

TOI Social Impact Awards

THE TIMES OF INDIA | AHMEDABAD
THURSDAY | JANUARY 31, 2013

15



FLEXI MODE | Yashoda Chona with NIOS head S S Jena | Edu, Govt

HIGH YIELDS | Devesh Patel gives the award to Anand Agricultural University | Environment, Govt

DOC ON CALL | Karuna Trust's Dr Sudarshan with Jadegowda | Health, NGO

E-SMOOTH | Gwalior's DMs (2009 & present) accept the trophy from Hari Om Jatav | Advocacy, Govt

HELPING HAND | Rajesh Shah with the Ziglitz Health Care team | Health, Corporate

ALL GREEN | Chinmaju with Dhan's Vasimati | Environment, NGO

GO SOLAR | Selco's Hegde and Biswal with Madur | Environment, Corporate

SERVICE FIRST | Sewa's Kanti Devi with N Chaudhary of Macwan | Livelihood, NGO

GOOD RETURNS | Chhotela & Kann Devi with N Chaudhary of Jaipur Rugs | Livelihood, Corporate

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They touched lives at micro level

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TEAM TOI

Chandra was right, though the discussions stayed animated throughout the meeting. The jury unanimously agreed that the sole nominee in the government category, National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities, deserved the award. In the NGO category, it recognised that the degree of difficulty faced by an organisation in carrying out its work should be a major criterion by conferring the award on Karuna Trust, which provides free, primary healthcare in remote, tribal and insurgency-prone areas.

In Education, the jury decided not to award anyone in the Corporate category though GMR Varalakshmi Foundation and Aditya Birla Group found support among some. Chandra accepted the jury's verdict, but added that having worked as a finance secretary in a poor state, he knew that state governments didn't have the money to invest in building classrooms or paying teachers, so it was essential to encourage the private sector to provide affordable education.

The next category saw an interesting contest between the National Institute of Open Schooling, which provides vocational education to 5.2 lakh students every year, and Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya No. 2, Zeenat Mahal that educates girls from the minority community in old Delhi.

While the sheer size of NIOS's operations was undeniable, former Chief Election Commissioner J M Lyngdoh pointed out that Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya had gone from being one of the worst government schools not long ago to achieving 100% pass results for the last five years. "Turning around something like this in a way that touches lives is commendable," he said.

"The two nominees reflect two diverse but equally important attributes," chimed in renowned environmentalist Sunita Narain. "On the one hand, scale; on the other, making a difference at the micro level. Why not give them the award jointly?" she added. It was a decision that speedily found favour with the jury. In the NGO category, Room to Read emerged a comfortable winner.

"Sunita, we are now in your territory," quipped Chandra as the conversation turned to the Environment sector. But the jury still vigorously debated whether the winner in the Corporate category should be Selco Solar Light or ITC for its efforts on conservation, biodi-

versity and preservation of resources. Some jury members expressed scepticism about how much of an impact solar lighting had had in India. However, NAC member Aruna Roy said that as someone who herself lives in a village and spends a fair amount of time in rural India, she could vouch for the fact that many villagers who might never have received electricity had literally been empowered. "Solar energy is the future," she declared. The award went to Selco.

There was little debate about giving the award in the government category to Anand Agricultural University. But the NGO category saw a vigorous debate between Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), which restores degraded common lands, and Dhan Foundation, which has organised about 3 lakh small and marginal farmers into associations across six states and helped stabilise cultivation in 75,000 ha of land. The jury finally resolved the issue by deciding to give the award jointly to both.

In the Corporate category of the Livelihoods sector, there was a brief but animated tussle between Jaipur Rugs Company and Keggfarms. Some jury members opposed Jaipur Rugs, which encourages production of hand-knotted carpets by people below the poverty line, on the grounds that women working with it earn about Rs 4,000 or Rs 5,000 a month, which is a meagre amount. But others argued that this represents a considerable sum for families that otherwise would have zero income. Besides, there is considerable cost involved in reaching out to people in remote, distant locations, so it's not as if the organisation can leverage economies of scale and enjoy fat margins. Planning Commission member Syeda Hameed said the government had not been able to do much for unskilled workers in remote areas; at least Jaipur Rugs was able to provide them some income and artisanal skills. Finally, the jury ruled in favour of Jaipur Rugs.

