

IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF *LAADLI* MEDIA & ADVERTISING AWARDS FOR GENDER SENSITIVITY (LMAAGS)

A REPORT
BY



CONSCIOUS
DEVELOPMENTSM



laadli

Celebrate Her Life

An Initiative by Population First

Supported by



United Nations Population Fund



Norwegian Embassy
New Delhi



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Foreword

The *Laadli* - Girl Child initiative was announced in 2004 and formally launched on the 9th of June 2005. The first *Laadli* Media Awards for Gender Sensitivity were launched in 2007 as a Mumbai-centric event which was upscaled to a national campaign in 2008 with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The awards were a part of a much bigger media advocacy initiative which apart from the awards included, capacity-building workshops, fellowships, and various initiatives to create a supportive ecosystem to promote greater gender sensitivity in media in association with the industry bodies.

It's been 15 years since the awards were launched, with each year having 100+ award winners from across the country. It was time for us to step back and assess what has been the impact of the awards at the individual level for the award winners, for promoting gender sensitivity in the field of journalism, and to assess the response of the industry to the growing sensitivity to gender issues in the changed media scenario.

We commissioned a third-party impact assessment study to give us an understanding of the impact of the awards. The study was conducted by Conscious Development, a Consulting, Coaching, and Training organization, working in India, the USA, and the APAC region. The response and feedback from our winners and jury members show that we are on the right track. We also received some valuable suggestions to make the awards more visible.

I thank all the respondents for sparing their valuable time to respond to the questionnaire. I thank Bosco D'mello and his team from Conscious Development, for their efforts to reach out to people from across the country to prepare the report, particularly during the COVID, times when in-person interviews were not possible.

We express our appreciation for the support extended by UNFPA to the *Laadli* Media Advocacy initiative since its inception. This study was undertaken with the support from UNFPA and Norwegian Embassy of India. A big thank you to them from all of us.

We look forward to doubling our efforts to promote gender sensitivity in media to build a more equal and just society.

Dr. A. L. Sharada
Director
Population First

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Executive Summary

Population First (www.populationfirst.org) is a social development organization, committed to working for women empowerment and gender equality, through community mobilization. In 2005, it initiated a campaign named *Laadli* which was a girl child campaign and was later supported by UNFPA. One of the initiatives undertaken by *Laadli* was mobilization of media personnel by instituting an award named *Laadli* Media Awards (LMA) in 2007. Between 2007 and 2021, these awards were commissioned almost every year and, so far, over 900 media personnel have been awarded for their work towards bringing in gender parity in and through the media. The awards have been given in all major categories including print, electronic, web and performing arts and also at the regional level almost equal representation of three regions i.e. North, South and West and 14% awards were included from East. The largest proportion of awards went to materials in the English language (38%), followed by all regional languages combined (35%) and another 22% in Hindi¹.

Population First instituted a Study to ascertain the effectiveness of these awards in bringing about gender balance in the works of media professionals and also to see if such awards also contribute to the professional career of the awardees. A total of 154 (15% of the total awardees) awardees were contacted over phone/email and were interviewed using a closed-ended semi-structured interview tool to seek their opinion and perception on the awards. Additionally, 15 jury members and 7 “friends of *Laadli*” were interviewed to triangulate the information obtained from the awardees and also seek their feedback and recommendations.

Of the 154 awardees interviewed, 79% were women and represented all 4 regions (highest from East i.e. 30% and lowest from South i.e. 19%). Within this sample, the largest representation was from the year 2021 (32% of the total sample) and this is because these awardees had just received the award and therefore were more willing to share their views.

Data from awardees suggest that information about LMA flows largely through word of mouth as 32% received the information from friends/colleagues and the next was social media advertising (21%). It is important to note that media houses may not be promoting the information about LMA as only 4% of awardees received the information through them. Also, efforts made by the Population First team (workshops, press conferences etc.) did not reach many award aspirants. Therefore, it is suggested that **Population First finds innovative ways to publicize the awards and particularly create partnerships with prominent media houses to attract participation from their employees.**

Passion for gender equality (67%) and desire to contribute to gender equality (49%) were the two main motivating factors behind media professionals applying for awards. Of course, more than one-third (36%) said they had a desire to get recognized in the professional world through their work on gender equality. Receipt of the award also motivates the professionals to continue their work on gender equality as they repeatedly apply for the award year on and 41% of awardees confirmed that they have received the award more than once and 29% of these awardees also went on to receive national level LMA and another 5% received *Laadli* Fellowship. **Population First may want to develop certain case studies and publicize them for motivating more media professionals to apply for the awards.**

Overwhelmingly, the Study respondents mentioned that there are many benefits of organizing LMA by Population First and almost 90% felt that receiving an award certainly influences the future work of the awardees and is further inclined towards gender equality. The awardees felt that their

¹ For 5%, information was not available.

understanding of gender has enhanced (67%) and readership of their work has improved (36%). Above 80% of awardees also felt that the award has contributed to their professional career and **60% of awardees mentioned that they got recognition as a gender specialist**, which is a huge compliment for LMA. Further, a significant number (37%) confirmed that they are now being invited by other agencies to contribute to the field of gender equality.

The awardees also shared that while the receipt of LMA helps them get appreciation within the organization/community that they work for, but it does not translate to any financial gains (only 2% said that the receipt of LMA led to financial gain). Many of the awardees and jury have recommended **modifications to the structure of LMA so that it adds financial benefits to awardees, and this can be achieved through (a) adding cash/financial value to the award and (b) working with media houses to suggest in-kind benefits to the employees who win LMA.**

Another significant contribution of LMA is that it has transformed the awardees into changemakers. The awardees confirmed that since they received the award, they have been trying to influence their personal and professional surroundings with an attempt to bring about change in the attitude and perception of people around them including their family and relatives (64%), friends, and colleagues (80%) and support staff (45%). As many as 44% of the awardees included in the survey also mentioned that they have been able to influence the environment of the media house they work for and this influence is further classified as an influence on the thought process of decision-makers, work/product published by the media house and programmes and policies of the media house.

Nine out of 10 survey respondents confirmed that they motivated their colleagues and friends to apply for LMA and more than half (55%) confirmed that their colleagues/friends did receive the award.

The jury and influencers, when contacted, strongly suggested that awards such as LMA are even more relevant in current times and the contribution is manifold including bringing stories from remote rural areas, generating healthy competition, motivation for young professionals as they want to get recognized and act as influencers by sharing their work on social media.

Almost half of this group of jury and influencers agreed that LMA has encouraged the younger generation of media professionals and has significantly transformed their attitude towards gender. Being a competition, it motivates these professionals to go deeper into the subject and bring out stories that are backed by cogent data and facts.

The jury members included in the Study narrated several motivational stories of awardees from various parts of the country where not only that their status within the organization has enhanced, but some have even taken the initiative to mentor young professionals to take up gender-sensitive stories and bring gender balance within their work.

