



Laadi

@

10





# A journey from an endeavour to an empowerment



Laadli

Celebrate Her Life  
An Initiative By Population First



Laadli

A Girl Child Campaign

**CELEBRATE HER LIFE**

An Endeavour to stop pre-birth sex selection has moved on to a bigger purpose of women empowerment and gender equality.



## TEAM UNFPA

It all started 10 years ago. Many rounds of deliberations and much determination led to the first signs of *Laadli*. What sparked off as an idea, soon took on a life of its own.

A name that reminds us of a common form of endearment is now a name that has grown to be recognized as a touchstone for gender sensitivity in India.

It was time to re-write the rules. From urging ad-makers to think again to making film makers trudge the 'not-so-beaten' path –*Laadli* made everyone peer through the lens of gender sensitivity. She made journalists re-tell their stories and made them realize the importance of listening to the spoken and the unspoken.

She made us look at the world anew, question the given and establish the new norm. From a child finding her way to a self-assured 10-year-old today, we watched on with delight as *Laadli* did us proud time and again. As we look back and reminisce the defining moments of *Laadli*, we realize that she was fortunate to have the likes of Dr. A.L. Sharada and Mr. Bobby Sista faithfully accompany her every step of the way.

She crossed paths with many who joined her journey and made it their own. 10 years on... *Laadli* has moved from a being word of endearment to making everyone think what it truly means to treasure *Laadli* and create a world- more equal for her.





**SAM BALSARA ,**  
**Madison Communications, Founder, Chairman & MD**

*“I am delighted that an important initiative-like Laadli, to promote the cause of the girl child has been initiated and taken up by a senior advertising person like Mr. Bobby Sista. My compliments to him for devoting his post advertising life in service to Indian society.*

For India to unleash its real potential we have to harness and unleash women power and this can be done only if deep rooted beliefs detrimental to the girl child and women are buried and women are considered on par with men by all sections of society.

In the 80s & 90s, it was advertising that did a lot to promote the new modern woman, project her as a confident young lady, as capable as her male counterpart, managing the home and work efficiently and bring her out of the kitchen and home.

It is heartening to know that the cause has been further widened to focus on gender equality. Gender equality is very important especially in the corporate world. Advertising plays a big role in gender equality through the ads that the industry creates. Creating awareness and sensitizing creators of advertising on this subject is very important.

*Laadli* should focus on creating not just awareness but persuading the poorer and conservative sections of Indian society of the importance of gender equality for their own good.





## **PIYUSH PANDEY,**

**Ogilvy & Mather, Executive Chairman & National Creative Director**

Gender imbalance has its roots in a deeper issue - disrespect for women. The result is an obsessive preference for male children and the misuse of science and technology for sex determination and selection. This unhealthy trend will have far-reaching social consequences.

**Growing gender imbalance is a national issue. Reducing gender imbalance and making our dream of a society where women can live life with dignity requires change in attitudes. As change agents that influence people to endorse and embrace new lifestyles, values and social norms – media and advertising can surely help in promoting a more positive image of women in society.**

I strongly believe sexual discrimination is an indicator of social sickness and pledge my continued support for raising gender sensitivity in advertising, media and beyond and salute 'Population First' and the *Laadli* campaign and advocacy initiatives to bring attention and interest to this important issue that plagues our country.

Going into the future we need to accelerate change by enlisting the participation of young India and turning them into change agents ensuring the newer generations grow up learning to respect women.

Looking forward to a more gender balanced India where everyone is treated equally.





## **K.V.SRIDHAR (POPS), Sapient Nitro, Chief Creative Officer**

### **A world of Her and for Her**

I remember some time in 2005, right in its inception year, both Bobby and Dr. Sharada approached me and briefed about their campaign on girl child - *Laadli*. They asked me to associate and I told them that they are selling a convert and that I was already living the philosophies of the campaign in my own work. I told them about my habit of replacing boys with girls in most ads that my team creates and shared work like the HDFC campaign where a girl gifts her dad a car and other campaigns, which was originally written as a boy gifting his dad. **I also told them that I realize the importance of a girl child in a family, as ours didn't have one form two generations, my dad didn't have a sister and so do I.**

Since then it has been a great journey with *Laadli* and it's heartening to see that, what started off as a campaign has become a movement for a larger purpose of gender equality today. The effects are evident, as per just one parameter – the entries we received for the *Laadli* Media Awards have increased from less than 100 during early years to more than 1000 now. I've been privileged to be a part of this movement, we have come a far way in the last 10 years with a realization that there's a lot that still needs to be done in this regard.

I'll speak for advertising—we should continue sensitizing the brand makers - both the advertisers and the agencies. Many a times it's very subtle but the consequences are far-reaching. For instance the family planning ads always promoted the imagery of a perfect family with two kids - a boy and a girl sounds fair at the outset; but this imagery...





.. contributes to huge menace of non-survival of the second girl child in the quest to complete a perfect family.

The 2 C's that need to be carefully looked into are: **the content and the context** – the client writing a brief or the creative person writing the copy has a blank paper in front and they have a choice. They can choose to write about a girl who is presented like a gift to the boy who wins a bike race, or they can write about a girl driving the bike, or even a girl engineer who makes a bike. The need of the hour is to make creative people aware of the power which they possess, because they have **the power to influence mindsets and change behaviors**.

Make them realize that they have options and can choose to tell better stories. For instance, when we did a campaign for the P&G's Shiksha initiative, we created a girl child character Vidya and not a boy child. I believe that when you write for a boy, at a subconscious you are not including girls, but by writing it for a girl you are including boys too.

I am glad to see the changes, from a society where a girl's ultimate dream was 'koi rajkumar ayegaa urmujhe le jayega' to following their passion and making successful careers. The mindset has changed. But, in 2025 I want to see the gender ratio to be 100 girls to every 100 boys from the current dismal ratio. I want to see more than 50% of white collar jobs be done by women, like around 58% of pilots in Jet Airways are women and I want to see this replicated in all companies. As a society we should give them the dignity and place they deserve and realize that we are here because of them.





## **RAMESH NARAYAN**

**Canco Advertising Pvt. Ltd, Managing Director**

Ten years is a blink in the life of an organization.

The *Laadli* story has been replete with challenges and successes. Whether it was changing Governmental legislation or peoples mindsets, nothing is easy. Change comes gradually, and with great difficulty.

And the *Laadli* team has steadfastly chipped away, on this huge yet critical job it has cut out for itself. I have watched the efforts and the success of *Laadli* from a distance. It has been very gratifying.

To me, the growth of the *Laadli* Media Awards, the interactions that *Laadli* has had with the communications industry, the gender sensitization programs and the GS index in Campaign have all been great triumphs for *Laadli*.

No doubt there are more that I have not listed. Bobby and Sharada, you'll have been doing a wonderful job and I wish you and the *Laadli* team all the best.

I realize that in your success, lays ours.







## **MONICA TATA,** **HBO India, Managing Director**

It's been a pleasure and an honor to be part of the *Laadli* journey albeit in a very small way.

I think what *Laadli* has been able to achieve in highlighting the issues on gender sensitivity especially in the world of advertising and media has been commendable.

