

Connect

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Seema Arora
CEO
CII Foundation

“Corporate Social Responsibility has evolved into a deep and abiding commitment which is catalyzing social transformation. The CII Foundation is privileged to have committed supporters for our work, which has been growing over the years.”

Corporate India has always played a key role in India's social development. Corporate Social Responsibility today has evolved into a deep and abiding commitment which is catalyzing social transformation. The CII Foundation is privileged to have committed supporters for our work, which has been growing over the years.

Under climate change resilience, our crop residue management project has grown from 19 villages in 2018 to 800 villages now. Our efforts span both in-situ and ex-situ methods to manage crop residue effectively and in the July to September quarter, the team intensified its on-ground efforts to mobilize the farmer community to adopt sustainable agricultural practices. A key thrust area in this quarter has been the promotion of ex-situ methods such as the establishment of bio-compost plants, which convert crop residue into nutrient-rich compost. A bio-compost plant was inaugurated in Barnala, Punjab, which will not only reduce the practice of stubble burning but also offer a sustainable solution to soil fertility, benefiting farmers and the environment alike. These plants are a crucial part of the transformation we are working towards, with the aim of making stubble burning an obsolete practice.



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Beyond our work on crop residue management, the CII Foundation is also committed to restoring the ecological balance in urban areas. One of our notable initiatives is a tree plantation drive in Gurugram, where thousands of saplings have been planted to increase green cover and improve air quality. Additionally, we are actively working on the restoration of water bodies in the region, recognizing that the health of our natural resources is vital to both environmental sustainability and community well-being.

Turning to our Early Childhood Education (ECE) program, we are proud to share our latest milestone. In September, the CII Foundation launched an Anganwadi restoration initiative in Gummidipoondi, Thiruvallur District in Tamil Nadu. As part of this initiative, three Anganwadi centers were upgraded to create a more conducive learning and care environment for young children. The improvements included essential infrastructure upgrades and new play areas and pathways to support holistic early childhood development. This initiative is a step towards ensuring that every child has access to quality early education in a safe and nurturing environment.

In the area of women's empowerment, the Woman Exemplar Program continues to celebrate and support women leaders who are driving positive change in their communities, across areas such as education, health, and economic empowerment. In this quarter, we announced the Call for Nominations for the Woman Exemplar Award 2025 using a multi-media outreach campaign and I am happy to share that we have received an overwhelming response, with more than 400 nominations this year. In the next quarter, each nomination received will be evaluated through a

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multi-step process which includes desk reviews and personal visits to understand the journey and contribution of the nominated woman leaders.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the collaborative efforts of our partners, stakeholders, and the communities we serve. From government bodies to corporate sponsors, NGOs, and individuals, each plays a crucial role in helping us achieve our mission. Together, we are making strides toward a more sustainable, equitable, and inclusive future.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to addressing the critical issues of our time. We are grateful for the unwavering support we have received so far, and we look forward to continuing this journey with your partnership and encouragement.



CLIMATE CHANGE

CROP RESIDUE MANAGEMENT

At the onset of winter in north-west India, air pollution levels begin to rise in the region. One of the factors aggravating air pollution is crop residue burning by farmers in states such as Punjab and Haryana. Farmers resort to burning crop residue to clear their fields quickly in time for sowing the next crop. Farm stubble burning not only depletes the soil of essential nutrients, but also pollutes the air with dangerous gases and particulate matter which are hazardous to health.

To address the problem of crop residue burning, the CII Foundation initiated a pilot project on crop residue management in 2018, starting with 19 villages in Punjab.

Designed as a multi-stakeholder initiative, the project leverages the expertise and support of diverse stakeholders such as Government, industry, agricultural universities and farmers to create a 'zero stubble burning movement'. From 19 villages in 2018 to 800 villages across 12 districts in Punjab and Haryana now, the project is promoting sustainable agricultural practices through a gamut of activities.

During the July to September quarter, the focus was on intensifying efforts to prepare for the forthcoming harvest season to mitigate stubble burning. The geographic coverage of the project was also expanded to new areas to strengthen sustainable farming practices.

Key Components of the Program

Awareness
Building

Machinery
Support
Through
Community
Tool Banks

Farmers'
Training
and Farm
Demonstrations

Managing
Biomass
through
Ex-situ
Technology

FIELD VISITS & MEETINGS

Starting July, a series of meetings were held with farmers and other important stakeholders of the crop residue management initiative in multiple project sites in Haryana and Punjab. Visits with volunteers from donor companies were also organised to give them a first-hand experience of the project on the ground.

