

Connect

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Seema Arora
CEO
CII Foundation



India is one of the fastest-growing economies. What we must focus on is to see that the benefits of economic growth percolate down to the ground level and that the underprivileged and the marginalised receive the benefits as well.

According to the latest India Development Update brought out by the World Bank, the growth of the Indian economy remains resilient in spite of global challenges. In fact, India is one of the fastest-growing economies. What we must focus on is to see that the benefits of economic growth percolate down to the ground level and that the underprivileged and the marginalised receive the benefits as well.

It is heartening to see how different stakeholders in the India growth story are already working together towards this vision of inclusive development.

Our multi-stakeholder crop residue management initiative, which aims at promoting a circular economy and curbing stubble burning in the farm fields of Punjab and Haryana is a fine example of such collaboration led by corporate support. In this quarter, intensive on-ground activities were undertaken, and events held in the project areas with the active participation of corporate supporters,



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district officials, agriculture experts and a large number of farmers. At these well-attended events, farmers shared their journey and their learnings under the project promoting peer-to-peer learning and all the participants shared experiences and insights to improve crop residue management. In season 2022, stubble burning was reduced by 83% in the intervened villages due to the project interventions. The success of the project establishes beyond doubt the efficacy of this project model and we remain focussed on expanding reach for greater social impact.

In our work on women empowerment through the Woman Exemplar program, our teams fanned out across 13 states in India for due diligence visits to meet with the grassroots women leaders for the Woman Exemplar Award 2023. In a month, the teams traversed the length and breadth of the country meeting these women leaders in their homes, their nominators, and the communities the exemplars work with to understand the journey of the exemplar and the social impact she has created. The stories of transformation were awe-inspiring and showed the

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grit and determination of the women in the face of odds, and the teams came away with rich experiences that showed how a grassroots army of nation-builders is dedicatedly working towards social transformation at the ground level. The winners of the CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Award 2023 will be announced at the forthcoming CII Annual Session in May.

The Clean Abul Fazal Project in New Delhi's Okhla is making an impressive impact. This community-led project promotes efficient waste collection and management including recycling and composting amongst the 60,000 + residents. Significant behaviour change is visible with waste segregation at home and composting accelerating: a community compost centre set up in January 2022 to compost wet waste on a large scale has treated 78,030 kg of wet waste and the manure is being used to green Abul Fazal.

We remain committed to accelerating social change through our on-ground projects which are supported and enriched by multiple stakeholders. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our supporters and look forward to your continuing engagement with our endeavours.



CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE

Crop Residue Management



The contribution of the agriculture sector to the Indian economy is significant. The sector provides food and livelihood to millions of people across India. However, some agricultural practices such as crop residue burning in the farms of Punjab and Haryana is a leading cause of environmental damage - it aggravates air pollution, respiratory ailments and impairs the soil quality, leading to gradually lowering yield.

To address the issue of stubble burning, CII launched a multi-stakeholder crop residue management initiative based on the circular economy model in 2018.

Key Components of the Program

- Building awareness
- Creating community-shared tools and machine banks
- Technical training and handholding
- Local engagement and ownership
- Research and policy advocacy

The project coverage was expanded over the years and in 2022 covered 300 villages in Punjab and Haryana. The project is implemented on-ground with the active support of the government, industry, agricultural institutions, farmers and field partners. By building awareness, creating community tool banks for farmers to access appropriate machinery easily, and training and handholding farmers, the initiative aims to promote local engagement and ownership with the goal of reducing stubble burning. Through such collaborative efforts, it is hoped that the negative impact of crop residue burning on the environment can be minimized in the times to come, while promoting sustainable agriculture practices that benefit both farmers and the wider community.

In season 2022, stubble burning was reduced by 83% in the adopted villages due to project interventions.

In the January to March 2023 quarter, intensive ground level activities were undertaken with the objective of intensifying the outreach and adoption of environment-friendly crop residue management practices.

FARMER OUTREACH EVENTS

A series of farmer outreach events were organised this quarter to raise awareness about the project, facilitate peer-to-peer learning and recognise farmers and other key stakeholders for their contribution to mitigate stubble burning.



To promote sustainable agricultural practices, the CII Foundation and SBI Card with the support of the District Administration of Karnal jointly organized a farmer outreach event in Village Mardan Heri, Assandh, Karnal, Haryana, on 3rd March. The event was attended by several dignitaries, including Mr Shyam Singh, Block Development Officer, Assandh, four village Sarpanchs and other key stakeholders. Over 300 farmers attended the event.

Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Shyam Singh highlighted that the block witnessed significant reduction in stubble burning in the last season, and was one of the best performing blocks in the state of Haryana. He credited this success to the efforts made by the farmers in the project area, who had adopted viable alternatives to stubble burning. He also lauded the efforts of CII Foundation and SBI Card in organizing the event and pledged the Agriculture Department's continued support for such initiatives.

The farmers also shared their experiences of adopting recommended methods like in-situ straw management, Direct Seeding of Rice (DSR), etc. Sixty progressive farmers were honoured with certificates to further promote crop residue management in the villages.



On 16th March, the CII Foundation in collaboration with PTC India Limited, PTC India Financial Services Limited (PFS) and the District Administration of Fatehgarh Sahib, organized a farmer outreach event at Village Bathan Khurd in Fategarh Sahib, Punjab to promote sustainable crop residue management practices.

Mr Vinod Pande, Advisor CSR, PFS; Chief Agriculture Officer, Dr Kulwinder Singh; Dr Loveleen Bains, Dean, Extension Cell, Guru Nanak National College, Doraha and other dignitaries and a number of farmers attended the event.

Mr Vinod Pande spoke of how in 2019 he saw the problem of stubble burning along the highway and decided to support farmers to stop stubble burning. He congratulated the farmers for joining and supporting the project in the 64 villages under 3 districts of Punjab where PFS is supporting the crop residue management project. Progressive farmers were given a certificate of appreciation at the event.



A farmer outreach event was organised by Goodyear India Ltd. and the CII Foundation at Kotduna, Barnala, with the support of the District Administration on 17th March. The event was a part of the Goodyear India Ltd and CII Foundation crop residue management initiative

in 15 villages covering 40,000 acres of farmland in Barnala.