I have had the privilege to lead some of these initiatives which have been supported by *Laadli* be it - VOW – Violence on Women and Changing Gender Frames, both being IAA initiatives.

Am sure all the work *Laadli* has done in the past decade will make for a strong foundation to build a solid structure which will take *Laadli* to the next level of success in the coming decade.





## **PRITI NAIR,** **Curry Nation, Director**

My connection with *Laadli* and population first came when they had just begun. I started first by being on the jury and I went in with saying “*Is this going to be yet another award?*” and then I met Sharada and the team. My first meeting with Sharada and Bobby Sista, had me completely amazed at the passion and the commitment to what was their ambition.

**Laadli is far far bigger than just an award. There was a clear and correct strategic direction of sensitizing the right kind of people to gender. And those people were us, the media, marketing and advertising fraternity.**

I can't even begin to say how much that realization meant to me. It was such a concrete and powerful direction. We, the people who have the weapon of media with us are actually capable of changing perception and attitude. And that responsibility is something we don't even think of taking. Every time we write an ad, every time we think of a concept why can't we put a gender filter? We can. And this is the one thing *Laadli* instilled in me.

Depending on a brands strategy, sometimes it may be possible and sometimes it may not be possible to make gender sensitivity happen but it is always and always possible for us to think about it at least each time. Apart from this, the many other initiatives *Laadli* takes are always so solid and strong. I can't end this write up without mentioning Sharada's passion. It is so addictive. It energizes you. I hope to continue my association with *Laadli* and truly support it in whatever way possible that I and my agency can.

I am sure the ten years have been filled with enormous hard work and hardships. But *Laadli* to today is a name to reckon with and that is only because of the untiring efforts of the core team. I feel proud that I can be a part of this celebration and achievement. It is truly a privilege.





## **MOHAMMED KHAN,** **Advertising veteran**

"I've been associated with *Laadli* awards since their inception and I remember how, in the first year, there were just about half dozen or so entries, mostly in the vernacular and from small towns. It was all very depressing.

This year, I was truly impressed not only with the number of entries but the outstanding quality of the advertising as well the sensitivity and maturity with which it was handled. I believe this body of work is amongst the best in the ad industry today.

Consequently, the number of awards has also been increased dramatically. This transformation has been possible only through the passion and commitment with which Bobby, Sharada and her team have worked month after month, year after year.

Women's issues are at the forefront of social change in India and, thanks to their dedication, *Laadli* is driving this change.





## **SANTOSH DESAI,** **Future Brands Limited, Managing Director & CEO**

The struggle for gender equality needs necessarily to be a long term one needing consistent effort across many fronts simultaneously. This is exactly what the *Laadli* campaign has been doing with imagination, courage and great drive for the last ten years. Starting out with a focus on the girl child, the effort today embraces all key aspects of the issues surrounding gender equality.

The active monitoring and espousal of gender-friendly representations in media is an issue of particular importance that the organization has been focusing on. This is a crucial and often under-examined area, and ***Laadli's* great success has been in drawing public attention to not only the gross stereotyping that takes place in popular culture, but also in more subtle, implicit ways in which such representations find their way into public consciousness.**

The UNFPA *Laadli* award is a positive instrument to recognize those who are leading the effort to show gender in a more progressive way. In a few years, these awards have become a benchmark for the industry, one that encourages others to follow the examples set.

It is largely in this area, that I have had the great pleasure and privilege of being involved with the organization. In doing so, my own awareness of the nature of gender stereotyping has been vastly enriched. Under the able and committed stewardship of Sharada and her team, this important cause is getting the attention that is its due. The conversations around this subject have multiplied, and while so much remains to be accomplished, the last ten years demonstrate that change is not only possible, but that it is inevitable.





**AMBI PARAMESWARAN,  
DraftFCB Ulka, Executive Director, CEO**

I am delighted to hear that Population First / *Laadli* Campaign is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year. The effort of Dr Sharada and Mr Bobby Sista is indeed laudable.

The subject of Gender Sensitivity is now a part of popular currency in the Indian world of advertising and marketing, thanks to some measure to the efforts taken by these tireless warriors.

I have enjoyed being a part of the Jury for several years and a part of the faculty at training sessions organized by Population First / *Laadli*.

The Government is spending a lot to build awareness of the plight of the girl child but at the grassroots level more focused communication can help.

Towards this end the service provided by Population First / *Laadli* is very creditable. I wish them all the best for the next decade and next.





## **ALKA PANDE,** **Art critic, cultural theorist, teacher, curator, author**

*Laadli* – a common endearment given for daughters in Hindi language. The paradox is the inexplicable yearning of most Indian mothers for a son, who consider their *Laadlis*, a burden. I grew up observing this skewed approach towards daughters, around me.

The word *Laadli* seemed to be present only in fairy tales. I had never imagined that the word *Laadli* would emerge from the pages of fiction books as real until one day, in 2012, Population First approached me.

They wanted me to be a part of their campaign, ‘*Laadli* Media Advertising Award for Gender Sensitivity’ – an endeavour to save the girl child. The involvement started with a nondescript mundane approach but soon I found myself deeply absorbed in it.

Awareness, capacity building, and empowerment – *Laadli* helped me achieve all that. I discovered that *Laadli* was not the run of the mill campaign. Behind its name, lay intense passion, serious commitment, sincere dedication, and immense love – for not any one particular *Laadli* but for each *Laadli* born in India.

I grasped the ethos of the concept and felt proud to be a part of it. The idea was realistic and sensible, if not unique – to reach out to the masses through the mass media! Being a journalist, I understand the power of writing.

People believe what media says. So, who could have been better to advocate against sex selective abortions than the media?

...Contd.





Population First exhibited its genius to honor the journalists who wrote on gender issues and through their writing raised awareness in society. The recognition journalists got through the *Laadli* award infused in them a sense of pride.

For me, it was an enriching and empowering process. Learning from veterans like Bobby Sista or experts like AL Sharda, was a privilege, which I benefited from.

Today, *Laadli* has become a household name in India, due to the efforts of Population First, and is actually making girls, '*Laadlis*', in their homes as well as in society.

I hope Population First keeps showering its love and affection on all *Laadlis*, and continues with its endeavor to enable each one of them to grow into mature, intelligent, wise, passionate, emancipated, loving, and independent human beings.





## **KUMUD SINGH,** **Laadli Media and Advertising Awards for Gender Sensitivity,** **Coordinator**

I have been associated with the *Laadli* campaign for the past three years and I have to admit that it has been a blissful journey for me. Along with the team of Population First I have grown a lot as an activist and worker in the field of Gender Equality and Girl Child Development. The team contacted me three years back for conducting the *Laadli* Media Awards for Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh and since then we haven't looked back. Being so closely associated with the *Laadli* Media Awards, helped me understand the ground reality of gender inequality in our nation and specially MP and CG. I got in touch with many individuals, groups, media houses, radio channels and government officials whose ideas were aligned with mine and that is of society free from gender discrimination. There were many inspirational individuals and their even more inspirational stories which moved me to the very core and it gave me immense happiness to see that people are standing up for the cause of gender equality in the country and they are understanding the gravity of the matter. Sarokar (NGO) also got a chance to conduct a two day Gender Media Workshop along with Population First. The detailed explanation about the state of this issue in our country, problems and solutions which were given by Dr. Sharada are still fresh in my mind and I use them very frequently in all the workshops and meetings conducted by Sarokar. The best part about this entire experience has been that I have always been provided a lot of freedom by Dr. Sharada and team to express myself. They have been very receptive to my ideas and have always responded immediately. To fight such a monstrous problem of gender inequality, one always requires a team of people who are immensely determined and equally motivated to stand up and fight the problem. Through the *Laadli* Campaign I have found one such team and some friends for a lifetime. At the end I would like to quote Mahatma Gandhi "In a gentle way, we can shake the world." Thanks for the awesome times, waiting for many more years of work together.