The CII Foundation team along with the CSR team of Cadence Design Systems, a key supporter of the project in Haryana, met with farmers in Dullat and Buwan villages. The interactions focused on raising awareness about the ill effects of stubble burning and how technological solutions like machinery and training can help farmers adopt better crop residue management practices.



The CII Foundation team met Dr. Satbir Singh Gosal, Vice Chancellor of the Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, and Dr. Vishal Bector, Associate Director (Institution Relations) to discuss collaborative efforts to promote sustainable farming.

The team also visited Dhamar village in Rohtak and the straw-to-biogas unit in Meghawali village, Haryana and engaged in insightful discussions with village women, learning about the benefits they've experienced from cooking with biogas produced from crop residue and the impact of the reduction in stubble burning.



At the Jatana Multipurpose Cooperative Society in Ludhiana they interacted with farmers to raise awareness about the harmful effects of crop residue burning.

To explore advanced machinery and technologies for the forthcoming season, the team visited PDC Agro, an agricultural tool manufacturing company, and learnt more about the best possible solutions for stubble management.



On 26th and 27th September, the team visited key project areas in Fatehabad and Sirsa, Haryana, to assess the progress of ongoing initiatives. The highlight of the visit was the interaction with experts at CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar. The team had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Yadvika, Professor and Head, Department of Renewable and Bio-energy Engineering, College of Agricultural Engineering & Technology, CCS HAU, Hisar. This visit provided valuable insights into both current achievements and potential areas of growth as we continue to strengthen our impact in the region.



FARMER OUTREACH EVENTS

Inauguration of Bio-Compost Plant in Barnala



On 6th August, the CII Foundation, in partnership with Goodyear, organized a farmer outreach event at the Pandher Multipurpose Co-operative Society in Barnala. A key highlight of the event was the inauguration of a bio-compost plant, a crucial step towards effective crop residue management to reduce stubble burning in the region. The bio-compost plant will convert agricultural waste into valuable organic compost, promoting environmental sustainability and a greener future.

Present at the occasion were Mrs. Anuprita Johal, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Gen.), Barnala; Dr. Jagdish Singh, Chief Agriculture Officer, Barnala and key leaders such as Mr. Shivam Kharbanda, Regional Business Head-North, Goodyear; Ms. Insha Fatima from KPMG; Mr. Sunil Kumar Misra, Principal Advisor, CII, and Mr. Chandrakant Pradhan, Lead Climate Resilience, CII Foundation.

Addressing the farmers, Mrs. Anuprita Johal said, "We are delighted to attend this event and inaugurate unique compost plants, which represents a significant step forward in our efforts to promote sustainable agriculture. The District Administration will provide complete support to the farmers in this positive cause."

Over 350 farmers attended the event and shared their positive experiences with the project and expressed gratitude for the support in adopting sustainable farming practices. At the event, the Pradhans and secretaries of 28 Co-operative societies were felicitated for their contribution to the project.

The inauguration of the compost plant is expected to have a far-reaching impact on the agricultural landscape of Barnala and serve as a model for other regions to follow.



SHOWCASING CROP RESIDUE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE AT THE CII SUSTAINABILITY SUMMIT

The CII Foundation participated in the 19th Sustainability Summit, held on 17th and 18th September, which brought together global leaders, innovators, and policymakers to address critical issues such as climate action, ESG, responsible practices, and technological innovation. The stall set up by CII Foundation at the summit highlighted its impactful work in crop residue management, which is helping mitigate air pollution by offering sustainable alternatives to stubble burning, significantly contributing to cleaner air.

By showcasing these initiatives, the Foundation aims to build awareness of responsible environmental practices and address pressing challenges through innovative solutions for long-term, positive change.



URBAN CLIMATE RESILIENCE – TREE PLANTATION INITIATIVE

To address air pollution in the Delhi-NCR region, promote carbon sequestration, and support local wildlife and biodiversity, the CII Foundation in partnership with PTC India Financial Services Limited and local Gram Panchayats has launched a large-scale tree plantation project in rural Gurugram. Under this community plantation initiative, 1,00,000 saplings will be planted across five villages in Farrukhnagar, Gurugram, to enhance the region's green cover.

A memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for this initiative was signed on 8th May and on Teachers' Day, 5th September, teachers and students from the Government Primary School in Daboda village joined forces to plant over 3,000 saplings. The event was more than just a plantation drive—it created a strong sense of community and teamwork as students and teachers planted trees together, symbolizing their shared commitment to a healthier environment.

By involving local communities in this effort, the project is not only planting trees but also planting hope for a greener, more sustainable future.



URBAN CLIMATE RESILIENCE – RESTORATION OF WATER BODIES

Waterbody degradation is a pressing environmental issue that worsens water scarcity and threatens biodiversity. The CII Foundation has been addressing this challenge by launching waterbody restoration projects, beginning in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, in 2023. In partnership with Kemin Industries, three vital waterbodies—Eswaran Pond, Karuperi Kullam Pond, and Panpakkam Pond in Gummudipoondi—were revived as part of the CII Southern Region's Water Alliance Initiative. These efforts, supported by local government, aim to improve water management,

enhance resilience to flooding, and encourage community engagement. Key interventions include cleaning and unblocking water passages, increasing water holding capacity, improving drainage, preventing waste dumping, and beautifying areas to encourage community engagement and create recreational spaces.

On 25th September 2024, a fourth waterbody at SR Kandigai, Gummudipoondi, Thiruvallur District, was restored and officially handed over to the Government.



The inauguration was graced by Mr. Ayush Gupta, IAS, Assistant Collector of Tiruvallur District, Ms. Aakriti Sethi, IAS, Assistant Collector of Salem District, Mr. Murali, Panchayat President of SR Kandigai, Mr. Sivakumar, Block Chairman, Dr. Sureshkumar, President, Kemin Industries South Asia Pvt Ltd, and Mr. Devendra Dixit, Vice President – HR, Kemin Industries South Asia Pvt Ltd, among others.

The restored water body now boasts a water holding capacity of 9.7 million litres.

Building on Chennai's success, the CII Foundation has expanded the initiative with a new project in rural Gurugram, Haryana. On 8th May, the Foundation signed an MoU with PTC India Financial Services Limited to restore 10 waterbodies across five villages in Farrukhnagar. In August, the CII Foundation team conducted an extensive field visit to assess the restoration progress in the villages of Daboda, Khandewla, and Tajnagar, ensuring that the project is on track to create a healthier environment for the community.





EDUCATION

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Early childhood education (ECE) plays a critical role in shaping a child's cognitive and social development, with lasting impact on their future success. Research shows that quality ECE programs reduce school dropout rates and promote overall development, benefiting both students and the education system.

In India, Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) are the primary providers of ECE, offering pre-school education to children up to the age of 6 years. However, there is significant room for improvement in the quality of ECE delivery as many AWCs face challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and a lack of trained

Anganwadi workers. Recognizing the vital role AWCs play in enhancing ECE, the CII Foundation launched a project to improve ECE delivery using a multi-stakeholder approach. By collaborating with state governments, industry partners, and local NGOs, the project harnesses the expertise of diverse stakeholders to drive impactful changes on the ground. The CIIF Anganwadi Adoption Program has been implemented in the states of J&K, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka over the years, focusing on transforming learning environments by creating model Anganwadi Centres to transform ECE through a gamut of activities.

Key Components of the Program

Infrastructure Support to Develop Model Anganwadi Centres

Developing Age and Culturally Appropriate Curriculum

Promoting the use of Teaching Learning Material (TLM)

Capacity Building of Anganwadi Workers

Involving and Engaging the Community

ANGANWADI ADOPTION PROGRAM, JAMMU & KASHMIR

Since 2019, the CII Foundation has been dedicated to strengthening Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Jammu and Kashmir. In Phase 1 of the Project, the focus was on upgrading infrastructure to make it child-friendly, using the concept of BaLA (Building as Learning Aid), as mentioned in the NEP 2020. Now in Phase II, in partnership with the Mission

Directorate, POSHAN, J&K, 80 AWCs across four blocks in three districts - Banihal and Gool in District Ramban, Breng in District Anantnag and Narwah in District Baramulla - have been identified to enhance cognitive learning, school readiness of children enrolled in the Centres and nutritional awareness among parents and communities located near AWCs.

First Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Melas

As part of the Anganwadi Adoption Program, two vibrant ECCE Melas were successfully organised under the 'Fulvun Lokchaar / Khilta Bachpan' initiative. The first Mela took place in Block Narvaw, Baramulla,

followed by another in Block Breng, Anantnag. This event transformed Anganwadis into centres of learning, joy, and community participation, highlighting the critical role of early childhood care and education.

The Melas aimed to:

- **Raise Awareness:** Attendees were sensitized to the goals of the ECCE Melas and the importance of early education.
- **Promote Community Engagement:** The Melas emphasized the vital role that parents and community members play in child development and supporting Anganwadi activities.
- **Showcase Educational Resources:** Teaching learning materials were displayed, giving the community a glimpse into the resources that help prepare children for school.
- **Highlight Child Development:** The community was educated on the various aspects of child development being supported through the project.
- **Strengthen ALMSC Involvement:** The role of the Anganwadi Level Monitoring and Support Committee (ALMSC) in maintaining the quality and effectiveness of Anganwadi services was also highlighted.

In a special initiative, the project team worked with Anganwadi workers and parents to prepare nutritious meals for the children, using recipes from the Nutrition Awareness Package that had been developed earlier under the project.

These Melas encouraged community involvement highlighting the importance of collaborative efforts in supporting child development and education.



ANGANWADI ADOPTION PROGRAM, KARNATAKA



The CII Foundation in collaboration with Volvo has been strengthening Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Karnataka. As part of this initiative, workshops were held across Anganwadi centres during July and August.

In July, six batches of a three-day workshop were completed for 300 Anganwadi educators in Hoskote. The focus was on creating and using locally available Teaching-Learning Materials (TLMs). Each participant also received a TLM handbook to support their ongoing efforts. The training encouraged educators to use locally crafted material to make learning more engaging for children.



In August, the TLM Training Workshop was conducted for 200+ AWWs of Karwar, where Anganwadi workers enjoyed storytelling sessions and appreciated how simple and accessible the TLMs were.

These workshops mark another significant step towards creating a better learning environment in the centres, aiming to make education more engaging and effective for children by integrating culturally rich and relevant TLMs. The training also highlighted the dedication of AWWs in enhancing children's learning experiences, demonstrating the vital role educators play in shaping young lives.



ANGANWADI RESTORATION INITIATIVE, TAMIL NADU



CII Foundation, in collaboration with CII Southern Region and Kemin Industries South Asia, successfully launched an Anganwadi Restoration Initiative, focused on fostering sustainable and inclusive development in Tamil Nadu. This initiative places a strong emphasis on early childhood education, nutrition, and health.

On 25th September 2024, the inauguration ceremony took place in Gummidipoondi, Thiruvallur district, in the presence of key dignitaries including Mr. Ayush Gupta, IAS, Assistant Collector of Tiruvallur District; Ms. Aakriti Sethi, IAS, Assistant Collector of Salem District; Mr. Annadurai, IPS, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Gummidipoondi; and Mr. Ravi, Panchayat President, Billakuppam.

As part of this initiative, three Anganwadi centres were revitalized through essential upgrades, such as roof waterproofing, fencing, renovation of toilets and kitchens, tile work, creation of play areas, pathways,



and plantation activities. These improvements have transformed the centres into child-friendly environments, while Anganwadi Workers were also provided with training on early childhood education and nutrition.

In his inaugural address, Mr Gupta emphasized the importance of early childhood development, stating, "This is a very important project taken up by the CII Foundation and Kemin Industries. Many children from the community will benefit from this intervention. It is now the responsibility of the panchayat to maintain and care for these centres. These Anganwadi centres serve as key delivery agents for nutrition, health, and education during this vital period."

Dr Sureshkumar, President, Kemin Industries South Asia Pvt Ltd, commended the government and community for their support of this initiative.





WASTE MANAGEMENT

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES FOR A GREENER TOMORROW

Inefficient waste management, especially in densely populated areas, is causing significant harm by polluting the air and water. Piles of garbage on roadsides, plastic waste choking drains, and untreated waste entering water bodies are making both humans and the planet sick. It is crucial to acknowledge the damage being done to our environment and the efforts required to address these issues.

To improve urban waste management practices, the CII Foundation launched a community waste management initiative as a multi-stakeholder project in Abul Fazal, Okhla, Delhi, in June 2021.

