

2003 Africa Prize Laureates

In October 2003 The Hunger Project honoured two African women with the 15th Africa Prize for Leadership to recognise their bold efforts to legally guarantee women's full human rights. Both women have played critical roles in generating national legislation that expanded women's rights in areas such as family, labour, economic law and civil rights. They each founded national organisations that bring the full power of the law to women's daily lives.



Sara Longwe

Sara Longwe of Zambia is a grassroots mobiliser, critic and author of the "Longwe Framework for Gender Analysis." She has pioneered the use of international human rights laws in the fight for women's rights in domestic courts.

She faced her first battle, as a young secondary school teacher, when the government refused to give her maternity leave, despite Zambia's ratification of an ILO labour convention that required the school to provide 90 days of maternity leave. This led to her becoming a prime mover in a lobbying group that successfully pressed the government to introduce, in 1974, a provision for maternity leave in the teaching service.

In 1984, she was a founding member of the Zambia Association for Research and Development, which was instrumental in pushing the government to ratify CEDAW: the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

In 1992, she won a landmark battle against the Lusaka Intercontinental Hotel, which had refused to admit her because she was not accompanied by a man. Zambia's ratification of CEDAW was part of the basis of the high court's ruling.

Ms. Longwe served six years as chair of FEMNET, the African Women's Development and Communications Network. Established in 1988, FEMNET aims to

strengthen the role and contribution of NGOs focusing on women's development, equality and rights, and to provide an infrastructure for information and empowerment. FEMNET runs programmes in advocacy, training and communications, and the Network of Men Against Gender-Based Violence. FEMNET was the main organizer of the African regional preparatory meeting for the UN's Beijing conference on women in 1995.

Meaza Ashenafi

Meaza Ashenafi established Ethiopia's leading women's legal aid, education and policy-reform organization in 1995 - the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA).



Ms. Ashenafi's organization has led the charge for women's rights across the political spectrum and across the nation. She has championed women's rights in the areas of domestic violence, sexual

abuse, the family, economic and land rights.

EWLA engages in public education, research and law-reform advocacy, and provides free legal aid to women who are victims of injustice. It has twice-weekly radio broadcasts on women's issues; two publications; a resource center for information on legal and women's issues; a legal aid program that handled 3,917 cases in 2000; a task force on violence against women; and programs related to civil service reform, political participation of women, and networking.

Born of an illiterate mother and a civil servant father in a small town near the Sudan border, she received her LLB degree from Addis Ababa University and qualified as a lawyer in 1986. Her teachers used to say, "Oh, you're so smart and have so much potential; it's too bad you're not a boy."

Prior to founding EWLA, Meaza Ashenafi was a legal advisor to the Constitution Commission of Ethiopia's transition government. Ms. Ashenafi was responsible for advising the commission, preparing position papers for the commission's human rights panel, and producing the first drafts of the constitution's articles on the rights of women and children. ♀