



Press Release

They are catalysts for positive impact: Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Education

Announcing Winners of the CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Award 2026

12 May 2026, New Delhi: They are not only trailblazers and grassroots leaders; they are all ‘Matrushakti’ - creators and nurturers who have developed models that have made a meaningful impact on society. They are catalysts for positive impact, said Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, Hon’ble Minister of Education, Government of India, while presenting the CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Award 2026 to the winners during the CII Annual Business Summit 2026 today.

Appreciating the journey and contributions of the grassroots women leaders who were felicitated, he added, “The confidence and clarity with which they presented their thoughts is remarkable.”

The CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Award recognises and celebrates extraordinary grassroots women leaders from resource-poor and marginalised communities who are creating meaningful change despite significant social and economic challenges. Recognising leadership rooted in resilience, courage, and community impact, the awards spotlight changemakers driving progress at the grassroots.

Kranti from Indore, Madhya Pradesh, won the award in the Community Strengthening category; **Jasmeen Hussain** from Nuh, Haryana, in the Education category; **Shalini** from Salem, Tamil Nadu, in the Health category, and **Arundhati Patil** from Kolhapur, Maharashtra in the Micro-enterprise category. Each winner received a trophy, a certificate, and a cash prize. Three

hundred and forty-seven nominations were received for this Award, and an eminent jury selected the finalists based on their impact, leadership, and potential to scale change.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Rajiv Memani, President, CII, said, “Hearing the stories of each of these women was truly inspirational. These are the stories that make a real difference to Bharat.”

“We feel it’s quite natural for us as an institution to promote social development and women empowerment across the spectrum, right from the grassroots to women in corporate India. The Woman Exemplar Program promotes leadership at the community level by identifying, recognising, and supporting grassroots women who have risen beyond their limitations and positively impacted their communities. Collectively, these grassroots leaders impact the lives of over 2 lakh people each year across the most vulnerable parts of our society.” said by Mr Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII.

The 2026 cohort of the Woman Exemplar Program comprises 20 grassroots women leaders from across the country, each driving meaningful change within her community. These Exemplars now become part of a powerful national network of over 150 women leaders who collectively impact more than 2 million lives annually.

The CII Foundation continues to support and empower the Woman Exemplars through sustained initiatives focused on strengthening leadership capabilities and expanding their social impact.

For additional information about the Award and the CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Program, please visit [Our Work - Woman Exemplar Program](#)

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