## **Dr. SUGUNA RAO,** **Professor**

'10 years of *Laadli*' - It has been truly an enriching experience - joining hands with you in your efforts in making this world a little more gender sensitive!!

*Laadli* campaign through its outreach programs for the youth - such as various competitions and issues related to the girl child, workshops on gender sensitization-has given teachers like me an opportunity to raise awareness of youth towards these issues and kindle a spirit of social responsibility among them.

If it has even touched the hearts of a few young students making them more proactive with regard to such issues, all the credit goes to you all at Population First. Every moment of working with you has been memorable. However we do know there is still a lot to be achieved. How do we move forward?

Here are a few ideas that come to my mind:

- Try to mold the young minds. Since we are witnessing a rising number of crimes against women by young adolescents, why not try to change the mindsets of young boys in schools, i.e. from 5th to 10th std. Only when boys and girls both participate in these efforts, change is possible.
- Make educational institutions more receptive towards providing gender sensitization modules in their curriculum wherever possible.
- Make media create more gender sensitive programs especially for young people.

Here's hoping that *LAADLI* grows from strength to strength spreading its branches all over India and soon brings in the desired change in the society.  
Woh subha kabhi toh aayegi...!





## **JEROO MULLA,** **Visiting Faculty at various Prestigious Media Institutions**

My association with *Laadli* began when I was invited to make an audio-visual presentation on the Portrayal of Women in Advertising to a group of journalists at a workshop in March 2007. Although I have been involved with issues of women for a long time, several of the discussions/interactions at the workshop were eye-openers – especially one where I observed the reactions of the journalists when they were exposed to how deeply embedded gender inequalities were in our culture leading to conditioned responses. Their initial reactions were disturbing revelations of the rigid patriarchy in our country – a refusal to see their own conditioned responses and prejudices. So it is that all our media professionals, our lawmakers and law keepers, business organizations and educational institutions carry these deep-rooted biases.

***Laadli* is doing commendable work trying to change these biases through its workshops for media practitioners. It is doing this at all levels of our society- from working with rural journalists in the hinterland to the top advertising agencies of our country.** The *Laadli* awards are a great idea. In the past few years, awards have been given to many journalists who have written forceful articles questioning this bias and to the creators of advertisements who have tried hard not to reinforce the stereotypical role of the woman as either a housewife or a sex object. The award-winning advertisements portrayed women who commanded respect and took their own decisions. These ads however are still the exception rather than the rule – but the battle has begun and in time, things are sure to change. *Laadli*'s multiple interventions such as the *Laadli* media advocacy initiatives, the *Laadli* youth initiatives with college students, and Amchi with its village development initiatives at the community level are certain to have an impact in the long run. I greatly admire the hard work and effort that all the *Laadli* team members are putting in. I also look forward the festival of films that *Laadli* is planning that will showcase films with strong portrayals of women that show them as independent women with minds of their own.





## **VIBHUTI PATEL,**

**Professor, Head of the University Department of Economics,  
SNDT Women's University**

From its inception, I have been working with The *Laadli* Campaign as a member of Advisory Committee, resource person for its training programs, as a co-organizer of quiz on girl child, street-play on 'save the girls', training workshop on gender sensitization of college teachers, contributor of article on current concerns for girls and women for its e-newsletter, teacher-mentor for my post graduate students to be active in 'change maker club' and as a member of jury for various awards instituted by the campaign for journalists, film makers, artistes and women achievers.

Our students who have interned and also have been employed with Population First have had life-changing experience in the *Laadli* campaign. They have developed courage of conviction to work for the cause 'Save the Girl Child by eliminating inequality, evil practice of dowry and daughter aversion'. The campaign has made a path-breaking contribution in terms of changing mindset of various stakeholder groups (parents, students, youth, policy makers, media persons, teachers, politicians, film fraternity) with regard to discriminatory abortions resulting into pre-birth elimination of girls, social accountability of print and electronic media towards the issue of gender equality and equity, monitoring of Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 2002. In the last ten years, the campaign has achieved nation-wide credibility due to its honesty of purpose and simple questioning, "You worship your mother, crave for a wife and love your sister, then why are you eliminating your daughters?" The *Laadli* campaign's quest for reaching out with a strong message that daughters are not for slaughter has touched head and heart of all thinking citizens.





**Mrs. ANNA DANI,**  
**Govt. of Maharashtra, Additional Chief Secretary**

When *Laadli* began as a fledgling, much like a baby, 10 years ago, the country was just waking up to the little understood concept of sex selection and abortions of the girl child.

While the government struggled, the organization now called *Laadli* stepped up to assist in spreading awareness of gender injustice.

Since then there has been no looking back. *Laadli* has only gone from strength to strength, keeping the flame of saving the girl child ever burning.





## **MEENAL GANDHE,** **Ex-Employee, Population First**

### **Long LiveLaadli!**

*Laadli* is unique in that it has come up with many novel interventions for involving media and youth in a dialogue on gender. While I worked with Population First during 2008-2013, mainly on AMCHI project, *Laadli* influenced me in many ways – it sharpened my understanding of role of gender in everyday life besides giving me a comprehensive view of the issue of sex selection.

It was a learning experience contributing in small ways to Creative Excellence Awards or Media Awards irrespective of which project one was working. It was a treat to go through the excellent work done by the people in various media while working on the compilation of award winning articles in a book-form. I thank sincerely Mr. Sista and Dr. Sharada for giving me various opportunities along with the freedom and flexibility to contribute and to learn.

I think the most impactful activities of *Laadli* have been the gender sensitization workshops with youth and media. *Laadli* should continue to have these workshops with modified content in future as an ongoing activity. Secondly, development of a free resource material - selected articles with its gender analysis - would benefit students and journalists a lot. It would be wonderful if *Laadli* Media Awards are able to reach out to every nook and corner including the smaller publications in remote areas.

It is indeed a proud moment for Population First to have successfully completed 10 years of *Laadli* campaign. I feel very happy to have been part of it for some time. Long live Population First and *Laadli*!





## **PREETI GOPALAKRISHNAN,** **Ex-Employee, Population First**

### **My thoughts on *Laadli***

I am so proud to be part of the *Laadli* campaign that gave a voice to millions of girl children. The campaign has successfully involved all the stakeholders who can make a change. From community-based activities during the hugely popular Ganeshotsav celebrations in Mumbai, to the highly influential media professionals, everyone is talking about how they can change the situation.

