

## Seodi White Biography

Seodi White is a social development lawyer, socio-legal researcher and writer on women's human rights. As an African feminist and Director of *Women and the Law in Southern Africa Research and Education Trust (WLSA Malawi)* she has been influential in achieving ground-breaking law reform to protect women's rights, and in promoting women's access to justice in Malawi and throughout Southern Africa. She is a Commissioner on the Special Law Commission on Gender Related Laws (Malawi Law Commission) and served as a regional legal and gender expert for the upgrading of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Declaration on Gender and Development to Protocol status. In 2004 she received the Malawi Human Rights Commission award for her contribution to the advancement of women and children's rights in Malawi over the past ten (10) years. In 2006 she led the NGO Delegation that presented Malawi civil society's Shadow Report to the United Nations CEDAW Committee (June 2006).

WLSA-Malawi is a non-governmental organization (NGO) distinguished throughout Southern Africa for its work in empowering women. The organization is known particularly for connecting women's rights, gender equality and the law in action-based research, human rights training, and advocacy for legal and policy reform. It uses a participatory action-research approach, drawing on feminist participatory research with communities, and translating this research and analysis into action (including academic publications and policy-based advocacy) that has achieved significant changes in women's lives. With a high degree of national, regional and international visibility and credibility amongst universities, donors and stakeholders, WLSA-Malawi amplifies African feminist voices as they relate to women's daily lived realities.

One of the most notable achievements of Seodi White's leadership in women's organizing has been the enactment of the Malawi domestic violence legislation in 2006. This represented the culmination of over six years of challenging national strategic lobbying, and significant co-operative community-based research which strengthened local and regional women's networks in essential ways. This work contributed to the development of the Malawi NGO Gender Network. Seodi White is Chairperson of the Network's Permanent Committee on Gender-Related Laws.

Seodi White is published widely on the topics of citizenship, HIV/AIDS, gender justice, domestic violence, gender and development, property/widow dispossession, women's law and policy reform, and human rights, including articles and books which have significantly contributed to both the theoretical and practical conceptualizations of women's human rights within international development contexts. Such publications include: *Sexual violence and women's vulnerability to HIV transmission in Malawi* (2005); *Beyond inequalities: Women in Malawi* (2005); *The prevention of domestic violence bill in Malawi: Multisectoral perspectives* (2003); *Dispossessing the widow: Gender-based violence in Malawi* (2002) and; *In search of justice: Women and the administration of justice* (2000). Many of Seodi White's papers and other publications

have been influential in promoting constitutional/legal/policy reform in favour of women's rights in Southern Africa. Some of the most recent publications in this field include: *Contributing towards the realization of women's human rights and gender justice: Recommendations for a more equitable Constitution* (2006); *Engendering parliament in Malawi: A handbook for parliamentarians* (2005); *Gender and citizenship as a critical lens for analysis in development* (2005); *Law and policy review: How far has SADC engendered law and policy?* (2005) and; *Can the law reduce HIV transmission among women?* (2005).