



CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF THE MARTHA FARRELL AWARDS (2017-2026)



About The Martha Farrell Award

The Martha Farrell Award for Excellence in Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality is a first-of-its-kind initiative to discover, recognise, and honor mid-career individuals and committed institutions which have made valuable contributions in the areas of women's empowerment, gender equality, and living feminism in their everyday lives and practices.

The Award offers nominees and winners a platform to grow and network with like-minded professionals and institutions working in the space of gender empowerment and equality.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Awards.



DR. MARTHA FARRELL

Dr. Martha Farrell (1959–2015) was a dynamic and deeply respected voice in civil society, celebrated in India and beyond for her pioneering work in women's rights, gender equality and adult education. Her life's mission was to embed feminism and gender justice into everyday practice, empowering women and men to challenge inequality at its roots.

On 13 May 2015, while in Kabul, Afghanistan, conducting a gender training workshop for the Aga Khan Foundation, she lost her life along with 14 others killed in a terrorist attack on a guest house. She died doing the work she believed in the most.



**WE NEED TO QUESTION ALL THOSE BELIEFS
THAT KEEP WOMEN FROM MAKING PROGRESS.**

~DR. MARTHA FARRELL

Born in Delhi into an Anglo-Indian family, Martha studied English Literature at Delhi University before earning a Master's degree in Social Work from the Delhi School of Social Work. Her career began in 1981 at Ankur, an NGO championing women's literacy in Delhi, where she developed an enduring commitment to participatory learning methods.

In 1991, she co-founded Creative Learning for Change, dedicated to research, training and the development of learning resources for non-traditional educational spaces.

Her leadership extended to distance education and from 2005 she built the Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) International Academy into a vibrant hub for global learning. She also held teaching assignments at the University of Victoria and Royal Roads University, Canada.

Martha's advocacy on workplace sexual harassment took root in the wake of the Vishakha Guidelines of 1998. She pursued a PhD from Jamia Millia Islamia on the subject, culminating in her influential 2014 publication *Engendering the Workplace: Gender Discrimination and Prevention of Sexual Harassment in Organisations*. The book distilled decades of experience and remains a practical reference for organisational change-makers.

She was not only a visionary leader but also a leader who nurtured a safe, inclusive, and values-driven space within PRIA. She urged colleagues to "walk the talk" and live the principles they espoused.

To those who knew her, Dr. Farrell was both an inspiring public figure and a warm personal presence, a fearless activist, generous mentor, steadfast friend, beloved mother, devoted spouse and compassionate soul. Her absence is keenly felt, but the ideals she championed continue to inspire action around the world, especially within the values that the Martha Farrell Foundation carries forward.



MFA JURY MEMBERS (2017-2026)



Shabana Azmi



Anshul Tewari



Kamla Bhasin



**Justice Retd. AP
Shah**



**Anuradha Das
Mathur**



Shushama Nath



**Binalakshmi
Nepram**



Deepthi Bopaiah



**Shubhashish
Bhutiani**



Nandita Tripathi



Dr. Bhavani Rao



Dr. Pankaj Mittal



Feisal Alkazi



Moncho Ferrer



Namita Bhandare



Sudha Srinivasan



Mirai Chatterjee



Deep Brahma



Deepa Pawar



Dr. Rajesh Tandon

OUTREACH

1,713 Total nominations received

949 Nominations received under the individual category

764 Nominations received under the organisational category

26 States and Union Territories reached



Fighting Child Trafficking in Alipurduar's Tea Estates

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RAKHI GOPE

**Alipurduar, West
Bengal
2017 Winner**

*Reach out to Rakhi at
rakhigope2013@gmail.com*



Rakhi Gope is a social activist from Alipurduar, West Bengal, who has spent over two decades working with tea estate communities vulnerable to poverty, trafficking and child marriage.

Having witnessed children and young women at risk, she began working directly with families to build awareness around trafficking, child rights and early marriage. Her work supports survivors in accessing safe shelter, education, vocational training and livelihood opportunities, helping them rebuild their lives with dignity. Rakhi also works closely with the police, administration and child protection authorities, bridging the gap between vulnerable communities and formal systems.

Her grassroots experience led her to serve on the Child Welfare Committee. Despite facing resistance and threats, she continues to combine prevention, rehabilitation, legal support and community mobilisation to strengthen child protection and empower families.

Transforming Women's Access to Justice

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Majlis Legal Centre is a women-led organisation founded in 1991 by activist and lawyer Flavia Agnes to create a dedicated space where survivors of violence could access justice with dignity and without institutional bias.

Over the years, Majlis has grown into a collective of women lawyers and social activists providing legal services, rights education, policy interventions, public campaigns and litigation to strengthen women's access to justice. Its survivor-centred approach combines legal expertise with research, community engagement and advocacy for stronger legal and institutional frameworks. Majlis also strengthens the wider ecosystem by training women lawyers and conducting legal awareness programmes.