Present at the event were Mr Sukhpal Singh, Chief Minister' Field Officer; Dr Jagdish Singh, District Chief Agriculture Officer, Barnala; Mr Harjeet Singh, Assistant Registrar, Cooperatives, Barnala; Mr Shivam Kharbanda, Regional Head, North India, Goodyear India Ltd; Mr Sukhmeet Singh Arora, Regional Sales Manager, Punjab, Goodyear India Ltd; Mr Chandrakant Pradhan, Project Lead, Climate Change, CII Foundation, over 300 farmers, the Secretary, Pradhan and members of 12 Cooperative Societies associated with the project.

Mr Sukhpal Singh spoke about the issue of stubble burning and appreciated the efforts of Goodyear India Ltd and CII in mitigating stubble burning. He encouraged farmers to adopt environment-friendly practices and pledged to support other Cooperative Societies with similar machinery in the coming season.

Mr Shivam Kharbanda spoke about how Goodyear India Ltd partnered with CII to support farmers to mitigate stubble burning by providing appropriate machinery and helping them upskill to optimally utilize the machinery.



Apraava Energy, in partnership with CII and the District Administrations of Fatehabad & Sirsa, held farmer outreach events in village Maghawali, Fatehabad and village Naiwala of Sirsa to accelerate the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices and reduce the

practice of stubble burning in the villages. The Maghawali event was graced by DDA, Dr Rajesh Sihag, Fatehabad; Sandeep Kumar, BO Agriculture, Fatehabad; Dr Pawan Jayani, AAE, Fatehabad and Bheem Kulahdiya, SDO, Ratia Block. At the Naiwala, Sirsa event, Gaurav Bhardwaj, XEN Panchayati Raj Department; Ankur Garg, SDO, Panchayati Raj Department, Sirsa; Harish Chandar, Tehsildar, Rania Block; Satveer Ranga, SDO Agriculture and Mahendar Kumar, Forest Department were present. A large number of farmers, about 300, were present at both events.

With the efforts of the CII Foundation and Apraava Energy, the burning incidents have been reduced by half in the block which has resulted in better quality and water conservation said Harish Chandar, Tehsildar, Rania Block.

PARTICIPATION IN KRISHI MELAS



On 10th January, at the **Krishi Mela** held at Fatehgarh Sahib in Punjab, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Fatehgarh Sahib awarded the CII Foundation team for its work in crop residue management. The award was given in the presence of Mr Ashok Kumar, Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) and Mr Vipin Kumar Rampal, Deputy Director, KVK Fatehgarh Sahib.

To encourage farmers to adopt the 'zero stubble burning' approach, the CII Foundation adopted 37 villages in the district of Fatehgarh Sahib last year.



In February, the CII Foundation participated at the **Krishi Darshan Expo** at Northern Region Farm Machinery Training & Testing Institute - NRFMT&TI Hisar (Ministry of Agriculture & Farmer's Welfare, Government of India). The project was showcased to over 2,000 farmers from Haryana and neighbouring states who visited the stall.

Dr. Mukesh Jain, Director, NRFMT&TI, Hisar and Sh. Tawinder Singh, Program Lead, Krishi Darshan, visited the stall and were apprised of the initiative.



Students of Bal Bharti Model School, Hisar, also learnt about the initiative and were briefed about the environmental issues caused by crop residue burning and the possible alternatives available to tackle it.

The Krishi Darshan Expo, which took place from 18-20th February, offered a single venue interface for the Indian agriculture and farming community to congregate for mutual benefits.

AMPLIFYING THE VOICES

Participation in the CII National CSR Summit 2023

The CII Foundation participated in the 12th edition of the CII National CSR Summit at New Delhi on 23rd January 2023.

Through a stall, the CII Foundation showcased the crop residue management initiative in Punjab and Haryana and Community Waste Management Initiative in Okhla, Delhi.

At the CSR Summit platform, Farmer Cooperatives which have played an active role in crop residue management to achieve zero stubble burning were recognised.



STORIES FROM THE FIELD

MANAGING CROP RESIDUE



Gurpreet Singh
Student, Nagra, Sangrur

"Growing up, like many other farmers in Punjab, I believed that burning crop residue was the only way to get rid of it. However, as I matured, I began to notice the negative impacts of this practice on the environment and human health. During the harvesting season, the air quality in my village would be severely affected, leading to respiratory issues, persistent coughing, and eye irritation among residents. The thick smoke from burning residue also reduced visibility and caused road accidents. I was deeply concerned about the consequences of this practice on the environment and the health of my community.

My perspective changed when my father told me about the crop residue management project. I learned about the damaging effects of burning residue on the soil and the environment, as well as the benefits of integrating residue into the soil.

Last paddy harvesting season, I witnessed a significant transformation in my village. Many farmers, including my father, were adopting the initiative. Instead of burning crop residue, they employed advanced machinery to incorporate the residue into the soil. This resulted in less smoke and better air quality in the village. People experienced fewer respiratory and skin-related issues.

I believe that it is crucial to raise awareness about the negative impacts of burning crop residue and encourage farmers to adopt alternative solutions, such as incorporating residue into the soil. By undertaking such efforts, we can ensure a healthier and more sustainable future for our village."

ਪੀਟੀਸੀ ਇੰਡੀਆ ਲਿਮਟਿਡ, ਪੀਟੀਸੀ ਇੰਡੀਆ ਫਾਈਨੈਂਸੀਅਲ ਸਰਵਿਸਿਜ਼ ਲਿਮਟਿਡ ਅਤੇ ਸੀ.ਆਈ.ਆਈ. ਨੇ ਫਸਲਾਂ ਦੀ ਰਹਿੰਦ-ਖੂੰਹਦ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਨ ਪ੍ਰੋਜੈਕਟ ਦੇ ਤਹਿਤ ਕਿਸਾਨ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਪ੍ਰੋਗਰਾਮ ਕਰਵਾਇਆ