Perhaps the most animated discussion of the day followed as the jury considered the nominees in the Government sector, in which Central Silk Board squared off against JEEVika—Bihar Rural Livelihoods Society. Sunita Narain made a strong case for Central Silk Board, arguing that India needs to promote its silk cultivation, which is coming under increasing threat from China, and the Silk Board's approach of setting up micro enterprises based on tussar silk production by tribal families reaches out to the poorest people. She

And The Award Goes To...

LIFETIME CONTRIBUTION

Naga Mothers Association & Meira Paibi, Manipur | Both women-driven organisations are peacekeepers in the troubled north-eastern region. NMA sustains the ceasefire between Naga groups and government. Meira Paibi is the largest grassroots civilian human rights movement in Manipur

HEALTH

CORPORATE: Ziqitta Health Care Ltd | Affordable ambulance service; runs 860 ambulances; touched 1.75 million people in Rajasthan, Punjab, Bihar, Kerala, Mumbai

GOVERNMENT: National Trust for the Welfare of People with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Metal Retardation and Multiple Disabilities | Health insurance for people with disabilities; insured 1.2 lakh people across India

NGO: Karuna Trust | Free primary healthcare in remote, tribal areas; benefits for 9.6 lakh people in 8 states including Karnataka, Maharashtra, Arunachal Pradesh

EDUCATION

CORPORATE: None

GOVERNMENT: Joint award

National Institute of Open Schooling | Vocational and academic education to 5.2 lakh students across the country every year

Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya No. 2, Zeenat Mahal | Turnaround of Urdu medium school in Old Delhi to achieve 100% results for five years running; education for 1,300 girls

NGO: Room to Read | Libraries for rural

and urban poor; education in government schools and for disadvantaged girls; impact on one million children in 9 states, including Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand

ENVIRONMENT

CORPORATE: Selco Solar Light Pvt Ltd | Solar energy and cooking solutions for low income families; reached 1.3 lakh households in Karnataka, Kerala, Gujarat

GOVERNMENT: Anand Agricultural University | Developed and distributed eco-friendly, cost-effective liquid bio-fertilizers; supplies farmers in 18,000 villages in Gujarat

NGO: Joint award

Foundation for Ecological Security | Restoration and conservation of land and water resources; improved earnings for 1.6 million people in 7 states including Nagaland, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh

Dhan Foundation | Forms farmer associations to restore common ponds, tanks; helps provide water to 3 lakh farmers in six states including Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Odisha

LIVELIHOODS

CORPORATE: Jaipur Rugs Co Pvt Ltd | Training marginalized rural poor to weave carpets for export; hires 50,000

INTERNATIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO INDIA

Pratham USA | Volunteer-run fundraising arm of Pratham (India) that works to improve education here; has 14 chapters; raises about \$11 million annually through galas and events

people in 7 states including Rajasthan, Jharkhand, West Bengal

GOVERNMENT: Central Silk Board | Part of textile ministry; sets up micro enterprises for tussar silk production among tribal communities; helps close to 3,000 people in Bihar, Jharkhand

NGO: Self Employed Women's Association (Sewa) | Creating cooperatives to make women self-reliant; impact on 1.4 million women in five states including Gujarat, Assam, J&K

ADVOCACY & EMPOWERMENT

CORPORATE: None

GOVERNMENT: District Administration Gwalior | Setting up decentralised hubs to deliver public services efficiently and punctually; benefits more than 2 lakh every year

NGO: Joint award

Association for Democratic Reform | Improves voter knowledge by disseminating information on candidates contesting local and national elections through all media across the country

Navsarjan Trust | Empowers dalits, tribal communities, religious minorities and women; works with close to 2 lakh people every year in Gujarat

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IIMs want more girls in classrooms
But Boys Continue To Dominate CAT Results

Ishan Srivastava | TNN



front of this idea. Overall in terms of appearance in CAT, the number of girls have gone up from 56,050 in 2011 to 60,876 in 2012, a minor increase in the light of the total number of candidates who appeared for CAT this year - 2.14 lakh.