With 80,000+ people supported through legal services, 100,000+ through social support, 150,000+ trainings and awareness sessions, and 1,500+ collaborations, Majlis continues to advance lasting change for women.



MAJLIS LEGAL CENTRE

**Mumbai, Maharashtra
2017 Winner**

*Reach out to Majlis at
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[@majlis_law](https://www.instagram.com/majlis_law)



[@majlislegalcentre](https://www.facebook.com/majlislegalcentre)

Using Storytelling to Amplify Women's Voices in Srinagar

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NADIYA SHAFI

**Srinagar, Jammu
& Kashmir
2018 Winner**

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 [@nadiyashafigadda_official](https://www.instagram.com/nadiyashafigadda_official)

Nadiya Shafi is a video journalist and community storyteller from Srinagar who uses visual storytelling to document lives and struggles overlooked by mainstream media.

Her work focuses on women and marginalised communities, highlighting gender discrimination, domestic violence, education, healthcare and social exclusion. Her early work with Video Volunteers during the 2014 Kashmir floods led her to document transgender communities. Nadiya has created gender discussion clubs where women, young people and communities discuss harassment, sexuality and social norms.

Her storytelling preserves Kashmir's cultural heritage, including traditional crafts, food and women artists. Body of work documents Kashmiri half-widows and the impact of unrest. Since receiving the Martha Farrell Award, she has expanded her work through collaborations with human rights and academic organisations.

From Women's Representation to Real Political Power

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The Resource and Support Centre for Development (RSCD) works to strengthen women's leadership, people-centred governance and social justice. Founded in 1994, in 2000, it launched the Mahila Rajsatta Andolan, a state-wide campaign supporting rural women elected to Panchayati Raj institutions.

RSCD combines grassroots mobilisation, leadership development, institutional training and policy advocacy to strengthen women's participation in decision-making. It has conducted 4,450 trainings for elected women leaders, induction training across 16,000 Gram Panchayats, and trained more than 1,700 Village Development Committees. Its work spans 34+ districts, 150+ blocks and 1,700+ Gram Panchayats across Jharkhand, Bihar, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh.

Through the Savitri Academy, RSCD builds institutional capacities while addressing women's empowerment, health, climate resilience, food security, constitutional rights and sustainable development.



**THE RESOURCE AND
SUPPORT CENTRE FOR
DEVELOPMENT**

**Mumbai, Maharashtra
2018 Winner**

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[@Resource and Support
Center For Development -
RSCD.](https://www.facebook.com/ResourceandSupportCenterForDevelopment-RSCD)

Transforming Classrooms, Challenging Gender Norms

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MANU GULATI

**Delhi
2019 Winner**

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 [@manugulati11](https://www.instagram.com/manugulati11)

 [@ManuGulati11](https://twitter.com/ManuGulati11)

Manu Gulati is a government school teacher in Delhi who has spent over a decade making gender equality part of everyday learning. Working with students from low-income communities, she transformed her classroom into a space where girls and boys can question stereotypes, express themselves.

Manu uses dance, drama, activities and interactive projects to build girls' confidence and challenge restrictions on their mobility. She has organised community walks and awareness campaigns on menstrual hygiene, safety and gender discrimination. Recognising that lasting change requires collective engagement, she works with parents, teachers and community members to support girls' education and address gender bias.

She also engages boys on equality, care, household responsibilities and respect, helping create inclusive and gender-sensitive school environments today.

From Football Field to Community Leadership

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Mahila Jan Adhikar Samiti (MJAS) is a women-led collective working across Rajasthan communities, to challenge child marriage, gender discrimination and the exclusion of adolescent girls.

Built by rural Dalit women who experienced caste and gender discrimination, MJAS places girls at the centre of social change. Its model combines sports, digital learning, leadership development and community mobilisation. Through football, girls build confidence and agency while challenging restrictions on participation in public spaces. MJAS also provides access to computers, strengthening life skills.

More than 400 girls have been supported as peer educators and community champions, engaging families and leaders on child marriage, education, safety and gender-based violence. MJAS invests in feminist organisational culture and support.



महिला जन अधिकार समिति
MAHILA JAN ADHIKAR SAMITI

**MAHILA JAN
ADHIKAR SAMITI
(MJAS)**

**Ajmer, Rajasthan
2019 Winner**

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 [@MJAS.Ajmer](https://www.facebook.com/MJAS.Ajmer)

Taking Legal Action to Protect Women from Violence

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Mamta Singh is a grassroots activist supporting women facing violence and exploitation through safe spaces, legal assistance, livelihood support and community leadership. She is based out of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

Her work is rooted in direct engagement with survivors, ensuring women are not left to navigate systems alone. Mamta follows up at police stations and with authorities to help remove barriers and advance cases. She also works with girl leaders, encouraging them to enter public spaces and engage communities on preventing gender-based violence.