ਫਤਹਿਗੜ੍ਹ ਸਾਹਿਬ, 17 ਮਾਰਚ- ਪੀਟੀਸੀ ਇੰਡੀਆ ਲਿਮਟਿਡ ਅਤੇ ਪੀਟੀਸੀ ਇੰਡੀਆ ਫਾਈਨੈਂਸੀਅਲ ਸਰਵਿਸਿਜ਼ ਲਿਮਟਿਡ (ਪੀ.ਐੱਫ.ਐੱਸ.) ਨੇ ਭਾਰਤੀ ਉਦਯੋਗ ਸੰਘ (ਸੀ.ਆਈ.ਆਈ.) ਅਤੇ ਫਤਹਿਗੜ੍ਹ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੇ ਜਿਲ੍ਹਾ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਾਸਨ ਦੇ ਸਹਿਯੋਗ ਨਾਲ ਫਤਹਿਗੜ੍ਹ ਸਾਹਿਬ (ਪੰਜਾਬ) ਵਿੱਚ ਫਸਲਾਂ ਦੀ ਰਹਿੰਦ-ਖੂੰਹਦ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਨ ਪਹਿਲ ਦੇ ਹਿੱਸੇ ਵਜੋਂ ਇੱਕ ਕਿਸਾਨ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਪ੍ਰੋਗਰਾਮ ਕਰਵਾਇਆ। ਹਰ ਸਾਲ ਸਰਦੀਆਂ ਦੌਰਾਨ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਅਤੇ ਹਰਿਆਣਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਕਈ ਖੇਤਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਫਸਲਾਂ ਦੀ ਰਹਿੰਦ-ਖੂੰਹਦ ਨੂੰ ਸਾੜ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਹਵਾ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਦੂਸ਼ਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਹੱਤਵਪੂਰਨ ਯੋਗਦਾਨ ਪਾਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ



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60 ਕਿਸਾਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਫਸਲ ਅਵਸ਼ੇਸ਼ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਨ ਦੇ ਖਰਚੇ ਲਈ ਫਸਲ ਅਵਸ਼ੇਸ਼ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਨ ਪ੍ਰੋਜੈਕਟ ਦੇ ਤਹਿਤ ਕਿਸਾਨ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਪ੍ਰੋਗਰਾਮ ਕਰਵਾਇਆ

ਕਰਨਾਲ। ਕ੍ਰਿਸ਼ ਪ੍ਰਣਤੀਯੋਂ ਨੂੰ ਕਾਇਮ ਰੱਖਣ ਦੇ ਲਈ ਫਸਲ ਅਵਸ਼ੇਸ਼ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਨ ਪ੍ਰੋਜੈਕਟ ਦੇ ਤਹਿਤ ਕਿਸਾਨ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਪ੍ਰੋਗਰਾਮ ਕਰਵਾਇਆ। ਹਰ ਸਾਲ ਸਰਦੀਆਂ ਦੌਰਾਨ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਅਤੇ ਹਰਿਆਣਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਕਈ ਖੇਤਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਫਸਲਾਂ ਦੀ ਰਹਿੰਦ-ਖੂੰਹਦ ਨੂੰ ਸਾੜ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਹਵਾ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਦੂਸ਼ਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਹੱਤਵਪੂਰਨ ਯੋਗਦਾਨ ਪਾਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ

ਗਾਂਵਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਰੰਗ ਲਾ ਰਹੇ ਪਰਾਲੀ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਨ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਯਾਸ

ਜਾਗਰੂਕ ਸੰਗਠਨਾਂ, ਫਸਲਾਂ: ਪਰਾਲੀ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਨ ਦੇ ਲਈ ਕਿਸਾਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੇਣ ਦੇ ਲਈ ਫਸਲ ਅਵਸ਼ੇਸ਼ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਨ ਪ੍ਰੋਜੈਕਟ ਦੇ ਤਹਿਤ ਕਿਸਾਨ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਪ੍ਰੋਗਰਾਮ ਕਰਵਾਇਆ। ਹਰ ਸਾਲ ਸਰਦੀਆਂ ਦੌਰਾਨ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਅਤੇ ਹਰਿਆਣਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਕਈ ਖੇਤਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਫਸਲਾਂ ਦੀ ਰਹਿੰਦ-ਖੂੰਹਦ ਨੂੰ ਸਾੜ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਹਵਾ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਦੂਸ਼ਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਹੱਤਵਪੂਰਨ ਯੋਗਦਾਨ ਪਾਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ

ਲਿਫਟਿੰਗ ਫਿਰ ਗਏ। ਸਰਦੀਆਂ ਦੌਰਾਨ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਅਤੇ ਹਰਿਆਣਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਕਈ ਖੇਤਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਫਸਲਾਂ ਦੀ ਰਹਿੰਦ-ਖੂੰਹਦ ਨੂੰ ਸਾੜ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਹਵਾ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਦੂਸ਼ਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਹੱਤਵਪੂਰਨ ਯੋਗਦਾਨ ਪਾਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ

SBI Card and CII Foundation organises a Farmer Outreach Event

KARNAL: The CII Foundation and SBI Card jointly organized a Farmer Outreach Event in Mardan Heri, Assandh, Punjab. The event was aimed at providing farmers with information and resources to manage crop residue effectively.

PTC India Limited, PFS and CII organise Farmer Outreach event FATEHGARH SAHIB: PTC India Limited and PTC India Financial Services Limited (PFS), in collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and District Administration of Fatehgarh Sahib, organized a farmer outreach event in Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab, as part of their crop residue management initiative.

MEDIA COVERAGE

ਅਪਰਾਵਾ ਏਨਰਜੀ ਆਰ ਮਾਰਟੀਓਰ ਏਨਰਜੀ ਫਾਊਂਡੇਸ਼ਨ (ਸੀਆਈਆਈ) ਨੇ ਕਿਸਾਨ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਾਰਜਕਰਮ ਆਯੋਜਿਤ ਕੀਤੇ

