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## Press Release - 1 October 2023

### Presenting 10 Laureates receiving the annual WWSF-Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life



*486 Prizes awarded to-date (1994-2023) - US\$ 1000 per prizewinner - honoring creativity, courage & compassion and help advance the quality of life in rural communities. Local Award celebrations are held on International Day of Rural Women - 15 October 2023 (see Poster attached p. 9)*

**Empowered rural women can change the world & help realize the UN Sustainable Development Goals - Agenda 2030**



# Presentation of the first 5 Laureates receiving the 2023 WWSF-Prize for women's creativity in rural life



## **1) MADJALIA SEYNOU, 38, from Burkina Faso (now living in the USA)**

### **AN EXCEPTIONAL AND HIGHLY CREATIVE CONTRIBUTION TO ENDING RURAL POVERTY**

The activities of FARM SAHEL, the organization created by MADJALIA SEYNOU, originally from Burkina Faso, focus on the end goals of improving food security and soil fertility, with an emphasis on community based, participatory methods. The activities address climate change and promote regenerative farming practices in Burkina-Faso. It aims at giving women farmers the tools that will enable them to both feed their families and sell produce to generate income, thus enabling them to send their children to school, hence increasing access to quality education, especially for girls. Madjalía has created 10 cooperatives, worked with 31 communities and supported well over 1000 women in improving their farming and increasing their harvests by over 50%. Her work constitutes a tremendous contribution to ending rural poverty and empowering the poorest of the poor.

Her contribution impacts the realization of various SDG targets.



## **2) ESTHER LUPAFYA, 65, Ekwendeni, MALAWI**

### **A RELENTLESS CRUSADER FOR THE POOREST OF THE POOR**

The achievements of Esther Lupafya are exceptional, and she has influenced in a very positive manner the lives of an estimated 20'000 poor farmers. She has helped them improve their farming techniques and hence boost soil productivity in an amazing manner, therefore greatly improving the production of food and the health of innumerable families. She has consistently supported greater gender equality in an extremely male dominated society.

A nurse by training, Esther was for many years head of the Maternal and Child Health unit at Ekwendeni hospital, a position that naturally enabled her to realize the importance of good nutrition on health, especially as many children were suffering from serious malnutrition. She is currently Executive Director of a non-profit she founded in 2017, the Soils, Food and Healthy Communities organization (SFHC). It is run by a board of local farmers experienced in agroecological farming methods. This NGO has helped hundreds of villages representing thousands of rural households improve their food security, nutrition, sustainable land management and gender equality. One especially exciting project of SFHC has been the

establishment of a community seed bank so that families have access to a wide range of indigenous and local varieties of seeds to improve dietary diversity and nutrition. She helps families improve soil fertility via compost production and agroforestry.

Above all, Esther has been relentless in ensuring that her work remains focused on the most vulnerable households of Malawi. As a very large percentage of the poor rural women are illiterate, she found a highly original way of overcoming this obstacle by teaching the women health promoting songs. To summarize, Esther Lupafya is a truly exceptional individual who has demonstrated outstanding courage, creativity and perseverance in rural life while making a profound and lasting impact on her community.

Her contribution impacts the realization of various SDG targets.



### 3) MABEL IFEOMA ONWUKA, 50, NIGERIA

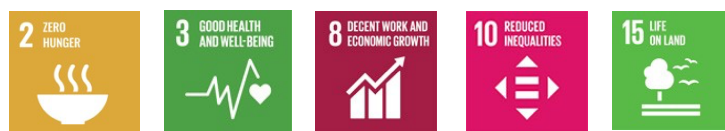
#### **A PASSION FOR TEACHING NEW SKILLS TO RURAL WOMEN**

An Associate professor specialized in soil chemistry, University of Agriculture. UMUDIKE, Abia State, Ifeoma's passion for adding value to humanity made her volunteer to enhance the lives of rural women farmers and girls by training them in using waste organic materials, compost and biochar (a soil condition) to improve soil nutrients and crop yields. She managed to translate complex

research results into simple practical terms that made meaning to mostly women farmers.