I knew we have made a difference in addressing gender discrimination when at the end of a gender sensitization workshop for college youth, an 18-year old boy said, "I feel bad that my sister is not allowed to attend extra classes at night because our family thinks it's unsafe for girls to be out at night. I will talk to my parents about it." There have been many such rewarding instances.

*Laadli* has left a deep impact on me. I use the gender lens all the time - in conversations, while working on communication strategies for our clients, while watching TV or films and even when choosing toys for my son and daughter and their friends!





## **MERCY BARLA, Ex-Employee, Population First**

### **Congratulations on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary!!**

Working at Population First (PF in short as we lovingly said) was a great and wonderful opportunity for me. I recall how Mr. Sista and Dr. Sharada ensured that the team members enjoyed work at PF. I cherish and fondly remember working with the many different *Laadlis* and *Laadlas* who came from various fields and of diverse experience and thankful to all for making the journey at PF endearing. I felt that “*Laadli*–the girl child campaign”, was a very creative and sensitive nationwide campaign.

I joined this campaign in late 2009 when media advocacy, communication campaign and youth sensitization were major interventions. The campaign gradually and steadily expanded its reach in media, colleges- among students and teachers both, government, common man and garnered large support and acceptability. I was always overwhelmed to see the growing response be it from the media in covering gender issues with sensitivity or advertising agencies/individuals participating in developing creative and freely accessible communication materials for the campaign or common man adopting *Laadli* themes in Pandals during popularly celebrated Ganesh Utsavs year after year. Obviously it involved a lot of networking and sensitization meetings and workshops for eliciting this kind of response.

PF widening its strategic focus to a larger context of gender equality is commendable. I hope it would pursue this issue by networking with like-minded NGOs and advocate for broad based and concerted action aimed at bringing women’s interests directly into favorable policy formulation and public spending decisions, bringing legal and other reforms to support women’s empowerment along with gender equality.

I wish greater success in all endeavors during years ahead. (2009-2013)





## **NIRMAL JAIN,** **India Infoline Ltd., Founder & Chairman**

*'Laadli'*, as the name suggests, is the darling of the family. We in India, for reasons known to us have been oblivious to this meaning and have been doing many things which denigrate the position of the girl child in our society. There has been steady decline in female to male ratio, from 972 in 1901 to less than 910 per 1000 men. This does not happen in the backward areas, less educated populations. But it is some of the most affluent pockets in some cities, which have shown the sharpest drop in this ratio. Even though the traditional role of the girl in Indian society is subservient, yet the girls have done the country proud in many walks of life, be it Politics, Business, Sports or any other.

Today, in IT sector women are playing a very important role in having the country recognized as the leading IT service provider of the world. It is important for the entire society to recognize that it is imperative to save girl child as today's girl will be the mother of a child tomorrow, and will help guide the future of India.

Through *'Laadli'* campaign, 'Population First' has been carrying out yeoman's work is bringing awareness in all walks of society to this important issue - of maintaining the sanctity of importance of the girl child. 'Population First' decided to do this by bringing the attention of the powerful media to this issue and through them spread the awareness to the rest of the country. While we have made major inroads, with other initiatives like 'SatyamevJayate' also bringing the awareness of the country on this issue, we still need to carry the message forward. 'Population First' needs to address the specific target segments and geographies, where the abuse is the maximum. My vision for us is to achieve complete equality among men and women in India by 2025.







**F.C.KOHLI,**  
**Tata Consultancy Services, Advisor**

It was Mr. Sista who brought me to *Laadli*. Gender issue has been and is responsible for India not doing as well as many countries including China.

Women have brain and thinking capacity no less than men, perhaps more as I have seen in companies that I have worked with.

India is blessed with bright people – (we are three times USA, therefore we should have three times bright people – both men and women).

Let us recognize this natural heritage and build a country that will have no illiterate and no poor. We are capable of achieving this goal.





## **NANA CHUDASAMA, Giants International, President**

Ten years ago, in 2005, when my good friend Bobby Sista and his dynamic colleague Dr. A.L. Sharda sounded me out about their idea to launch the *Laadli* Campaign, spotlighting the fundamental rights of the girl child, I was very excited. **Finally, someone responsible was creating a voice and platform for the oft-abandoned and abused girl child, a cause that screams for attention in our country.** When they requested me to support their campaign by serving on their advisory board, I felt deeply honored. So inspired was I that I immediately initiated and encouraged all the GIANTS groups to take up similar causes wherever they were situated.

The enthusiasm of Bobby Sista and the dedication of Dr. A.L. Sharda has seen the *Laadli* Campaign grow from strength to strength over a lively decade and spread to all corners of India. They created awareness in the media and the public about the terrible practice of female feticide, consistently fought to balance the ever-falling child sex ratio in India, conducted several youth initiatives and workshops and went on to grow the campaign broadening their focus to gender equality issues in general. The *Laadli* Awards too have been well researched, unbiased and well deserved. That they achieved a majority of their success within just two years of starting their tireless, selfless and exemplary work is testimony of their dedication and earnestness.

Although I did not give as much time as I would have liked to for this movement, I have kept myself abreast with all its achievements and successes. My experience working with the *Laadli* team has been educational and inspiring. pray that Population First carries the torch of gender equality well into the ever-changing, challenging and complex orbit of the 21st Century. I pray it grows in strength beyond all our imaginations. My heartiest congratulations to Bobby Sista, Dr. A.L. Sharda and Team *Laadli* on completing 10 eventful years. Wishing you more power. God bless you and your good work.





**NANDINI SARDESAI,**  
**Professor of Sociology, Population First Advisory Council**  
**Member**

I joined Population First in its fledgling years. I just accepted to be on Board because I was acquainted with Sharada and Sista. I knew nothing about their agenda. What struck me most was that over the years, the focus was on the girl child, 'Laadli', a subject close to my sociologist's heart. And then gradually the scope expanded to include rural development and gender parity.

When I had to assign projects to my students, I would send one group to utilize the resources from the NGO. Indeed many of the assignments were well researched because the students worked in the field.

Through the NGO, I was able to meet many scholars and activists and it has been a great learning experience. Instituting the awards was a step in the right direction as it enthused many young writers and filmmakers. It has been a long journey for the NGO and I admire the zeal and energy of Sharada and Sista. From mere campaigning, it has been transformed into a movement involving persons and organizations of various genres. In my own small way, I have tried to contribute with inputs. Wish I could do more!

*Laadli*, for me is symbolic name and hence I think more people need to know about the pioneering work being done by this committed organization. Yes, spread the word, get your hon'ble trustees to help in this effort. That for me is an expectation and vision for the future. Sure the next decade will be very rewarding and enriching. CHEERS!

Sharada, thank you for asking me. Take care and keep up the good work...





## **PRADEEP MALLICK,** **The Listening Post, Founder Chairman**

I became a part of the *Laadli* campaign from its very inception through my association with Bobby Sista, Sharada and Population First. I already believed in the mission that Population First had embarked upon, but when I came across *Laadli*, that just touched me deep inside.

