

TOP 25 WOMEN LEADERS TO FOLLOW

HENCY THACKER AND KASMIN FERNANDES

Here are 25 Indian women leaders in the fields of philanthropy and social impact that you need to follow:



SUDHA MURTY

Sudha Murty is a notable philanthropist working as the chairperson of the Infosys Foundation and a member of public healthcare initiatives of the Gates Foundation. Her social work covers the healthcare, education, empowerment of women, public hygiene, art and culture, and poverty alleviation at the grassroots level.

A prolific writer in English and Kannada, Murty has written novels, technical books, travelogues, collections of short stories and non-fictional pieces, and books for children. She was the recipient of the R.K. Narayan Award for Literature and the Padma Shri in 2006.

Her vision of a library for each school has resulted in the setting up of more than 50,000 libraries. Through the Infosys Foundation, she has built 2,300 houses in the flood-affected areas. She has handled national natural disasters like the tsunami in Tamil Nadu and Andaman, the earthquake in Kutch - Gujarat, hurricane and floods in Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and drought in Karnataka and Maharashtra.



ROHINI
NILEKANI

Rohini Nilekani is a writer, author, and philanthropist who founded and chairs the Arghyam Foundation, a non-profit organisation that focuses on water and sanitation concerns. She was the Founder-Chairperson and Chief Funder of Pratham Books, a non-profit children's publisher, from 2004 to 2014. During her tenure, millions of children were reached. EkStep, a non-profit education platform, is her co-founder and director. She is a member of the Competition Commission of India's Eminent Persons Advisory Group.

She was also the founding trustee of the Akshara Foundation, established in March 2000. "Every Child in School and Learning Well" is the Akshara Foundation's mission. To accomplish this, the foundation collaborates closely with the government, community members, and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Over a million schoolchildren in Karnataka have benefited from the foundation's various activities.

Rohini Nilekani, along with her husband, has joined

the Giving Pledge, which devotes half of their money to philanthropic organisations.



PRITI G. ADANI

An educationist and a qualified doctor with Bachelors in Dental Surgery (BDS), Dr. Priti Adani has been treading a path hitherto less travelled in the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) space. Focusing on the mantra of Growth with Goodness,

Dr. Adani is as much a businesswoman as she is a responsible citizen helping create sustainable solutions to complex problems. She has been spearheading Adani Foundation, her brainchild, passionately for two decades now - ensuring that the Adani Group helps transform the lives of as many people as possible. Under her guidance and leadership, Adani Foundation has been carrying out its activities in four core areas namely, Education, Community Health, Sustainable Livelihood Development, and Infrastructure Development. At present, the Foundation is helping uplift 3.4 Million people annually across 18 states of the country.



NITA AMBANI

Nita Ambani is an educationist, philanthropist, businesswoman, patron of arts and sports, and champion of women and children's rights. Through various initiatives of Reliance Foundation, of which she is founder and chair, she seeks to empower millions of Indians with resources and opportunities.

On International Women's Day 2021, she launched an inclusive and collaborative digital movement for women called Her Circle. She is the owner of Mumbai Indians, the most successful cricket team in the Indian Premier League, the founder chairperson of Football Sports Development Limited, which launched the Indian Super League, and the head of the Education and Sports for All initiative for

children. Through Sir H N Reliance Foundation Hospital and Research Centre in Mumbai, she is committed to making affordable world-class medical care available to all Indians. US magazine Town and Country recognised her as one of the world's top philanthropists in 2020, Forbes listed her among the 50 most powerful businesswomen in Asia in 2016, and Fortune India has ranked her as India's Most Powerful Woman.



KIRAN
MAZUMDAR-
SHAW

Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw is Chairperson and Managing Director of Biocon Limited, a biotechnology company based in Bengaluru. She is highly respected in the corporate world and has been named among TIME magazine's 100 most influential people in the world.