She of course spoke in the local Igbo language. She came up with a low-cost pyrolysis unit which she trained rural women to fabricate and use, not just for their farm but also for sale, to increase the very modest income of their families. To date, Mrs. Onwuka has never received any reward in recognition of her pioneering work. She not only trains the farmers but evaluates the results of their progress in adopting novel technologies. Mrs. Onwuka is very passionate about empowering and building the capacity of rural women and girls. Apart from the technical training on improving their agricultural techniques, she has also helped build their capacity in leadership skills, their rights as women & other important social issues.

Her contribution impacts the realization of various SDG targets.







#### 4) ANNE BOUCARD, 54, FRANCE

##### **ENABLING THE GENERAL PUBLIC TO GET ACQUAINTED WITH AND BETTER UNDERSTAND THE ACTIVITY OF FARMERS.**

Anne Boucard has many times been acknowledged as an exceptional farmer, in great part because she managed to harness internet to promote the cause of farmers. At a time when the immense challenges of the rural sector are little known and “agribashing” a favorite practice in some circles,

Anne Boucard has shown that a modern farmer is not a claustrophobic individual enclosed between his stables and his barns with a few fields forming the extent of his vision of the world, but can be a very active personality in their community.

Anne for instance played a key role in her community in the fight against cancer. She met her husband, François Boucard, a farmer in Bournois in the Doubs region of France. She impelled her husband to introduce improvements in the field of animal well-being with the introduction of automatic milking machines or soft technologies in the area of animal prophylaxis, introducing for instance essential oils or the practice of energy treatments (e.g., Reiki).

She has had major responsibilities in the field of agriculture, and because of her numerous commitments in this field she was nominated a Knight of Agricultural Merit in 2018. Her ethics can be summarized in two words: generosity, solidarity. She has really enabled the spirit of solidarity to prosper in the field of agriculture.

Health reasons have forced her very recently to interrupt her activity as a farmer, but her legacy in the field of social communication will survive for a long time.

**Her contribution impacts the realization of various SDG targets.**



#### 5) MARIA EVA SOTO, 59, ARGENTINA

##### **A TIRELESS FIGHTER FOR THE INDIGENOUS RIGHTS OF HER NATIVE PEOPLE, THE AVA GUARANI, THEIR LANDS, THEIR CULTURE AND LANGUAGE**

Born in a family of nine siblings, she had to fight to go to school (her parents fearing that schooling would make her loose her cultural identity), ending up with a degree in Guarani culture and linguistic revitalization. After the reform of the National Constitution 1994, the pre-existing indigenous organizations resumed their activities. Maria Eva

was active in getting the women together. However, the continuous violation of indigenous



rights and the non-compliance of the laws protecting them decided Maria Eva to get involved in the struggle for their lands, which they had never been able to recover since ... the Conquest centuries before!

With the support of ENDEPA, an institution accompanying the Guarani people, Maria became a leader in the recovering of the stolen lands. The state finally made the commitment to return 11'000 hectares.

Other fights in recovering land rights continued, and many other struggles were to follow, including the struggle for intercultural bilingual education which she undertook for many years with the collaboration of the young people.

Maria is also an active environmental defender, protector of the bush (KAA) and water. She participated in denouncing deforestation and the illegal logging of native forests and river pollution, a process in which she fearlessly confronted large companies. For her people the forests are not only sacred but also the source of precious medicinal plants. She is also active in encouraging the harvesting of rainwater and the installation of cisterns.

She collaborates actively with numerous women's groups. Maria Eva is also considered a spiritual leader in her community. Her key values are love, respect and solidarity, the fundamental values of the Guarani people. Her greatest achievements might well be in the transmission of this knowledge and the Guarani language. Her main dream is that, together with her Guarani sisters, they will be able to stand on their own two feet and gain access to decent living conditions with the education of their young people.

Her contribution impacts the realization of various SDG targets.



***For your information,***



*We are pleased to present to you the **5 additional laureates in 2023** selected and awarded in India through a partnership arrangement with the JAI JAGAT Movement & CESCO (Centre for the Experience of Socio-Cultural Interaction), both in Tamilnadu, India, and the Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF/FSMF) in Switzerland to receive the "Prize for Rural Women's Creativity in Rural Life"*

*Below you find photos of the 5 additional laureates at the Award ceremony in India (showing their Prize certificates) and surrounded by local village children.*





In this photo, you see **Sivarani from Tamil Nadu** receiving her WWSF - “Women’s Creativity in Rural Life Prize” (holding her certificate) Memento and cash prize. She is flanked by the President of CESC, S.C. Behar and Gandhian leader, Rajneesh Kumar. The woman in the green sari on the left was the Co-Leader of Ekta Mahila March, Ms. Kasturi.