Some jury members were also of the opinion that apart from looking good on the CV, such awards do not make any significant contribution to the professional career of the awardees, primarily because LMA is not well recognized yet and many media houses may not have even heard about them. It is therefore suggested that **Population First consider this aspect and introduce certain other motivating factors for award aspirants.**

Recommendations

Both awardees and the jury unanimously agreed that the awards should continue. Increased efforts with media houses and advertising agencies will help LMA gain wider recognition and support. It is

important that LMA is not viewed as an award for female professionals and hence more male professionals may be encouraged to participate. Population First may want to explore some international association, not only to get branding advantage but also to provide career development opportunities for the awardees. While there is a need to re-consider the categories and types of awards and rationalize the number, Population First may consider including awards that go beyond individual work and honour the overall contribution of the professionals through Lifetime Achievement Award. An award category for media houses may also be considered.

Indicator Factsheet

Indicators	Value
% of Awardees that share their award/achievement on social media	90%
% of Awardees who were aware of LMA before applying for it	77%
% of Awardees who aspired to receive LMA	88%
% of Awardees who believe that receiving LMA has influenced their perception on gender	86%
% of Awardees who believe that they have been able to change the perception of people around them	97%
% of Awardees who believe that they have been able to change the perception of media house they worked for	44%
% Awardees who believe that receiving LMA has positively contributed in the professional career	81%
% of Awardees who reported receiving appreciation from their organization for receiving LMA	71%
% Awardees who reported receiving financial benefits after receiving LMA	2%
% Awardees reporting receiving other rewards/recognition after receiving LMA	39%
% Awardees reporting motivating other colleagues/friends for applying for LMA	90%
% Awardees reporting their friends/colleagues receiving LMA after their motivation for applying for the award	55%
% Awardees who believe that LMA can contribute in sensitizing media on gender	86%
% Awardees aware of other interventions of Population First	66%
% Awardees in contact with LMA through Facebook/WhatsApp Group	38%
% Awardees that follow LMA on Social Media	81%

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. About Population First²

Population First is a social impact organization that works for women empowerment, gender equality and community mobilization. Founded in 2002 under the Bombay Public Trusts Act (1950) to leverage communication and media influence to address the social and demographic issues in the country. *Laadli* is a flagship program of Population First that leverages its goodwill in the media and advertising field. (Read: www.populationfirst.org)

2. About *Laadli*

Various Census and many other studies have regularly highlighted the sex ratio in the country, which in most of the states of India, favours males. For the last 2 decades, several Government, NGO and collaborative initiatives have been implemented to bridge this gap in sex ratio. One such initiative initiated by Population First in 2005 was a Girl Child Campaign, named *Laadli*. *Laadli* has evolved over the years and the primary focus of the campaign was on media and advertising world with an intention to find social, cultural, demographic, economic and political reasons why girls are undermined in our society. Since 2007, *Laadli* Media Campaign has been financially supported by UNFPA.

One of the most critical components of this campaign was *Laadli* Media Advocacy, which had three specific components as:

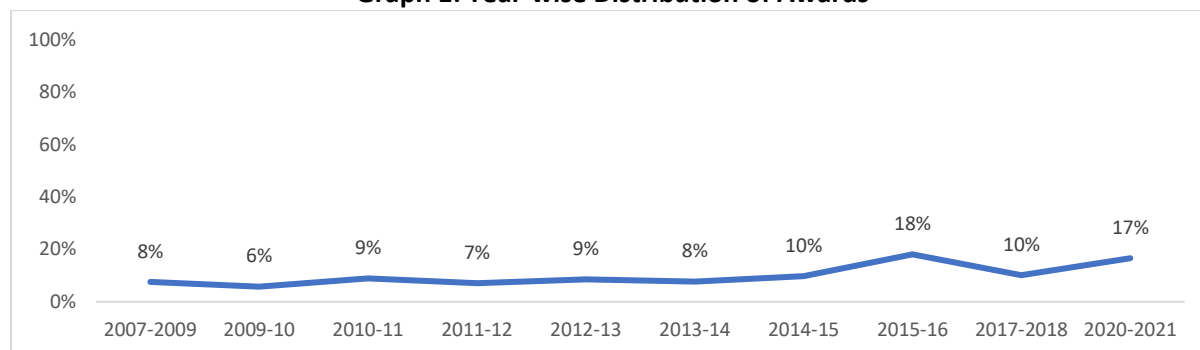
- Capacity building of communicators
- Creating a supportive ecosystem by engaging with the media and advertising icons
- Institute awards and other reward mechanisms to reinforce positive change

3. About *Laadli* Media Advertising Awards

Since 2009, Population First instituted awards for people working in the field of media and journalism for rewarding their work on gender. The participants are expected to submit their work on gender and the work is sent to a specially constituted Jury for selection and approval of awards. These awards are provided in different categories that include regions (North, South, East, and West), languages (English, Hindi, Regional), media type (print, web, electronic) and other such relevant categories.

As per the data received from Population First, a total of 991 individuals have received the award between 2009 and 2021, which includes people from across the country. The year-wise distribution of grants is presented in Graph 1 below.

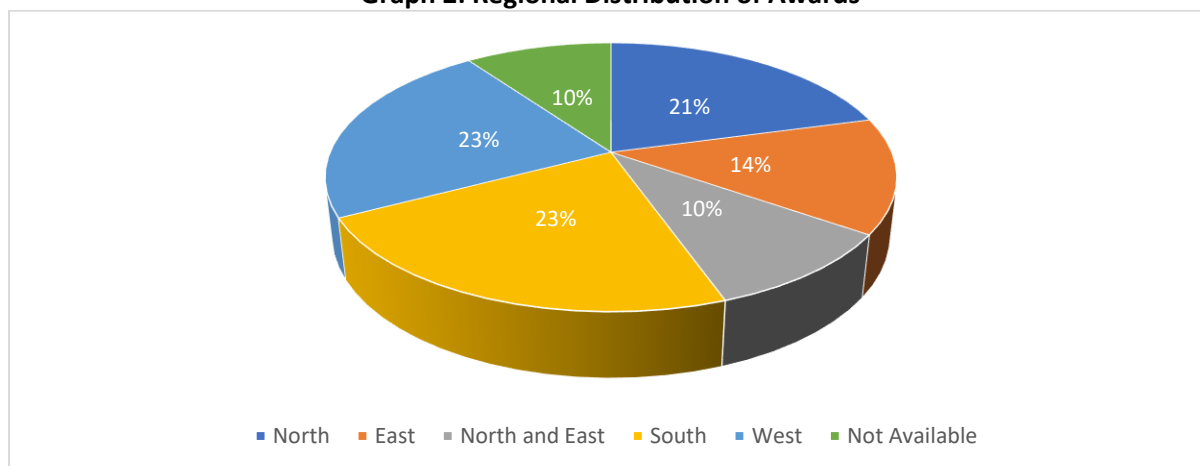
Graph 1: Year-wise Distribution of Awards



The data also suggests that except for the East, the other 3 regions have received similar proportion of awards, as presented in Graph 2 below.

