



**Changing the world together!**  
**50 women who have already begun.**



BREAD FOR ALL. LENTEN FUND  
In collaboration with «Partner sein»

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# Foreword

2019 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> year of the Ecumenical Campaign conducted by the *Bread for all* and *Swiss Lenten Fund* relief organisations, with the collaboration of *Partner sein* since 1994. For the success of our work, both women and men are important, each in their own way. Nevertheless, women's work often goes unnoticed. Because the 2019 Campaign is dedicated to women, it was only natural to portray 50 women in this jubilee year. Women from all over the world, young and old, unassuming or famous—from near and far. We have brought together 50 impressive stories for this booklet: 50 brief glimpses that provide insight into the lives of these women. Insights that arouse curiosity, give cause for concern, yet also bring hope.

No matter where these women live, no matter whether they are lawyers, smallholders or workers, they all have one thing in common: They are all committed to a better and fairer world. They are heroines—even though they perhaps would never describe themselves in such a manner.

We would like to thank, in particular, the women who provided their portraits. This small book would not have been possible without

them. Choosing only 50, however, was not easy for us. Such being the case, the portraits stand for all women—indeed, for all people who make a difference—both on the large and small scale. They all certainly deserved to appear in this booklet. Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to them. And to all those who are committed to a better and fairer world. Everyone can make a contribution: Let's take part in change.



**Bernd Nilles**  
Managing Director  
*Swiss Lenten Fund*



**Bernard DuPasquier**  
Managing Director  
*Bread for all*

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08 MARS 2016  
Egalité, Genre et  
Economisation de la Femme.

la Femme.

**“When you realise what is happening in the world, you feel obliged to become involved.”**

Il advocate for women in rural regions and for food sovereignty. Because despite their major contribution to the wellbeing of families and society, their work is not recognised. They have to constantly their land so that it is not taken away from them, the land they need to provide the basic needs of their families.

But I am proud of the changes we have been able to achieve in recent years, one of which is empowering rural women. This is evident in greater autonomy regarding food production as well as an increase in the women’s self-confidence. It is evident as both an individual and a collective development. Now the women are more involved in making decisions concerning the family as well as the entire community. When women know their rights and become involved, then a situation can change quickly. This shared commitment with the women gives me strength and demonstrates that together we can change things. A change towards a better world with a protected environment, social peace and cultural diversity—in which African values are also preserved.

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Alimata Traoré is an autodidact. She became aware of the challenges of today’s world through her work primarily with farming organisations. She finds the marginalisation of women and their lack of participation in decision-making processes especially scandalous.





# Anne-Marie Holenstein

81 | Switzerland  
Former Director  
of Swiss Lenten Fund

**“My discord with women’s roles already began in the 1950s when I intuitively felt that I had to break free from these constraints.”**

I am proud of the fact that we established fair trade already in the 1970s. At present, I am advocating for the Responsible Business Initiative (Kovi), because the due diligence for corporations must be required by law. I also examine the potentialities and risks of religions and advocate the integration of refugees in Switzerland. I am grateful for the inspiration I receive from many people, for example, from the women with whom I was under way in the ecumenical movement.

Especially important was my late husband’s openness towards the changing roles of women and men in our family life. We always hoped to leave our children a better world. My daughter Rahel drafted the programme for it when she explained, at the age of nine, that she knew how an end could be put to the malady in the world: 1. Distribute all things fairly 2. Ban everything that damages the environment 3. Prohibit war. Likely as not, she heard this “programme” from the many discussions we had with people from all over the world at the kitchen table in the 70s. And it is more topical than ever today. But what makes me feel confident is the contact I have with young people working on Kovi. Hopefully they will continue working on Rahel’s “programme” persistently and wholeheartedly. I myself will not end my commitment to “a better world”!

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The Germanist was committed as a political activist with the Berne Declaration, worked as a radio journalist, directed Swiss Lenten Fund from 1995–2000 and led the DEZA project “Potentialities and risks in religious factors in the EZA”. In 2009 she received the Honorary Doctorate from the Theological Faculty of the Lucerne University. She is currently actively committed to the Responsible Business Initiative.



# Belén Alarcón Alarcón

59 | Columbia  
Managing Director | Corporación  
Plataforma Sur de Procesos  
y Organizaciones Sociales

**“My strength lies in my absolute certainty that a different world is possible—that we women and men are capable and creative enough to build a better world.”**

My commitment goes as far back as my youth. As a young girl I noticed how urban children received luxurious Christmas gifts, but farmers’ children only frugal toys. I found this unfair already then. It became clear to me that I have to help build a more socially just world because of the shameful fact that my country, Columbia, has one of the largest social divides worldwide and still fails to accept modernity. Nor we have managed to really put an end to the ongoing war lasting for more than 50 years. I am therefore committed to my work as a human rights defender with the Plataforma Sur de Procesos Sociales. I am also proud of having co-initiated the public debate on civil rights, as well as contributing to the origins of the women’s movement and the empowerment of women, youth, farmers and indigenous communities.

My life was influenced by the transformation processes in Latin America, but also by my rural roots. The poor farmers and their resistance—they are my heroes!

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Belén Alarcón Alarcón was born in Tolima and studied nursing as a young woman. During an internship in a hospital, she met a young patient who was injured in guerrilla warfare. She was so shocked by how atrociously he was treated—constrained and guarded despite a fatal bullet wound—that she committed herself from then on to human rights and international humanitarian law. Today Belén is the managing director of Corporación Plataforma Sur de Procesos y Organizaciones Sociales.

AGRIKOLE

NO SEIN DE MENAGE

HOMME / BAIATA  
 KUPUKA BAIATA / KUBULA  
 KUSATA  
 KUYUKA TIYA  
 KUBUNDULA  
 KUKUNA BA NENGA  
 KUSAKULA  
 KUKATULU  
 KUZENZA  
 KUKAHISA BIMA  
 KUBUMBA NA BA SAC  
 TO NA NGONZI  
 KULANDILA SAMBUNZ  
 KUZABA KANA KISALU YA  
 NSUNGI YINA HE PES  
 HIMBITU YA MOOTE

12 opérations

FEMME / BA NENGA

- 1) KUBUNDULA
- 2) KUKUNA NGUBA
- 3) 1 - - nti ya ma
- 4) KUSAKULA
- 5) KUKATULU
- 6) KUZENZA
- 7) Transport
- 8) KUYUKA
- 9) Kutula yo
- 10) KUKAHISA

DECISIONS PRISES

NOTRE ATTITUDE, NO  
 ER LA REPARTITI  
 TRAVAIL AGRIC  
 CON DES BONNES  
 TABLE = RE  
 LES MENAGES



# Blandine Bukayafwa

60 | Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Responsible for gender issues  
Centre pour la Promotion Agricole de  
la Lukula (CEPAL)

**“The mothers in our villages have no one to turn to for advice. That’s why I support them. Men also have responsibilities, and women have rights. We are all equal.”**

We analysed the gender-specific division of labour in agriculture together with several village groups. It became clear that men did 12 different farming tasks, and the women 22. In order to share the workload more equally, the men decided to support their wives more. And the women resolved to draw up rules together to change the mentality within their families. Now the husbands help their wives in the fields. In the past the men said field work was women’s work. The men waited, without lending a hand. Now they understand that by supporting their wives, the family earns more money. Today men also come to us with problems, and I give them advice.

I am committed to this work out of love. Because apart from my work for CEPAL, I also work the fields in the village. It is a huge burden. I love my work: my work for more gender equality as well as my work in the field; they are closely related.

My three girls have all studied. I wish them a good future.

---

Blandine’s commitment began as an animator in rural regions, where she supported farmers to work their fields more sustainably and thereby improve the family income. Today she works for CEPAL and is responsible for gender issues, advising both women and men.



# Caterina Fierz Carinci

59 | Switzerland  
Volunteer worker | Protestant  
church parish in Lugano

**“Being there for others gives meaning to my life.”**

A serious car accident 40 years ago and my husband's terminal illness 20 years ago have both had a tremendous impact on my life. I stayed at his side to the last. That changed my life for ever. I have a profound faith in God. I feel protected by an energy that manifested particularly after my husband passed away. He was and is definitely my personal hero. For me, a hero is someone who knows how to deal with life, even in difficult situations.

My task in life is to be there for others, especially for my family and the elderly members of the parish. A small success for me every day is when I can elicit a smile from a guest or colleague at work who is discontent.