ਫਤਹਿਗੜ੍ਹ ਸਾਹਿਬ, 17 ਮਾਰਚ- ਪੀਟੀਸੀ ਇੰਡੀਆ ਲਿਮਟਿਡ ਅਤੇ ਪੀਟੀਸੀ ਇੰਡੀਆ ਫਾਈਨੈਂਸੀਅਲ ਸਰਵਿਸਿਜ਼ ਲਿਮਟਿਡ (ਪੀ.ਐੱਫ.ਐੱਸ.) ਨੇ ਭਾਰਤੀ ਉਦਯੋਗ ਸੰਘ (ਸੀ.ਆਈ.ਆਈ.) ਅਤੇ ਫਤਹਿਗੜ੍ਹ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੇ ਜਿਲ੍ਹਾ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਾਸਨ ਦੇ ਸਹਿਯੋਗ ਨਾਲ ਫਤਹਿਗੜ੍ਹ ਸਾਹਿਬ (ਪੰਜਾਬ) ਵਿੱਚ ਫਸਲਾਂ ਦੀ ਰਹਿੰਦ-ਖੂੰਹਦ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਨ ਪਹਿਲ ਦੇ ਹਿੱਸੇ ਵਜੋਂ ਇੱਕ ਕਿਸਾਨ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਪ੍ਰੋਗਰਾਮ ਕਰਵਾਇਆ। ਹਰ ਸਾਲ ਸਰਦੀਆਂ ਦੌਰਾਨ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਅਤੇ ਹਰਿਆਣਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਕਈ ਖੇਤਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਫਸਲਾਂ ਦੀ ਰਹਿੰਦ-ਖੂੰਹਦ ਨੂੰ ਸਾੜ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਹਵਾ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਦੂਸ਼ਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਹੱਤਵਪੂਰਨ ਯੋਗਦਾਨ ਪਾਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ

ਗਾਂਵਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਰੰਗ ਲਾ ਰਹੇ ਪਰਾਲੀ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਨ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਯਾਸ

ਜਾਗਰੂਕ ਸੰਗਠਨਾਂ, ਫਸਲਾਂ: ਪਰਾਲੀ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਨ ਦੇ ਲਈ ਕਿਸਾਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੇਣ ਦੇ ਲਈ ਫਸਲ ਅਵਸ਼ੇਸ਼ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਨ ਪ੍ਰੋਜੈਕਟ ਦੇ ਤਹਿਤ ਕਿਸਾਨ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਪ੍ਰੋਗਰਾਮ ਕਰਵਾਇਆ। ਹਰ ਸਾਲ ਸਰਦੀਆਂ ਦੌਰਾਨ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਅਤੇ ਹਰਿਆਣਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਕਈ ਖੇਤਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਫਸਲਾਂ ਦੀ ਰਹਿੰਦ-ਖੂੰਹਦ ਨੂੰ ਸਾੜ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਹਵਾ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਦੂਸ਼ਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਹੱਤਵਪੂਰਨ ਯੋਗਦਾਨ ਪਾਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ

Apraava Energy and CII hold farmer outreach events

FATEHABAD: Apraava Energy, in partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the District Administrations of Fatehabad and Sirsa, held farmer outreach events in village Maghawali, Fatehabad and village Naiwala of Sirsa to accelerate the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices.



DISASTER RELIEF AND REHABILITATION



India's vast and varied geographic landscape is frequently affected by disasters such as floods and droughts. Climate change is aggravating the situation with more frequent and often totally unexpected changes in climatic conditions. Swift and efficient interventions in the wake of disasters are critically important to reduce the loss of lives and livelihoods.

The magnitude of several disasters requires a multi-pronged and multi-stakeholder approach and

disaster management in India continues to be a complex and evolving issue that requires sustained attention and collaborative efforts by all stakeholders.

CII has been at the forefront of disaster management across the country, complementing the efforts of the Government and the State administration. The CII Foundation has been actively involved in several disaster relief and rehabilitation efforts, especially reaching out to the marginalised and underserved in rural India.

KERALA RELIEF & REHABILITATION

The floods that hit Kerala in 2018 were one of the worst natural disasters the state had seen in almost a century. The floods were triggered by heavy monsoon rains that lashed the state for over a week, causing massive landslides and flooding in almost all 14 districts of the state.

Amidst this situation, the CII and CII Foundation collaborated with the Kerala State Government to support urgent relief measures for flood victims under the Government's 'Nava Keralam' efforts. The rehabilitation initiatives focused on enhancing access to services and reaching out to underserved groups in the most affected areas.

As part of this initiative, the Government Lower Primary School (GLPS) in Kayanad and six Public Health Centers in North Paravoor, Moothakunnam, Chittattukara, Puthuvyppu, Mulavukadu, and Avoly were identified for renovation and/or reconstruction.

Work has been underway and the Government Lower Primary School (GLPS), Kayanad, was rebuilt and handed over to the school administration in January 2022.

Four of the six health centres are now ready to be handed over to the Government.

Community Health Centre, Moothakuunam

The Community Health Centre, Moothakunnam caters to the health needs of 4 major Panchayats - Vadakkekara, Chittattukara, Kodungallur & Chendamangalam. This is a coastal belt inhabited largely by fisherman. The floods of 2018 damaged CHC Moothakunnam. The CII Foundation focussed on refurbishing the Health Centre to make it patient-friendly. The in-patient block, out-patient block, public health block and laboratory have been refurbished and a new toilet block has been constructed.

Family Health Center, Chittattukara

The Family Health Center, Chittattukara is one of the oldest Health Centres in the Panchayat and caters to the healthcare requirements of nearly 25,000 people. The interventions included the construction of a conference hall, a bio-medical waste management unit, office room, store room, refurbishment of wards, waiting area, and painting of the building. The interventions focussed on upgrading the Health Centre to a Family Health Centre.

Family Health Centre, Mulavukadu

The Family Health Centre, Mulavukadu is the only Health Centre in Mulavukadu, a remote village. The interventions were focussed on upgrading the Health Centre to a Family Health Centre through interventions

such as truss roofing above the IP block in order to prevent leakages during monsoon and later, converting the same to conference hall and multi utility area.

Family Health Centre, Avoly

The Family Health Centre, Avoly, was completely damaged in the floods since Avoly was one of the worst flood-affected areas. The project interventions included creating a comfortable waiting area for patients, who previously had to wait in the open space, and constructing a biomedical waste management unit which was very essential as they had no provision to store and manage medical/ hazardous waste. Interventions focused on upgrading the centre as Family Health Centre.

All these Health Centres were upgraded with the objective of making them 'safe and green' health centres.

Currently, all these health centres are in the process of applying for the National Quality Assurance Standards (NQAS) certifications which recognises patient-friendly facilities thereby improving credibility of public hospitals in the community.

Through these initiatives at least 5 lakh direct beneficiaries will be benefitted in the district annually.

The CII Foundation's efforts in Kerala have significantly contributed to the state's rehabilitation and set an example for other disaster-prone areas in the country.