Complementing the efforts of the local authorities, the project took a wholistic approach and made significant improvements in the area. Building on the success of the Okhla project, the waste management initiative was expanded to Farrukhnagar in Haryana, Kochi in Kerala, and Leh in Ladakh.

The initiative focuses on implementing safe waste collection practices as well as promoting local recycling of plastic and other waste material. By establishing a sustainable waste management system, this project seeks to significantly reduce environmental pollution and improve the quality of life.

Key Components of the Program

Creating Awareness and Catalysing Civic Engagement

Promoting Waste Segregation at Source and Safe Waste Collection

Promoting Recycling Waste Locally and Value-addition in Bio-degradable Waste with the Involvement of RWAs

Segregating and Recycling Non-biodegradable / Dry Waste such as Plastic

Building Skills of Waste Workers and Enhancing their Safety

WASTE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE IN LEH, LADAKH

On 28th March 2024, a Community Waste Management initiative was launched in Leh in partnership with HDFC Bank Parivartan. The project targets 25 villages in two blocks of the Leh district and

complements the efforts of the local government in waste management. In this quarter, several initiatives were undertaken to drive behavioural change and advance waste management efforts.

Stakeholder Workshop and Meeting with Chief Secretary, Union Territory of Ladakh

On 11th July a Stakeholder Workshop was held at Hotel Singge Palace, Leh, supported by the district administration. The event was graced by Mr. Rakesh Joshi, Zonal Head, J&K and Ladakh, HDFC Bank, Mr. Tahir Ahmad Khan, Assistant Vice President, HDFC Bank, Mr. Ghulam Mohammad, BDO Chuchot, Mr. Manzoor Hussain, BDO Kharu, Mr. Nawang Thinles, Former Chairman, CII-Ladakh Region, Syed Shah Naqwi, Chairman, Imamia Mission School, Mr. Parwez, Principal, Government High School, Chuchot Yokma, SHG Members of Chuchot and Kharu Block, Gen Thinles, Secretary, Thikse Monastery and the media.



During the workshop, a Feasibility Report on Waste Management in Leh was released. Students from Government High School, Chuchot Yokma, who had participated in a community clean-up drive were honoured at the event with Eco School Kits for their participation.

Additionally, waste collection E-Carts were handed over to the Block Development Officers (BDOs) of Kharu and Chuchot and a plastic bottle vending machine was handed over to the Hemis Monastery as part of the initiative.



On the same day, the CII Foundation and HDFC Bank Parivartan team met with Mr. Pawan Kotwal, Advisor to the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of UT Ladakh and Chief Secretary, Union Territory of Ladakh and apprised him of the waste management initiative in Leh.

Present on the occasion were Mr. Rakesh Joshi, Zonal Head, J&K and Ladakh, HDFC Bank; Mr. Tahir Ahmad Khan, Assistant Vice President, HDFC Bank; and Disket Yangdol, Branch Manager, HDFC Bank, Chuglamsar. The CII Foundation team included Mr. Nawang Thinles, Mr. Chandrakant Pradhan, S.M Tahir Hussain, Mohd Jibran Zakir, and Tsetan Dolker.



Inauguration of Automated PET Bottle Vending Machine at Thiksey Monastery

On 23rd July, an Automated PET Bottle Vending Machine was inaugurated at Thiksey Monastery. This innovative machine is designed to crush PET bottles efficiently, facilitating their recycling. The crushed waste will be directed to a Material Recovery Facility, which will soon be established in the Kharu and Chuchot blocks.



During the visit, the team engaged in a productive discussion with a monk representing the monastery. The key focus was on waste management awareness, highlighting the importance of educating the local community about effective waste management. To further support cleanliness efforts, five dustbins were donated to the monastery, encouraging better waste disposal practices within the premises.



Cleanliness Drive in Upshi Market



A cleanliness drive was conducted in Upshi Market on 23rd July 2024, in collaboration with the Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) office of Kharu. The program began with a welcome address by Mr. Nawang Thinles, Former Chairman, CII Ladakh Zone. Sonam Dorjay, SDM Kharu, emphasized the crucial role of maintaining personal hygiene and a clean environment.

The cleanliness drive saw active participation from over 75 individuals, including representatives from various local authorities such as block development officers, Naib Tehsildar Kharu, the Officer Commanding 111 RCC, labourers, shopkeepers, restaurant owners, and all Heads of Departments from the Kharu sub-divisions. During the event, SDM Kharu personally handed over 25 dustbins to the market association of Upshi, encouraging proper waste disposal practices.