My wish for the next generation is for them to understand that it's not the enormous efforts that improve the world. It's the small gestures between each and every one of us that make a difference. Inner richness protects us from materialism.

---

After completing her studies at the hotel management school, Caterina Fierz Carinci worked for many years in the hospitality sector and then in the credit card department of a bank from 1989 to 2013. She is an impassioned grandmother and has already signed up for her next volunteer assignment in the Grottino des Centro evangelico in Magliaso.





# Claudaline Muhindo Mugaruka

42 | Democratic Republic of the Congo  
National Coordinator  
Action Salulaire pour le Développement  
Intégral de Goma (ASDIG)

**“As a mother and a woman, I must advocate for the wellbeing of other women and children!”**

I saw a great deal of suffering during the Congo war: sexual violence against women – children who were abandoned. As a mother and a woman, I had to do something about it. Thanks to the ASDIG association, we are able to make a difference. Children can go to school. They are no longer undernourished and healthy now. We offer vocational training for women to find work, for example, as a seamstress. In this manner, we have already been able to help many women earn an income.

During this entire time God has given me strength and he is still an important support for me now. But thanks to scholarships, I also had the opportunity to study in Uganda, where I could acquire all the knowledge that I now need to lead the association.

Every day I see how important health and education are. That is why my wish for the future is that there would be no illiteracy anymore, nor hunger – in short, that future generations lack nothing.

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Claudaline founded the ASDIG after witnessing the suffering of the Congolese people, especially the women and children. The goal of the ASDIG is to improve the living conditions for women and children and offer them a future through education and by empowering women.



## “My life is committed to God and helping women and children.”

I am committed to two things—God and therefore my life in the religious order as well as helping women and children. And so my decision to enter the religious life and train as a nurse and midwife was the best decision of my life.

Already when I entered the order, my goal was to become a nurse and midwife. But the first seven years I occupied myself with religious life and my obligations as a nun. In 2004 I was able to begin my training as a nurse and midwife. It was not always easy, but I could always count on fellow students and tutor for support. At the end of my training I passed all the exams and have since been able to look after the women and children who need help.

Being able to care for people gives me a great deal of strength. And what do I wish for the next generation? That they live a Christian life, study hard in school and think about others in a positive attitude.

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Sister Debora entered the Anglican Order of the CMM Sisters in 1997 and took her vows in 2004. Thereafter she began her training as a nurse and midwife. Today she uses the internet to study further and expand her knowledge.



**“The warm response and love of my people is the source of my strength.”**

I am committed to saving the lives of my people caught in ongoing ethnic riots that have taken a huge toll and forced the people to migrate. I have advocated hope and courage and am proud of initiating grain banks in our communities, aiming to find a lasting solution for their problems.

My personal role models are the community leaders who were killed in their struggle to save the lives of community members. They have inspired me to work for my community. When I witnessed the massacres of my clan and community members, I felt their pain on my own body. This experience has brought me to my commitment.

I wish that the coming generations could stay peacefully on their land, without fear of being driven out or even being killed.

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Sister Dominica works in her own Adivasi community in Assam. The people there have been victims of ethnic riots and land conflicts, during which time the Adivasi lived through traumatic experiences. Several families lost their kin in repeated massacres and had to spend their life intermittently in relief camps or in their villages under security cover. The project focuses especially on this marginalised and traumatised segment of the population.



# Douangdeuane Bounyavong

71 | Laos  
Voluntary coordinator  
Buddhism for Development  
Project (DBP)

**“I am particularly proud of the fact that I have motivated local inhabitants to read more again and enhance their handicraft production.”**

II advocate promoting education and culture. With particular enthusiasm, I am committed to children, young adults and women in rural areas.

My commitment comes as no surprise, however. Several people have guided me in this direction: my mother, herself an illiterate woman, raised 15 children of her own properly. She is my personal heroine. But also my father, who was one of the most important physiologists in Laos, contributed to developing my writing competence.

On the one hand, I got my compassion from my father, for he was a Buddhist monk in his early years. On the other hand, my husband’s simple life as a boy from a rural area also had an influence on me. In addition, I get my strength from my father’s literary works and my husband. My own in-depth research on three Lao epics has been a key experience in my life that has brought me to my commitment for education and culture.

My wishes for the coming generations are for them to enjoy and learn to appreciate their own cultures, traditions and literatures.

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Douangdeuane Bounyavong is a Lao author. She has written poems, novels, reference books on Lao textiles and transcribed traditional folk tales, including the most famous work Kam Pha Phi Noi (“The Little Orphan and the Spirit”). She advocates literacy and manages, among other things, a publishing house and a bookshop providing children’s books in the Lao language. She is the widow of Outhine Bounyavong. In 2005 she was honoured with the Fukukoa Art and Culture Prize.





**“Through working together, a sense of unity has returned to our homes. Now the people can mutually support one another. I am very pleased to see how people work together to solve their problems.”**

II have lived in Olmorán for the last 30 years. Due to the rain shortage in the past, people only survived because of the relief food from the World Food Programme or from the missionary fathers in the local Olmorán parish. Today they have formed solidarity groups, and now we know how we can support one another to be able to produce a sufficient amount of food for our families. The farmers come to my home to see my work as a practical example and then replicate it on their farms. They see the many fruit trees growing on my land and my organic kitchen garden. It makes me proud. Seeing how people change and my work bearing fruit, gives me strength.

For me, Caritas Nyahururu and the Swiss Lenten Fund are my personal heroes through their very committed staff, for they have transformed the livelihoods of our entire community in a special way. For the coming generations that will be hit even harder by climate change, I wish that they find their way back to our ancestors’ traditional values; that they live in a society where my problem is our problem and, that they take care of God’s creation in a responsible manner.

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I am a farmer living in the village of Ndunyu in the arid parts of Laikipia County in Kenya. I am a mother of four children. I work very hard every day on my farm to ensure that my children have food on the table and that I am able to pay school fees, take them to hospital and also buy clothes for them.



# Elizabeth Mpofo

Zimbabwe | Chairperson ZIMSOFF, International General Coordinator of LVC, UN FAO Special Ambassador | Zimbabwe Small Holder Organic Farmers Forum (ZIMSOFF) and La Via Campesina (LVC)

**“Women are the backbone of the development of the rural and national economies. That’s why their work needs to receive greater recognition.”**

As a young girl I was not allowed to go to school. So I became a farmer and saw how important this type of agriculture is for women who produce the majority of food world-wide. It provides a significant source of livelihood and a way out of poverty. But the proper conditions have to be created for this. Health, educational and social services in rural areas need to be strengthened and focus on the appreciation of women’s role as producers of food.

Women make essential contributions to the agricultural and rural economies as they often manage households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies: raising crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, collecting firewood and water, going to the market, caring for family members and maintaining their homes. If possible, they also seek paid employment.

Many of these activities are not defined as “economically active employment”, but they are essential to the wellbeing of rural households and therefore to the country’s overall economy as well. That is why the needs of these women must be perceived and taken into account. Women need to be able to articulate issues that affect them. This is what I fight for, and every small step along the way gives me the strength to continue.

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Elizabeth Mpofo is committed to the uplifting of rural women who make up the majority of small-holder farmers in Zimbabwe. In addition, she advocates for the participation of women in leadership positions and is proud of the transition which has occurred in the organisations she is associated with, a change towards more women assuming responsibility.



 **REPÚBLICA DE COLOMBIA**  
INSTITUTO GEOGRÁFICO AGUSTÍN COSSIO  
**ENTIDADES TERRITORIALES**  
2011  
Escala 1:100.000  
De los Territorios Nacionales

**ESTADO DE AVANCE**  
El presente mapa muestra el avance de la cartografía de las entidades territoriales de Colombia, con base en la información suministrada por las entidades territoriales y el Instituto Geográfico Agustín Cosío.

# Elsy Marulanda Alvarez

66 | Columbia  
Since 2007 Coordinator of the  
Swiss Lenten Fund country  
programme | Corporación para  
el Desarrollo Sostenible y la  
Participación Social - (CORDEP)

**“My commitment is for the communities most affected by marginalisation, for the farmers, the indigenous and the Afro-Columbians who particularly suffer the consequences of war and violence in our country.”**

My actions are guided by my search for a peaceful society. I am particularly proud of the fact that through my work and my personal commitment I was able to facilitate a negotiated settlement of the armed conflict and the dialogue between the government and the FARC guerrillas, which led to ratifying a final agreement in Havana in 2016. I accompany relief agencies that promote solidarity and socio-political commitment in communities. Organisations that fight for their rights: such as for the right to life, as well as for the right to a socially just model of development that focuses on the wellbeing of all people, the protection of nature and equal opportunity for women and men.