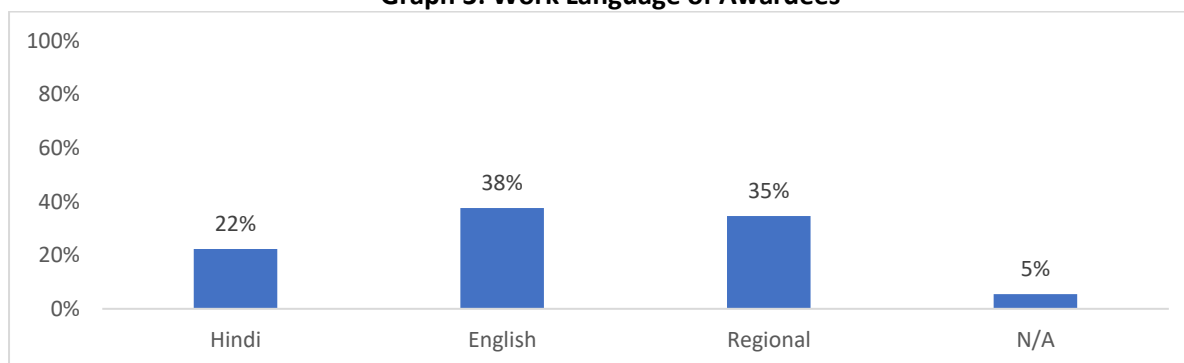
² www.populationfirst.org/about-us/

Graph 2: Regional Distribution of Awards



Largest proportion of the awardees were carrying out their work in English and those working in other languages is presented in Graph 3 below.

Graph 3: Work Language of Awardees



While Population First has created regional categories of awards, English and Hindi are still the dominating languages. This could also be because Hindi is a regional language for several states in North India.

Further, it is important to note that the work of more than 90% of the awardees was descriptive and only 2% were related to audio-visual (such as theatre, television, radio).

4. Objectives of the Study

In order to get an in-depth understanding of the impact LMA has created on the media and advertising world and the change it has brought in the mindsets of the influencers, Population First has commissioned this third-party evaluation, with the objective to understand:

- The extent to which LMA has influenced the work of award recipients, bringing in gender sensitivity and gender balance in their work and end products
- What are the compelling reasons for Population First to continue LMA in the coming years?
- How LMA and its strategy can be further strengthened to optimize the resources and impact

Chapter 2: Study Methodology

Once the data, information, and documents were received from the team managing *Laadli Media Awards*, an in-depth discussion was organized with the team, and indicators of interest were developed and finalized. The final set of indicators led to developing the tool for gathering data on critical questions. Separate tools were developed for the awardees and the Jury engaged by Population First for selecting the submitted work for award.

In discussion with the Population First team, a set of [indicators](#) were identified, that are both necessary and sufficient to demonstrate the effectiveness of LMA and achievement of its objectives. The indicators are presented in the Fact Sheet, presented earlier in the document.

The next step was to gather data from the awardees and jury through phone interviews and therefore attempts were made to contact all awardees and jury for whom the contact information (phone numbers and/or email address) were available. For the awardees between 2007 and 2011, the contact details were not available, and hence awardees from 2011-12 onwards were contacted. While there were few refusals, the majority of the awardees chose not to respond to the requests for an interview, despite repeated attempts to contact, and reminders. With several rounds of contacts from the Conscious Development research team and requests from Population First, only 154 awardees (20% of the total 771 awardees for whom contact details were available) agreed to be interviewed and were interviewed over the phone.

Further attempts were made to contact the jury who has been supporting Population First in assessing the work that is submitted for awards. In total 15 jury members agreed to be interviewed of which phone interviews were organized for 12 members and the other 3 filled the tool themselves and sent their response over email. Also, included in the discussion were 7 influencers who have been associated with Population First for a long time and have contributed to the development of LMA, over the years.

Acting on the suggestions from Population First, the team decided to have discussions with a few individuals who have been associated with Population First and *Laadli Media Awards* in various other categories and are identified as influencers or friends of *Laadli*. These 7 individuals were identified by the Population First team and their contact details were provided to the team for discussion.

The gathered data were then analysed according to the identified objectives of the study and the findings are presented in the next chapter of this report.

Limitations of the Study

The biggest challenge faced during the study was to motivate awardees and jury to agree for interviews. The primary reason was that all the awardees were professionals and therefore too busy to provide 20-25 minutes of their time for the interview. During several discussions, it was also felt that since the awardees did not have any association with Population First after the awards, they did not have any specific inclination to devote their time for anything that relates to LMA.

Chapter 3: Survey Findings

In order to ascertain the overall impact of the *Laadli* Media Awards on the individuals receiving the Award and the indirect impact on their surroundings (family, friends, and media houses where they work), a sample of awardees were contacted and interviewed. Efforts were made to reach out to as many awardees as possible through email and WhatsApp messages and those who agreed to provide information were interviewed. A total of 154 respondents agreed to be interviewed and this chapter presents a detailed analysis of the information received from these 154 respondents.

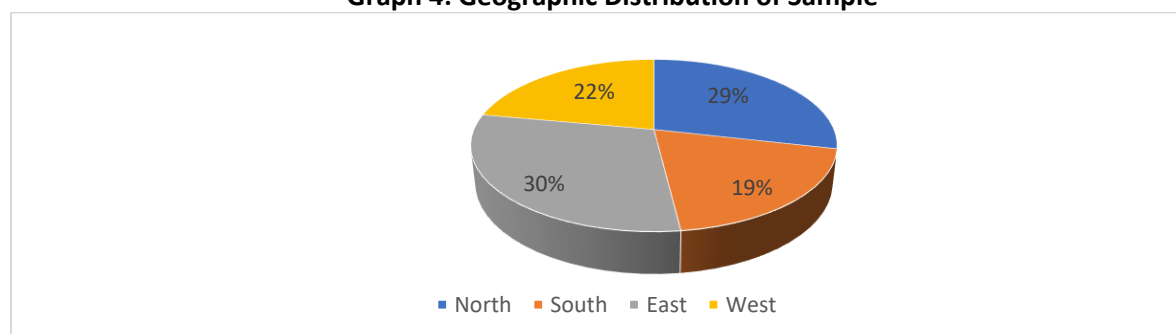
Also, the assessment team was able to interview 15 Jury Members and 5 influencers who have been supporting Population First and *Laadli* as advisors and well-wishers. Important findings from these discussions are also presented in this chapter.

