

MEDIA RELEASE

New book celebrates the role of grassroots women leaders during the pandemic

- *The First Responders celebrates extraordinary women who stepped forward to lead their communities during the pandemic*
- *Published by Reliance Foundation and Observer Research Foundation, the book illustrates the importance of supporting leadership capacity building for women*

New Delhi, 27th April 2022: Women who courageously supported their communities across India during the pandemic feature in a new book launched at Raisina Dialogue 2022 in New Delhi on Wednesday. Called *The First Responders: Women Who Led India Through The Pandemic*, the book published by Reliance Foundation and Observer Research Foundation celebrates the leading role of these women in helping combat the challenges of the pandemic at the grassroots and shows the importance of supporting leadership capacity building for women. These heroic stories were gathered from across India in partnership with a range of partner organisations.

The launch of the book at the event with international delegates from over a 100 countries was followed by a panel discussion on the subject, 'The First Responder: Women Leadership and the SDGs', with illustrious speakers Smt Smriti Irani, Minister for Women and Child Development; Ms Kwati Candith, Deputy Minister, International Relations and Co-operation, South Africa; Ms Waseqa Ayesha Khan, Member of Parliament, Bangladesh; Dr Vanita Sharma, Advisor, Strategic Initiatives, Reliance Foundation; and Mr Shombi Sharp, Resident Coordinator, India, United Nations.

The book, *The First Responders*, spotlights the work of 25 Indian women across governance, education and skilling, health and nutrition and entrepreneurship and livelihoods, and highlights their individual journeys to leadership over several years and how they were able to utilise those skills during the pandemic. Each of the women featured rose up to the challenge of steering their communities forward at a time when physical contact was risky and the pandemic posed uncertainty on the way ahead.

From a water conservation advocate in Uttarakhand to a health worker in Madhya Pradesh and from a football coach in Manipur to a police officer in Telangana, the women leaders featured in the book are from varied walks of life. These women do not know each other, but their stories of leadership have key similarities that represent the untold stories of many such women across the country who stepped forward to help during this time. Their stories also illustrate the importance of creating a conducive environment to nurture a woman's intrinsic ability to lead, promotion of sustainable livelihoods for women, promoting multi-level collaborations and communication, ways to reduce the burden on public healthcare system and recognising as well as ensuring a woman's right to life with dignity.

Registered Office:

9th Floor, Maker Chamber IV,
222 Nariman Point, Mumbai 400021,
Maharashtra, India

Toll Free Number:

1800 419 8800

Email:

contactus@reliancefoundation.org

Internet:

www.reliancefoundation.org



The practices, methods and tools used by the 'First Responders' to steer their communities have learnings for policymakers and development practitioners, particularly regarding the importance of supporting capacity building for women leaders. The book exemplifies the outcomes envisaged in Goal 5 of UN Sustainable Development Goals that calls up on the international community to ensure full and effective participation and equal opportunities for women.

Reliance Foundation works to help women become self-sufficient and discover the leaders and entrepreneurs amongst themselves. Since 2010, it has reached several million women through multiple approaches to enhance their lives and livelihoods. *The First Responders: Women Who Led India Through The Pandemic* aims to spark positive change through example as it provides a glimpse of the countless stories of women's leadership at the grassroots and demonstrates the significant impact these women have made while supporting their communities. Reliance Foundation will continue to highlight real-life stories and experiences to create an enabling environment for women, especially at the grassroots.

The First Responders is available for free download [here](#).

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 (RF) is relentlessly working towards facilitating transformative changes to ensure overall well-being and higher quality of life for all. Among India's largest social initiatives, RF 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. RF has touched the lives of more than 57.5 million people across India, in more than 50,600 villages and several urban locations.

Learn more: www.reliancefoundation.org

Registered Office:

9th Floor, Maker Chamber IV,
222 Nariman Point, Mumbai 400021,
Maharashtra, India

Toll Free Number:

1800 419 8800

Email:

contactus@reliancefoundation.org

Internet:

www.reliancefoundation.org