

Suresh Prabhu presents the CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Award to Women Change Makers

Grassroots Women Leaders from Jharkhand, Goa and Mizoram awarded CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Award 2019

New Delhi, 4 April 2019:

Shri Suresh Prabhu, Hon'ble Minister of Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation, presented three grassroots women leaders with the CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Award 2019 for their extraordinary contribution in transforming the excluded and disadvantaged communities in India. Ms. Bhimavva Chalwadi of Goa, Ms Vanlalruati of Mizoram and Ms Nilima Tigga of Jharkhand were conferred the awards for education, health and micro-enterprise respectively at the CII Annual Session 2019 held in New Delhi.

Daughter of a rag picker, Bhimavva became a Devadasi at the age of 15. Her rescue from sex work put her on the path of child protection. Bhimavva has counselled and prevented 2,500 girls from joining the Devadasi practice. She has provided rehabilitation support to 1,400 women rescued from sex work. A child protection champion and advocate of education, Bhimavva herself is unschooled. A firm believer in vocational education, Bhimavva leads Swift Wash Laundry, a unique social enterprise that has opened up jobs with dignity for 280 women who were once engaged with sex work.

Vanlalruati overcame poverty, drug abuse, violence and family abandonment to become a towering champion for women living with HIV. Discriminated by the state health system, she became one of the first Mizo woman to publicly declare her HIV positive status. Vanlalruati founded the Mizoram Positive Women's Network (MPWN) and has directly impacted 20,000 persons living with HIV in the state. In a state with the highest prevalence of HIV, she has pushed for large-scale policy shifts, leading to the integration of persons with HIV in the general healthcare system.

Small savings from a self-help group (SHG) and earnings from her micro-enterprise enabled Nilima Tigga to pull her family back from the brink of starvation. With this conviction, she grew from a SHG peon to setting up Shankhdhara Mahila Vikash Mandal (SMVM), a federation of 1,030 SHGs in Lohardaga, Jharkhand, one of the most backward districts of India. Under her leadership, SMVM has created significant income increase for 15,000 women and their families through SHGs and 700 women through micro-entrepreneurship

These three extraordinary women leaders were recognized as the CII Foundation Woman Exemplars 2019 for their courage and conviction in transforming lives of many others in their communities.

The Award is part of the CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Program (WEP) which focuses on promoting women's empowerment at the community level by discovering and recognizing those who chose to look beyond their limitations and contributed significantly to positively impact the community. Since its inception in 2005, 44 women have been recognized and supported. Each woman is further impacting lives of 2 lakh people annually. The platform aims at celebrating the Women Exemplar Collective with industry leaders, and to spur dynamic learning and exchange among the women change makers.

In addition to a cash reward of Rs 3,00,000 each, the three winners and 12 finalists of WEP 2019 will be part of the CII Foundation leadership training and mentoring program.

Selected by an eminent panel from Industry and social sector, the awardees were shortlisted from over 300 nominations received from NGOs across the country. The award, now in its 15th year, was supported by JK Tyres (in Education category) and JCB India (in Micro-Enterprise category).

About CII Foundation:

The CII Foundation (CIIF) was set up by CII in 2011 to undertake a wide range of developmental and charitable activities pan India by enabling industry for infusing inclusive development. CIIF works towards inclusive development by providing a meaningful bridge between marginalized communities and donors, especially corporates by providing strategic guidance on CSR and developing and

managing high impact programmes. The thematic areas of CIIF include: Early Childhood Education; Women Empowerment; Climate Change Resilience; Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation.

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