Part I: Findings from Awardees

1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

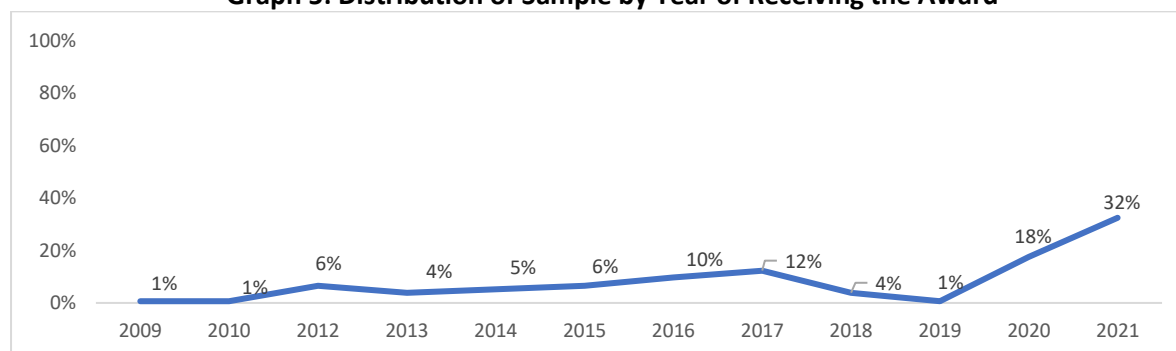
As expected, a significantly large proportion of the total sample were females (79%) and the geographic distribution of the sample is somewhat comparable, as depicted in Graph 4 below.

Graph 4: Geographic Distribution of Sample



Almost two-thirds (67%) of the total respondents were those who received the award in the last five years (2017-2021) and the largest proportion (32%) includes those who received it in 2021. This could be because those who have received the award recently are more motivated to respond to the survey, as compared to those who received it many years ago. The year-wise distribution is presented in Graph 5 below.

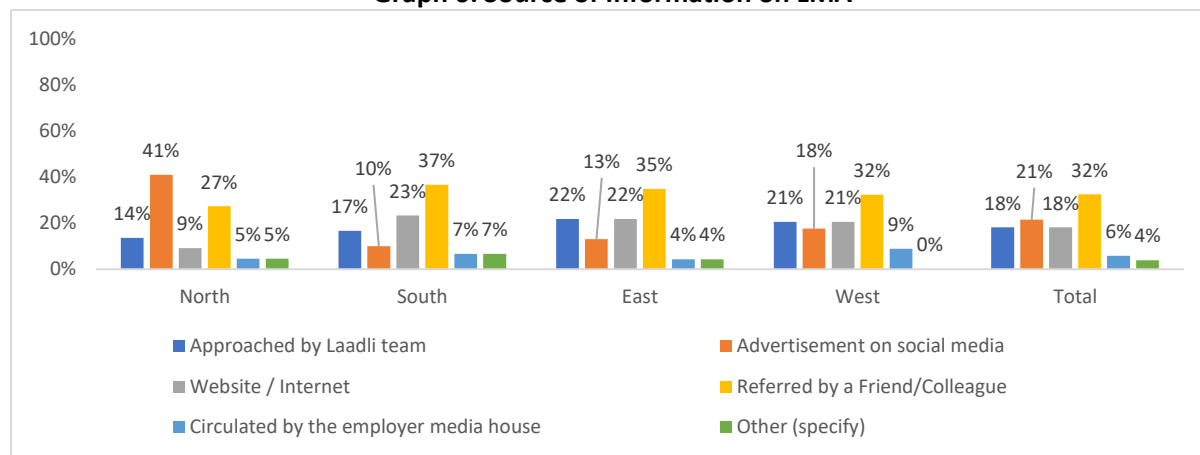
Graph 5: Distribution of Sample by Year of Receiving the Award



2. Awareness regarding LMA

The awardees were asked how they came to know about the LMA. Overall, word of mouth was by far the most common source of information for them, and for all regions except the North. However, there were specific regional variations, as depicted in Graph 6 below.

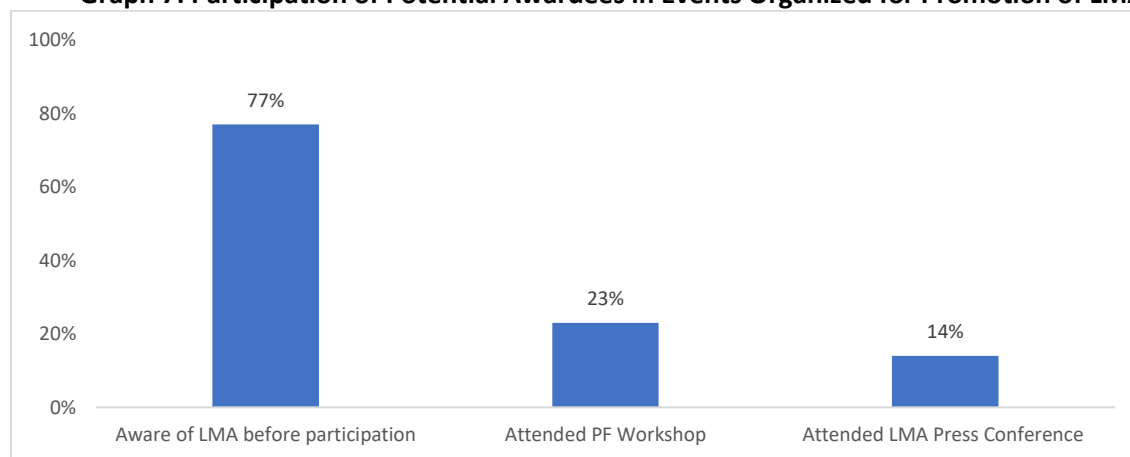
Graph 6: Source of Information on LMA



The data also suggests that the information is not reaching potential applications through their respective media houses, which is common across all regions. This, being an important channel for reaching out to journalists, has a lot of scope. Also, except for the North, social media does not seem to be optimally utilized for disseminating information regarding the awards, which can be further strengthened.

Data obtained from survey participants also suggest that almost three-fourths of the participants were aware of LMA before they applied for the awards, but the workshops and press conferences organized by Population First to announce/promote LMA has limited reach among media professionals who would want to apply for the awards. Graph 7 below provides the details.