My role model is Maria Cano (1887–1967), the first female political leader in Columbia. She advocated intensively for workers’ rights. She viewed the oppression of women and machismo as a hindrance to their political participation. She was a woman with an exemplary life.

I wish for the new generations a country of peace, of social justice in harmony with nature; a country in which girls and boys have a future.

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During her studies Elsy Marulanda realized that she wanted to advocate changing structures of injustice. She was influenced by the student movement as well as the growing Campesina and indigenous mobilisation. Her concern about the omnipresent violence prompted Elsy to scientifically investigate the factors which invariably lead to armed resistance. This knowledge, as well as her own experiences, served as the basis for her to subsequently facilitate the cooperation processes of international relief agencies.



**“Our soil is rich and fertile. Now I know the value of our land, land is money. That’s why I would like to encourage my brothers and sisters to work this land. ”**

When I see my sisters and brothers [the people] in the villages, I realise that many people are still suffering. There is poverty and misery. When the people get sick, they cannot get treatment. As a result, I do everything to help my sisters and brothers. CEPAL has encouraged the people in the villages to cultivate their fields collectively. When production increases, they can sell the surplus and also earn money. It is important to work, because we have many resources: water, forest, land. We must not only ask for help, we also have to work.

The people have also begun to save money. When we sell the harvest from the communal field, we share the money and one part goes into the solidarity fund. The solidarity fund is there to help each other. Thanks to it, mothers can now send their children to school.

I am committed to the people in the village organisations. I am concerned about my people. It is good to see that the suffering has decreased.

I hope for the coming generations that there will be peace and that the political conflicts in my country will be resolved.

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Esther Kiswe works as an animator for CEPAL in the Kwilu Province. Esther and her team educate members of the village groups to enhance their livelihood together: for example, by improving the seeds, raising small animals and fish farming, by using organic farming techniques and by setting up food reserves or establishing solidarity funds.





**“I have changed from being a very dominant and self-opinionated young leader to an older person who has learned to listen better and accept criticism—and to learn from it.”**

I was the principal author of the human rights laws, which I championed to completion and implementation. They were strategic and have influenced policy: i.e., the Recognition of and Reparation for Victims of Martial Law, the Abolition of Death Penalty, etc. My days of imprisonment and torture during the dictatorship under Marcos, which I survived along with so many others, has generated a whole community of human rights defenders whose children and even grandchildren are imbibing in what all of this history has meant and why it is so significant. That is why I am committed to contributing to the theory and practice of human rights whether in government or on an individual level. Human rights as a national policy is still the best solution to empowering the citizens of any country and enhancing their capability to transform as agents for social change.

My father underscored the importance of being true to oneself. This was reinforced by the writings of Rizal, Dostoevsky and the life experiences of Gandhi and Mandela. I get my strength from the people who love me and whom I love, from my family, including my siblings from the global community and the people in the Church: they helped me in my darkest hours when I was not certain of living because of my cancer.

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Etta Rosales is a politician and well-known defender of human rights. From 2010 to 2015 she was the Chair of the Philippine Human Rights Commission. As a victim of human rights violations herself under the Marcos regime, she contributed significantly to a class action suit that led to the only conviction of Marcos. In 2017 Rosales was honoured with the Progressive Alliance Award for special political courage.



**“One day while on a consultation visit in the villages, I became consciously aware of the women’s daily toil in the field—without tools and in blazing heat—and something clicked. I knew that I had to do something for them.”**

When I devoted myself to sustainable agriculture as a woman, it was because it is meaningful to raise crops ecologically in my region. My other motivation is to show my sisters [the other women] that we no longer need to cultivate plants from Guinea, but that we can use very good local kinds here, like maize, millet, rice, fonio, etc.

I am proud of my commitment because I could raise awareness for many women. But there’s more: in several villages where I work, women do not limit themselves to merely backbreaking work in the family field anymore; now they own their own small parcels of land and work with their own seeds. This is a source of pride, for my words were not in vain. I will do my utmost for this.

My late father, who loved farming, taught me farming techniques and storing seeds in my earliest childhood. My commitment is because of him, and he should know that I am contributing to the development of my community.

I hope to make it clear to future generations, my children and grandchildren that farming is a profession, indeed a vocation. That is my mission.

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Francisca Diouf is committed as an animator for ALSE in the Casamance Region in Senegal. The partner organisation works together with the population in 70 villages and neighbourhoods to reduce the food shortage before the harvest period (soudure) and the resulting debts for the families.

TEL  
**LAS MUJERES EXIGIMOS  
GARANTIAS PARA LA LABOR  
COMO DEFENSORAS Y DEFENSORES  
DE DERECHOS HUMANOS.**

**LAS MUJERES NO  
SON FORNIDAS  
PARA LA LEY**

**LA MUJER  
NO DEBE SER  
VULNERADA**

**LAS MUJERES  
DEBEMOS SER  
AUTORIDADES EN DERECHOS  
HUMANOS**

**LAS MUJERES  
DEBEMOS SER  
AUTORIDADES EN  
DERECHOS HUMANOS**



# Gloria Amparo Suárez

50 | Columbia  
Attorney  
Organización Femenina Popular

**“For the future I would like a country living in peace and where all human beings can live in dignity.”**

Women and ethnic communities should be able to lead a dignified life in peace and autonomy. I facilitate building peace in my country and am proud that I was able to empower many women. I could form a political family that is like my own family for me.

The countless women, above all my grandmother and my mother who had to cope under the most adverse conditions, have influenced me. Due to the murder of my brother and murders of many other people, I decided to defend life, women’s rights and my homeland. My resistance was an important impetus for the women’s movement. It was my training as a leader and defender of human rights. My perseverance and my conviction give me the strength to continue this work every day.

I wish for a country where inequality on the basis of social background or gender is not allowed; a just world without wars or violence against women.

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Gloria has defended women’s human rights for 30 years. She represents women in legal matters and fights against class and gender differences. Strengthening women’s rights is the basis for developing peace in the country.



# Grace Kathini Kavilu

30 | Kenya  
Cookstove artisan | Catholic Diocese  
of Kitui - Caritas Kitui

**“Transforming my husband and having a happy family—this has made me more committed to the work I do every day.”**

I was raised by a stepmother and experienced many adversities. I prayed to have a better life in future. After I had to leave middle school, I fended for myself with casual jobs. Marriage seemed a better option to me at that time, but soon realised it was no bed of roses. Two young people struggling with life was not easy. Then my mother-in-law Mama Joyce filled the gap of a real mother and became my protector and mentor. When the opportunity arose to attend an artisanal training programme to construct cookstoves, Mama Joyce encouraged me. After I had constructed five stoves, my husband soon realised that I was earning much more money than before, and he accompanied me as my casual labourer. That was a turning point for us as a family. My husband also became a cookstove artisan.

The joy of seeing the stove users appreciate my work gives me strength. And the fact that my husband accepts and supports me in my work.

I wish a better future for my children, with more affordable and cleaner energies for all households. I am committed to serving God and giving my best to what I do. I am committed to my family and my work.

---

Grace is committed to the cookstove project of Caritas Kitui. Partner organisations in the rural regions of Kitui are assisted in constructing energy-efficient cookstoves so that households can reduce their use of wood by half. Cooking over an open fire requires a great deal of wood and causes serious health problems. Anchoring the project at a local level enables the entire population to benefit from it, including all religions and ethnic groups.





**“My most important source of strength is silence. In fact daily, with regular practice for many years.”**

I learned already from my mother that it is possible to live in alleged contradictions—for she was a well-known musician and simultaneously an enthusiastic housewife. I orient myself on Hannah Arendt’s political thought. Especially on the understanding that we are all *ad initium*, meaning: free and dependent at the same time, and: unique. Life turns out best when everyone does what they can do best and what they like best. Then we network with each other intelligently.