As a trainer, she conducts capacity-building programmes on the PoSH Act, POCSO Act, BNS and other gender-related laws. Her engagement includes a government project to train up to 2,500 Anganwadi Supervisors in Lucknow. Her work connects survivor support, legal advocacy, leadership.



MAMTA SINGH

**Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh
2020 Winner**

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Building Women's Economic Power Through Land, Livelihoods and Leadership

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The Rural and Environment Development Society (REDS) works with communities in Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh, to strengthen women's rights, livelihoods and leadership. It was established in 1996 and led by Ms. Bhanuja Cheruvu.

Its work addresses links between economic insecurity, gender-based violence, landlessness and trafficking, particularly among women agricultural workers. REDS helps women understand and claim land and property rights while supporting collective farming and livelihoods. Through Farmer Producer Organisations, women process and market agricultural products collectively, strengthening control over earnings and local incomes.

REDS also works to prevent human trafficking and supports survivors through rescue, legal assistance, psychosocial support and rehabilitation. By promoting women's participation in village institutions and agricultural forums, and maintaining at least half women staff, REDS strengthens grassroots agency.



**THE RURAL AND
ENVIRONMENT
DEVELOPMENT
SOCIETY**

**Anantapur,
Andhra Pradesh
2020 Winner**

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Building Young Women's Voices and Leadership

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**VAISHALI
JETHAVA**

**Mumbai, Maharashtra
2020 Winner**

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Vaishali Jethava is a gender activist from Mumbai who works with young people in vulnerable communities to challenge gender stereotypes, strengthen girls' confidence and support their continued education. Drawing from her own experiences of overcoming barriers to education and independence, she creates spaces where adolescents can question restrictive social norms and imagine new possibilities.

Through the Blue Ribbon Movement and the Avanti Young Leadership Programme, Vaishali uses storytelling, dialogue and interactive activities to engage young people on gender, education, emotional well-being, safety and discrimination. A key part of her approach is developing youth as community leaders. Through the Avanti Young Fellows model, young people conduct awareness activities, support peers and engage families on issues affecting girls.

Vaishali also works with parents and schools to promote girls' education and create more gender-sensitive environments. Her work demonstrates the power of youth leadership and community dialogue in advancing gender equality.

Breaking Witch-Hunting, Trafficking, and GBV in rural Jharkhand

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The Association for Social and Human Awareness (ASHA) works with Adivasi communities in rural Jharkhand to challenge gender-based discrimination and violence. Its work focuses on preventing witch-hunting, combating trafficking, addressing domestic violence and strengthening indigenous women's rights and leadership.

ASHA uses legal awareness, community discussions and women's collectives to help women understand their rights and challenge harmful social practices. It supports survivors through shelter, counselling, education and rehabilitation, helping them rebuild their lives with greater independence. Education is another key part of its approach, with support for girls whose studies have been disrupted by poverty, early marriage or trafficking. ASHA also strengthens women's participation in Gram Sabhas and local governance.

By combining survivor support, legal literacy, education and community mobilisation, ASHA addresses both the immediate and structural causes of gender-based violence.



**THE ASSOCIATION
FOR SOCIAL AND
HUMAN AWARENESS**

**Ranchi, Jharkhand
2020 Winner**

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and Human Awareness](https://www.linkedin.com/company/Association-For-Social-and-Human-Awareness)

Reclaiming Rights, Dignity and Mental Justice for NT-DNT Communities

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Deepa Pawar is a grassroots leader from the Ghisadi (Gadiya Lohar) nomadic community in Maharashtra and founder of Anubhuti Charitable Trust. Having experienced migration, discrimination and social exclusion herself, she began working with girls and women as a teenager. Her lived experience shaped a lifelong commitment to nomadic, tribal and de-notified communities.

Deepa's work brings together gender justice, mental health, constitutional literacy and community advocacy. Her pioneering concept of "Mental Justice" connects mental well-being with dignity, social safety, discrimination and access to rights. Through Anubhuti, she supports young people to understand the Constitution, engage with government institutions and advocate for their communities.

She also works to create safer spaces for first-generation learners facing discrimination in higher education. Deepa documents the traditional tool-making heritage of the Gadiya Lohar community, helping preserve histories often overlooked in mainstream narratives.



DEEPA PAWAR

**Maharashtra
2021 Winner**

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Community Action and Qawwali to Advance Women's Rights

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Shaheen Women's Resource and Welfare Association works with women, children and families across 25 impoverished urban slums in Hyderabad and Rangareddy. Founded in 2002 in Hyderabad's Old City, its work addresses gender-based violence, education, economic independence, communal harmony and women's leadership. Shaheen has reached more than 1.49 lakh young women, girls and boys through its programmes.