Graph 7: Participation of Potential Awardees in Events Organized for Promotion of LMA



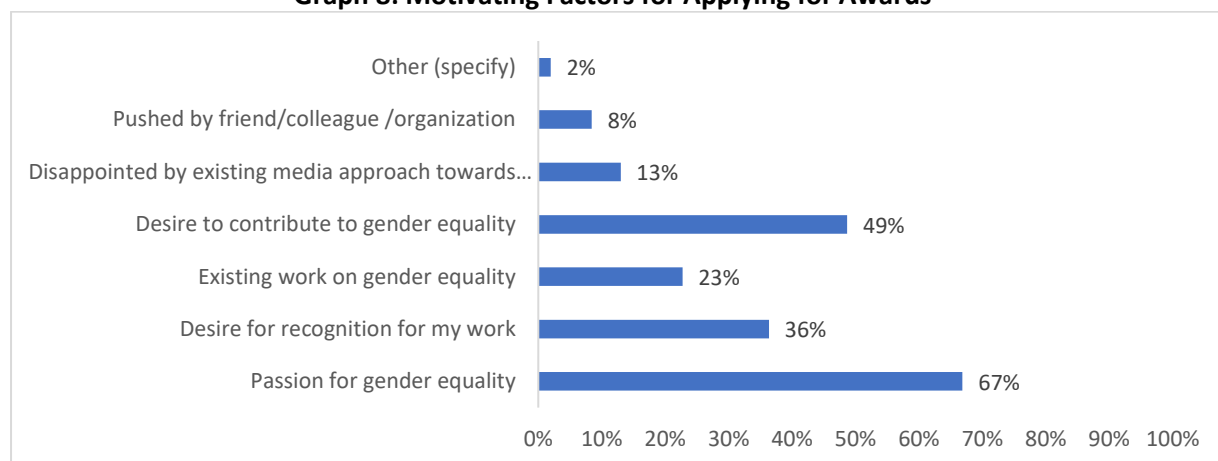
Population First may want to review the effectiveness of the process adopted for promoting LMA in future. Some regional difference was observed with regards to attendance of workshops and press conferences. Attendance at workshops was minimum for East (17%) and highest for North and South (27% each) and attendance at the press conference was highest for East (17%) and least for South (10%).

Almost 3 out of 4 survey participants (77%) said they were aware of LMA before they decided to submit their work for the award. When asked if they are generally aware of the work that Population First is doing under brand name *Laadli*, 66% said that they have knowledge. One third (33%) of the survey participants also confirmed that members of the *Laadli Alumni* Facebook page and 38% confirmed their membership on WhatsApp group named *Friends of Laadli*.

3. Receipt of LMA

The survey also enquired about the factors that motivated the respondents to apply for the award. The biggest motivating factor was their passion for gender equity, followed by their desire to contribute to the gender space. Other important factors that motivated these respondents are presented in Graph 8, below.

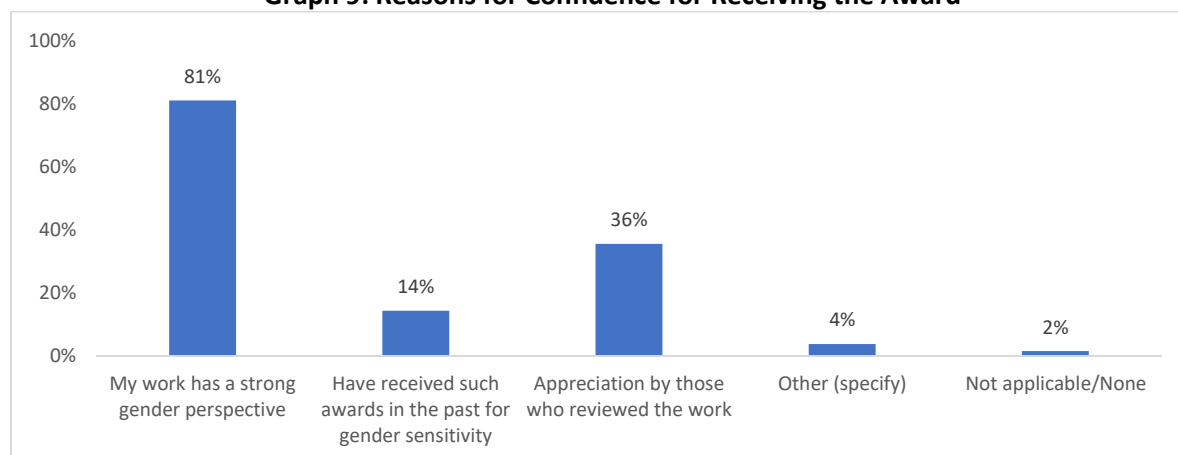
Graph 8: Motivating Factors for Applying for Awards



It is important to note that there were no gender or regional differences in the motivating factors reported by the awardees.

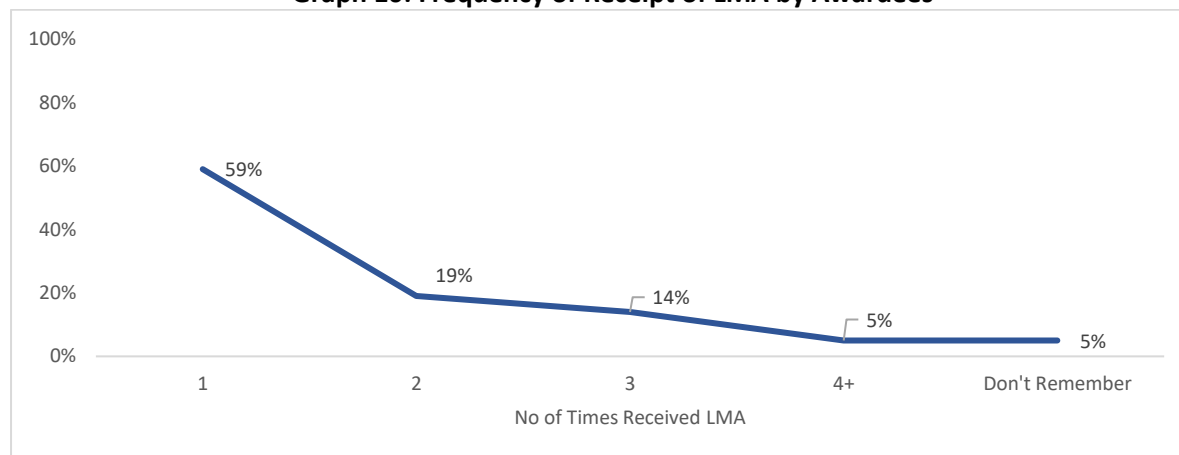
A significantly large proportion of respondents (86%) mentioned that they were confident of receiving the award when they applied for it and also mentioned several factors that contributed to their contribution, as presented in Graph 9 below.

Graph 9: Reasons for Confidence for Receiving the Award



Further information from the survey respondents revealed that 35% of the respondents have received LMA more than once, which is a direct indication of the fact that LMA recipients see a lot of value in these awards and are motivated to apply multiple times and receive the awards as well. About 5% of respondents were not sure about the number and it is likely that they may have received the award more than once. Graph 10 below provides more details.