"The number of girls appearing itself is less so we can't really compare their selection numbers with boys. Numerical targets are not implementable and not desirable," said Prof Hari Sreekumar, head of placements at IIM-Tiruchirappalli. "But what we and the

five other new IIMs are doing is to give weightage to gender in the selection process so as to have better balance. It does appear to have improved diversity on the campus.

In my understanding, there is a consensus among IIMs at a conceptual level but what has to be done specifically is left to individual institutes."

He also said that IIMs have to reveal these weightages in advance. "For IIM-K there is no target for diversity," he said.

However, speaking to TOI

However, IIM-Ahmedabad denied having any specific measure for better representation of girls and non-engineers on campus

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More levity followed as the jury turned to the NGO sector and the Self Employed Women's Association (Sewa) was announced as the first nominee. "You've fielded Roger Federer right at the start. No one else could possibly compete," quipped Chandra. But the discussion quickly turned serious. The jury acknowledged Sewa's enormous contribution, but wondered if it wouldn't be better to highlight the work of a relatively lesser-known organisation. As Lyngdoh quipped, "Giving Sewa an award is like pinning one more medal to a Russian field marshal's already overcrowded chest". But there was also a counter-argument that Sewa had chosen to apply, and rejecting it would act against the objective of encouraging applications from top-notch organisations that are truly

making a difference. In the end, 'Federer' won one more award. But Gravis, which has set up 2,500 community-based organisations in remote villages of Thar Desert, drew considerable praise for its efforts to bring water to an arid region. Anu Aga said Gravis should get an "honourable mention".

In the Advocacy & Empowerment sector, the jury decided against giving any award in the Corporate sector, and overwhelmingly voted for the district administration of Gwalior, which delivers 76 services of 13 departments through 48 decentralised hubs, in the Government category. The NGO sector featured yet another intense debate between the Association for Democratic Reforms and Navsarjan Trust, which is active in more than 3,000 villages to ensure human rights for all, especially dalits, tribals, religious minorities and women.

"ADR has done tremendous work, though I must point out that they were not the pioneers in filing affidavits on all election candidates, it was the Election Commission," observed Lyngdoh to a round of laughter. But has it really been able to prevent criminalisation of politics, wondered some jury members. "It is an ant biting an elephant. But it bites hard, and should not go unrecognised," said Lyngdoh.

Others, however, argued that Navsarjan's work at the micro level deserved appreciation. Finally, the jury decided to award the prize jointly, invoking the same argument about recognizing both scale of operations and micro-level impact that had been used in the case of the National Institute of Open Schooling and Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya No. 2, Zeenat Mahal.

That left the jury with the last two awards: International Contribution to India and Lifetime Contribution. Unlike the other categories, in which the jury had to either choose from the shortlist or not give any awards, they were allowed to go beyond the names suggested by TOI and come up with their own nominations in these two segments. After a short discussion, the jury settled for Pratham USA, which has been instrumental in helping education NGO Pratham reach 3 million children in 21 states across India, for International Contribution.

The Lifetime Contribution Award was more intensely discussed. From the start, the jury seemed clear about wanting to choose a woman or a women's organisation. Aruna Roy went beyond the list of nominees to suggest that writer/activist Mahashweta Devi, "an icon for my generation", and social crusader Chunibhai Vaidya be considered. She also

suggested that while there may be a conscious decision to not give any posthumous awards, some way should be found to honour Nirbhaya, "who lives on in our minds". Anu Aga, who is chairperson of Teach for India, spoke passionately about Sister Cyril's amazing 'Rainbow' programme of educating thousands of Kolkata's street children.

In the end, though, the jury went for two organisations that were already on the shortlist: Naga Mothers Association and Meira Paibi, which is active in Manipur. The Naga Mothers Association has nurtured and sustained a ceasefire between Naga underground groups and the government, and continues to monitor the peace process. Meira Paibi is best known for taking on the state and security forces against human rights violations in the conflict-ridled state. The fact that both organisations were driven by women and working in the conflicted north-east seemed to strike a chord with the jury members.

Historically, the Naga and Meiti communities have been in conflict. Yet, both face similar social problems. Fittingly, the jury chose to jointly honour the peacemakers in both communities, signalling that a shared humanity can transcend narrow divides.