I advocate for the global economy returning to its core business: meeting human needs. Instead of revolving around only money and profits. An important step in this direction is recognising the unpaid work for care, which women in particular do daily in private households. The churches are also called upon for this: they could finally state openly that God is not a “lord”, but rather the unfathomable good all around us and between us.

My wish for the future is that the wonderfully colourful coexistence on the fragile and bounteous Planet Earth becomes ever more successful.

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Ina Praetorius is a theologian and social ethicist, co-founder of the “Wirtschaft ist Care” association and member of the women’s synod. In her doctoral thesis she proved that as late as the 1980s, theologians only meant “man” when they said “person”. Her work has since become a standard reference that can hardly be overlooked by any sensible person.



# Juana Vasquez Arcon

72 | Guatemala  
Regional coordinator and spiritual  
authority figure (Ajq'ij Sakapulteka)  
Asociación Maya para el Buen Vivir  
Komon Ajq'ijab'

**“My wish for the coming generations is that they are aware of how they can defend life and that they see all living things as part of nature—including human beings. I wish for them to restore harmony, peace and a balanced life with nature.”**

My commitment is dedicated to liberating the Mayan people in Guatemala to improve their situation of oppression and historical marginalisation. My grandparents had a strong influence on me. They taught me to respect life, plants, animals and human beings and had a significant influence on me.

But the death of family members in the armed civil war has also had an impact. And finally, a seminar on Mayan identity opened my eyes to our reality. In this seminar I woke up from my paralysis caused by the war. Now I am proud that we have been able to strengthen identity in several Mayan communities. This is also due, not least, to political education for the youth, as well as for young and elderly spiritual Mayan leaders.

The energy that I have today is nourished by knowing my roots as a Mayan woman. I understand where my cosmic energy comes from: I take my energy from the nahuál (spiritual-identity day signs from the Mayan calendar), part of the Mayan cosmovision.

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Juana Vasques Arcon is not only committed as a regional coordinator of Komon Ajq'ijab', she is also an “Ajq'ij”. These spiritual authorities and leaders guide the social life of the Maya in all cultural and spiritual aspects. All activities of the Komon Ajq'ijab' are based on Mayan cosmology and focus on the principle of “good living”. As a result, the organisation works together with approximately 100 spiritual authorities. Juana is one of them.



...right to  
...collective bargaining

## WEAR FAIR 3

...of workers  
...the right to  
...collective bargaining



5 payment  
of a living wage



6 reasonable  
hours of work



**“We can all change the world and should not wait for someone to come save us.”**

I am committed to the human rights of workers, especially women workers in the garment industry who are defenceless against violence and harassment at their workplace. At several factories in Bangladesh, we have successfully set up a system for women that handles assault and harassment cases.

I always get energy when a complaint case gets solved or the young girls’ smiles when they have learned skills in our workshops. Every small success story is a step forward.

A key experience for my commitment today was a conversation I had with a woman in Bangladesh. She said: “I would like to do my best to support my children so that they do not grow up and become a garment worker like me.”

I wish for a respectful environment for all human beings of all races, gender or religion, as well as for animals and nature.

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Juliette Li works for the Fair Wear Foundation. It advocates for fair working conditions in the garment industry, in which over 75 percent of the employees worldwide are women. Juliette Li verifies whether the guidelines are complied with in production countries.



# Kaliamma

33 | India  
Animator and community leader  
Rural Development Society (RDS)

**“I wish that no girl in my community is forced to work in these spinning mills under such slavery and hazardous conditions in the future.”**

I am committed to preventing our girls from working in such exploitative conditions in the spinning mills and am also proud of initiating saving activities for the community which can support the families in need of emergency loans. We have forged a unity in our community which can enable us to access welfare rights and alternative livelihood resources.

The coordinator Nagarathnam has motivated me to become involved with his courage. But also my own story has prompted me to help other women in my community. I myself have been the victim of exploitation in the spinning mill, losing my uterus due to profuse bleeding. After that my husband abandoned me. He was unable to cope with my situation. This experience has made me determined to help other women so that they do not have to face a similar fate.

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Kaliamma is actively committed to RDS. The organisation works in 40 villages in the textile industry region of Tamil Nadu, India, where landless dalits often earn their living as labourers in the fields of large landowners. Because their wages are barely enough to survive, they are forced take out a loan and thus trapped in debt bondage. With the project's saving and rice banks, the dalits are protected from enslavement, and families are no longer forced to send their daughters to work in the spinning mills to pay off the debts.



WALHI  
MORNITORIUM  
SAWIT



**“All people – no matter where they live, how old they are and what their background is – have equal rights. We must defend these rights.”**

I was born during Suharto’s military regime. My father was a human rights activist and made our home available for meetings. Consequently, I heard about the many injustices already as a child. Commitment is something I inherited from my father. During my studies I joined a student organisation and worked as a volunteer for the NGO Walhi, by whom I am now employed.

We human beings all have the same rights – no matter how and where we live. A part of my work is claiming these rights for victims of human rights abuses. We must defend them and fight for them. I am proud each and every time we succeed. Being able to fight on behalf of these people gives me energy. My battery is charged every time I see them. I use this energy again – for achieving social justice and protecting the environment. I firmly believe that the future will be better.

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Khalisah Khalid is Muslim and came into contact with environmental and human rights movements as a Theologies student, initially as a volunteer for the Walhi organisation and then as an employee after completing her studies. Following the tsunami in 2004, she was head of Walhi Nordsumatra, now she is the national campaign leader.



# Lavinia Sommaruga Bodeo

60 | Switzerland  
Coordinator of  
development policy  
Alliance Sud

**“Responsibility and mutual participation with different alliances, achieving social justice, planting a seed that takes strong roots so that truth is brought to light.”**

I grew up in a committed and humanistic family. Women from the North and the South, various authors from different cultures all had an influence on me. During Baby Doc’s regime in Haiti, I witnessed a “vente des esclaves”. One evening 20 young people were murdered before my eyes, people who were hungry and demonstrating for a better life and a piece of bread. At that moment it became clear to me that I would devote my life to changing the economical, political and social structures for the poorest in society. Subsequently, I began advocating for a world in which more responsibility would be taken, a world worth living in, where justice and dignity are promoted and where values and social justice count. Politically and privately, I have met people who have these same deliberations, who commit themselves to the powerless, support them in their cause and give us hope that change is possible. My wish for the coming generations is a future full of dialogue and mutual love so that they find solutions in a globalised world and succeed in enforcing human rights.

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Lavinia Sommaruga grew up in various European cities. A traveller and a seeker who has developed a passion for chance encounters with people and situations. Her humanistic education led to her advocacy for the powerless and to her fight against injustice. She is the coordinator for development policy at Alliance Sud.



**“People are still discriminated against because of their gender, because they are stateless or because they belong to a different ethnic group.”**

I am committed to ensuring that human rights issues for Palestinian refugees become the focus among key decision-makers on a regional, national and international level.

My personal hero is a woman in a Palestinian refugee camp who has devoted her life to the fight against injustice and discrimination. Although she herself is constantly subjected to violence and discrimination, she continues this struggle without rest.

My own experience as a Palestinian refugee, and the experiences of other refugee women led me to my commitment today. The results of our work at Najdeh give me energy: strong women and children who can provide for themselves and are proud; who defy violence and discrimination and find a vocational livelihood.

I wish for peace and an end to occupations all around the world. My greatest wish is equality and the guarantee of human rights for everyone, especially for women and girls.

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Leila is the Director of the Najdeh Organisation in Lebanon. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Philosophy.



# Leticia Elvia

27 | Guatemala

Animator and social worker for Asociación Maya Mam de Investigación y Desarrollo (AMMID)

**“My faith in the creator gives me confidence that every act, no matter how small, has an influence on the life of other people. This is what motivates me.”**

I am committed to both myself and to people in need, to support them in their struggle for a free and fulfilling life. For I believe that people are social beings and this sociability should enable us to build relationships so that we all can live the principle of “Buen vivir” together.

I am especially proud of the fact that in my work I am able to advance gender justice in families and at the community level. Because a key experience for me as a woman living in a patriarchal society and experiencing how difficult it is, especially for women, is to overcome poverty and lead a dignified life.

But another influence in my life was the struggle of my parents, who have always sought alternatives to this capitalistic and consumption-oriented society. And finally, my daughter Yulisa is the one person who inspires my life the most. She is my personal hero.