Community Health Centre Moothakunnam



BEFORE INTERVENTION



AFTER INTERVENTION

Family Health Centre Chittattukara



BEFORE INTERVENTION



AFTER INTERVENTION

Family Health Centre Avoly



BEFORE INTERVENTION



AFTER INTERVENTION

Family Health Centre Mulavukadu



BEFORE INTERVENTION



AFTER INTERVENTION

STORIES FROM THE FIELD



Mrs Sobina U Mariam
Headmistress
Government Lower
Primary School,
Kayanad

"As the Head of this institution, I'm delighted to be a part of a school that boasts modern infrastructure comparable to that of top private schools. Our school has come a long way from its humble beginnings, having had only 22 students in the past. However, since relocating to our new building with improved facilities, the number of students coming to the school has significantly increased."

Presently, with the support of the community, our teachers have initiated several programs such as a Football Coaching Camp and Reading Club, which aim to enhance the overall development of our students.

Since relocating, we have also received excellent support from our Marady Panchayat, CII Kerala member companies, individuals, and small businesses who have helped us address minor requirements like tables, chairs, landscaping, park refurbishment, among others, making our school more child-friendly and conducive to learning.

We value your wholehearted support and look forward to further developments as we continue on this journey."



Mrs Vibitha Dinumon
Parent of a student
studying at the
Government Lower
Primary School
Kayanad

"Children coming from the poorest of the poor families are studying in this school. After the floods of 2018, the school building was declared unfit and the school was working out of a temporary facility which had limited facilities and we were afraid to send our children to the same."

Thankfully, the School Management and Panchayat stepped in and announced that GLPS Kayanad would be getting a new school building. We eagerly awaited the completion of this project so that children could be sent to a typical school.

We are thankful to CII & CIIF for giving our children the best school with all the facilities and creating a nurturing learning environment. We are thrilled that the school now offers a wide range of activities, and as parents, we have become actively involved in these programs."



WASTE MANAGEMENT

Clean Abul Fazal Project



Urban waste management in India is a complex issue. As rural-to-urban migration gathers pace and densely populated areas grow in cities and metros, the amount of waste generated increases exponentially. The existing waste collection and management systems often do not grow at the same pace. Moreover, understanding of waste segregation and handling is poor or inadequate, and mounds of waste pile up along roadsides and in dump yards that emerge within localities. Rotting waste becomes a breeding ground for germs and causes environmental pollution and health issues.

To address the challenges of urban waste management and augment the efforts of the local municipal corporation, the CII Foundation, supported by PTC India Limited and PTC India Financial

Services Limited (PFS) launched a waste management project in June 2021. The project was launched in Delhi's Abul Fazal, a congested locality which is home to over 60,000 people mostly from the economically weaker sections of society, and where 8-10 tonnes of waste was generated daily. A baseline survey revealed that 67% of the sampled population did not know about the home segregation process and that 30% of the sampled population was throwing their waste in open dumping sites.

The Clean Abul Fazal project was designed as a community-driven multi-stakeholder project. It promotes civic participation, working closely with the local government and municipal corporation, Residents Welfare Associations (RWAs) and the community to make Abul Fazal a zero-waste neighbourhood.

Key Components of the Program



Creating awareness and catalysing civic engagement



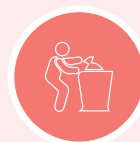
Promoting waste segregation at source and safe waste collection



Promoting recycling waste locally and value-addition of bio-degradable waste with the involvement of RWAs



Segregating and recycling non-biodegradable/dry waste such as plastic



Building skills of waste workers and enhancing their safety

In the January to March 2023 quarter, the project activities were intensified to accelerate the pace of change.

MEETINGS WITH VOLUNTEERS AND RWAs

Regular meetings, both with RWAs and volunteers for assessing progress and planning future activities foster a sense of community and are necessary for accelerating the project interventions and impact. Over 15 community meetings were held this quarter.



CLEANLINESS DRIVES

A cleanliness drive was organised in one of the blocks, H-Block, of Abul Fazal in February, to increase awareness and engage the public in ongoing community initiatives. These drives serve to emphasize the importance of waste management and encourage individuals to develop a habit of cleanliness and incorporate it into their daily routine.



MEETINGS WITH SAAF AGGREGATORS, RECYCLERS AND WASTE WORKERS

Regular meetings have been held with SAAF (Safai Abhiyan and Aid Foundation) aggregators, recyclers, and waste workers. These meetings aim to create a platform for dialogue and collaboration between stakeholders in the waste management ecosystem. The discussions centre around enhancing waste segregation practices, improving waste collection and transportation, and identifying sustainable solutions for waste processing and disposal.



PROMOTING COMPOSTING THROUGH HOME COMPOSTING AND COMMUNITY COMPOST CENTRE

With the distribution of dustbins, community members are encouraged to segregate waste. To promote home composting of wet waste, home composting bins have been distributed and the practice has increased. In this quarter, more families were encouraged to compost their wet waste.

A Community Compost Centre was set up in January 2022 to promote composting on a large scale with an initial capacity of 500 Kg/day, which has been increased over time. Collected waste from residents is transported to the dumping site and taken to the Composting Centre. Equipped with the machines to handle up to 1,200 kgs of organic waste daily, a total of 78,030 kg of wet waste has been treated and turned into compost so far. Some of the compost is utilised as manure to beautify and make Abul Fazal green.

DISTRIBUTION OF DUSTBINS

To promote good hygiene and sanitation practices, which are crucial for maintaining a healthy living environment, over 1200 dustbins were distributed amongst residents to encourage the segregation of waste. The CII Foundation volunteers and the segregation team went door-to-door to distribute bins in N-Block.



AMPLIFYING THE VOICES

Participation in the CII National CSR Summit 2023

To create greater awareness, the project is showcased at various events. At the CII National CSR Summit in January, a stall was especially set-up to showcase the innovative waste management project to the participants and invitees. The stall provided a detailed overview of the project's features, benefits, and outcomes. The waste management project received significant attention and appreciation from the attendees, who lauded its potential to address critical environmental challenges while fostering responsible corporate citizenship.





WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Woman Exemplar Program



The contribution of women to the economy and society is immense, and their grit and determination in the face of adversity is exemplary. One sees this time and again, especially amongst grassroots women who are socially and economically more disadvantaged compared to their urban counterparts. Yet, some rise above their daunting circumstances to emerge as change-makers and leaders in their communities.

