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Women's Day: 5 Indian women philanthropists who made a difference during the pandemic

By Anju Ann Mathew | 7th Mar 2021



Ahead of International Women's Day, we celebrate Indian women philanthropists who have created a societal impact during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

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When the pandemic struck, a number of families and workers were displaced from their homes. But at the same time, a number of philanthropists and NGOs rose to the occasion to help those in distress and contribute to the right causes.

Among these were women philanthropists who not only made generous donations but led entire COVID-19 relief projects.

HerStory lists a few of them.

Nita Ambani



Nita Ambani is no stranger when it comes to philanthropy. The founder and chairperson of the Reliance Foundation has significantly contributed to develop a positive social impact in society. The efforts of the foundation are majorly targeted at rural development, education, health, sports for development, disaster response, arts, culture and heritage and urban renewal.

During the pandemic, Nita was the only Indian to get featured Town & Country magazine's top global philanthropists of 2020 list. She was featured for leading the foundation's efforts that fed migrant workers, factory workers, the underprivileged and the elderly in old age homes through Mission Anna Seva. Her contribution of \$72 million for this relief work was also used to set up India's first COVID-19 hospital.

Sudha Murty



Sudha Murty, Chairperson of Infosys Foundation

Stealing millions of hearts with her inspiring, simple-minded approach to life, Sudha Murty has been heading the Infosys Foundation since 1996. She dedicated her life to serving the underprivileged by empowering them through education, poverty alleviation, healthcare, public hygiene, education, and art and culture.

During the pandemic, the Infosys Foundation donated over Rs 100 crore to relief efforts, of which Rs 50 crore was donated to the PM-CARES fund. The Foundation also opened a hospital in Bengaluru exclusive for COVID-19 patients. It also provided meals and rations to the needy.

Even though she stepped down as Chairperson of the Infosys Foundation in 2021, she hopes to continue her philanthropic efforts through the Murty Foundation.

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Malini Saba



Malini Saba

Malini Saba, a self-made entrepreneur and the founder of Saba Group Holdings, enunciates the quality of using one's business to serve humanity. She launched the 'Ananke Foundation' (previously known as Saba Family Foundation) to serve as the umbrella organisation for all her philanthropic efforts and activities that focus on healthcare, education, and human rights.

During the pandemic, the Ananke foundation under Dr Saba's leadership donated Rs 1.9 crore and 20,000 kg of dry white rice to its 'Save the Children' COVID-19 response as a series of donations. The donation aimed to enhance the outreach of food baskets, hygiene kits, clothes and support to 20 lakh children and their families living on the streets.

They also had an extensive plan that was laid out to help the underprivileged sustain through the pandemic.

Rohini Nilekani



A noted philanthropist and the founder of the Arghyam Foundation, Rohini Nilekani donated Rs 47 crore topping the EdelGive Hurun India Philanthropy List for 2020 among women.

The Arghyam foundation was also a major contributor to the Rapid Rural Community Response (RRCR), a consortium of 20 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) having an outreach of more than 1.2 million families.

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Vidya Shah



Vidya Shah

Vidya Shah is the CEO of EdelGive Foundation, the philanthropic initiative of the Edelweiss Group. Having witnessed the potential of small to mid-sized, high calibre NGOs in addressing India's development concerns, Vidya has channelled EdelGive's structure of giving to include both financial and non-financial support to a special cohort of organisations.

During the pandemic, the EdelGive Foundation extended its support to all its partner NGOs who were on-ground helping those in distress. They also helped connected donors with NGOs.

Edited by Rekha Balakrishnan



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