In this photo you see **Ashitha Ash from Kerala,** receiving her “Women’s Creativity in Rural Life Prize” in company with the same people whose names are given above.



This is **Lakshmi Unnikrishnan,** an indigenous woman from Kerala receiving her “Women’s Creativity in Rural Life Prize”.



In this photo you will see **Bhagyalakshmi, from Tamil Nadu,** receiving her “Women’s Creativity in Rural Life Prize” with the same people whose names are given above.

In this photo you will see **Sucila Pandian, from Tamil Nādu,** receiving her “Women’s Creativity in Rural Life Prize” with the same people whose names are given above.







**CESCI**

Centre for Experiencing  
Socio Cultural Interaction



**YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED ON  
SUNDAY, 19TH FEBRUARY 2023 TO THE**



## **MAJA KOENE AWARDS' 23**

FOR OUSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE FIELD OF  
SOCIAL ACTION, JOURNALISM AND PEACE BUILDING

&

## **EMM/WWSF AWARDS' 23**

FOR WOMEN CREATIVITY IN RURAL LIFE

3 to 6 PM – Award Function & Book Release  
7 to 7:30 PM – Theater of Transformation by Rama Mani  
7:30 to 9 PM – Theater Performance by Ekta Kala Manch

### **Address:**

CESCI – Centre for Experiencing Socio Cultural Interaction  
Natham Road, Majagram, Kadavur, Chathirapatti Post,  
Madurai – 625 014, Tamilnadu, South India.  
Phone: (+ 00 91) 8525835218

## WWSF Annual poster

**15 October - International Day of Rural Women**

Feel free to use it to give visibility to your rural women for their contributions to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals - Agenda 2030.

# 15 Oct. 2023

## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN

### JOURNÉE INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES RURALES



Día Internacional de la mujer rural  
Internationaler Tag der Landfrauen  
اليوم العالمي للمرأة الريفية 世界农村妇女日

**Theme: Rural Women Rise & Claim their Right to sustainable development with a seat at the decision-making Table.**



CREATED IN 1995 AT THE 4TH BEIJING WOMEN'S CONFERENCE BY THREE INTERNATIONAL NGOs,  
AND PROMOTED BY WWSF WORLDWIDE TO BECOME AN OFFICIAL UN DAY IN 2007.  
WWSF AWARDS ITS ANNUAL PRIZE FOR WOMEN'S CREATIVITY IN RURAL LIFE ON 15 OCTOBER.  
WWSF-Women's World Summit Foundation / FSMF - P.O. Box 1504  
1211 Geneva 1 • Switzerland • [wwsf@wwsf.ch](mailto:wwsf@wwsf.ch) • [www.woman.ch](http://www.woman.ch)



## About Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF)

Mission & objectives of annual campaigns briefly described below and on our website: [www.woman.ch](http://www.woman.ch)

The Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF) is a not-for-profit, international, humanitarian, lay, and non-governmental organization with UN consultative status (ECOSOC, UNFAP and DPI). Since 1991, WWSF serves with its annual campaigns, action kits, prize awards & Round Tables for the advancement of women and children's rights, and advocates for a world where 75% of the world population has a seat at the Table.

Via its international network and annual Calls for action, WWSF contributes to the empowerment, capacity building, and education for better prevention measures to eliminate violence against women, children, and youth, and ending rural poverty, and moving civil society actors into greater partnerships with governments to increase activism and ensure that the UN Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 is realized.

WWSF activities are coordinated by a secretariat based in International Geneva that deals with program development, management, fundraising, communications and relationships with members, donors, NGOs, staff, the media, and the United Nations. The secretariat also manages relations with Board Directors, Advisory members, Prizewinners, and active campaign coalition member organizations and networks, as well as with Swiss White Ribbon Campaign actors, who pledge the elimination of violence against women and youth by 2030.