CHELLODE CHELLANAM WASTE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE IN KOCHI, KERALA

The waste Management initiative, Chelode Chellanam, in Kochi was launched on 6th March in partnership with the General Insurance Corporation of India. Since then, a series of activities are being undertaken to promote efficient waste management under the project.

Health Camp for Haritha Karma Sena Members

On 29th July 2024, a health camp was organized for the Haritha Karma Sena members of Chellanam to address health issues related to their waste management work. Blood tests, with follow-up medical consultations and prescription of medications were provided to participants. In addition, the camp included dental and eye care consultations. The members expressed their gratitude to the CII Foundation for organizing the camp and were very satisfied with the care they received.



Capacity building workshop for Haritha Karma Sena

On 29th July 2024, a capacity-building workshop for Haritha Karma Sena members was held to address field challenges and explore solutions. The workshop was inaugurated by KL Joseph, Panchayat President, alongside other Panchayat members. The session included interactions with Ward Members and Haritha Karma Sena representatives to develop an actionable plan for effective waste management within the ward.



These include field visits to understand and address on-ground challenges, regular meetings with the community, training waste workers and regularly organising awareness drives to change waste management processes and practices.

Clean-Up Drive at Chellanam Harbour

As part of the Swachhata Hi Sewa 2024 campaign, a Clean-Up Drive was successfully organised on 21st September at Chellanam Harbour and its beach area.

During the drive, members of Haritha Karma Sena and local harbour workers, collected plastic waste that were piling up along the shoreline.

The collected waste was responsibly transported to a recycling centre, reinforcing our commitment to environmental sustainability. Together, we are making strides towards a cleaner, greener future for our communities.



SWACHHATA HI SEVA CAMPAIGN 2024



As part of the Swachhata Hi Seva 2024 campaign under the Swachh Bharat Mission, students from the Imamia Mission School in Chuchot, Leh participated in a Swachhata Pledge on 25th September 2024, where they enthusiastically took the pledge, reinforcing the importance of cleanliness in daily life. They pledged to adopt sustainable practices and contribute to a cleaner environment.



A successful clean-up drive was also organised on 30th September in collaboration with the Municipal Corporation of Leh, Ladakh, where volunteers and officials came together to clean the Industrial Area and Skampari.



A cleaning drive was organised at Puthenthode Beach, Chellanam, Kerala, on 2nd October, which was inaugurated by Shri K L Joseph, Panchayat President,

Chellanam Grama Panchayat, in the presence of Mr. Sunu Kumar, Coastal Circle Inspector, Mr. Jacob, Sub Inspector, Ms. Sreelatha, Panchayat Secretary, and Haritha Karma Sena members. More than 90 people participated, collecting plastic bottles, slippers, and other waste, which was transported to a recycling facility for proper disposal.



Another cleanliness drive was held at Government High School, Puthenthode, with the support of Student Police Cadets, teachers, and PTA members. More than 70 students collected waste and handed it over to the Haritha Karma Sena for recycling. Cloth bags were provided to the students to encourage responsible waste management practices.

Alongside this, a 3R's Workshop to promote the concept of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle was held at St. Mary's Higher Secondary School, South Chellanam. Over 80 students participated in the workshop and showcased their creativity by turning waste material such as bottles and shells into beautiful decorative items. The event concluded with "Hug the Hero," where the cleaning staff of the school were honoured for their invaluable services.





WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

WOMAN EXEMPLAR PROGRAM

Grassroots women leaders play a crucial role in driving community transformation across the country, yet their contributions often go unnoticed. Recognizing the importance of highlighting and empowering these unsung heroes, CII began identifying and honouring grassroots women leaders as early as 2005. This initiative became part of the CII Foundation in 2011 and evolved into the broader CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Program in 2017.

The Woman Exemplar Program identifies and awards grassroots women leaders for their impactful work in Education, Health, and Micro-enterprise. The award not

only acknowledges their efforts but also enhances their visibility and credibility, attracting further support for their initiatives. The program goes beyond recognition to build their capacity, empowering these leaders to drive deeper social change within their communities.

Currently, the program supports a network of over 120 women leaders across India, collectively impacting the lives of more than 3 million people annually.