Shaw is the founder member of Karnataka's Vision Group on Biotechnology and currently chairs this forum. She also serves on the National Advisory Council of the Government's Department of Biotechnology, where she has been instrumental in bringing government, industry and academia together, to charter a clear and progressive growth path for Biotechnology in India. She is a part of the Prime Minister's Council on Trade & Industry in India and the US-India CEO Forum. She is also a member of the Governing Council of National Foundation for Corporate Governance, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India and a member of the Union Commerce Ministry-instituted committee to advise the government on India's export promotion strategy. Her most cherished awards are the national awards, Padmashri (1989) and Padma Bhushan (2005).

Her commitment to affordable healthcare extends beyond business. She is passionately focused on innovation led healthcare solutions for sustainable and affordable healthcare for the marginalized communities. Her philanthropic initiatives include an innovative micro-health insurance programme based on delivering cashless healthcare through primary healthcare clinics in rural areas of Karnataka, an education initiative based on math education for school children in government schools as well making quality cancer care affordable to a larger patient population. She has established the 1,400-bed Mazumdar-Shaw Cancer Center (MSCC) in

Bangalore in partnership with renowned heart surgeon Dr. Devi Shetty to deliver affordable world-class cancer care services to patients irrespective of socio-economic status and class.



ANU AGA

Anu Aga is Director on the Board of Thermax Limited, the engineering company providing systems and solutions in the areas of energy and environment. She retired as Chairperson of Thermax in October 2004. She began her industry career in Thermax in 1985 and later was in charge of the company's Human Resources function from 1991 to 1996. After her husband Rohinton Aga passed away, she took over as Executive Chairperson of the Thermax Group in February 1996, and two years later chose to continue as Non-Executive Chairperson.

Since her retirement, she has been focusing on social causes and is closely associated with the Thermax Foundation. Her area of interest is Education and she is keenly involved with an NGO called Akanksha, which promotes education for underprivileged children in Mumbai and Pune. The Foundation, in partnership with the Municipal Corporations of Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad and Akanksha is managing five schools for children from lower income groups. Mrs. Aga is the chair on the Board of 'Teach for India' which attempts to bridge the inequity gap in education and is actively involved with its initiatives. She has been very active in various national and local associations like Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and had served as the Chairperson of CII's Western Region.



SWATI PIRAMAL

Dr. Swati Piramal is the Vice-Chairperson of Piramal Group. She is amongst India's leading scientists and industrialists whose contributions to innovations, new medicines and public health

services have touched many lives. In 2012, she was awarded with the Padma Shri.

Over the past 3 decades, Dr. Piramal's efforts towards providing cost-effective and science-based healthcare globally, have significantly contributed in shaping the Indian pharmaceutical industry and to emerge as one of the largest producers of drugs in the world. She founded the Gopikrishna Piramal Memorial Hospital in Mumbai and was instrumental in launching several pan-India public health campaigns against chronic diseases, osteoporosis, malaria, diabetes, tuberculosis, epilepsy and child immunization. She has authored several books on nutrition and health.

As the Director of Piramal Foundation, the CSR arm of Piramal Group, Dr. Piramal is deeply involved in developing innovative long-term and scalable solutions to resolve issues that are critical roadblocks towards unlocking India's economic potential. She spearheads the efforts of the Foundation towards effective public policy and governance that enables successful private-public-partnerships (PPP models) to effectively solve problems and help meet India's SDG Goals.

Dr. Piramal has played a significant role in establishing avenues that promote primary healthcare in rural India, developing frameworks for women empowerment and enabling systemic transformation of India's public education system by realizing the potential of young leaders of tomorrow, and promoting sustainable models for facilitating access to safe drinking water. Under the leadership of Dr. Piramal, the initiatives of Piramal Foundation work cohesively with the central and state governments, as well as through collaborations with NITI Aayog, The Rockefeller Foundation and The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, amongst several others.



RAJASHREE BIRLA

Rajashree Birla is an exemplar in the area of community initiatives and rural development. She spearheads the Aditya Birla Centre for Community Initiatives and Rural Development, the Group's apex body responsible for development projects. She oversees the Group's social and welfare driven work across its companies. The

footprint of the Centre's work straddles over 7,000 villages, reaching out to 9 million people.