May my children and grandchildren have the freedom to live in a healthy and clean environment—with access to the natural resources Mother Earth provides us.

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Leticia Elvia worked for AMMID already as a young woman. The grassroots organisation in the San Marcos district promotes socioeconomic and cultural development of the Mayan Mam. This ethnic group lives in extreme poverty. In addition, their natural habitat is endangered by activities of mining companies. Animators such as Leticia do everything within their power to empower local communities in such a manner that they can plan their development autonomously and claim their rights. Women leaders in particular are promoted. This is what Leticia holds near and dear to her commitment.





# Lucie Sawadogo

46 | Burkina Faso  
Literacy expert | Association Neeb Nooma pour  
un Développement Intégré (ANDI)

**“In this day and age, it is becoming increasingly difficult to strive for autonomy or to develop without being able to read and write. I wish that women have the same access as men to education.”**

I am committed to literacy training in the “Mooré” national language. In 1990 I received my degree as a literacy expert but did not really realise its significance at that time. However, when I was hired for the project in 2010 and received very positive feedback on my lessons, I dedicated myself to this cause with heart and soul. Thus began my adventure that has already lasted eight years.

The majority of the people who benefit from these lessons are women. They become receptive to the courses and also learn bookkeeping to manage their income-producing activities better. In addition, we offer advice and support them in their children’s school education.

The task is not without difficulties, however, for working together with people is not always easy. But when you love your work, this can be overcome. Besides, I have unwavering support from my husband, who is very understanding when I have to be away for several days.

Thanks to further training which I have received through the partnership with Swiss Lenten Fund, I also have a pig, poultry and sheep farm. Nevertheless, promoting literacy remains my true passion.

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Lucie is married and the mother of five children. She was born in 1972 in the village of Touka. After completing primary school, she attended a literacy training programme and graduated with a diploma. In 1993 she moved to Foulou to live with her husband and together they joined the village group. In 2006 it could affiliate with the Soutong Nooma Association [now ANDI], a Swiss *Lenten Fund* partner organisation. In conjunction with the MUFEDE project, it was possible to initiate communal activities which foster solidarity, such as building a grain bank or a literacy project for women.



 CENDECT

KAMATCHIP

Minor Millet

Crops :

Village :

Farmer :

SEEDS

S.N. SAMY  
TAILORS

**“I wish to never again lose our forest land and never again go back to slavery.”**

I have been committed for a long time to liberating the people in my community from debt bondage and getting back our ancestral forest land in order to have a dignified livelihood. I am proud that we are finally going to succeed. The coordinator Rajeshwari has been a real inspiration for me. I am deeply impressed by her commitment and her courage while accompanying us in our struggle.

My commitment was prompted when my husband Ishwaran was arrested and tortured along with 15 other men from the community under false criminal cases to deter us from fighting for our ancestral land. This made me lead my community—especially the women at the front. I get my strength for this struggle from the hope that we Adivasi get back all of our ancestral forest land for a dignified livelihood and can reconnect with our culture and spirit.

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Malliga is the leader of an Adivasi community in the hilly region of Tamil Nadu. Long ago the indigenous community was driven from their native land—the forest—by large landowners and forced into debt bondage for survival. Malliga has been leading her community in initiating a grain bank so that they can free themselves out of the slave-like conditions. Through the project, the Adivasi were also able to secure the access and sustainable use of the ancestral forest land in the long term.



# Mamitiana Andriamanalina

38 | Madagascar  
Member of the savings  
group in the village  
of Belay | Tsinjo Aina in  
Mahajanga

**“Thanks to Tsinjo Aina, I am free from debt, can send my children to school and further expand my small farm.”**

I have been committed to our savings group for five years. Because we can lend money without interest to each other in emergency situations, I was clear of debt already after two years. I am proud of the fact that we got out of debt by our own efforts, without any external assistance. I draw my strength from the fact that my four children can now go to school and have an education. I was recently able to have a new, small house built.

My role model is the animator who was trained through the Swiss Lenten Fund programme in Madagascar. He visits our group regularly and shares his knowledge as to how we can organise ourselves efficiently, and how we can improve our rice and vegetable production.

I want to stay here on my land in future, and not have to move to the city. I would like to increase my production, preferably with agricultural machinery. We all still work by hand here. It would also be great to have a car so that we can sell our vegetables in other villages.

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Mamitiana Andriamanalina is a single mother of four children and lives near the port city of Mahajanga on the west coast. She earns the family income as a small-scale farmer. Thanks to the savings group, all four of her children can attend school.



# Mamy Rakotondrainibe

67 | Madagascar  
President | TANY — Collectif  
pour la Défense des terres  
Malgaches

**“Our strength lies in the fact that we are many and are becoming more and more—for together we can change things!”**

At the Tany Collective we are dedicated to ensuring that farmers and their families are no longer driven off their land. We have already produced several triumphs. Thanks to our support, local communities were able to keep their land and their livelihoods and did not have to yield to the projects of large-scale investors.

Our struggle is inspired by all Madagascan women who fight on a small scale locally—and with the means available to them—for better living conditions. And these women were the source of my motivation to protest against injustices, to take action and to speak out for them. For genuine, just and sustainable development to improve life in Madagascar. Only together can we make a difference. That’s why it is important for us to unite, both in Madagascar and worldwide—to exchange information and support one another. For a better world; free of injustice, corruption and discrimination.

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Mamy Rakotondrainibe is committed to fighting against injustices in Madagascar. She has observed how the gap between the rich and the poor has become ever greater over the years. Her commitment was prompted by the shocking amount of wealth in the hands of a few and, at the same time, the unacceptable poverty of many in Madagascar.





# Marie Crescence Ngobo

52 | Cameroon  
Executive secretary  
Réseau du Développement  
Durable (RADD)

**“Sustainable development must include all social levels, without distinction.”**

At an early age I already saw the extreme poverty and harsh life for mothers and women in rural areas. They are constantly in the fields, from morning to night, in the rain or scorching sun. working hard, day in and day out. It is the fruit of their labour that feeds the entire population. But they themselves remain the poorest of the poor. Apart from their living conditions, there is also the problem of land theft. Women are displaced at the expense of industrial farming and robbed of their livelihood. This is often accompanied with abuse and violence as well. These injustices fill me with consternation and have motivated me to act. For more than 20 years I have advocated for a greater appreciation for the work of these women, for the defence of their economic and social rights—so that they can lead a dignified life.

I want to put an end to the injustice. So that future generations can also have an intact environment, that women can determine their own living conditions. My wish is that human values and respect for nature count in the future—not only economic benefits.

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Marie Crescence Ngobo has a degree in Economics and Development Cooperation. She advises women in establishing and developing their own businesses and provides further training for women in this area. In addition, she advocates for women's rights. She has been committed to empowering women for 20 years.



INCARCERATED

**“As guardians of the forest our lives are at stake as individuals. So imperilled that the number of murdered indigenous leaders is increasing. Why? Because we are fighting for our right to life, water and land.”**

The Brazilian Ministry of Environment gives the green light for everything that is happening here: hydroelectric power, deforestation. And everything is done in the interest of capital, not in the interests of the people – especially not the indigenous peoples who have taken this struggle to heart. In order to achieve success, we have to occupy positions at the government level. We are making progress step by step. We have achieved a lot on the local level and worked together with other indigenous peoples. We have shown that we together we can fight.

Because the government’s narrative abroad is different than what is happening in the country, we must represent the voices of the indigenous peoples at the UN Climate Change Conference. Major political leaders, entrepreneurs and landowners should be punished for what they have done to people’s lives, to the fauna and flora in rivers and forests.

Outside the country the government is praised, while we are dying at the community level because of this government.

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Marta Tipuici is a social scientist and a member of the Manoki indigenous group, whose habitat in the northwest region of Mato Grosso is in jeopardy due to large-scale deforestation and hydroelectric power stations. Marta will represent Rede Juruena at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP24) in Poland and advocate protecting the endangered Juruena river basin.



# Sister Mary John OSB

80 | Philippines  
Executive Director and Prioress  
Institute of Women's Studies

**“A policeman asked me during a demonstration: ‘Sister, wouldn’t it be better to look after the souls?’ And I replied: ‘Do you see souls walking around here? I only see humans.’”**

Since my youth, I have advocated for complete equality for women and men in both society and the church. I also believe that women would be better priests. But I myself never wanted to be in the “boys club”. I was first a political activist before becoming a feminist. My experience of solidarity with striking factory workers in 1975 made me a political activist. Then my taking part in a women’s conference organised by the World Council of Churches in Venice enlightened me about women’s issues and the dynamics of gender oppression. These experiences started my passion and commitment to the empowerment of women.