Seeing the passion and commitment Bobby – and more particularly Sharada – brought to this campaign, I would weep at the very thought of such a skewed gender ratio that pre-birth sex selection had brought upon our country. It was hard to believe that we were witnessing such gross inhumanity, injustice and ignorance, living in the twenty-first century in a land led by many noble leaders for over a century.

Being a staunch believer in the power, capacity, capability and competence of women, being one who always believed that education of the girl child led to the education and empowerment of generations and one who admired the sheer managerial and administrative capacity that women bring to bear, the *Laadli* programme, to me, was a mission of my heart.

If you too were to just mouth the word *Laadli*, enunciate it with love, compassion and feeling, you will see what I mean and you – like me – will believe in the love of womankind – be she your mother, sister, wife, daughter, daughter-in-law or granddaughter. May Bobby and Sharada be blessed with good health to empower tens of thousands of us to let many millions of *Laadlis* to bloom and bless India.





## **SUNEETA RAO,** **Singer, Performer, Actress, Population First Advisory Council** **Member**

**LAADLI AND ME – TEN YEARS ON!** Ten years ago, when the *LAADLI* team first showed me a film about a village where girls were being eliminated just after they were born, I became certain of what was going to be my life's work from then on. The horrifying images were just a glimpse of what was going on in our country – and I knew that there was nothing more important than the fact that our girls were being killed – and this was an issue that needed to be addressed immediately.

But what was different about *LAADLI* as an organization was their approach. Every attempt was made right from the start to celebrate the Girl Child, as opposed to constantly project a depressing picture of the situation; to change people's mindsets towards a more positive and appreciative attitude towards women, and to empower them instead of just deriding the system for perpetuating this heinous crime without giving the society the means by which they can make the change. This hard working team has touched my heart with their sincere commitment to the cause – spearheaded by the quietly persistent Dr. Sharada who's understated but smoldering passion for the issue radiates from every podium that she stands on all over the country. With *LAADLI* and AAMCHI, Mr. Bobby Sista has created two sensitive initiatives that will only grow in strength – which is evident from the strong and increasingly solid support that they have been receiving from a number of distinguished and leading personalities and organizations in Mumbai and outside. Having been with *LAADLI* as "Spokesperson" since its inception in 2005, my role has evolved from making the curtain-raiser film for the launch and composing, recording and singing the *Laadli* Theme song, to making a music video sponsored by the UNFPA - from giving motivational speeches to school and colleges to presenting awards and performing at the *LAADLI* Media Awards. And the rewards come in small but powerful ways – leaving me enriched and full of hope and the desire to continue to make a difference.





## **DOLLY THAKORE,**

**Well known Indian theatre actress, casting director, National LMAAGS Coordinator, Population First Advisory Council Member**

**THE LAADLI I LOVE** - I can't remember how and when I became an inseparable part of *LAADLI*. For years Bobby Sista has always involved me in every campaign he has embarked upon...and I have certainly grown in experience and stature and it has opened up new avenues. He has always pulled a heart string that is sensitive to causes that are dear to my heart...and allowed me to contribute within the capacity and creativity that he has recognized in me. I have never been able to say NO to anything that Bobby sets his mind to. And I began to acknowledge and recognize *LAADLI* as my very own. There is no nine-to-five in my calendar. When it comes to *Laadli* my passion for the project dictates my round-the-clock schedule. I have rung up Chief Ministers and Governors, Sponsors and Supporters, Chief Guests and celebrities no matter what the hour...and achieved results. While facts and figures speak for what we have achieved, it is the reach of *LAADLI* that has taken me to the corners of India – from Vizag and Kochi to Raipur, Lucknow, Bhopal, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Jaipur, Chandigarh and Delhi – and introduced me to the bright young dedicated journalists, film makers, bloggers, programmers, writers, actors, social workers committed to the cause of Gender sensitivity and *Laadli*, that I would never have had the opportunity to meet. I am the richer for being involved with *LAADLI*. And hold my head up high and boast of being with them from its very inception.

Look forward to the day when equality for boys and girls, men and women, will make gender insensitivity a thing of the past even in the remotest corners of our country. With the team we have and the dedication to the campaign from individuals and government hopefully we will overcome the hurdles and change the mindsets of the bigoted, narrow-minded religious dictats. We have initiated an opening up of the minds...and will never accept defeat!





**VIBHA,**  
**Co-Owner, Genuine Contact™ Program**

To me *Laadli* is not just a campaign, a noun but it is an adjective. My vision for 2025 is that *Laadli* becomes an adjective used for all the girls by their parents. An adjective, which is used by schools when girls come to study; by hospitals when a girl child is born; by police stations when girls go for redressal and by society at large when girls are making their choices.

As per my knowledge of the work of PF and *Laadli* campaign, I think that PF is using multi-pronged approach so that eventually the system is sensitized enough to treat girls as '*Laadlis*'; and every family, irrespective of their socio-economic conditions, celebrates rearing, nurturing, supporting and celebrating lives of girls; and every parent feels joy in welcoming a girl by the song "*mere ghar aayi ek nanhi pari*".

I also envision that as '*Laadlis*' are awarded, they are also encouraged to support at least one girl child, in whatever big or small ways they can. This would create a ripple and multiplier effect in creating life nurturing climate for girl children to thrive.

My very best to the meaningful work by PF.





## **MEGHNA GHAI PURI,** **Whistling Woods International, President**

### **10 years of 'Laadli'**

"It gives me great pleasure to write about *Laadli* and the completion of 10 years of a wonderful organization supporting such a worthy and important cause. The media is where perception begins and *Laadli* has been working with media organizations and ad agencies to change the way girls and women are perceived through our films, TV and ad campaigns.

Sensitizing filmmakers about what their images and dialogues portray is extremely important given that it's these images that young children grow up watching and sometimes idolizing. That is why at Whistling Woods International we have consistently had *Laadli* taking center stage at workshops to speak and teach our students about the portrayal of women in the media and how to sensitize themselves against such images and campaigns.

There is much more work to do and I am sure the entire team at *Laadli* has now set themselves new goals and will use their first ten years and the platforms they have built to strongly interact with the industry and drive real change in our films, filmmakers and our society. As President of Asia's largest film school and as a woman, they have my full support in their endeavors. With women's issues coming to the fore in the media in the recent past, it's important to understand that there have been organizations working for this for many years and my heartiest congratulations to all involved with *Laadli* for doing such stellar work over the past decade and I wish them every success in this vital campaign in the years to come.







## **URVI PIRAMAL,** **Ashok Piramal Group, Chairperson**

Let me start by congratulating Population First on the completion of 10 years for the campaign *Laadli*. It is commendable to see the kind of awareness the campaign has generated. World over, girls across all age groups witness discrimination in various forms - from physical assault to mental torture. The violence is often perpetrated by a family member, partner, teacher or a peer. Over time, this discrimination leads to suppression of their potential.

I would like to create a world where girls can live free of violence and achieve their full potential. Time and again women have proved their mettle, be it in taking off to space or in boardrooms. Yet we are still fighting the medieval menace of gender inequality. Women have been at the forefront of shaping our future. To end the cycle of violence against women, we must go beyond raising awareness. We must take action to equip girls with knowledge, resources and the power to determine their own path in life.