She is the Chairperson of the FICCI-Aditya Birla CSR Centre for Excellence, Habitat for Humanity (India) and is on the Board of the Asia Pacific Committee as well as Habitat's Global Committee. She is the Chairperson of FICCI's first ever Expert Committee on CSR. She serves on the Board of Director's CSR Committee of State Bank of India. She is on the Board of BAIF Development Research Foundation, Pune and Population First, Mumbai. She serves on the Akhil Bharatvarshiya Maheshwari Education Trust, Indore. As a patron of arts and culture, she heads the 'Sangit Kala Kendra', a centre for performing arts, as its President. The government bestowed the 'Padma Bhushan' Award in 2011 on her in the area of social work.



VIDYA SHAH

Vidya Shah is the CEO of the EdelGive Foundation, the Edelweiss Group's philanthropic arm. Vidya has channelled EdelGive's giving structure to include both financial and non-financial support to a unique cohort of organisations after witnessing the potential of small to mid-sized, high-quality NGOs in tackling India's development challenges.

During the pandemic, the EdelGive Foundation supported all of its partner NGOs on the ground who were assisting individuals in need. They also assisted in the connection between donors and non-governmental organisations.



ROSHNI NADAR MALHOTRA

Roshni Nadar Malhotra is the CEO of HCL Corporation as well as a Shiv Nadar Foundation trustee. The organisation founded in 1994 is aimed at creating world-class educational institutions that are accessible to people from all walks of life in India.

Roshni was named NDTV's Young Philanthropist of the Year, and she says that while she could support the well-established family business into the next generation, the foundation offered opportunities beyond traditional philanthropy - she sees it as a start-up social venture that will help future leaders.

The Shiv Nadar Foundation established and maintains the SSN Institutions, the oldest of which is SSN College of Engineering, one of India's top engineering colleges. The foundation's mission is to create world-class educational institutions and centres of excellence to prepare future leaders on a national and international scale. VidyaGyan and Shiv Nadar University are two of its other schools, which deliver superior education to rural communities.



MALINI SABA

Malini Saba, the founder of Saba Group Holdings and a self-made entrepreneur, enunciates the value of using one's business to help humanity. She established the 'Ananke Foundation' (formerly Saba Family Foundation) to serve as the umbrella organisation for all of her philanthropic endeavours and activities in the areas of healthcare, education, and human rights.

During the pandemic, the Ananke Foundation donated Rs 1.9 crore and 20,000 kg of dry white rice to its 'Save the Children' COVID-19 reaction, the first in a series of gifts led by Dr Saba. The funding sought to increase the distribution of food baskets, hygiene kits, clothing, and support to 20 lakh street children and their families.



NISABA GODREJ

Nisaba Godrej is the executive chairperson of Godrej Consumer Products (GCPL). In addition to this, Nisa is in charge of the Godrej Group's 'Good & Green' (CSR) projects and the Godrej

Family Council's operations. She is a member of the GCPL, Godrej Agrovet, and Teach For India boards of directors. She is passionate about education, especially for women. Her commitment is to change the educational outcomes for a million Indian girls. With Teach for India, she is delivering education in low-income schools and hiring full-time teachers for two years from college graduates and working professionals.



INDIRA JAISING

Indira Jaising, a lawyer and human rights activist, has been dubbed "formidable" by many, particularly while detailing her work in drafting the Domestic Violence Act (2005). Indira started her legal profession in the early 1960s and has been working relentlessly for the past 53 years as the founder of the Lawyer's Collective.

Jaising was the first female senior attorney in the Bombay High Court and the country's first female Additional Solicitor General. She has taken on environmental issues such as coast conservation and more, in addition to women's issues and human rights.

She has been involved in some of the country's most high-profile cases, including leading commissions in Punjab to investigate extrajudicial killings, police brutality, and disappearances in North India in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as fighting for compensation for victims of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy and the 2002 Gujarat riots.



KIRAN BEDI

Kiran Bedi, a social crusader and the country's first female IPS officer, was born in Punjab's holy city of Amritsar. This Magsaysay award winner has contributed everything she has to not only her department but also to a range of societal issues. Kiran was the first Indian woman to be assigned

to the UN Secretary-Department General's of Peacekeeping Operations as a Policy Advisor.

