la Reine Fabiola de Belgique, assistèrent à une cérémonie spéciale pour la remise du prix.

"By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation."

"En honorant une femme, on honore toute une nation "



Coordinating Bureau for Women's Groups « SUKURI »

Africa - Togo

Laureate 1995

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

“Sukuri” (school for rural women), is under the auspices at the Centre du Développement Agro-pastoral et d'Accueil de Baga. The women involved in this school come from villages of the Niamtougou region. They learn how to generate income in order to face their needs in health, food, housing and clothes. They share the same poverty.

“Sukuri” was one of the 10 prize winners awarded in 1995, the first year of the official Prize program for rural women. It was personally honored with the WWSF Prize during the 1995 UN World Conference on Women in Beijing. At a special prize award ceremony, many conference participants attended the event, including Queen Fabiola from Belgium.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

« Sukuri » est sous les auspices de Centre de Développement Agro-pastoral et d'Accueil de Baga. Les femmes étudiant dans cette école viennent de la région de Niamtougou. Grâce au Sukuri, elles apprennent comment gagner et gérer l'argent nécessaire pour faire face aux besoins de santé, d'alimentation, de logement et de vêtements pour leurs familles.

« Sukuri » faisait partie des 10 lauréates récompensées en 1995, la première année du programme « Prix WWSF pour les femmes rurales ». Il a été personnellement honoré par la WWSF pendant la Conférence mondiale sur les Femmes organisée par l'ONU à Beijing en 1995. Beaucoup de participants à la conférence, incluant la Reine Fabiola de Belgique, assistèrent à une cérémonie spéciale pour la remise du prix.

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Samuben UJABHAI THAKORE and Ranbai JEMALJI RAUMA

Asia – India

Laureate 1995

WWSF Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life ©

Samuben and Ranbai share a Prize.

Samuben's fellow villagers were forced to migrate for 6-8 months of the year during the period of drought. Under her leadership, women used their agricultural skills to raise and sell saplings instead, so the villagers are no longer at the mercy of rich land-owners and their daily wages have increased.

Ranbai's village, Anternesh, is situated in the middle of a desert in the Gujarat area. The villagers traditionally sold their harvest of raising gum to local traders. Ranbai realized that they were being exploited and bargained with the government to obtain fair returns for their labour. 1000 families from her own and neighbouring villages benefitted from the increased price in gum.

Samuben and Ranbai have led women in their areas to bring them greater self-reliance, security and empowerment.

WWSF Prix pour la créativité des femmes en milieu rural ©

Samuben et Ranbai partagent un Prix.

Les villageois de Shergadh où vit Sumaben devaient émigrer 6-8 mois dans l'année pendant les périodes de sécheresse. Sous son leadership, les femmes ont utilisé leur savoir-faire agricole pour planter et vendre de jeunes arbres et développer des pépinières. Les villageois ne sont plus à la merci des riches propriétaires terriens et leurs salaires ont augmenté.

Le village de Ranbai est situé en plein milieu d'un désert du Gujarat. Autrefois, les villageois vendaient la récolte de gomme aux commerçants locaux. Ranbai réalisa qu'ils étaient exploités et négocia avec le gouvernement pour qu'ils soient adéquatement rémunérés. 1000 familles profitèrent de l'augmentation du prix de la gomme.

Samuben et Ranbai ont permis aux femmes de leur région d'acquérir plus de confiance en elles-mêmes, de sécurité et d'autonomie.

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