There is a growing recognition that supporting the basic human rights for girls lead to healthier communities. An increase in women's employment has been the biggest engine of growth in recent times, more so in the developing nations.

Women's empowerment leads to better outcomes and has a ripple effect for families, businesses and the nation. Better educated women are more productive and they raise healthier and better educated children. Sustainable development is not possible without women. We need to take a holistic approach to women's empowerment. What is good for women is good for all humanity. What we need is a shift in mindset to be driven by a strong will to achieve this. This is my vision for *Laadli* and I can see that Population First have started making inroads into these areas.





## **PAMELA PHILIPSE,** **Womens Feature Service, Director**

### Ten Years of *Laadli*

An idea is a wonderful thing yet it needs to be translated into action to unleash the possibilities of change. *Laadli* was an idea that Population First seized upon in 2005 and went on to realize with the help of some of the most formidable and committed talent on offer from all over the country.

The little girl with red ribbons in her pigtails was to symbolize the hope of a more gender equal society. This was to be done not just through advocating the effective implementation of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act but by building awareness at every layer of society that such equality is fundamental for the well-being of women and, most importantly, for the idea of India.

This was to be done not just through prescriptive texts but through every means of communication on offer, from painted walls to painted buses; from mainstream media to social media, from marches for the *Laadlis* of India to events that honored people who have committed themselves to their cause.

This journey has carried on uninterrupted for a decade now. If that beribboned stick poppet conceived as the *Laadli* logo in 2005 was in actual fact a little girl, she would have been a teenager today. As she continues to make her way through our midst, here's wishing her a long life. May she continue to touch lives by unleashing thought, creativity and fun times in equal measure!





## **RANJONA BANERJI,** **Journalist**

*Laadli* began with a remarkable idea: to encourage the media to pay more attention to gender injustice and women's empowerment. The media in India is in some ways a gender-neutral employer and does not blindly follow the western print media model of men for politics, business and serious stuff and women for food, fashion and fluff. And yet, when *Laadli* started its media awards, the stories about gender were often stereotypical and did not rock any boats.

The most serious issue at the time that journalists could come up with was pre-birth sex-selection and female infanticide. But serious as this subject is, it is not the only problem that affects either gender equality or gender relations. In the past decade, even by its sheer existence, *Laadli* has managed to get people to think about how differently and unfairly the sexes are treated in India, from a 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective.

*Laadli*'s involvement is not limited to journalism either. The advertising industry has also been in focus, with sexist ads and attitudes coming under the scanner. Students and young people have been used to create campaigns and make short films to increase awareness about gender biases and inequalities.

In the years that I have been involved with *Laadli* as an award-winner, a jury member, as part of a committee or even as an observer, I am always impressed and inspired by the commitment and clear-thinking of the team.

Indeed, it is an honour to be part of this effort.





## **SATHYA SARAN,** **Diligent Media, Editor**

It is amazing how a small idea that challenged stereotypes and existing gender biases has grown into a movement in just a decade.

Flying in the face of prejudices that have become the norm, *Laadli* has taken wing and is all set to take off into the next decade, to influence minds and change perceptions.

Perhaps her biggest success has been the positive effect on journalists, advertisers and writers. By involving editors and writers in their movement, and awarding positive stories about women, by highlighting the advertisements that free the women portrayed from the shackles that previously tied them down into subordinate roles, *Laadli* has created awareness that has a ripple effect, as the writing, the reports and the ads reach out to change the perceptions of those who are exposed to them.

The following of *Laadli's* supporters, both formal and informal, is growing. But this is the beginning of the change. Even as pockets in India sink back into fundamental gender biased thinking, *Laadli's* movement gains more significance and meaning.

The next decade is waiting. And *Laadli* marches into it with bright eyes and firm steps. More power to her. May a million *Laadlis* smile, thanks to *Laadli*!





## **BINDIYA VAID,** **Member of Change Makers Club**

*Laadli's* initiative is definitely commendable and almost defiantly empowering, as they tackle a very sensitive issue (Gender Equality and Women Empowerment) in a very innovative manner. The youth is a force that can make the biggest difference and they have included us in something that has the potential to become downright revolutionary, I feel greatly honored.

I feel that *Laadli's* agenda of making a marked difference would flourish if the workshops could be spread across the cities, over different locations, so as to attract people who shy away from travelling, while making it more accessible. Also, the workshop's motive should be specified very clearly, so as only those actually interested in it could come and help in bettering it, over all.

My experience at *Laadli* has been a complete one, honing skills, increasing the knowledge quota, meeting great people, while also having fun. I thank you for giving me the opportunity for doing so, and wish you all the very best!





## **ANIS FATIMA SYED,** **Change Maker Club Member, Jaihind College**

Firstly, I would like to congratulate *Laadli* on its tenth anniversary. It is definitely one of the best campaigns related to gender equality and girl child launched till date.

I have been associated with *Laadli* since the past one year through my college clubs mainly because of National Service Scheme (NSS) and Sexual Harassment Prohibition Committee (SHPC). Year long, together we have organized a number of activities, seminars and competitions in my college (Jai Hind College).

It was definitely a time to reflect and learn from. I have personally got to learn so much from the sessions and the activities and being a girl, it has motivated me even more to stand up for my rights and raise my voice against any inequality around.

Talking about *Laadli*, as a campaign it is definitely doing wonders. *Laadli* is going great since the last 10 years, growing, developing and shining even more with time. Therefore, I take this opportunity to wish Population First all the very best for their endeavors with *Laadli* for the coming decade and many more decades to follow. And it goes without saying, I would always be a helping hand as and when they need me.

Three Cheers for *Laadli*! **Jai Hind College**





## **BIJAL, Student**

Pf Dr Sharda: It was in the year 2006, that an important page in the book of my life was being written... A call from the Laadli team member informing me about me winning a prize in its Youth Fest, did the 'Shri Ganesh' for me, as they say. That was the first ever prize I won in my life, the answer to all those who said I was a burden.

It gave me the much needed confidence in myself and helped me sail through small and big challenges in life. April - June 2007, as I got an opportunity to volunteer for Laadli, a new experience awaited me. Laadli became a part of me, and I became a 'Laadli' forever.

The journey has been enriching, full of life changing experiences, it gave me a perspective towards the world which none other could give, it made me understand the seriousness of population imbalance and its impact beyond record sheets, to the security concerns and overall development in the world society. It is difficult to mention any experience in all the past years in short as I could write pages and pages on it, but Laadli - the team, and Laadli - the concept, became part of me and my family.

Thank you Laadli... Thank you for being there. Keep up the good work.





## **BHAVNA RAJESH GOLAMBDE,** **Student who participated in *Laadli* Training Programme**

It's a great honor to me to be a part of Population First. I belong to a middle class family which believed in traditional values which had a typical old mind-set regarding girls and women that they should get marry by 18 years of age and should not study much. It was also believed that girls would misuse if they are given the freedom to study more. In our family, only my mother was the one who supported us against all odds. She stood firm behind us and motivated us to complete the education and to be good human beings.