Bedi started the India Vision Foundation (IVF) in 1994, which focuses on police and prison reform, women's empowerment, rural and community development, and rural and community development. In the domain of police reform, she also advocated for more training while opposing the hazing of recruits.

Over the next 25 years, she founded the Nav Jyoti India Foundation, which provided residential treatment to nearly 20,000 drug and alcohol abusers. It also started crime prevention programmes, including as schooling for street and slum children. She was an active participant in Anna Hazare's anti-corruption movement in India in 2011. (10 Indian women activists)



SUNITHA KRISHNAN

Another well-known Indian social activist who has fought human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation is Sunitha Krishnan. Krishnan is the co-founder and principal functionary of Prajwala, an NGO dedicated to rescuing, rehabilitating, and reintegrating sex-trafficked victims back into society. She is a victim of sexual assault.

Krishnan's passion for social work grew when she was eight years old and began teaching dancing to mentally challenged children. By the age of twelve, she was running slum schools for disadvantaged children, and she was sexually abused by a gang of men while working for these communities. Dr. Krishnan has been quite active in advocacy work, creating several policy recommendations and consulting on government policy-making businesses, in addition to volunteering with the Prajwal NGO.

Dr. Krishnan received a "TIP Report Hero Acting to End Modern Slavery" award in 2009 in recognition of her efforts to combat human trafficking. Despite numerous attempts throughout her life, she continues to advocate for better policies and to work with Prajwala to combat sex trafficking. In 2016, she received the Padma Shree, India's fourth-highest civilian award, as well as numerous other honours.



ARUNA ROY

Aruna Roy is well known for her efforts to combat corruption and increase government openness. Aruna Roy has been at the forefront of various struggles for the rights of the poor and marginalised. Among the most well-known is the Right to Information, the Right to Work (the NREGA), and the Right to Food.

She was recently involved in the campaign for a universal, non-contributory pension for unorganised sector workers as a member of the Pension Parishad. Aruna has been recognised for her contributions to society with the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 2000, the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Award for Excellence in Public Administration, Academia, and Manpower in 2005, and the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 2006.



LAXMI AGARWAL

Lakshmi Agarwal is an acid assault survivor as well as an advocate for the rights of acid attack victims and a television host. She is an example to all acid attack survivors to pursue their aspirations and live their lives with self-assurance. She is the director of the Chhany Foundation, an Indian non-governmental organisation dedicated to supporting acid attack survivors. The International Women of Courage Award was given to Laxmi by US First Lady Michelle Obama in 2014. She is also the face of the Viva and Diva campaign, which encourages all girls to focus on their inner beauty rather than their external appearance.

She was only 15 years old when she was attacked in 2005. Despite this, she battled for her rights and spoke up for all acid attack survivors. In response to Laxmi Agarwal's writ case from 2006, the Supreme Court delivered rulings in 2013 limiting the sale of

acid, paying victims, and recognising acid violence as a separate offence (10 Indian women activists)



MANASI PRADHAN

Manasi Pradhan is an author and an activist, giving voice to women's issues in India. She is the founder of India's Honour for Women National Campaign, which aims to abolish violence against women on a statewide level.

In 1987, she founded the OYSS Women NGO, with an initial purpose to help female students get a better education and grow into future leaders in society. Hundreds of young women have been groomed to be future leaders in their industries through OYSS Women's leadership workshops, education and vocational training camps, legal awareness, and self-defence programmes. Aside from that, the organisation participates in a variety of activities and events and is widely credited with pioneering contributions to women's empowerment. The National Campaign for Women's Honour is also led by this organisation. In 2014, the President of India presented her with the Rani Laxmibai Stree Shakti Puraskar. In addition to this she alongside Mary Prema Pierick, the global head of the Missionaries of Charity, shared the 'Outstanding Women Award' in 2011.



KRITI BHARTI

Kriti Bharti is a social activist in India who campaigns for the eradication of child marriage and women's social justice. She founded the Saarthi Trust, an organisation dedicated to rehabilitating child marriage victims, annulling child weddings, and providing counselling to children and their families. As a result of her work with children in NGOs, she launched Saarthi Trust in 2011. Throughout her campaign, Bharti has received