

MEDIA RELEASE

Fifty inspiring social sector women leaders awarded the WomenLead India Fellowship

The Fellowship by Reliance Foundation and Vital Voices aims to strengthen leadership and provide a support system

- Inaugural cohort of WomenLead India Fellows selected for work in Education, Rural Transformation, Sports for Development and Arts, Culture and Heritage
- Through a 10 month programme, the Fellows will be provided a course curriculum and access to a network of global leaders and influencers
- The Fellowship aims to enhance India's development sector ecosystem through women's leadership

Washington, D.C., USA / Mumbai, India, December 13, 2022: Women leaders who drive, enable and facilitate social change in India will be part of a new initiative that strengthens their capacity with a Fellowship and a strong support system.

Fifty inspiring women from India's social sector have been identified for the inaugural **WomenLead India Fellowship**, a joint initiative by Reliance Foundation and Vital Voices Global Partnership. Driving an ambitious urgent agenda for women's leadership in India, the Fellowship invests in change makers, social entrepreneurs and social sector leaders, with a support system to meaningfully grow their social initiatives and achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The Fellows in the inaugural cohort have been selected for their work in the themes of Education, Rural Transformation, Sports for Development and Arts, Culture and Heritage. This dynamic, and intergenerational cohort hails from various social sector organizations, working at the grassroots level across rural and semi-urban areas of the country. The Fellows include entrepreneurs working on a range of issues and geographies from waste management in southern coastal villages to affordable energy sources in north-east India.

Over the course of 10 months, the Fellowship will provide these women leaders a course curriculum, access to a network of global leaders and influencers, and advance mentoring support that will collectively help enhance their knowledge and skills – all the requirements for achieving high community impact.

Speaking on the Fellowship award, Mrs. Nita M Ambani, Founder & Chairperson, Reliance Foundation, said, “My congratulations to the 50 exemplary women who have been selected for the first WomenLead India Fellowship. It has been a joy to learn about their inspiring journeys and transformational vision. I hope this Fellowship will be a force multiplier that further strengthens and amplifies their outstanding work with communities across India. Reliance Foundation is privileged to partner with Vital Voices in this incredible initiative to support our WomenLead India Fellows and be a part of their story.”

“I commend these 50 women leaders for rising up to the challenges people face in their communities to steer the way forward. They are shining examples of what the WomenLead India Fellowship is all about and I couldn't be prouder that Vital Voices is a part of their journey. We are enthusiastic about making a long-term investment in this inaugural cohort of Fellows, whom we believe will use their power to empower millions of others,” **said Alyse Nelson, Co-Founder, President & CEO, Vital Voices.** “We are thrilled to partner with Reliance Foundation on welcoming India’s next generation of women leaders into this esteemed Fellowship.”

The WomenLead India Fellowship will adopt a participant-centric approach, providing common as well as theme-centric mentorship to the Fellows. Over the coming months, it will serve as a platform to connect across diverse thematic areas, where they can learn with and from each other, both from Indian and global experiences. By adopting a multilateral and interdisciplinary approach, the WomenLead India Fellowship aims to strengthen the development sector ecosystem of India through women’s leadership.

About Reliance Foundation

Reliance Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Reliance Industries Limited, aims to play a catalytic role in addressing the nation’s development challenges through innovative and sustainable solutions. Led by Founder and Chairperson Smt. Nita Ambani, Reliance Foundation is relentlessly working towards facilitating transformative changes to ensure overall wellbeing and higher quality of life for all. Reliance Foundation is focused on addressing the nation’s development challenges in rural transformation, education, health, sports for development, disaster response, urban renewal and arts, culture and heritage, and has touched the lives of more than 63 million people across India, in more than 50,800 villages and several urban locations. Learn more: www.reliancefoundation.org.

About Vital Voices Global Partnership

Now celebrating 25 years since its founding, Vital Voices Global Partnership has directly invested in more than 20,000 changemakers across 184 countries and territories since its inception in 1997. Driven by the universal truth that women are the key to progress in their communities and nations cannot move forward without women in leadership positions, Vital Voices has provided early support for leaders who went on to become Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, U.S. Youth Poet Laureates, Prime Ministers, award-winning innovators, pioneering human rights defenders, and breakthrough social



entrepreneurs, including Amanda Gorman, Malala Yousafzai, and more. In an effort to advance and expand this work, in 2022 Vital Voices opened the doors to the world’s first global embassy for women, the Vital Voices Global Headquarters for Women’s Leadership —a first-of-its-kind space that allows for convening, innovation, planning, and action — all in the pursuit of tackling the world’s greatest challenges. Serving as a “venture catalyst,” Vital Voices identifies leaders with a daring vision for change and partners with them to make that vision a reality. It provides connections, increased capacity, a peer network, financial support, skills training, and increased visibility for their work, which ranges from gender-based violence and climate justice to economic inequities and political disempowerment, and more. Learn more: www.vitalvoices.org.