Through women-led Qawwali performances, the organisation challenges male-dominated traditions while creating conversations around child marriage, discrimination, girls' rights and communal harmony. Shaheen also supports women to enter non-traditional livelihoods, including three-wheeler driving, expanding their mobility and economic independence.

Its evolving work includes digital advocacy and AI-assisted music to engage younger audiences. By combining cultural activism, livelihood support and grassroots mobilisation, Shaheen creates spaces for women to claim dignity, voice and agency.



SHAHEEN WOMEN'S RESOURCE AND WELFARE

**Hyderabad,
Telangana
2021 Winner**

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Building Grassroots Power Against Caste Violence and Gender Injustice

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**SUMAN
DEVATHIYA**

**Rajasthan
2021 Winner**



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Suman Devathiya is a Dalit grassroots leader from Rajasthan working at the intersection of caste justice, gender equality, legal rights and community leadership. As the Rajasthan state head of Dalit Women Fight, she supports Dalit women and communities facing caste-based violence and discrimination.

Her work includes fact-finding missions, documenting survivor accounts and helping affected families pursue legal and administrative action. Suman combines immediate response with long-term leadership building. Following incidents of caste violence, she brings community experiences and evidence to authorities, police officials, human rights institutions and other decision-makers. She also helps families navigate administrative processes and access government compensation.

A defining part of her leadership is mentoring women and young activists to understand constitutional and legal rights, engage with institutions and support survivors. Through workshops, networks and grassroots strategy-building, Suman strengthens collective leadership and helps communities challenge caste discrimination, demand accountability and pursue justice.

Creating Spaces of Safety, Dignity and Independence for Queer Communities

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Sappho for Equality has grown into one of Eastern India's longstanding organisations working with gender and sexually marginalised communities. Founded in 1999 as an emotional support group for lesbian women, it creates spaces where lesbian and bisexual women and transmasculine persons can seek support, safety and dignity without hiding their identities. Sappho responds to challenges including family rejection, domestic abuse, social isolation and economic insecurity.

Its Crisis Intervention Centre provides short-stay accommodation for people facing unsafe or abusive home environments, while livelihood initiatives support professional skills and economic independence. Peer counselling and crisis helplines connect individuals with people who understand their experiences, while family engagement creates opportunities to challenge prejudice and rebuild relationships. Sappho also produces research, literature and educational resources documenting queer experiences through a feminist lens. By combining crisis support, livelihood opportunities, peer networks and knowledge generation, it has built a sustained community-led model of safety, dignity and collective strength.



**SAPPHO FOR
EQUALITY**

**Kolkata,
West Bengal
2021 Winner**

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Breaking Barriers Through Education, Livelihoods and Trans Rights

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GRACE BANU

**Chennai,
Tamil Nadu
2022 Winner**

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[@GracebanuGanesan](https://www.linkedin.com/company/GracebanuGanesan)

Grace Banu is a Dalit transgender woman and India's first transgender engineer. Drawing on her own experiences of caste and gender discrimination, she works to ensure transgender people can access education, employment, healthcare and dignity.

During the COVID-19 crisis, she organised relief support, safe housing and essential assistance for transgender communities facing severe insecurity. Grace places education and economic independence at the centre of long-term change and has supported more than 1,000 transgender people in accessing essential services. She has also developed training initiatives helping community members prepare for competitive government examinations. A significant innovation in her work is the trans-run milk cooperative she helped establish, creating sustainable livelihood opportunities and greater financial independence.

Grace has also conducted gender-sensitisation programmes with police and district administration officials. Her leadership transforms personal achievement into collective advocacy, creating pathways for transgender people to participate equally in education, employment, public institutions and community life.

Taking Women into Non-Traditional Work and Community Leadership

Archana Women's Centre works to strengthen women's economic, social and political participation, particularly by opening pathways into occupations traditionally dominated by men. Founded in 2004 in Kerala, its work spans gender justice, entrepreneurship, prevention of gender-based violence, political participation, environmental sustainability and community health across Kottayam, Idukki, Alappuzha and Thiruvananthapuram.

AWC's distinctive model uses Community Action Groups (CAGs) that identify local challenges and develop collective solutions. Women receive training in non-traditional livelihoods such as masonry, carpentry, welding, driving and restaurant management, while cluster enterprises support agriculture, food processing, tailoring and garment production. AWC also connects economic empowerment with political participation. In recent local elections, 13 women from its CAGs were elected as Panchayat members.

Other initiatives include cancer-patient support, community meals, scholarships and a cloth bank. Its women's cooperative has also undertaken government construction and maintenance contracts, demonstrating women's capacity to participate in public economic systems.



