News



Francoise Mukakalisa, a farmer and mother of six children from Gikundamvura Cell, Bugesera District, Rwanda, joined One Acre Fund in 2019. (Courtesy of Conrad N. Hilton Foundation/One Acre Fund)



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An African agricultural service provider supporting small-holder farmers has been selected as the recipient of the 2023 Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize.

In a Sept. 6 announcement, the California-based Conrad N. Hilton Foundation said the prize will be awarded to the One Acre Fund, which, since its first pilot training of 40 farmers in 2006, reaches a network of 4 million farm families across nine African countries through a direct service program and partnerships, the foundation said.

The One Acre Fund will receive $2.5 million in funding and will be feted during a ceremony and daylong symposium Oct. 26 at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California. (The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation is a major funder of Global Sisters Report.)

The issue of hunger and farming — and particularly assisting small-holder farmers in Africa and elsewhere in the Global South — is becoming increasingly important to Catholic sisters, with congregations focusing on needed ministries, in Kenya, for example.

In its announcement, the Hilton Foundation noted that more than "50 million small farm families in sub-Saharan Africa produce 80% of the continent's food supply and rely on their outputs to earn a living. However, harvests from these farms continue to lag behind the rest of the world — while recent global economic volatility and climate concerns pose an existential threat to the livelihoods of these farmers."

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In its work, the Kenya-based One Acre Fund has provided "the financing, tools, and training to help farmers increase yields and profits, grow their way out of hunger, and create thriving economies. One Acre Fund's work is more critical than ever as Africa's vulnerable smallholder families bear the brunt of mounting global crises of food insecurity, poverty and climate change," the Hilton announcement said.

"The fact that extreme poverty is concentrated in farming, with most of the global poor living on $1 dollar a day relying on agriculture for their livelihoods, should be at the forefront of every conversation about sustainable development," Peter Laugharn, the president and CEO of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, said in a statement.

"The jury's selection of One Acre Fund to receive the 2023 Hilton Humanitarian Prize highlights the vital role smallholder farmers have in addressing massive humanitarian challenges such as hunger and climate change," Laugharn said. "The organization has a proven and scalable model that has supported millions of farmers to grow more food and earn more money, with the potential of increasing the livelihood and prosperity of many more."

The announcement said that the Hilton prize will help the One Acre Fund realize a 2030 goal of assisting 10 million farmers "build pathways to prosperity." The 2023 prize money will support the organization's plan "to sustainably grow its portfolio across key markets, reaching roughly 1.6 million farmers with its core program and over 3 million additional farmers via partnerships."

In an accompanying statement, Andrew Youn, the executive director and co-founder of the One Acre Fund, said the organization is honored by the Hilton recognition "at a critical moment for Africa's smallholder farm families."

He added: "Tens of millions of such families play a vital role in ensuring the well-being and food security of their communities and environments, and now stand at the forefront of the pressing global crises of our time: extreme hunger and poverty, and climate change."