Recognising this, CII began identifying and awarding grassroots women leaders as early as 2005. This public recognition not only encouraged the women but also opened up new avenues of support for them to scale up their work. The Award was subsumed into a larger women's empowerment program in 2011, called the CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Program, which

aims to identify and empower grassroots women to amplify the social impact of the change they are driving.

Each year, from hundreds of nominations, 15 women are shortlisted after a multi-level rigorous selection process comprising of desk reviews of nominations and in-depth telephonic interviews. An eminent jury of leaders from the industry, social development sector and media then select three winners for their contribution towards social transformation in the areas of Health, Education, and Micro-enterprise, who receive the prestigious award.

For the CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Award 2023, over 400 women were nominated and in the last quarter of 2022, the nominations were scrutinised

Key Components of the Program



Identification
and recognition



Coaching and
mentoring



Becoming a part of a network
of 100+ Exemplars driving
social transformation

carefully basis parameters such as the types of challenges faced and the social transformation brought about by the nominated women. Through this rigorous process, 17 women were shortlisted for their exemplary work.

In the January-March 2023 quarter, the focus was on due diligence visits to understand the struggles and the achievement of the shortlisted candidates in their

own milieu, through interactions with them and the communities they work with. The CII Foundation team fanned out across the country, travelling long distances and using different modes of transport, often trekking the last mile to reach remote villages such as in Lahaul and Spiti where they braced minus-degree temperatures and snow-covered roads to meet the Exemplars. The team covered 17 nominees in a month.

Taking the Road Less Travelled...



Braving the snow and the bitter cold....



Past bright yellow fields...



And driving along canals...



We reached the homes of our Exemplars....



We sat down with our grassroots women leaders and heard their stories...



And shared a meal with them...



And as curious neighbours wondered why we were here...



Watching the change they have created...



And were impressed by their ability to stand tall amidst the challenges...



To create an oasis of peace in their turbulent circumstances ...



Witnessing the social transformation they are driving



THE CII FOUNDATION WOMAN EXEMPLAR COHORT OF 2023

From a young 28-year-old from Aurangabad in Maharashtra to a 54-year-old from Puri in Odisha, the woman exemplars of the 2023 cohort had one thing in common: a never-say-die attitude and a steely determination in the face of odds. The lives of the

cohort of 2023 are awe-inspiring: their life has taken them down dark alleys of neglect, abuse and discrimination but they have soldered on to find the light at the end of the tunnel, and help others out of abysmally crushing circumstances.



EDUCATION

Bhawani Kanwar
Rajasthan
Meena Rani
Haryana
Pushpa Shukla
Chhattisgarh
Rekha Devi
Uttar Pradesh
Swati Sawant
Maharashtra



HEALTH

Jaspreet Kaur
Punjab
P Anna Vilasini
Telangana
Razia Nasreen
West Bengal
Sapna Verma
Uttar Pradesh
Sunita Chauhan
Madhya Pradesh
Zohmangaihi
Mizoram



MICRO-ENTERPRISE

Archana Gokul Mane
Maharashtra
Bishnupriya Swain
Odisha
Laxmi Rani
Rajasthan
Poonam Paul
Himachal Pradesh
Rita Devi
Bihar
Sonali More
Maharashtra

From Darkness To Illuminating The Lives Of Others: P Anna Vilasini

Anna Vilasini was born on an Amavasya day - a dark, moonless night - in Secunderabad, Telangana. Her paternal grandmother believed that birth on the Amavasya or no moon night is an ill omen and declared her a bad omen. Compounding Anna's problems was her dark skin colour, which became her defining characteristic and started a tragic story of body shaming and associated abuse and discrimination that she faced throughout her life.

Anna's life was full of struggles: At age 4, her parents separated, and she found herself in court as the object of an acrimonious custody battle. Her father won her custody, but her father's home was never a safe and loving space for her. She suffered emotional abuse and atrocities that scarred her for life. Her paternal grandmother's hatred of her took different forms to torment her, and Anna was named 'Kali' by her grandmother. Anna's mother, who was also tormented, fled the house when Anna was barely 3, leaving the poor child at the mercy of her grandmother, who was both her chief caregiver as well as her chief tormenter. The little girl was made to do strenuous household chores such as washing utensils, cleaning bathrooms, and was severely punished if she resisted her grandmother's orders. She had no one to turn to - Anna's father had turned alcoholic

and never noticed Anna's sad state, and her mother was missing from her life.

But worse was to come: Anna was first molested when she was in 3rd class by one of her father's friends, and the sexual abuse grew over the years as she suffered in silence. One man became multiple men - uncle, grandfather, father's friends. Anna became silent and withdrawn. In class 7th, another elderly friend of her



father attempted to rape her while her father lay drunk in the next room. Anna's father remarried soon after this harrowing incident, but Anna's hopes of love and peace were dashed when she discovered her stepmother was no better than her grandmother. Her stepbrother born a year into this marriage, also was made of the same mettle. She suffered horrific instances of sexual abuse at the hands of her step-brother. One day when Anna was exhausted and could work no more, the stepmother and brother stuffed dirty socks into her mouth and beat her till she bled.

A year later, Anna's father, unable to cope with the tensions at home, enrolled Anna in 'Forum for Boys,' a shelter home in Secunderabad for street children, and the only way out that he knew of. It was a desperate attempt at finding refuge for the 13-year-old despite her being the only girl in an all boys home. Anna channelized her pain and anger by spending all her time at the care home helping the staff in activities such as singing, playing games, reading books and engaging with children around her who were orphaned, abandoned by families, and victims of sexual abuse and child trafficking. Her life's focus became to lend her heart and hand to those like her. Through their stories, she found strength and opportunity in her own life, using it as a springboard to launch herself in a new direction.

Anna's marriage brought her a fresh set of problems: an alcoholic and abusive husband who tried to kill their child. Desperate to save her child and herself, Anna fled home, and found refuge in her father's house. Determined to give herself and her child a life of dignity and respect, Anna found and worked at odd jobs and

resumed her work with the 'Forum for Boys' helping with fundraising. Seeing Anna's motivation to help victims of abuse and violence, her cousin working with My Choices Foundation informed her of a job. Since then Anna has been independent.