I wouldn't have achieved, whatever, I have right now without her motivation and support. My involvement with "Population First" was the biggest turning point of my life. The campaign "LAADLI" gave me a new world where I came to know about my existence in the society. "LAADLI" movement gave the hope that girls could bloom like a flower on this unsecured earth. It gave me an inspiration to develop myself. It always reminded me "How Special I am as I am".







“Population First” gave me many opportunities for developing myself during the involvement. It provided me platforms where I was able to reach out to large masses through street plays, we were trained to speak for ourselves by building public speaking skills in us, gave me opportunities to reach out to various groups and organizing competitions which motivated me to build my career in social field. I have always looked upon Ms.A.L.Sharada, Mr.Devidas Shinde, Mr.Prakash Parkhe and Ms.Pradnya Shinde as the first source of inspiration while I was completing my Masters in Non-formal Education.

All this inspiration and motivation helped me to take important decisions of my life persuading my family to support me on those. I married to a person of my choice. Tough as it was an inter-caste marriage; I was able to convince my family within last few years. Also the strange fact that I noticed was, “People change along with the time, we just have to be patient enough in making efforts. Success is guaranteed!” I would like to express my gratitude to “Population First” for providing me “LAADLI” which gave me an identity and inspiration to be a better Human Being in my life.

I want to thank “Population First” from the bottom of my heart and wish all the success and happiness and Love to “LAADLI” Program.





## **URMILA CHANAM, LMAAGS Winner, Founder, Breaking the Silence Campaign & Journalist/Columnist**

The year was 2012. The venue was United Theological College, Benson Town, Bangalore. The women journalists from my city who registered for the two day- workshop organized by Population First were mostly friends from the print, electronic and internet media. We all came from different backgrounds in terms of what we wrote, photographed, broadcasted or telecasted. Little did we know that by the end of the 'Gender and Media Workshop', each one of us would walk out a changed person, never to be the same again.

And I am the witness to this remarkable change that I have seen in the way the same women journalists who were there with me in that workshop three years ago and what they are now doing in their stream of work and the kind of perspectives and issues they now carry in their stories. And I am convinced change is this. I am convinced change occurs like this. The most important take-away from the workshop for me was the role ; a journalist could play in challenging norms and traditions that are propagated in the name of culture but that which harm girls and women in the country. Though the context of the workshop had been the alarming rise in the number of sex determined abortions and the country's obsession to attain a boy child often at the cost of eliminating all the girls in the womb, the seed to question these age old practices was sown deep within me.

The following year my article titled, "*We don't talk about it at all: The taboo of menstruation in rural Maharashtra, a major deterrent in menstrual hygiene*" won the *Laadli* Media and Advertising Award for Gender Sensitivity 2014. This award brought such a profound shift in my thinking that from writing stories on girls and women I found myself wanting to do much more! The recognition and the responsibility it brought moved me to begin working on banishing myths, taboos and stigma around menstruation by reaching out to girls and women in my several journeys to remote villages around the country. No matter where I would go, be it in Patiala in Punjab, Amethi in Uttar Pradesh, Bettiah in Bihar or Kuppum in Andhra Pradesh I would walk from house to house, village to village spreading awareness on how menstrual blood is not impure.





This was my first step into launching my global campaign, 'Breaking the Silence' and 'Celebrating the Red Droplets' that trained 6000 girls and women in just one year (2014) and mobilized 10,000 sanitary pads as donations from around the world that went to poor girls and women in remote villages.

What began in a workshop soon became a story to go ahead and take the form of a campaign on ground on menstrual hygiene and women's health in different countries and states in India.

'Breaking the Silence' won the National *Laadli* Media Award this year and I know yet another journey has begun to deeper and much wider area life will take me to explore.

Being a *Laadli* brought immense responsibility but undeniable visibility. What I used to do on my own before as a woman or a journalist is now seen as something a *Laadli* is doing and this has been my greatest strength in all my work.

Being a *Laadli* is like being a special person, readily believed in, easily persuaded by and lovingly supported for and I am confident the journey ahead is going to be from one strong moment to another.

*Laadli* changed my life by giving me a perspective that values life of a girl/woman, it gave me the spring in my aspirations and the strength to give birth to 'Breaking the Silence' Campaign but most of all it gave me the joy of being a woman and take pride in that.

There must be so many girls and women who have also taken their individual journeys to excellence in their own individual ways after *Laadli* has touched their lives.

I am convinced this is how real change occurs.





## **MADHAVI SHREE, LMAAGS Winner**

My association with *Laadli* Media & Gender Sensitivity Awards starts from 2009 when I first applied for award. But fortunately I received my first award in my second attempt in 2011 and that was *LAADLI MEDIA AWARDS 2010-11*. Since this is my first media award, I have special attachment to it. After this award, I received three more awards in media but *Laadli* is still very special to me.

After winning *Laadli*, I became the state - coordinator, New Delhi for two consecutive years. I learned a lot from this role. I met so many journalists from northern region of India those who write on gender issues. It's a magnificent experience to know so many people who work on the same line as we do. Meeting people always enriches us and if they are from diverse field, it is that much more enriching.

This is also the first time that I handled the media consultancy on gender issues. Doing that made me communicate with so many senior media persons in important position who can bring change in the real life working situation of female journalists and the way gender issues are being reported in media.

This became an important platform for promoting gender issues in media and bringing together gender issue crusaders.

Now winners of LMAAGS write it as their signature in daily life. Love to be part of this campaign.





## **AFSANA RASHID,** **LMAAGS Winner, *Laadli* Media Fellow**

It has been an enriching experience to be a part of Population First and the Laadli Campaign's journey over the past many years. The bond that has been in the form of awards (UNFPA-Laadli Media award for best reporting in adverse conditions on gender issues for two consecutive years 2008 and 2009) and fellowship (Pre-Birth Sex Selection in 2013) has played an indispensable role in enhancing my career objectives and honing the skills of investigative journalism.

Initiatives taken by the organization, time and again, are the building blocks for a prosperous and empowered society. Empowered lives lead to empowered nation. Such initiatives should be encouraged and strengthened as those would go a long way in creating gender sensitive societies required for a healthy environment.

I wish Laadli a superb future ahead and together we would fly to the heights of success and prosperity.





## **SUKHBIR SIWACH,** **LMAAGS Winner, The Times of India, Chandigarh**

It was a moment of extreme pleasure when I got a call from the Population First in 2010 about selection of my stories on PNDT act for the Laadli media award.

No doubt, it was a moment of great satisfaction for me when the state assembly changed the PNDT Act after I exposed how the state government had failed to notify the Act for 12 years. Not only this Punjab and Haryana high court had also intervened into the matter.

Though, still I feel that I got the real recognition after I was honoured with the Laadli award for the same. After that function held at Bhopal, I was honoured with Laadli award twice — 2011 and 2012 — for my investigative stories on honour killings and state's protection to khap panchayats. Next year, I was also honoured with Laadli scholarship.

Because of so many honours, my friends in journalist fraternity and bureaucratic circles started calling me as “Laadla” and my daughters as “Laadlis”.

I strongly feel that the Laadli awards have encouraged the journalists in great way for writing against the gender bias.