ARCHANA WOMEN'S CENTRE

**Kolkata,
West Bengal
2022 Winner**

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Using Technology to Build Safer and More Accountable Workplaces

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MEGHANA SRINIVAS

**Bengaluru, Karnataka
2022 Winner**

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Meghana Srinivas is an entrepreneur working at the intersection of technology, gender equity and workplace safety. Through TrustIn, the social enterprise she founded, she addresses gaps between workplace safety laws and employees' everyday experiences of harassment and discrimination.

Recognising that complaint processes can feel complicated, intimidating or opaque, Meghana developed technology that supports organisations in implementing the POSH Act, 2013 more effectively. TrustIn provides digital guidance to Internal Committees, helping them follow procedures, document cases and meet required timelines. The platform also enables complainants to track the progress of their cases, improving transparency and reducing uncertainty. Meghana's approach treats workplace safety as an ongoing institutional responsibility rather than a one-time compliance exercise.

By combining technology, legal processes and employee awareness, she seeks to strengthen accountability and consistency in handling sensitive complaints. Her work demonstrates how digital tools can complement institutional systems and help create workplaces where employees feel more confident raising concerns.

Changing the Trail: Transforming Travel, Work and Leadership in Ladakh

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The Ladakhi Women's Travel Company (LWTC) is Ladakh's first travel agency entirely owned and run by women. Founded by pioneering mountaineer Thinlas Chorol, it challenges gender stereotypes by training women from rural communities as professional trekking guides, porters and outdoor leaders, enabling them to access dignified livelihoods and greater economic independence.

LWTC provides training in English, hospitality, first aid, navigation and mapping while fostering a safe and supportive work environment. Its all-women trekking expeditions create new opportunities for local women while offering safe experiences for female travellers. The organisation also promotes women-run homestays, helping rural households benefit directly from tourism.

By combining livelihood opportunities, leadership development and community engagement, LWTC is transforming perceptions of women's capabilities and creating pathways for women in Ladakh to lead, earn and make independent choices.



**LADAKHI
WOMEN'S TRAVEL
COMPANY (LWC)**

**Ladakh
2022 Winner**

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Building Dalit Women's Leadership Through Law and Community Action

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Mohini Devi is a women's rights and Dalit rights activist from Karnal, Haryana, and founder of Avira Foundation. A lawyer and core member of Dalit Women Fight, she works at the intersection of gender justice, caste equality, education and community leadership.

Through Avira Foundation's Resource Hubs in Panipat and Karnal, Mohini works with Dalit, marginalised and underserved women and adolescent girls. The organisation focuses on access to information, government schemes, leadership development, education, livelihood skills, community mobilisation and prevention of domestic violence. Its interventions have reached more than 1,000 women, young girls and adolescent groups across six districts of Haryana. Mohini places community leadership at the centre of her work, supporting women and girls to understand their rights, engage with institutions and participate in social and economic processes. Since receiving the Martha Farrell Award, Avira Foundation has gained greater visibility and networks. Mohini now also practises as an advocate at the Haryana High Court.



MOHINI DEVI

**Karnal, Haryana
2023 Winner**

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Building Women's Leadership Across Gender, Migration and Social Protection

Nari-O-Shishu Kalyan Kendra (NOSKK) works with women, children, young people, migrant workers and vulnerable communities across the state of West Bengal since 1979. Its work spans gender-based violence prevention, child protection, education, health, livelihoods, migration, social protection and community development.

NOSKK has reached more than 5.61 lakh people across three districts and works in over 700 villages. It has formed hundreds of women's groups and adolescent groups while providing vocational training to young people. The organisation combines direct support with community organising, enabling women and young people to become active participants in local change. Its gender-justice work includes survivor support and initiatives engaging boys and men in violence prevention, as well as PoSH awareness among factory workers, artisans and frontline workers. NOSKK also promotes women's participation in local governance, particularly among SC and ST women. Its women-led structure reinforces its commitment to practising gender equality within the organisation.



**NARI-O-SISHU
KALYAN
KENDRA**

**Howrah, West Bengal
2023 Winner**

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Advancing Transgender Rights Through Health, Livelihoods and Gender-Affirming Care



DIPIKA THAKUR

**New Delhi
2023 Winner**

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Dipika Thakur is a transgender rights advocate working to build a rights-based, stigma-free and inclusive society for transgender people. Her work focuses on education, skills, employment, healthcare, rights awareness and gender sensitisation.

She has worked to strengthen transgender community organisations and advocate for implementation of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019. Dipika has supported more than 19,000 transgender people in accessing essential services and rights. Her work also includes training and capacity building for community organisations, alongside gender and LGBTQ+ sensitisation programmes across educational institutions and workplaces. She has served as Chairperson of the FLUX India chapter and worked with institutions to build greater understanding of transgender rights and inclusion. Today, as General Manager at Skin Pride, she works to make gender-affirming healthcare more accessible and welcoming. Her leadership combines community advocacy, institutional engagement and capacity building, helping create pathways for transgender people to access services, education, employment and greater social participation.