A survivor of child sexual abuse and domestic violence, Anna is committed to the work of prevention of child sexual abuse and domestic violence and works as a peace maker, counsellor and mentor, guiding many women, young girls, and boys out of the clutches and lasting effects of abuse and violence. From being the first responder to an act of violence and abuse to sensitizing her community on gender rights, and spreading awareness, Anna has combined both psychological restoration and social transformation at the grassroots through her work.

Anna's motivation to work for the cause comes from a deep personal space of having been a victim of child sexual abuse, gender-based discrimination, and violence. Anna today is fighting the normalization and social acceptance of violence against women, girls, and boys in the community she works with by creating awareness and implementing interventions around the issue. She undertakes one-to-one and group counseling, encouraging them to tell their stories and problems.

Through all her community initiatives, P Anna Vilasini has reached 3,50,000 children, 1,87,500 women, and 50,000 men. Anna's core work also involves creating a second rung of community women leaders. So far, she has empowered 41 second-in-line women leaders.

From Rock Bottom to Radiance: Swati Sawant

Born into a poverty-stricken family in Aadte village in 1989, Swati Sawant's turmoil and misery began very early, in fact while she was still in her mother's womb. Her alcoholic father was seldom home and "out for work" for several months at a stretch. Promiscuous by nature, in Swati's words, *"It was his addiction to be with different women"*. Given that her husband was absent and there was no money to sustain the family, Swati's mother had to work as a daily wage earner in the fields. Even when Swati's mother was pregnant with her, she had to continue working to earn enough to look after herself, her unborn child, and her son. While she returned to her maternal family during her pregnancy,



economic stress forced her to keep working. The group that facilitated these daily work assignments was managed by a lower-caste man.

It was during one of his visits, that Swati's father saw a man and accused Swati's mother of being unfaithful and insinuated that Swati was a product of this illegitimate relationship. He also sowed the seed of this suspicion in the head of Swati's maternal uncle.

A few years later, her father visited their house again, when Swati was around 4 years old. On spotting his wife working in the sugarcane field with the man he suspected was Swati's father, he flew into a rage and brought Swati's maternal uncle to the field. Together, the two men, driven insane by anger and jealousy, dragged Swati's mother across the field by her hair, tied her to a wooden pole in the shed, and beat her till she died.

As small children, Swati and her brother, along with many from the village witnessed this gruesome murder, but no one did anything. Till date, Swati is not clear what was done with her mother's body post her death.

After her mother's death, her maternal uncle decided that both the kids would stay with him and not with the father. But life's challenges continued: her uncle's son who was entering his teenage years started using Swati for sexual experimentation. As a young girl, Swati felt uncomfortable and tried to tell her uncle and aunt, but instead of believing her, they blamed Swati. She was beaten, thrown out of the house, and starved of food for many days.

When she married, Swati discovered to her utter dismay that her husband was a womanizer, alcoholic and addicted to Gutka and that the family was debt-laden and extremely poor. She struggled to make ends meet, working in the fields with the women from the in-law's family. Swati soon got pregnant and delivered her first child in 2005. She fell sick but didn't

have money to go to the doctor. This made her realize that if she doesn't do anything or stand on her own feet, no one will take care of her. Her husband's family threw them out because they refused to support their growing numbers.

One day, while intoxicated, Swati's husband went to work and fell from the construction site. The expenses for his medical care added up to Rs 1 lakh, but his workplace only provided Rs 20,000 towards the cost, leaving Swati to arrange for the rest. Swati took loans from 3-4 different private finance companies to cover the remaining expenses and had to start working multiple jobs to pay this loan back. It was this exposure to the outside world that made Swati aware that she was not alone in suffering abuse and discrimination.

Recognizing patriarchy as the root cause, Swati began studying, sharing her own experiences with others, and bringing women together to tackle common obstacles that hindered women's progress, while assuming leadership positions within their families and society at large.

Swati joined an NGO called CORO and has been actively engaged in educating and empowering women in rural western Maharashtra. Her work further expanded to organizing livelihood training for 2,000 single women from 92 villages, enabling them to establish their own businesses. She also led advocacy campaigns at the district level, involving 5,000 women and reaching 40,000 people through the Grassroots Voice campaign. Additionally, she worked with 54 organizations, impacting over 4,000 people and indirectly reaching an additional 9,000 people through the food security campaign.

Currently, Swati is working with 18 CORO fellows to empower them to undertake local issues for communal benefit, impacting 34,000 women in their own communities. In addition, Swati has taken it upon herself to educate women on property rights, starting with 1,000 women in 32 villages.

[To read the stories of the other Finalists for the Award, click here.](#)

MARCH 8: CELEBRATING THE POWER OF WOMEN

This year, International Women's Day was celebrated across the globe with "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality" as the theme to draw attention to the digital gender gap that accentuates economic and social inequalities, the vulnerabilities and rights of women and girls in digital spaces while addressing online and ICT-facilitated gender-based violence.

To commemorate this day, the CII Foundation presented views of women from different walks of life using various media platforms.

Two of our grassroots women leaders shared their stories of abuse and discrimination, and how they overcame their challenges to emerge stronger and shaped a better life for women trapped in the same circumstances on social media.

Daughter of a sex worker in Kolkata's infamous Kalighat, a red-light area, CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Tumpa Adhikari found to her dismay that her mother's clients thought she was fair game and sexually abused her. But she was not the only one suffering: most young girls faced the same trauma. *"I always wanted to work for the children of sex workers of Kalighat in Kolkata to ensure that child abuse and 2nd generation prostitution ends in the area,"* says Tumpa. Determined to be the change she wanted to see, Tumpa set up an organisation that helps improve the lives of the children of sex workers

and has reached out to over 9000 community members to create awareness. Today, children of sex workers are graduating and getting jobs and Tumpa's dream is to ensure that 5 years from now, every person is aware of their rights and has the courage to fight for them, and a better life.

CII Foundation Women Exemplar Bobby Mahato faced neglect and discrimination as a child, and marriage only made matters worse. Determined to create a better life for herself, she walked out of her marriage and started making garments. She works in the most backward areas of Jharkhand, teaching women and children from backward tribes to recognise their self-worth and become financially independent. Bobby is trying to empower women so that they can educate their children, prevent child marriage and contribute in equal measure to their homes and society. *"I work with the tribal women from the most backward areas of Jharkhand. I want them to be financially independent & educate their children. They should be able to take decisions for themselves & have equal say in their families & society at large,"* says Bobby Mahato. Bobby helps women like her set up enterprises and has helped over 20,000 women gain financial independence.