As a Benedictine Sister, I get my strength from the fruit of my contemplation. I am a contemplative activist. For the Philippines I want that everyone would have a house and a lot of their own, where the parents earn a living wage and the children have the opportunity for education and the whole family can enjoy some form of leisure. I of course would wish for gender equality for all coming generations.

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Sister Mary John entered the Benedictine Order at the age of 19 and subsequently became the prioress there. After her studies in Theology and Philosophy in Germany, she received her doctorate as the first woman ever at the Pontifical University in Rome. In 1985 she founded the Institute of Women’s Studies in Manila, which she directs today. In 2011 she was honoured by “Women Deliver” as one of the 100 most inspiring people worldwide. Her TV talk show and her book “Nun Sense, Makes Sense” created a sensation.



# Mbali Baduza

27 | South Africa  
General manager of LHR in Upington and human rights lawyer | Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR)

**“There is an old, popular saying that life has three certainties: change, death and taxes. I have a fourth: my faith in humanity.”**

I attended a co-ed high school in Johannesburg. Every school day we were expected to wear the standard uniform: the boys wore pants, while the girls wore skirts – even during the cold winter months. As a group of ten girls, we raised our concerns to our teachers. However, nothing changed. We then realized that we could not just wait for change to happen by itself, we would have to stand up for ourselves. On the following Monday we wore pants to school. At first there were adverse reactions from the school administration, but ultimately girls could wear pants whenever we wanted. This key experience taught me to commit to what I believe is right and to fight for it.

I advocate for the objective truth that a higher moral duty and standard ought to be imposed on politicians in a democracy. The institutions exist to serve the people and not the other way around. In this vein, I am particularly proud of being part of a team that led to the arrest of the mayor of Lusikisiki in the Eastern Cape because he had failed or negligently executed his duties to the detriment of his constituents, whose homes had been unlawfully demolished by local government.

I want my generation to have a better story to tell than those that came before us. I wish for a world where difference is embraced instead of shunned, explored instead of essentialized and celebrated instead of demeaned.

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Mbali Baduza works as a lawyer for human rights and manages LHR in Upington. With regard to that fact that this is even possible today, she explains: “As recent as 24 years ago in South Africa, access for a young, black woman – for someone like me – to education, health, employment and independence was a wild dream back then. Today it is a reality.”





**“I wish to see a society where women and girls can speak their minds without fear, where they can travel and are not stigmatised as untouchable during menstruation.”**

The people in this place are like my family now, I am part of their community. My presence in the community has been an advocacy in itself. I, as a young “untouchable” dalit woman, have been an inspiration to many young girls and women. When they see me come to their villages and travel from one village to another all alone, talk to people about change and train men, it helps boost their confidence. I demonstrate through my presence and work that women can live a dignified life away from the protection of family and one’s community.

My actual work consists of supporting families in establishing kitchen gardens and planting fruit trees. I am also proud of this. In this arid region of Palata families have now started growing vegetables even in the driest months. I believe that when we use the land sustainably, we can stop people from migrating to India.

I wish that the future generation will be able to live in a society that is free from caste- and gender-based discrimination.

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As a young woman and member of the dalit, Narma has to repeatedly prove herself. She explains: “I am what I am because my father believed in me. He invested in my education, in spite of being made fun of for wasting money on a girl. Now I have to prove that a woman is as capable as a man and that the dalit are also just as hardworking as other castes.” Since obtaining her certificate from the agricultural technical school, Narma has worked as an agricultural consultant. She lives and works in the remotest part of the Kalikot district. It takes her a day in a jeep and then two days of walking to get from her home to her work location.



# Natacha Compaoré

38 | Burkina Faso  
Deputy programme coordinator  
Swiss Lenten Fund country programme

**“Educating women is fundamental to changing a society. I wish that no distinction would be made between girls and boys. In short: that all human beings are given their place in society.”**

I advocate for improving the appreciation for women’s roles in our society. Although I experienced equality in my parents’ relationship, I observed all around me that girls and boys did not have the same opportunity to attend school over the long term. Because the girls were taken out of school if there was a lack of money. My parents were always my heroes. They understood that gender equality begins with the right to education. So they invested in the same amount of schooling and love for their daughters and sons. My father was especially proud of his daughters and presented us as role models for others. Because of my parents, I am the woman I am today—on an individual, social and professional level.

My advocacy for increased gender equality focuses on women and men alike. I am committed to having more women involved in development cooperation, especially through more participation in decision-making processes. I am particularly pleased when women decide to organise themselves in groups to improve their living conditions. However, I am aware, that change takes time, and that we cannot hope for a rapid change with things that have always been.

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Natacha Compaoré was born in Ouagadougou, where she also lives today. She is a member of the Moaga, a large ethnic group on the central plateau. In 2004—after obtaining her degree in Sociology—she worked as a research assistant in an institute for demography. At her current job as a programme coordinator, she especially appreciates that it promotes sustainable development. Natacha is married and a mother.



**“The poverty all around me has many faces and is too blatant for us to close our ears and hearts to it.”**

I am convinced that we all have a right to happiness, peace and justice. This is why I am committed to helping the marginalised—all the poor people who are victims of injustice and abuse of power: the raped women, the abandoned orphans and the local communities that will become victims of the mines due to environmental pollution and resettlement. Our centre for legal assistance gives these people a voice to denounce violations of human rights and support them in their daily fight against multinational companies. For over three years our team has supported a community that became the victim of a major international enterprise. At first no one believed our success. However, because the law was on our side, we continued to fight until the company had to compensate the people whose fields had become contaminated.

I am encouraged in my commitment by the simple, yet courageous people who advocate for those who are forgotten in society. Apart from the socially committed founders of our congregation, Alix le Clerc and Pierre Fourier, I was deeply impressed by the Congolese nun Marie Bernard, because she advocated early on for supporting disabled children. However, I get my strength from God and prayer. But also from the smile we give back to despairing people. During Lent the solidarity with our partners in Switzerland also motivates us to lead our struggle to its end.

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Sœur Nathalie is a nun with the Sisters of Notre Dame, the canonesses of Saint Augustine. As a lawyer she leads the “Centre d'Aide Juridique et Judiciaire in Kolwezi” and provides—often under life-threatening circumstances—legal counselling for the victims of the mine in Kolwezi. Sister Nathalie is also the deputy executive secretary of the Episcopalian Commission for Justice and Peace.



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# Nathalie Kaboré

28 | Burkina Faso  
Project coordinator | Association Neeb Nooma  
pour un Développement Intégré (ANDI)

**“My wish for future generations is that their challenges are different than ours, that our struggles are a thing of the past for them. I wish they are involved in other facets of development for our beloved country.”**

As a project coordinator, I conduct food-security activities with the team to reduce the vulnerability of the target population. We provide consultation and training in agriculture, livestock farming or alternative incomes. The successes are the fruits of our teamwork efforts—at all levels. I am proud of being able to make my small contribution.

My training supervisor Félicité Traore, a passionate entrepreneur and visionary was my source of inspiration. Thanks to her exceptionally dynamic spirit, the quality of her services and her commitment, she succeeded in asserting herself in an environment typically dominated by men.

The experience of feeling useful, initiating small changes and consolidating them, the minor adjustments that ultimately become major changes, all of this has confirmed my belief that I have found my path.

I would like to leave the coming generations a better Burkina Faso; a “developed” Burkina Faso. And for that, each and every one of us, at whatever level, has to contribute their part to the bigger picture. As one of our sayings goes: “One hand alone cannot gather the flour”. That’s how this Burkina Faso, the one I dream of, the one you dream of, becomes reality.

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Nathalie Kaboré studied Macroeconomics. She writes: “During my studies, I was specialising in economic policy analysis without much conviction. Then I suddenly discovered the subject area with more focus on social economy and decided to concentrate on that. Even though macroeconomics was fine, grassroots development was more in line with my vocational expectations.” Nathalie now works as a project coordinator for ANDI.