Making Inclusion a Pathway to Gender Justice and Community Leadership

Rajasthan Mahila Kalyan Mandal (RMKM) works with women, persons with disabilities, children with special needs, Denotified and Nomadic Tribes and other marginalised communities in Rajasthan, Founded in 1975, its approach combines inclusive education, health, livelihoods, child protection, gender equality and community development.

RMKM currently works across eight districts, 80 blocks and approximately 1,230 villages, creating millions of service and awareness touchpoints. Its inclusive education journey includes Ajmer's first special school and innovative models such as reverse inclusion, where children with and without disabilities learn together. Its livelihood initiatives support women and marginalised families through Self-Help Groups, skills training, micro-credit and entrepreneurship. RMKM also provides market-oriented training and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. Its gender-justice work includes training teachers, frontline workers and institutions on disability inclusion and supporting women's leadership. The organisation has also mobilised communities against child marriage, connecting gender equality with broader systems of protection and inclusion.



RAJASTHAN MAHILA KALYAN MANDAL

**Ajmer,
Rajasthan
2023 Winner**

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Securing Forest Rights and Economic Power for Adivasi Women



**AUGUSTINA
SORENG**

**Simdega, Jharkhand
2024 Winner**

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Augustina Soreng is a tribal social activist from Simdega, Jharkhand, who has spent more than a decade working with Adivasi women and girls on forest rights, land rights, trafficking, migration, gender-based violence and community leadership.

Her work combines grassroots mobilisation with advocacy for constitutional and legal rights. One of her significant achievements has been facilitating Community Forest Rights recognition for 62 villages, enabling communities to secure legal rights over forest resources. She has also helped establish a producer company with 1,300 women shareholders, strengthening women's economic independence through collective ownership and forest-produce enterprises. The initiative has expanded to approximately 3,000 Gram Sabha members across around 150 villages. Augustina also uses rural journalism and community advocacy to amplify marginalised voices and has supported efforts to rescue people from human trafficking. Her work connects forest rights, economic empowerment, gender justice and community media. Since receiving the Award, she has gained greater recognition as a trainer and social worker across Jharkhand.

From Devadasi Survivors to Leaders of Change

Mahila Abhivruddhi Mattu Samrakshana Samsthe (MASS) was founded in 1997 by women who experienced the Devadasi system themselves. It has been built as a grassroots movement for the dignity, rights and empowerment of Dalit women in Karnataka.

The organisation works to end Devadasi dedication, challenge gender-based exploitation and strengthen women's access to rights, livelihoods and social protection. MASS combines community mobilisation with education, legal support and economic empowerment. Its historic campaigns have brought thousands of women together to challenge the Devadasi system and demand government entitlements. The organisation supports women in accessing pensions, ration cards, housing and other social protections, while providing counselling and legal assistance to survivors of violence. Education centres help children from disadvantaged communities continue their studies, while livelihood initiatives provide skills, financial support and enterprise opportunities. Through awareness campaigns, street theatre and community engagement, MASS challenges harmful social norms and develops women as organisers, educators and advocates for future generations.



**MAHILA
ABHIVRUDDHI
MATTU
SAMRAKSHANA
SAMSTHE**

**Belgaum, Karnataka
2024 Winner**

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[@Mahila Abhivruddhi Mattu
Samarakshana Samsthe](#)

Bringing Legal Justice Closer to Marginalised Communities

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Taniya Sultana Laskar is a feminist lawyer from Assam's Barak Valley who works to make justice more accessible to women and marginalised communities. She provides pro-bono legal support to survivors of domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape and other forms of gender-based violence while also working on human rights, discrimination and LGBTQI+ rights.

Through collaborations with local organisations and her independent legal practice, Taniya has engaged with communities across several districts of Assam. Her approach goes beyond courtroom representation. She builds the capacity of lawyers, paralegal workers and community volunteers, helping create local networks that can respond to gender-based violence and provide accessible legal support. She has worked with Sanatan Unnayan Sangstha to strengthen gender sensitisation and community-based legal assistance in the Barak Valley. Taniya is also associated with Sexuality and Gender Equality (SAGE), a queer-rights organisation. Her work reflects a feminist model of lawyering that connects legal practice with grassroots advocacy, research, documentation and community leadership.



**TANIYA SULTANA
LASKAR**

**Barak valley, Assam
2024 Winner**

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Building Women-Led Resilience in the Sundarbans

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Goranbose Gram Bikash Kendra (GGBK) works in the climate-vulnerable Sundarbans of West Bengal, connecting gender justice, climate resilience and community development. Founded in 1985, recognising that cyclones, displacement and livelihood insecurity can increase risks of trafficking, child marriage and gender-based violence, GGBK addresses these challenges through integrated community action.