Graph 10: Frequency of Receipt of LMA by Awardees

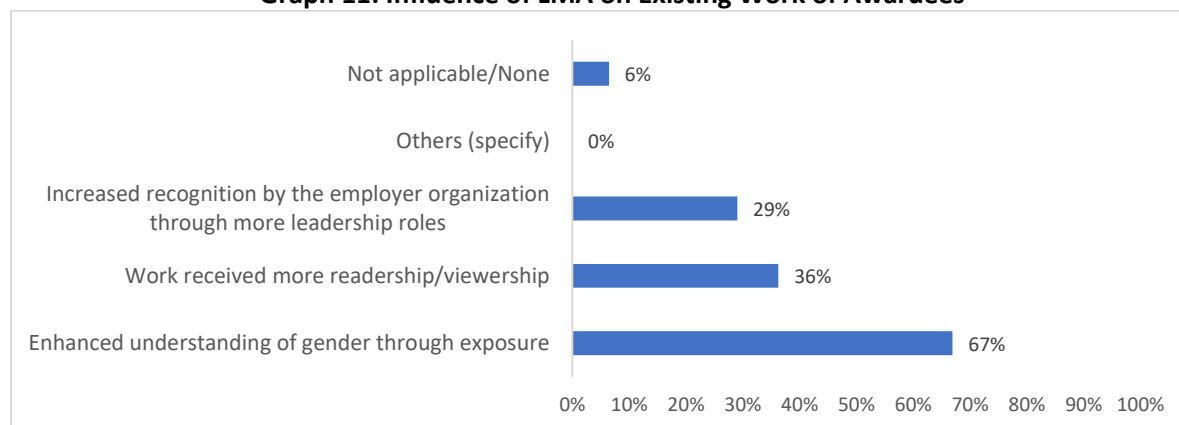


There is no significant regional variation in terms of the number of times an awardee has received the award, except that for West region, the proportion of awardees receiving award only once is slightly higher at 65%. Also, the data suggests that 29% of these survey participants received national-level LMA.

4. Benefits of Receiving LMA

When asked, more than half (57%) of the survey participants mentioned that they feel that after receiving the award, gender sensitivity within their work has increased. Graph 11 below presents the ways in which the respondents felt that the gender sensitivity in their work has increased.

Graph 11: Influence of LMA on Existing Work of Awardees



Overall, almost 90% awardees felt that receipt of LMA does influence one’s perception towards gender. When asked, more than half (55%) of the survey respondents mentioned that the receipt of LMA greatly influenced their perception about balancing gender in their work and another 31% agreed that the receipt of the award “to some extent” influenced their perception.

Also, 39% of respondents admitted that the receipt of the award has been a major contributor to their professional career and another 42% confirmed that the award has made some contribution in improving their professional career. Around 12% of the respondents chose not to respond. They also highlighted the areas where this contribution is felt, as depicted in Graph 12 below.

Graph 12: Contribution of LMA to the Professional Career of Awardees



The awardees shared that while the receipt of LMA helps them receive appreciation within the organization / community they work for, it does not translate into financial gains (only 2% said the receipt of LMA led to financial gain). Further, 42% of the awardees mentioned that winning LMA motivated them to participate in other such awards. 94% of those who participated won those awards.

In all 8 (5%) awardees also stated that they received *Laadli* fellowship after receiving the LMA, which is a further value addition to their professional career and 6% mentioned that they have been invited to be on the Jury of LMA after they received the award.

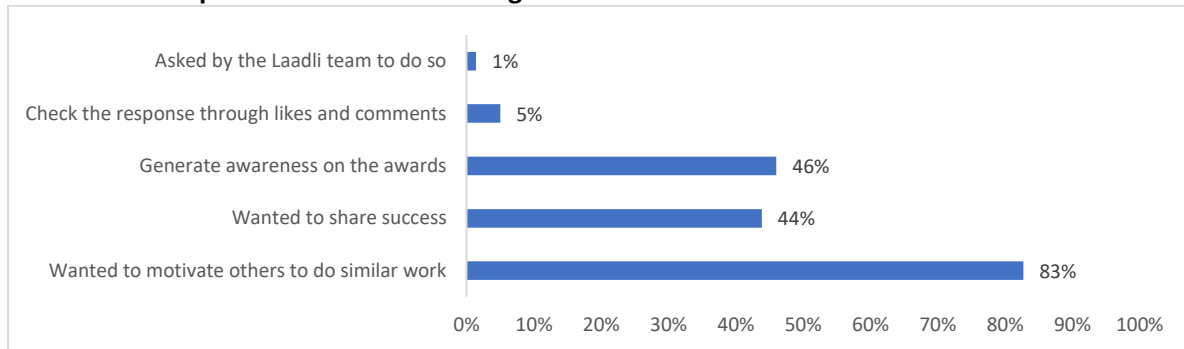
Respondents to the survey were asked about their opinion on whether they think they got the recognition they deserved after receiving the LMA and about a third (33%) were of the opinion that to a large extent they did get the recognition, while a larger proportion (45%) thought that they got some recognition, but not what they deserved. About 10% said they did not get the recognition that was due to them and another 10% chose not to respond to the question.

5. LMA Awardees as Change Makers

Almost 90% of the awardees mentioned that they shared information about them receiving the LMA on social media platforms and of these 95% also shared the work (that received LMA) as well on social media.

These awardees were asked for some of the reasons for sharing the information/work on social media and most (75%) stated that they wanted to motivate others to do similar work. Other responses are detailed in Graph 13 as follows.

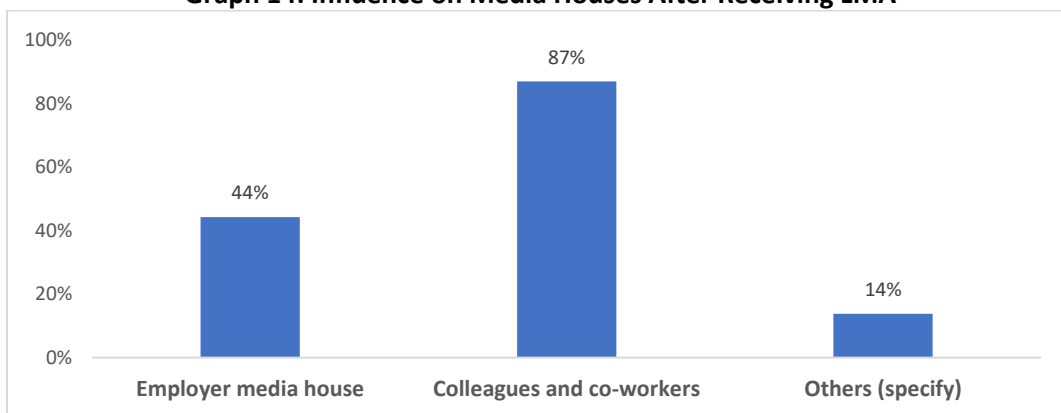
Graph 13: Reasons for Sharing the Information about LMA on Social Media



At least 80% of the awardees feel that (after receiving LMA) they have also been able to influence the perception of people around them on gender that includes their family and relatives (64%), friends and colleagues (80%) and support staff (maids, drivers, vendors etc.) (45%).