## **LENI CHAUDHURI,** **Narotam Sekhsaria Foundation, Program Manager - Health**

When sex selection was rampant in India and the PCPNDT Act had very limited impact, *Laadli* took upon itself the daunting task of challenging the gender discourse. While a small section of the civil society was engaged in the campaign against sex determination and sex selection, the society at large was still entrenched in the patriarchal structure.

The media and the policy makers also chose to be silent bystanders, till *Laadli* decided to stir the silence and break the status quo. I have been a great admirer of *Laadli's* media initiatives. As we all know, media plays a great role in influencing public opinion.

Thanks to the sustained engagement of *Laadli* with media professionals, one is able to see the difference in gender sensitive media coverage. Beginning with orientation programs, hands on training to recognition of sensitive journalists, *Laadli* has done it all.

*Laadli's* intervention with youth deserves special kudos. With about 50% of Indian population under the age of 25 years, one couldn't have thought of a more meaningful intervention. *Laadli* has attempted to bring about holistic change in the perspective of youth by integrating gender sensitization both within and outside their curriculum.

Through workshops, campaigns, change maker's club, *Laadli* instilled the values of gender sensitivity among the youth at a very early age. I am sure that the youth who have had the opportunity to engage with *Laadli*, will definitely work towards developing a gender just society. I wish *Laadli* all the very best in its future endeavors. I hope that they continue working with important stakeholders in the society such as the media, the policy makers, medical professionals and above all, the Youth.





## **KARON SHAIWA,** **Idobro Media & Marketing Services, Chief Impact Officer**

As with any endeavour that seeks to create long lasting change I know it has not been easy. More so, when it is an innovative and path breaking initiative. While there are many non-profits working on the girl child, to me *Laadli* has been unique in its approach to building awareness around the gender issue. By using media as the key, they have been able to bring about multi-stakeholder involvement, so critical to scale and success.

The *Laadli* Awards have truly awoken journalists, media persons, government officials and even lay people to be sensitized and understand the deeper nuances of an inequitable focus on entitlement and empowerment of the female child and women. It has also provided a highly visible platform for those who care, a channel to showcase their thoughts in their own distinctive ways be it articles, paintings, advertisements, documentaries, posters and more. Moreover by organizing the awards from a zonal level to the national, they have ensured that they have brought these voices from the different corners across India that are most affected. It is also, therefore, the most knowledgeable way to bring the real issues right to the center-stage at the National Awards.

The awards along with the various projects undertaken by Population First I believe have made a significant difference in the lives of many children and helped women stake their claim to a more meaningful existence.

Any journey that stays the course definitely motivates those who have been on the sidelines watching or even been involved in any small way! Thank you for the privilege, to be a minuscule part of *Laadli* first on a personal level and then through the Idobro membership program. May there be many more to celebrate.....







## **SUNNY SEBASTIAN,**

**Haridev Joshi University of Journalism & Mass Comn, Vice  
Chancellor**

A trail blazer - On the occasion of the *Laadli* campaign completing its first decade, let me extend my heartiest greetings and congratulations to all those behind this successful and hugely effective initiative in spreading awareness on the rights of the girl child and gender sensitivity. *Laadli*, as the effective and sensitive name denotes, has been about looking after, caring for and protecting. I would surely term it a very successful intervention by a group of well-meaning people - who themselves are very effective communicators - and the organization, Population First. Gender discrimination and issues related to girl children - be it in providing care to infants, education of girls in schools and at higher levels, their choices of a life companion and later, choice of motherhood and number of children—continue to worry the planners and social activists in our country. However, initiatives like *Laadli* have given a new impetus to the movements and campaigns for equity in gender matters and assertion of rights. As a member of the jury for the selection of entries for the *Laadli* Media Awards for the western region-Rajasthan, Mumbai and Gujarat - I enjoyed the processes which finally led the jury to pick from the shortlisted names. The meetings, in the presence of carefully chosen jury members, have been both enriching and educative for a media person like me. The entries at times fascinated the jury with their approach to the issues and at times left them with the feeling, “why others are not bothered?” and “when will they wake up”! The *Laadli* awards, both for the media and for advertising, have all these years, tremendously helped to give a stimulus to the whole gamut of activities related to gender equality and fighting for justice not only to the media persons but also to those who work in the field. News reports and features in print as well as on television are not written or produced for awards but these recognitions surely are incentives to those who go about their professional duties with zeal and commitment. I salute the spirit behind the concept of *Laadli*!



## **G.S. Agrawal, V Customer, Chairman**

### Ten Years of Laadli Campaign

I have personally known Bobby Sista since the last 35 years and I am proud to be associated with his organization – Population First – which launched the Laadli campaign in 2005. I congratulate Bobby and Dr. Sharada for their whole-hearted commitment to Laadli. It is one of the most successful campaigns to speak of the girl child and create awareness about critical issues such as pre-birth sex selection and the falling sex ratio.

It is a sad reflection on our society that we do not acknowledge the rights of daughters and this focus on changing the mindset of people in India is laudable. The Laadli campaign's efforts at sensitizing the media towards this very vulnerable section of our society – through the Media and Advertising Awards – has undoubtedly helped in making more people aware of the burning need to raise awareness about gender issues and promote the cause of the girl child. I wish them all success in the future as they go about trying to transform our society's thinking from apathy to action, and valuing and empowering our daughters and sons alike.

I am sure that their continued efforts will bring about results. I hope that the Laadli campaign will also reach out to children in the school and the youth and sensitize them to such issues. Children are the future and they must be the one to understand and lead the change.





## **Manjul Bharadwaj, The Experimental Theatre Foundation, Founder**

It has been a wonderful journey celebrating the girl child. The Laadli Campaign which started on 9th June 2005 at the Tata Theatre NCPA, Mumbai had the Experimental Theatre Foundation and me along with my team and volunteers performing the play '*Laadli*'.

I am delighted because the philosophy of Theatre of Relevance has been a part of this whole campaign since its inception. The technique has been used in various ways, be it performing a play, training the street theatre teams, facilitating media workshops, interacting with the team or witnessing public events.

Mr. Sista is a wonderful visionary who has given Dr Sharada and her team full freedom to be creative and to overcome challenges as a team to make this campaign a success.

Today, Population First is effectively influencing one of the most important influencers, the media. Engaging with media is the need of the hour as it acts as an important player in reinforcing the stereotypes of Gender Bias.

The Laadli campaign has been managing to sensitize professionals from all walks of life and institutions, and that in itself is a wonderful achievement.

However, there is a lot that needs to be done to break the stereotypes of gender, so we all have miles to go.

But let's continue the journey.





Celebrate Her Life  
An Initiative By Population First

Population First, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Shetty House, 101 MG Road, Fort, Mumbai – 400001  
Telephone: 91 22 22626672/6509/6676, Fax 91 22 22702217,  
Email: [info@populationfirst.org](mailto:info@populationfirst.org)  
Website: [www.populationfirst.org](http://www.populationfirst.org), [www.alumni.laadli.org](http://www.alumni.laadli.org)

 @Laadli\_PF  <https://www.facebook.com/LaadliPF>