The organisation builds women's collectives and self-help groups that strengthen economic independence while providing support during crises. It works with survivors of trafficking and gender-based violence, helping them access counselling, legal assistance, rehabilitation and livelihood opportunities. GGBK also places strong emphasis on community leadership, encouraging women, young people and children to understand their rights and engage with Panchayats, police and government institutions.

By bringing together climate resilience, women's empowerment, anti-trafficking efforts, education and local governance, GGBK has developed a holistic model of grassroots protection suited to the Sundarbans.



GORANBOSE GRAM BIKASH KENDRA

**Sundarbans,
West Bengal
2024 Winner**

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[@Goranbose Gram
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Turning Struggles for Sanitation into a Movement for Dignity



ARCHANA KR

**Bengaluru,
Karnataka
2025 Winner**

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[@Archana KR](https://www.linkedin.com/in/ArchanaKR)

Archana KR is a sanitation and gender rights activist from Karnataka and founder of Stand4SHE, a movement bringing marginalised communities into conversations on gender equality, sanitation and human rights. Growing up with limited access to basic sanitation, she experienced how inadequate infrastructure and social exclusion affect dignity, health and education.

She later left a career in consulting to work directly with marginalised communities. Through Stand4SHE, Archana combines grassroots mobilisation, digital advocacy and evidence-based campaigns to influence systems and public policy. She has helped more than 75,000 people access essential identity documents, enabling them to claim government entitlements and civic rights. After auditing 148 public toilets, she used data and digital advocacy to push for greater government investment in school sanitation, contributing to a major allocation for toilet improvement across Karnataka. Archana also trains women and transgender leaders in public advocacy and has built a transgender rights network in Bengaluru, demonstrating how lived experiences can become powerful tools for policy change.

An Arunthathiyar community-led movement

Rural Women Development Trust (RWDT) is a grassroots organisation working to end bonded labour, human trafficking, child labour and caste-based exploitation in Tamil Nadu. Founded in 2005 by V. Alamelu Bannan, a survivor of bonded labour, RWDT works across 70 villages to help vulnerable families secure freedom, dignity and sustainable livelihoods.

Its community-led approach transforms survivors into local leaders who support others facing exploitation. RWDT has rescued 2,896 families from bonded labour and rehabilitated more than 10,000 women and 380 children. It has also formed 180 women-led Self-Help Groups, supported livelihood development and helped workers access social security benefits.

Through its Arunthathiyar Women's Liberation Movement, RWDT brings together over 10,500 women across 23 districts, strengthening collective action, leadership and rights.



**RURAL WOMEN
DEVELOPMENT
TRUST**

**Salem,
Tamil Nadu
2025 Winner**

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Using Journalism to Reclaim Tribal Voices and Rights



JAYANTI BURURDA

**Malkangiri, Odisha
2025 Winner**

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Jayanti Buruda is a journalist and grassroots activist from the Koya community of Malkangiri, Odisha. She uses media, community organising and rights education to amplify the voices of tribal women and young people. Growing up in Serapali village, Jayanti witnessed restrictions on girls' education and deep-rooted taboos around menstruation.

She became the first student from her village to complete Class 10 and later studied journalism at the Central University of Odisha. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she returned to her community and founded the Bada Didi Union, a volunteer network supporting adolescent girls and young women across villages. Her work has reached thousands of women and trained tribal girls in media skills, enabling them to document their own realities. Jayanti has established Pad Banks and promoted menstrual health while also working on forest rights. She has trained community leaders on the Forest Rights Act and supported communities in securing forest rights titles. Her work turns journalism into a tool for rights, representation and collective action.

A Single Women's Movement from the Hills

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Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan (ENSS) is a grassroots collective of single women in Himachal Pradesh, bringing together widows, divorced, abandoned and unmarried women, as well as women facing multiple forms of social exclusion.

The organisation challenges discrimination, economic insecurity and the marginalisation of women based on marital status. ENSS emerged from the lived experience of its leader, Nirmal Chandel, who was widowed young and experienced severe social isolation. Beginning in 2005 with just 105 women, the collective has grown into a statewide network of more than 19,000 members. Its landmark 2008 Padyatra brought thousands of single women together to demand equality, social security and political representation. ENSS combines rights education, leadership development and policy advocacy, supporting women to contest elections, understand legal and land rights, and engage with government institutions. Its sustained mobilisation has helped transform single women from isolated individuals into a powerful collective voice, strengthening their social, political and economic visibility across Himachal Pradesh.



**EKAL NARI
SHAKTI
SANGATHAN**

**Himachal Pradesh
2025 Winner**

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Justice, Land rights and Dignity for Dalit women

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Seema Gautam is a social justice activist working with Dalit women, survivors of caste-based and sexual violence, and landless families in Gorakhpur and neighbouring districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh. She supports survivors in filing complaints, securing compensation and navigating legal systems, having helped facilitate over ₹1 crore in compensation and relief across cases.