7 out of 10 (71%) recipients of LMA felt that awards like LMA can certainly sensitize the media on gender issues and influence their perspective. As many as 85% of the survey respondents confirmed that their respective media house had a positive reaction to the news of their receiving LMA. However, a comparatively lesser proportion felt that they have been able to influence the media as 29% felt that they have been able to do so to a large extent and 61% felt they were successful only to some extent. The respondents were also asked who they have been able to influence in media and their responses are presented in Graph 14 below.

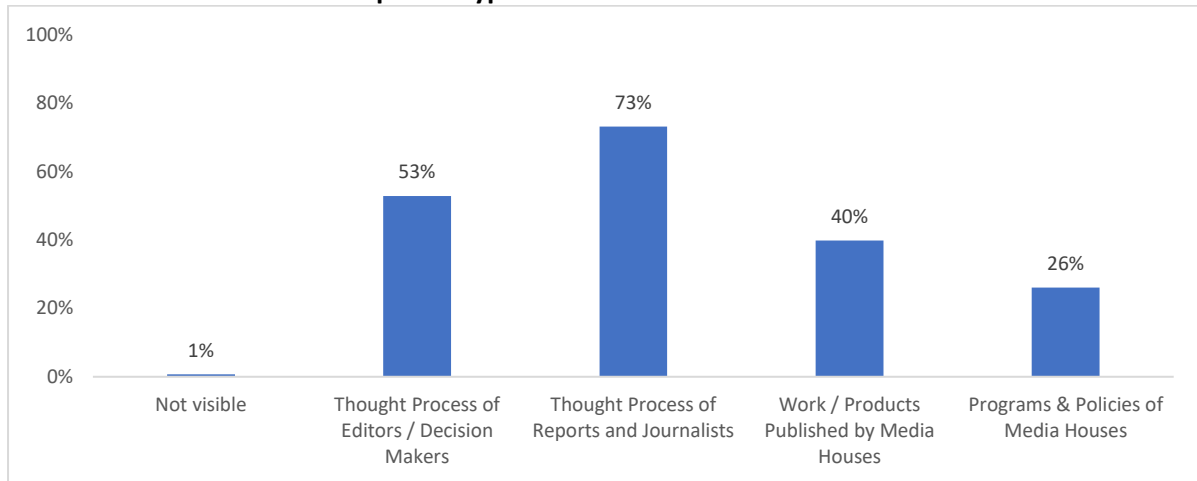
Graph 14: Influence on Media Houses After Receiving LMA



Amongst the awardees who felt that they have been able to influence the media houses, 97% confirmed that there have been instances of positive action by the respective media house and almost half (45%) of these said there have been many such instances.

During further discussion with the awardees, they were also able to list out the visible changes within the media houses that they think they have been able to influence and the type of changes they mentioned are presented in Graph 15, below.

Graph 15: Type of Influence on Media Houses



This, further, stresses the usefulness of the awards in influencing the attitudes and practices of media houses, though indirectly.

9 out of 10 survey respondents confirmed that they motivated their colleagues and friends to apply for LMA and of those who acted as motivators, almost one third (34%) said they motivated up to 5 friends/colleagues, another third (31%) said they motivated more than 5 people and the last third (35%) were not sure about the number but said they did motivate many people. Taking the discussion further, it was enquired whether these colleagues/friends applied for the award (as a result of motivation), about a quarter (37%) were not aware but more than half (55%) confirmed that one or more of their colleagues and friends did apply for the award.

Of those who confirmed that their friends/colleagues applied for LMA, following their motivation, 58% confirmed that their friends/colleagues did receive the award.

Summary

All but 1 respondent of the survey felt that LMA should continue in the future and also felt that young media professionals should apply for these awards. This recommendation stems from the fact that these recipients of LMA strongly feel that such awards not only contribute to their professional career, but also influences the mindsets of media houses and the general community through them. The respondents felt that the award motivates them to act and reach out to people around them, which they are able to do effectively.

Part II: Voices of Jury Members and Influencers

A total of 15 Jury members and 5 influencers were interviewed. This group of 20 “friends of *Laadli*” included 12 women and 8 men who could be interviewed and in-depth discussion was conducted. Of these 20, 15 were from the media fraternity and the other 6 were from the academics’ stream working with the Department of Mass Media and Communication of the Universities and a few with working as independent consultants. All the esteemed jury members were experienced in their respective fields as well as some of them were *Laadli* awardees too. Since all of them were interviewed on the same lines, their responses are collectively analysed and the group is referred as jury members.

The forthcoming discussion provides elaborated responses obtained during the interaction with jury members on different points.

1. Relevance of LMA

At large, all the jury members believed LMA is a prestigious award that should be continued as it has established its relevance and importance in media. All jury members had a common voice that these awards are very much required, especially in the current context. Jury members had their own perspective about the LMA and following expressions demonstrate their justifications on why these awards should continue:

- These awards bring stories from remote areas and real issues of gender in the media under-served regions like the North-East, which otherwise do not get published in national media and people remain unaware of those gender insensitivities and deprived status of women
- These awards generate some healthy competition between the colleagues within the working environment and therefore it forces one to get more sensitized towards gender issues and include in her/his reporting with evidence and facts
- Such awards motivate young journalists to work through gender lens on issues of interest and it gives recognition to them
- Awards are purely on merit that involve thorough efforts for identifying the best entries for awards
- During the current times, social media use has increased, and it is regularly contributing to increased incidences of bullying, stalking, blackmailing, and hence responsible media must report facts, and create awareness

One jury member trusted that increased gender sensitivity puts additional pressure to have active mechanisms to question or review the advertisements/TV shows/Programs / social media with a gender lens.

2. Composition of Jury

All jury members were found in agreement that jury with media personnel along with other academicians and professionals has been an outstanding combination. Jury members were of the opinion that the combination of experts from varied fields with experience of women and gender-related work makes the best combination. Media professionals can have their own bias towards stereotypes and peculiar styles and media protocols, but academicians and professionals oversee the quality of entries in terms of legal, social, and experiential angles of the topics. This absolute combination makes the entire screening process

“Diversity in terms of a right mix of media and non-media professionals as the jury members for the screening process is essential and this provides an edge to the criteria of selecting the right person of the award”

unbiased and worthy. Almost half the jury members had the opinion that academicians being

researchers with sound understanding and knowledge of gender, consider all minute details while scoring the entries. The entire process of screening is a team effort that is purely objective based on the quality and merit of writing or content of the story.