In the July-September quarter, the highlight was the Call for Nominations for the CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Award 2025 and a comprehensive outreach campaign was rolled out for nominations.

Key Components of the Program



Scan the Ecosystem for Exemplars



Award and Recognize Women Leaders



Amplifying the impact of work through leadership trainings & mentoring



On Ground Interventions to Create New Leaders



Broadening and Strengthening the Network

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: WOMAN EXEMPLAR AWARD 2025

The CII Foundation announced the Call for Nominations for the Woman Exemplar Award 2025 on 16th August inviting grassroots women leaders working in the categories of Education, Health and Micro-enterprise to apply. The nomination process specified the following criteria for eligibility:

- Nominate women who have at least 3 years of experience and have not received state or national awards.
- Overcome personal challenges and achieved professional milestones with or without formal education.
- Driven social change in her community through her leadership skills

Social Media Outreach

An extensive social media campaign was launched with a focused strategy to highlight key aspects of the Woman Exemplar Program. The campaign aimed to provide nominators with a deeper understanding of the program and the kind of grassroots women leaders eligible for nomination. Multilingual posts in English and Hindi, along with the #LeadLikeANaari hashtag, helped engage and involve communities from diverse regions, making participation more accessible.



WOMAN EXEMPLAR PROGRAM 2025

APPLICATIONS OPEN
APPLY NOW

Inviting Civil Society Organizations, Social Change Networks, Governments and Corporates to nominate exemplary grassroots women leaders from across India, excelling in the fields of Education, Health & Micro-enterprise.

Why Should You Apply?

- Recognition for 3 winners with a cash prize of INR 3 lakh
- Capacity building & mentoring
- Be a part of the network of grassroots women leaders

LAST DATE TO APPLY 15TH SEPTEMBER 2024

#LeadLikeANaari

Languages you can apply in: Hindi, English, Marathi, Bengali, Kannada, Tamil, Odiya and Assamese

For any queries and to send in your entries, please write to: womanexemplarprogram@cii.in

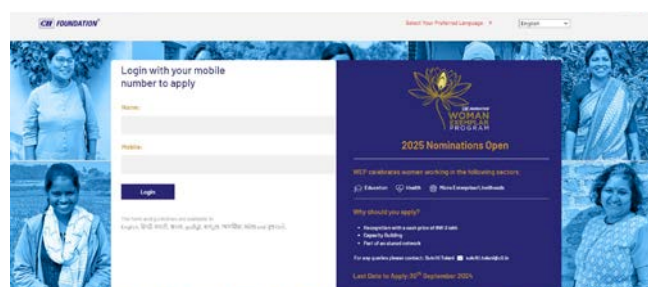
The campaign also featured impactful visual posts and short videos, spotlighting the remarkable contributions of past exemplars. These stories of transformation, coupled with videos from past winners, served to engage audiences emotionally, encouraging more nominations for the 2025 Woman Exemplar Award.

Three new languages- Odiya, Gujarati, Kannada- were also added this year to our registration page ([CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Program - 2025](#)) to further expand outreach.

The CII Foundation partnered with Vencap Social Ventures as the Due Diligence Partner to promote the program and boost nominations. Multiple webinars were conducted to help nominators understand the application process and gain insights into how it supports grassroots women leaders in the various categories.

The Call for Nominations campaign, launched on 16th August, reached out to more than 9 Lakh people across the country, highlighting the campaign's success in garnering interest and involvement in recognizing grassroots women leadership. The deadline was extended to 30th September. At the end of the Call for Nominations, the CII Foundation had received over 1,100 registrations, culminating to a total of 400+ applications for the program this year.

In the next quarter, the application screening process will commence. Each form will undergo a multi-level screening process with desk review and telephonic interviews to shortlist suitable candidates. Subsequently, field visits will be undertaken to meet the nominees in their natural surroundings to further evaluate their work and impact. At the end of the screening process, three winners will be chosen by an eminent jury to receive the prestigious Woman Exemplar Award.



WOMAN EXEMPLAR PROGRAM 2025

2025 Nominations Open

2025 Nominations Open in the following sectors:

- Education
- Health
- Micro-enterprise/ Livelihoods

Why should you apply?

