

## ***Her Skill, Her Future Initiative Launched to Empower Widows***

***CII Foundation, The Loomba Foundation, and Women's Collective Forum Collaborate to Equip 1 lakh Widows with Skills for a Brighter Future***

**10 January 2025, New Delhi** – The CII Foundation, in collaboration with The Loomba Foundation and the Women's Collective Forum launched the transformative initiative, *Her Skill, Her Future*, in New Delhi today. This initiative aims to provide 1,00,000 widows with the skills, resources, and opportunities to build sustainable livelihoods and create brighter futures. The collaboration was marked by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the CII Foundation and The Loomba Foundation, formalizing the partnership and aligning their efforts to realize the initiative's ambitious goals.

Addressing the gathering, Ms. Cherie Blair, CBE, KC, Founder of the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, delivered a thought-provoking perspective on global gender equality and the power of collaboration. She said "This is a global issue—widows continue to face systemic barriers that hinder their progress. But through collective action, we can transform their role from beneficiaries to empowered agents and leaders of their own lives. Financial independence and dignity give women the power to take control of their future and that is exactly what we aim through this mission. By empowering widows, we empower a stronger, more equitable society."

Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani, Vice President of The Loomba Foundation praised the initiative's focus on skill development and its potential to transform women's lives. "It is heartening to see that, today, no one at this event views widows as victims. A widow is not a victim. A woman's worth is never defined by her circumstances." Appreciating India Inc. for its support, she said that Indian industry always stands up as a collective to support causes that are just, ensuring that every woman is empowered to live with dignity and opportunities.

Addressing the gathering, Lord Raj Loomba, CBE, Founder and Chairman Trustee of The Loomba Foundation said, "Widows should be respected and cherished as integral members of society. For centuries, they have endured marginalization and discrimination, suffering not only from the loss of their husbands but also from societal biases. We must eradicate this injustice. A woman's potential should never be hindered simply because she no longer has a husband, a situation over which she has no control. It is essential to unlock the full potential of widows, empowering them to lead fulfilling lives and contribute meaningfully to society."

Sharing his perspective, Mr. Sunil Kant Munjal, Past President, CII, Chairman, Hero Enterprise and Co-Chairman, Leadership Pipeline Initiative stated, "There is a large section of our society that has been left behind. For the next wave of progress in this country, it is crucial to give women the kind of place they truly deserve. The dignity and freedom of choice that every woman deserves is essential for unleashing her potential and driving sustainable growth in our society."

Appreciating the initiative, the UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. Shombi Sharp, emphasized the need for collective action in driving meaningful change in his message to the gathering.

While the participation of women has increased in the workforce over the years, there is tremendous potential to unlock the potential. There is an acute shortage of skilled talent, especially amongst women. CII has been working towards building a robust ecosystem for empowering women through policy advocacy and on-ground initiatives to empower and skill women. Through the CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Program, it empowers grassroots women leaders. It builds the capacity of urban women through the CII Indian Women network and CII Centre for Women Leadership. CII also anchors the Alliance for Global Good -Gender Equity and Equality, a Global Collective of Governments, Industry and Development

Organizations working towards inspiring intentional action to enable women across the globe to achieve their economic potential under the guidance of Ms Smriti Irani.

The ***Her Skill, Her Future*** initiative will bring about a transformative change by identifying and mobilising women from the community who can be supported through livelihood skill training programs in various income-generating activities and catalyzing the creation of community-based initiatives to promote shared experiences, challenges, and personal development.

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