**“I was the youngest woman in the village who was allowed to assume responsibility at a very early stage. This trust which I enjoy among the women motivates me every single day.”**

I am proud of the changes we were able to achieve with the aid of the calabash in our struggle against the hardships during the shortage period (soudure), the debts and the waste of resources. With regard to health, I am glad about the improvements in prevention techniques for specific illnesses like malaria and diarrhoea and the pre- and postnatal care for mothers. I got my love for voluntary work in healthcare from my maternal grandmother. She was a state midwife and I could assist her in several cases. Other midwives have also impressed me with their dynamic spirit and their social commitment.

Other factors which always encourage me are the strengthening of solidarity between the various members of the calabash and the implementation of effective strategies to reduce poverty. I hope that our village has a promising future and that problems like illiteracy, rural migration or illegal emigration for our children and grandchildren will no longer exist.

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In 1996, after marrying at the age of 16, Ndiouck Séne moved to Niomar in the Ndiambour district to live with her husband. She left school in the fifth grade, after having completed primary school. Since 2000—for more than 15 years—she has been committed as a volunteer and subsequently managed healthcare in the village. In 2012 she participated in establishing a solidarity calabash in her neighbourhood. Since then Ndiouck also works as the secretary for Agrécol.



**“My heroes are all the workers fighting for labour rights in China—  
I advocate for them and together with them for fair working conditions.”**

The Tiananmen Square Student Movement of 1989 and the factory fires in 1991 and 1993 in South China, which caused more than 80 workers' deaths each time, inspired me to my life-long advocacy for labour rights. The workers' struggles in China inspire and motivate me to work together with them to improve working conditions in China. SACOM and the Chinese Working Women Network have been working consistently to expose and tackle abuses in a concrete manner. I am proud to see the improvement of labour rights in China because of our work. And recently more and more students along with other young people are committing to labour activism to fight for a post-capitalistic future. This gives me energy and hope and upholds my own commitment.

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Ngai Pun is a professor in Sociology at the University of Hong Kong. She has published numerous books and articles on the situation of women factory workers in China. She also advocates for migrant workers in China and throughout the world.



**“Already as a child I observed that rural women had no voice. We are being marginalised and our problems are not taken seriously. I am committed to fighting against this.”**

I myself was forced into a marriage against my will. And even in marriage I had to play second fiddle to my husband. Although I was using the land, I was not permitted to have land in my own name. I was also disallowed to speak in community meetings by men and the traditional authorities.

What changed me initially was the knowledge gained from several non-governmental organisations like CALUSA or TCOE. This new awareness influenced me. But also Winnie Mandela, who, despite police harassment and brutality, was committed to fighting injustices for her entire life. She, too, stood for the poor and the marginalised such as women and youth.

Knowing my rights gives me the strength to speak out and fight for my rights and those of others. Our campaign to democratise rural governance also makes me proud. We now have four rural communities that have elected local leaders. Ideally this will ensure that the voices of women and youth will be heard and respected.

I wish for a future where coming generations do not have to struggle for access to land, where they can use the land to produce and thus sustain themselves.

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Nomvuzo Nopote is committed to community development for the benefit of poor rural people. The focus of her campaign is the democratisation of rural governance, gender equality and the promotion of agroecology. She champions agriculture that uses organic material to fertilise the soil, protects indigenous seeds, as well as herbs and plants to repel insects.



# Nong Chouthavong

52 | Laos  
Director | Association for Community  
Development (ACD)

**“When I began my work, the road to Taoi was still very rough. I met a village chief there who did not believe in women’s abilities. When he found out that I could drive a car to the village by myself, it seemed inconceivable to him. Since then I have told myself to do everything I can to show him what I am capable of.”**

I am committed to children and their happiness. I am proud that I have enabled many children to participate in activities where they can play and learn wholeheartedly and not simply do what adults tell them to do.

I was influenced by my patients, especially the children in the hospital. When I observed how more and more children were being hospitalised, I wondered if I could do something about decreasing the number. Many children got sick and lost their lives because their parents were not aware of the connection between a stomach ache and unclean drinking water. At that time I met a Burmese doctor who started a clinic near the border of Thailand and Myanmar to treat patients who did not have identity cards. She—as my former boss—was an inspiring person for me. I also like exchanging ideas with colleagues.

I get my strength from the change I have actively advocated. I wish future generations a world in which people always give, share and help others, as well as doing something to improve their homeland.

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Nong Chouthavong was born in 1967 during the Vietnam War in South Laos. In 1993 she was one of the few women in Laos to receive a degree in medicine. But instead of opening a medical practice in the capital city, she has worked in public health. She is committed to health, education, food and the supply of drinking water. Nong is one of the 1000 PeaceWomen.





**“Either we will die by poison—if the mine comes—or by bullets—if we fight back.”**

I am committed to the defence of our ancestral land in Amadiba. One experience in particular influenced me: In the summer of 2005, a mining company invaded our land on the Amadiba coast. They came without warning, with drilling machines and four-wheel-drive vehicles “to do prospecting”. They started on the beach where few could see them. By midday they came driving inland to drill, also where the young maize was growing. Elderly women were fighting alone to protect their gardens. At first we were confused, but then we assembled and forced them to retreat. The day after we told our Chief Mtshoba to destroy the drilling holes. If he refused to protect our land, he was no longer our Chief. Pressured by the crowd following him, he destroyed all the drilling holes. We told him: “Now you have destroyed the work of your friends. If someone should be arrested by the police, it is you.” But the police never came. I will never forget those two days.

For this reason, I began speaking out against the mines. We must protect our ancestral land from economic exploitation. That is why we have blocked mining from happening on the Amadiba coast for over a decade and now develop our own local projects to generate income.

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Nonhle Mbuthuma belongs to a village group in Pondo and works as a small-scale farmer and tourist guide. For the past 10 years she has fought against the construction of an ilmenite mine proposed by an Australian corporation that would destroy 22 kilometres of natural coastline. Nonhle’s fight against the mine has rendered her vulnerable to such an extent that she must now be protected around the clock by two bodyguards and no longer dares to live in her village.



# Obertina Johanis

40 | Indonesia

Financial manager and consultant  
Pasundan-Durebang Centre for Victims of  
Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence,  
which belongs to the Pasundan Christian  
Church in Bandung

**“There may be no victims of domestic violence anymore.”**

I advocate for the freedom of women who experience violence from men and I fight for justice with every means possible. I advise the persons affected, publish articles and write sermons.

I have contributed to making gender equality become a topic in my church. The Durebang Women Crisis Centre, which ministers to victims of human trafficking and domestic violence, is very dear to my heart. Every woman who gains new hope and strength gives me energy.

My hero is my mother—she is my role model. She showed me that women can assume leadership roles in the church and society. The clergywoman Karmila is my mentor and best friend. My faith in Jesus gives me strength. My friends and colleagues are a further source. I wish that my daughters, my granddaughters and my great-granddaughters can live as people with equal rights.

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Obertina Johanis is a pastor in the Pasundan Christian Church and coordinator for Women's Affairs of the Continental Assembly of Asia. She advises victims of human trafficking and domestic violence at the Pasundan Durebang Centre. She has organised interreligious youth camps and was a board member of the Pasundan Christian Church synod.



# Philomène Edjego

35 | Benin  
Agricultural producer, treasurer of  
the “IFÈDOUN” Kpakpaza cooperative  
Ifèdoun & Secaar

**“I am at peace with myself and with my family. I work with courage and am proud of my work.”**

I chose agriculture to feed my family. Thank goodness I don't have as many problems as before. Now I am at peace with myself and with my family. I work with courage and am proud of my work.

Both of my parents were farmers. They influenced my decision to become a farmer. But I wanted to do things better than they did, because they were very poor. I didn't want my family to suffer anymore. Today I have the skills and the necessary resources to meet my basic needs.

The training and advice from the two staff members at Secaar gave me strength. Thanks to them and my daily work, I was able to make progress. I get up, go to the field and work with pride every day. My work feeds my family. My heart and soul go into this work, day after day.

I share my knowledge with my children and I hope that this inspires some of them to also work in agriculture.

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Philomène has been a farmer for more than twenty years and a member of the “Ifèdoun” Kpakpaza cooperative. The members of the cooperative secure their food using agroecological methods. Philomène Edjego has always educated herself further and can now provide food for herself and her family.



## “I am committed to my people and my family.”

In the past, when I sold cosmetics on the Po market and saw the women all around me suffering, I knew I had to facilitate change for them. So we joined together to form an association and conduct self-help activities to free these women from their burden of poverty. That was in 2002.