Presenting urban views, Rumjhum Chatterjee, Member, Steering Committee of CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Program and Co-founder and Managing Trustee of The Infravision Foundation; Smita Agarwal:



Director & CFO, PTC Industries and National Chairperson, CII Indian Women Network and Kaveree Bamzai, Member, Steering Committee of CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Program & Author and Columnist shared their thoughts on a panel discussion on Zee Business News moderated by journalist Swati Khandelwal. The participants deliberated on how in the corporate world, there is greater sensitization and acceptance of the contribution of women, with a recognition of the economic argument to increase the participation of women as a diverse workforce makes excellent business sense.



AMPLIFYING THE VOICES

Woman Exemplars at the CII National CSR Summit 2023

At the CII National CSR Summit this year, the 3 CII Foundation Woman Exemplars, Mana Mandlekar, Rama Sharma and Lata Mane, who are grassroots women leaders, shared their stories of struggle and setbacks and how they emerged as leaders for their communities, driving change in areas such as education and healthcare for the marginalised and underprivileged.

"I want every girl to be educated, safe & confident. She should be able to speak up for herself & her rights." said CII Foundation Woman Exemplar from the 2020 cohort, Mana Mandlekar, Founder of Tinka Samajik Sansthan, seeking support to make this dream a reality.

Sharing her experience working in the rural education sphere, CII Foundation Woman Exemplar 2020, Rama Sharma from Tonk, Rajasthan, who is also Founder of Bhavi Nirman Society said, *"I want to scale up my work to reach out to more girls so that they can be educated."*

RECOGNISING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN-LED DEVELOPMENT

India is a young society. Adolescents in India are a growing demographic, constituting the demographic dividend that is a great asset for India. This segment of youth has become much better educated than the previous generation of adolescents—especially because it took place with gender parity.

These educated girls aspire, they have role models, they have a plan. This is clearly an opportunity. The question before us today is what can we do to help them achieve their plan? To achieve gender equality, the government has taken several transformative steps to accelerate change and empower women by focusing on areas such as healthcare, education, skill development. Schemes such as 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' promote the education of the girl child, while the National Skill Development Policy promotes inclusive skill development. There are several other government schemes and policies designed to empower women. Moreover, India's Gender Budget, which aims to reduce the gender gap, was increased this year. This augurs well for women and will play a critical role in building an inclusive India where 'Nari Shakti' will have opportunities to lead and shape a new world.

In 2013, recognising the tremendous untapped potential, CII launched the Indian Women Network with the vision of becoming the largest network for career women to discuss and overcome challenges and identify ways to impact and co-create ecosystems that enable women to fulfil their economic potential. Today, with 23 chapters across the country and 10 years into our existence, we have built programs around the needs and experiences of women, including the campus-to-career initiative for young students on the brink of entering the workforce, mentorship for mid-level women professionals, and the gender self-diagnostic tool for companies to self-assess how they are faring vis-à-vis inclusion and what they can do better.

With India as G20 president, the focus is on creating inclusive multi-stakeholder alliances to empower women. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's comment at the G20 Summit in Bali that "global development is not possible without women's participation" underscores India's commitment towards inclusive development.

With CII as the secretariat for B20, the business platform of G20, I am optimistic that we can strengthen gender equity by



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working with all stakeholders. At B20, India this year will add the industry perspective to strategic policies by the world's largest economies to shape a more equitable world. The dialogue will take place under the theme of RAISE—Responsible, Accelerated, Innovative, Sustainable and Equitable Businesses. The "E" which represents Equitable business practices, looks at fostering inclusive growth and thus follows two basic principles: (i) principle of 'opportunities for all' (ii) principle of 'inclusiveness' wherein the economic benefits of businesses are fairly distributed among all.



When we look around, we see many women leading initiatives, whether they may be self-help groups at the rural level, or startups and independent small businesses

It is imperative that a roadmap is designed to help women achieve their full potential by capitalising on the opportunities that present themselves at all levels. If we look at the emerging economic trends, clear enablers of inclusion and enhanced participation of women seem to be emerging. These include:

a) New technologies and increasing digitisation are closing gender gaps in education and access to markets, and thus hold the potential to benefit women as workers, consumers and decision makers. Technology advancements, such as mobile money and digital platforms, may help women overcome barriers they face in accessing finance and markets, two of the biggest challenges for new business.

b) Linked to the increased digitisation is also the burgeoning startup culture which offers women tremendous opportunities to

be entrepreneurs and job givers instead of job seekers. Accompanied by the rise of the service industry, this is a big opening for women to take on new opportunities by keeping their skill sets and requirements at the centre.

c) The energy transition which we are witnessing requires an overhaul of the way our economy functions. This translates into new jobs with new skills, thereby providing an opportunity for industry to intentionally engage the new generation of aspirational women to lead us through a just energy transition.

d) Globalisation of the value chain is yet another trend that is throwing up a plethora of opportunities, allowing women-owned MSMEs to access foreign markets indirectly by supplying domestic exporters, helping to reduce the fixed costs of exporting.

A survey of over 700 working women conducted by CII revealed that 40% of the respondents aspired to "rise to the top of their companies". While women in the workforce are displaying new attitudes, even in the areas of education, especially higher education, a larger number of women in India today are opting for advanced learning at higher rates compared to before the pandemic. The gender gap in STEM subjects is narrowing, and an increasing number of women are opting to reskill and upskill themselves with various certification courses. When we look around, we see many women leading initiatives, whether they may be self-help groups at the rural level, or startups and independent small businesses. Not only are women tapping into existing opportunities but also creating new opportunities for themselves.

We have over 1.37 million elected Indian women representatives providing leadership in formulating and implementing gender-sensitive public policies at the community level. The serving president of India, Droupadi Murmu, is a role model for us. Women are leading in every sector, and I believe the narrative around women and leadership is changing. Let us orchestrate the opportunities that are presenting themselves, to create an economy that applies intentional design to move towards greater participation and inclusive growth for all. (cbci.in)



CII Foundation Woman Exemplar 2014, Lata Mane, Secretary, Vijay Krida Mandal who came out of the shackles of sex trade, shared her story and emphasized, *"My struggles and challenges made me determined that my daughters and other girls should not suffer the same fate as me. I want the children of sex workers to have access to education and health facilities"*.

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