- Recognition with a cash prize of INR 3 lakh
- Capacity building
- Part of an award network

For any queries please contact: womenexemplarprogram@cii.in

Last Date to Apply 30TH September 2024

AMPLIFYING THE VOICES

Woman Exemplar Mana Mandlekar and her team Triumph with 29 Medals at the 8th National Martial Arts Games

Mana Mandlekar, the CII Foundation Woman Exemplar of the 2019 cohort along with her team of students won 29 medals at the 8th National Martial Arts Games in New Delhi conducted in the month of July.

Mana has paved the way for girls in her community to pursue sports as a legitimate career choice, creating an inspiring pathway of change. Mana's achievements reflect the power of dedication and the importance of support systems. She has helped countless young girls

discover their potential and gain the confidence to pursue their dreams. The CII Foundation is honoured to have been a part of her inspiring journey and we hope to see more of our exemplars achieving milestones, transforming our communities.



WOMAN EXEMPLARS MEET MERCEDES SORIA AT US CONSULATE EVENT IN MUMBAI

On 1st August, our CII Foundation Woman Exemplars had the opportunity to engage in an inspiring interaction with Ms. Mercedes Soria, Executive Vice President and Chief Intelligence Officer at Knightscope, hosted by the US Consulate Mumbai, Maharashtra.

Ms. Soria is a speaker for the Department of State of the USA on technology and women in STEM; she coaches and mentors women in STEM and entrepreneurship. She shared her insights on the importance of promoting STEM education for girls, addressing gender disparity in the field, and the numerous career opportunities it offers. She also emphasized the value of mentorship and cross-border learning to create a broader impact.

Our Exemplars, representing Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh, shared their life journeys and highlighted their work in providing access to quality education and safe learning environments for girls, empowering tribal children through foundational literacy, and integrating girls into the formal education system. Overall, it was a powerful exchange of experiences and ideas, celebrating the shared commitment to education and empowerment.

Our Woman Exemplars were extremely happy with the outcome, as one of the attendees, Aarti, said, "We thank the CII Foundation for giving us the opportunity to be part of such inspiring events. We gain new motivation and courage to move forward from such experiences."



CHAMPIONING GRASSROOTS CHANGE: CII FOUNDATION EXEMPLARS INSPIRE AT THE WOMENATION SUMMIT

At the 9th Edition of the CII WR Indian Women Network's flagship event, the WomeNation Summit, held on Friday, 20th September in Mumbai, CII Foundation Woman Exemplars Ranjita Pawar, Sunita Chauhan, and Saraswathi M took centre stage to share their inspiring journeys of change and transformation.

These remarkable grassroots leaders represented the voices of rural women, participating as speakers in the summit themed -Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress. They showcased their impactful work in Education, Micro-Enterprise, and Health, demonstrating how investing in women leads to inclusive growth and significant community impact—truly embodying the spirit of progress.

Through their compelling presentations, they called upon industry women leaders to advocate for investments in grassroots women leaders who are actively working towards uplifting marginalized communities. They emphasized that any inclusive development of the nation must address the needs of those pushed to the fringes of society, highlighting their role as representatives of this often-overlooked section seeking support from the industry.

The summit served as a powerful platform to amplify the importance of investing in women, reinforcing the message that empowering grassroots leaders is essential for sustainable development and community resilience.



EMPOWERING CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE, ASSAM



CII foundation in collaboration with Apraava Energy, has been working on a project in Assam to empower grassroots women leaders and accelerate social change. Through the program, we are working with 15 women leaders across 8 districts.

A 2 -day residential training was organised on 26th and 27th August at the Rangjuli Training Center of SeSTA in Goalpara District, Assam. The training emphasized the importance of rights, gender sensitivity, and legal awareness. Participants engaged in interactive sessions, group activities, and viewed films such as "Pragati Sakhi" and "Laapata Ladies" to deepen their understanding on these topics.

The workshop concluded with participants creating a 45-day engagement plan for goal setting and monitoring.



On 4th September, a comprehensive leadership training session was conducted in the Bongaigaon district of Assam. We were honored to have the Apraava CSR team join us, including Dr. Priyesh Modi, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility, and Ms. Srushti Bangera, Manager of Corporate Social Responsibility at Apraava Energy. Their visit provided an opportunity to engage directly with community members and women leaders, fostering a deeper understanding of their commitment and passion for driving positive change.

The presence of Dr. Modi and Ms. Bangera was truly inspiring, and their interactions left the women leaders feeling highly motivated. Our field partners from SeSTA also played a pivotal role in making the training program a success.



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