A distinctive focus of her work is land rights as a women's empowerment issue. She led a movement mobilising nearly a lakh people across Gorakhpur, resulting in roughly 800 families receiving government land rights orders and prompting acknowledgment from the Office of the President of India.

Seema also builds community-based coaching centres and mentors women into independent local leadership, despite facing threats and legal pressure for her activism.



SEEMA GAUTAM

**Gorakhpur,
Uttar Pradesh
2026 Winner**

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Community-led Child Protection and Women's Leadership

Sarvo Prayas Sansthan is a grassroots organisation working across child protection, women's empowerment, education and livelihoods in Madhubani, Bihar. Founded in 2000 by Nirmala Devi, the organisation partnered with LEHER in 2013 to build a network of 36 Village Child Protection Committees, community-run structures that have addressed nearly 2,000 child marriage cases, 1,255 trafficking cases and 1,310 child labour cases.

Beyond protection, Sarvo Prayas has built nearly 400 self-help groups reaching 4,000 women, supporting livelihoods through goat rearing and farmer producer collectives.

Its Kishori Groups mentor adolescent girls into leadership and employment, while several former community members and VCPC volunteers have grown into staff leadership and even Panchayat representation, working steadily despite Madhubani's border vulnerabilities to trafficking and migration.



SARVO PRAYAS

**Madhubani,
Bihar**

2026 Winner

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Ending Caste-based Trafficking and Rebuilding futures

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**AKASH
CHOUHAN**

**Neemuch,
Madhya Pradesh
2026 Winner**

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Akash Chouhan works to end caste-based trafficking and prostitution within the Banchhada community of Madhya Pradesh, a practice generations have treated as inevitable. Since 2016, he has rescued hundreds of girls from exploitation, working closely with police and district authorities despite facing threats and social boycott from within his own community.

In 2023, he founded Jan Shaurya, shifting his approach from crisis response to prevention through education, livelihoods and leadership development. The organisation now runs learning centres and self-help groups across Neemuch, Mandsaur and Ratlam. Seven students have topped their Class 8 exams; one former student now serves in the Madhya Pradesh Police. Akash has also pursued a Public Interest Litigation in the Madhya Pradesh High Court since 2016, seeking rehabilitation for the community, a case still pending judgment.

Community-led Empowerment and Gender Justice

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Sisterhood Network is a non-profit working with women, children and marginalised tribes across 12 villages in Dimapur district, Nagaland. Founded in 2001 by Angula Aiar, it began with twelve women discussing water scarcity, tracing violence at home back to late meals caused by poor water access, and grew into a 25-year effort spanning education, livelihoods, survivor support and cultural preservation, reaching over 1,500 women across 19 Naga tribes.

The organisation built Nteunki, a community resource centre raised with materials contributed by villagers, and installed washrooms to support women's mobility into markets and public spaces. It has re-enrolled 600 children in school, supported 210+ girls through self-help groups, and pushed for women's representation in village councils, securing seats for community members in local decision-making. Sisterhood works within the shadow of AFSPA and regional conflict, sustaining its team through peer support, healing circles and pro-bono therapy partnerships, guided by the belief that activism against violence cannot be confined to sixteen days a year.



**SISTERHOOD
NETWORK**

**Dimapur,
Nagaland
2026 Winner**

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A Decade of Grassroots Feminist Leadership: The Journey Continues

The ten-year journey of the Martha Farrell Awards is a reminder that feminist leadership is lived in many different ways. It is found in the courage to speak up, the patience to organise, the care with which communities are held together, and the persistence to keep working for change even when the path is difficult. The stories in this booklet show that leadership often grows quietly from within communities.

The Awards were instituted to recognise and make visible this grassroots feminist leadership; especially the work that often remains unseen in mainstream narratives of change. Over the years, the Awardees have shown us that meaningful transformation is rooted in lived realities, collective action and a deep sense of responsibility towards one's community. Their journeys have expanded our understanding of who a leader is and what leadership can look like.

But recognition, by itself, is not enough. The Martha Farrell Awards have also created opportunities for connection, solidarity and learning, bringing diverse leaders into a wider community of people and organisations committed to social justice.

As we complete a decade of the Awards, we carry with us the stories, courage and wisdom of all those who have been part of this journey. We hope to keep walking alongside grassroots feminist leaders in the years to come: listening to their experiences, learning from their struggles, celebrating their victories and creating spaces where their work can grow and continue. The journey does not end with a decade; it is a commitment we carry forward, together.

A Decade of Feminist Grassroots Changemakers from across India



*Run by the Martha Farrell Foundation, the Awards are currently being supported by
it's long-standing partner, Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA).*



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