WWSF convenes 4 annual campaigns, 2 prize awards, and 2 World Days, described briefly below.

### 1) 75% Campaign-Actors for the common Good (launched in 2021) Leadership Training for Women & Youth

75%

Women, children & youth represent 75% of the world population, and claim a seat at the Table  
 Les femmes, enfants & jeunes représentent 75% de la population et revendiquent le droit à la parole  
 Las mujeres, niños & jóvenes representan el 75% de la población y reclaman un puesto en la mesa  
 Frauen, Kinder & Jugendliche machen 75% der Bevölkerung aus & haben Anspruch auf einen Platz am Verhandlungstisch

**8 March**

We are expecting from world leaders to change course so that our children and grandchildren will not inherit the unstable and fragile world we live in. Women who give birth to all humanity deserve a seat at the Table to organize for a more equitable world community by including 75% in co-designing, together with men, the space in which we can live without fear and pain. WWSF invites "Actors 4 the common Good" to share their work, inspire the world and create an unstoppable movement for the inclusion of women & Youth leadership at all decision-making Tables.

### 2) 17 Days of activism for the empowerment of rural women and their communities (1-17 October)

17

Days of Activism for the empowerment of rural women and their communities  
 Jours d'Activisme pour l'autonomisation des femmes rurales et leurs communautés  
 Días Activismo para el empoderamiento de las mujeres rurales y sus comunidades  
 Tage Aktivismus für die Stärkung der Frauen im ländlichen Raum und in ihren Gemeinden

**1-17 October**

WWSF seeks to mobilize via its [17 Days of activism Kit](#) (17 themes) women leaders in rural areas and communities. This annual empowerment campaign is designed to increase local and national activities and stimulate rural women's claim for their basic right to development while connecting their local campaigns with the relevant SDG targets Agenda 2030. WWSF awards an annual Prize (US\$ 1000 per prizewinner) to creative rural women leaders and grassroots groups, giving credit where it's due. Prizewinners are published at [www.woman.ch](http://www.woman.ch) (486 Laureates awarded to date). A Rural Women Movements Prize was launched in 2017 and honored SEWA (India) with a first award in International Geneva (US\$ 10'000). WWSF co-created at the Beijing Women's Conference (1995) the International Day of Rural Women-15 October, declared an official UN Day.

### 3) 19 Days of activism for prevention of violence and abuse against children and youth (1-19 November)

19

Days of Activism Prevention abuse and violence against Children/Youth  
 Jours d'activisme Prévention abus/violence envers Enfants/Jeunes  
 Días Activismo Prevención del Abuso/violencia contra los Niños/Jóvenes  
 Tage Aktivismus Prävention von Missbrauch/Gewalt gegen Kinder/Jugendliche

**1-19 November**

WWSF identifies & mobilizes via its [19 Days Prevention Kit](#) (with 19 themes) organizations and grassroots groups working for the implementation of the rights of the child and encourages coalition members to organize annual events for better prevention. The campaign is designed to increase local and national civil society action and encourages the implementation of the relevant UN Sustainable Development **Goal # 16.2**. WWSF also awards active coalition member organizations with an annual Innovation award for creative prevention programs (61 awards to-date).

### 4) 365 Days of activism for the elimination of violence against women and youth in CH (all year around)

365

Jours d'activisme (16 thèmes) pour l'élimination de la violence envers femmes/jeunes - CH  
 AktionsTage (16 Themen) für die Abschaffung von Gewalt an Frauen & Jugendliche - CH  
 giorni di attivismo (16 temi) per l'eliminazione della violenza contro le donne i giovani - CH  
 days of activism (16 themes) for the elimination of violence against women and youth - CH

**Campagne annuelle/Jahres Kampagne/Campagna annuale/Year long Campaign**

WWSF convenes since 2009 the Swiss White Ribbon Campaign, which aims to eliminate violence against women & youth by 2030. Its Toolkit "365 Days of Activism (including 16 themes) seeks to mobilize men, women and youth to sign on online: "I pledge not to commit, excuse, or remain silent about violence against women & youth", and introduce the campaign into schools, universities, businesses & families. (Rev.2023)