Today I am proud of my commitment, because by now many people are able to eat three meals a day, but also provide for their everyday needs (e.g. fabric, cosmetics, toiletries).

Apart from food security, it is also important for me that women have become better integrated into society. My mentor, Jacqueline Ky Zerbo, demonstrated this impressively through her political and social engagement for widows and orphans.

I get my strength on a daily basis from the women in the Federation, but also from the backing I receive from the public authorities and my family. But my greatest motivation comes from my two children, as well as my late husband. He never stopped encouraging me to persevere.

I hope that my children will have a bright and promising future, because all the activities we carry out locally will have lasting effects.

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Simone Bilgo has been actively committed to Federation Lougouzena in the south of Burkina Faso as an animator. Lougouzena is comprised of women's groups who train female farmers in five districts in agroecological approaches in an effort to not only hinder dependency on seed companies and pesticides but also increase crop yields. Producing and marketing Shea butter, as well as chicken farming, have also been introduced as a form of supplementary income.



Women for...  
Connecting and advancing...



**“Live in the moment and enjoy what is and not what could be.”**

Nature has to be the focus of our economy again. We need to be inspired by nature and live in harmony with it. The meaning must take precedence over profit. We also attempt this with our business. We operate in the black, without having to deplete natural or human resources.

I subscribe to a philosophy of life that links performance with the meaningful. But to do that, I had to find myself and my emotional intelligence first. One of my greatest influences is definitely my son, who shows me the world through the eyes of a six year old.

I wish for him and for the future a harmonious world, at times competitive but also collaborative. Where people help each other, are friendly to each other and rooted in nature and the community. A world in which everyone may discover their talents, without fear, the right to make mistakes and vulnerability is accepted.

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Sofia de Meyer is the cofounder and managing director of Opaline. Opaline produces juices using fruits from regional producers. Prior to this she worked in metropolises like London and Chicago, until she had the need to return to something more natural, closer to her roots.



**“It is necessary for us to unite in solidarity and face together the colossal challenges that lie ahead.”**

What kind of world do we want for tomorrow? I asked myself this question while studying for my master’s degree in Sustainability. Because the future does not look good for the human race regarding the climate and natural resources. If we want to live, indeed survive, we have to look at alternatives to our current way of life—these alternatives already exist, also on our end. A change is necessary. There are agents for transition in both the North and the South. Through my work and the Zoein Foundation, I hope to be able to make a difference: for example, how we perceive change and our own actions. We need to place our capabilities and “knowledge” as scientists in the service of change—this includes, among other things, the task of the Zoein Foundation’s advisory board. But we can all contribute to change. Therefore, my heroes are all those who humbly do their work day in and day out, in harmony with others and their own values. For instance, Sister Emmanuelle, who committed her entire life to the poor die Armen.

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The philosopher and economist Sophie Swaton is a lecturer and researcher at the Institute of Geography and Sustainability of the University of Lausanne. In addition, she is an author and the president of the Zoein Foundation, which she founded in 2017. The foundation supports projects focus on ecological transition. It aims to promote sustainability and reduce inequalities.



# Suzan Mark

54 | Nigeria  
Women Fellowship Leader in the Church of the Brethren  
in Nigeria, coordinator of the African Continental Assembly  
(ACA) | Church of the Brethren

**“I will never remain silent in the face of injustice, especially against women.”**

I work for the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (EYN) and advocate for women and their rights. At present, I am working with women, among others, who have suffered from the violence by the Boko Haram terrorist militia. The objective is to assist women in overcoming their trauma and improving their living conditions.

I advocate women participating in politics and becoming involved in decision-making processes.

My mother was a political leader and she is my hero. The plight of women in my society is the impetus for my commitment. Women are looked upon as their husband's property and may not inherit. I have seen so many women suffering, and this motivates me to stand up for changes.

The support from the church and from my community gives me just as much strength as my hope for a better future for women.

I wish for a future in which everyone experiences justice and in which women and men have the same rights.

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Suzan Mark is a theologian, the former principal of the Michika Bible College and lecturer. For 25 years she has committed herself to various functions in ecclesiastic work.



**“I am committed out of love for my country and the Haitian people. I draw my strength from my unwavering belief in real changes despite the difficulties we face as a movement.”**

I have always wanted a profound or structural change in our country. Early on—after the overthrow of Jean Claude Duvalier—I began championing for women in working-class districts in the informal sector and for factory workers in Port-au-Prince. I was impressed by their determination to fight for better living conditions for their children. But after several years of working as a trade unionist and political activist, very little had changed for the benefit of the people. Given the colossal misery in the country, however, our efforts must continue. I am proud of my contribution to the unions’ struggles, which led to negotiating a collective labour agreement in Codevi in 2006. This was a première in the textile industry in Haiti and in a free trade zone worldwide. That is a wonderful memory.

Apart from people like Martin Luther King or Malcolm X, an activist from the 1960s is an example of courage and commitment for me: Yanick Rigaud. As a young student she gave her life in the fight against the tyranny of the Duvalier regime. She is the symbol of resistance and self-sacrifice for her country.

For the future generations I wish a new society in which the rights of workers, the environment and human life are protected in socially equitable relationships.

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Yannick Etienne is the person mainly responsible for Batay Ouvriyé, an umbrella organisation comprising 20 grassroots trade unions from industry and the agricultural sector. The main focus of Batay Ouvriyé is in the free trade zones in the northwest of the country, where international corporations manufacture textiles and, in the course of this, systematically violate the rights of workers.



Shortly before printing this publication, Aldebaram Moura passed away unexpectedly as a result of an operation. We are deeply saddened and pay tribute to her and her work with this portrait. We wish to express our sincere condolences to her family, friends and the FASE team.



# Aldebaram Moura

45 | Brazil  
Adult educator (Educadora Popular)  
FASE

**“My source of inspiration is my 7-year-old daughter Luna, an inquisitive and courageous girl. In her eyes I see the indignation about how women in our society are mistreated. But I also see her joy of being a woman.”**

My father Benedito was a farm worker and my mother Elvira was a primary school teacher. Both set an example of Christian values for me like humility, solidarity, the love of the family and of learning. At the age of 17, I came to know the small Christian communities on the outskirts of Belém and was impressed by this new kind of church at the grassroots level, characterised by sharing, solidarity with a commitment to social transformation. As a result, I experienced how respectful and engaging relationships can be established in Brazil. But I also observed that even though women in the churches carried out a great deal of grassroots work, they did not occupy positions of power. So I became involved in empowerment processes for women.

For three years I have worked with the AMABELA group, comprised of 40 women. We have created a space for them where they can discuss their own issues—be it about production, reproductive rights, health issues or family relationships. Agroecology has enabled them to strengthen their political and economic autonomy.

When we raise our children with new values, so that boys no longer grow up believing they can do more than girls, that the poor do not have to bear the social and ecological cost of development, that the change we need is a good life, then there will be a better future for them.

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Aldebaram Moura has monitored the municipal reform programme as a professor at the Pará University. For 14 years she has worked as an adult educator for FASE Amazônia. She is currently coordinating an education programme in Feminism and Agroecology to assist women in learning to defend their land better as small-scale farmers against large landowners and agribusiness.

## Changing people to change the world

**Bread for all** is the development organisation of the Evangelical Churches in Switzerland. We are dedicated to bringing about new models of food production and economies in both the North and the South. Achieving this goal depends on cooperation between people and promotes respect for natural resources. By raising awareness and providing promising alternatives, we motivate people to take an active part in this necessary change.

## Daring the change for global justice

**Swiss Lenten Fund** is the Catholic relief organisation in Switzerland. We are committed to supporting disadvantaged people – for a fairer world and for overcoming hunger and poverty. We promote social, cultural, economic and individual change towards a sustainable lifestyle by working together with partner organisations in 14 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, as well as with organisations in Switzerland.

## Solidarity around the world

**Partner sein** is Switzerland's Christian Catholic relief organisation that supports and facilitates projects for the social and economic development of disadvantaged people in the world's poorest countries. Our projects aim to enable people to help themselves, with a focus on food, health and education. Our active dialogues with local project partners allow us to understand the needs of the people living there. It is an expression of solidarity, as expressed in the Gospels, for more fairness and more social opportunity.





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