On the question of subjectivity in the judgment process, Jury members clarified that there is a set criterion laid down by the organizers i.e., Population First and therefore subjectivity is somewhat controlled. Also, jury members would always add a few pointers for rating the entries. All the jury members claimed that they identify the right entries in a consultative manner through elaborate discussions. This joint meeting of jury members provides them an opportunity to consult, propose and discuss to reach to a consensus. This process of joint consultative meeting and discussion is thoughtful as all jury members collectively see the merits and demerits and make informed decisions.

“Consultative process adopted by the Population First for the selection of awardees is the best criteria and that too with right mix of variety of experience and talent among jury members.”

A few jury members opined that the entire process of screening by both media experts and academicians is somewhat lengthy (including individual screening and joint consultations). As the number of entries is increasing with each round, the effort of the jury is increasing, but overall, it is worth the effort.

3. Screening Process Adopted by the Jury

Jury members spoke passionately about the criterion suggested by the organizers and also confirmed the scope for their improvisation and inclusion of their perception, which makes the process live. One of the jury members mentioned that they would focus on non-stereotype writing, gender-focused contemporary work, data, evidence, and context. About half of the members reported focussing on language style, insights and supportive evidence that are backed by hardcore data, breaking the ice and food for thought to take up advocacy for gender-related customs and mindsets with the community and policy makers. One of the jury members appreciated the fact that all the jury members have been given the freedom to adopt the mechanism of scoring as per their contextual understanding balancing with the criterion proposed by the Population First.

All jury members expressed their full agreement that the process of finalizing the awardees is comprehensive and based on several parameters that adequately justify the purpose of these awards. While adhering to the parameters, new stories and reporting are highlighted which outstandingly portray the current status, truth and sensitivity towards the gender. The jury members felt happy that all of them put their best efforts to make the process and outcomes meaningful.

The current process of evaluation of LMA does not provide an opportunity for interaction between jury and the applicants/awardees. Most of the jury members did not feel the need to provide individual feedback to the participants or even the awardees. One of the most cited reasons was that since jury members are also from media, such interactions can create unnecessary bias. Another important reason mentioned by some jury members was that the work submitted for the award should speak for itself and there is no added advantage of any interaction between applicants and jury. Some of the jury members were not sure if the applicants would be open to feedback or critique of their work.

“Individual feedback to participants would dilute the process and neutrality would be sacrificed.”

A small number of jury members held the opinion that participants who could reach to the final round

but were not selected for the awards may be informed about the parameters where they fell short to qualify for the awards. Such feedback, if taken in good spirit by the applicants, can help them in improving their work for future rounds.

Another jury member proposed that the Population First may attempt to provide the details of the screening process to the participants at the time of invitation so that participants learn about the parameters and processes for the selection of awardees.

1 jury member suggested that for participants getting into the final round but not making it to the award may be provided some mentoring by the jury members, but this has to be initiated by Population First.

4. Experience of Association with LMA

Amongst all 20, 16 members (including all 5 influencers) had other associations with Population First (in addition to being jury with LMA) and the type of association included facilitating media workshops, capacity building workshops and being advisors/supporters for other activities/events related to gender/women. 6 jury members had themselves won the LMA in past, at least once. Currently, all jury members are on-board as a part of the jury for LMA. On asking about their engagement, it was observed that all the jury members expressed their satisfaction on being a member of jury as well as about their involvement in the process of screening and finalizing the winners of LMA and were very appreciative of the ways in which Population First has engaged with them.

A good number of jury members (12 out of 20 or 60%) had been on the jury panel for at least 3 rounds of LMA. All jury members mentioned that they are witness to an immense improvement in the quality of the work that is being submitted for the award with ever-increasing sensitivity towards gender. A total of 7 jury members were of the opinion that over the years, entries are increasingly being supported by evidence and researched facts. Moreover, some of the jury members mentioned that the respondents are now also consulting legal experts to understand the related laws and Acts on specific topics related to gender. One jury member observed that some entries elaborated aspects of the inter-relationship between gender and socio-demographic and geographical context of the country.

One of the findings of this assessment was that all the jury members had past association with the Population First prior to their inclusion as jury members. A majority of the jury members continue to be associated with Population First and contribute to their events, workshops, mentoring processes, and academic activities. Normally, jury members interact with the organizers during the finalizing phase of the awards. Nearly half the jury members also said that they meet the organizers during various other events and functions in the media circuit.

4 jury members mentioned that they discuss the screening process and provide their feedback, but nothing specific, and largely on how to avoid delays and bring consensus on the finalists. Jury members felt that Population First listens to their feedback and takes the due course of action at different times.

5. Contribution of LMA in bringing about Gender Focus in Media

Half the jury members mentioned that LMA has encouraged the younger generation of media professionals and transformed their attitude towards gender. Media personnel are now motivated to access hard-to-reach remote areas for finding the facts and develop their stories to highlight key issues that can transform the thinking of common people.

“Certainly, LMA have given recognition as well as the confidence to the younger journalists.”

About one-third of jury members from the academics' field felt that the awards have been a due recognition to the media people, especially the younger generation. LMA has convinced media professionals most (if not all) topics and stories are to be seen through a gender lens. Participants who plan their stories in the context of applying for the LMA undertake full research and take a deep dive to identify the key points that need to be highlighted.

Jury members were of the opinion that LMA did achieve the purpose for which these were initiated and are still contributing a lot in making the millennials more gender-sensitive, aware of rights, use of entitlements, and positioning of women in the society. Several media houses have now started providing due importance to gender in their work and one important reason is the recognition of the work of their team through LMA.

One jury member shared an example of an awardee who got recognition and initiated mentoring of young journalists and media professionals on how to progress in the field and aspire for awards like LMA, which is a very positive sign.

Similarly, a jury member from the North-East region stressed that earlier the stories from their region were not getting enough space in national level mainstream media but coverage and real-life stories are now being highlighted in the national media, due to these awards.

All the jury members expressed that they are already doing their bit. All the jury members are seniors, experienced and a few are awardees themselves. There are jury members who are already known for their work related to women studies and gender issues that have already contributed to a larger perspective. A male jury member who got associated with the LMA mentioned that *Laadli* has already achieved its prime objective in advertising and jury members have made an important contribution in this achievement. Therefore, they feel that the current role of the jury is balanced and sufficient and should remain the same soon.

6. Contribution of LMA in Professional Career of Awardees

More than half of the jury members felt that once they receive LMA, the awardees get the confidence and encouragement to include more stories and news on gender. Jury members mentioned that these media professionals get their due recognition not only within their own team and peers, but also among their family and friends. This is a great motivator for them to continue their work.

“Awards help in the career, promotion, encouragement among the peers and positive shift towards inclusion of gender focused writings.”

A jury member from the Western region shared an example of awardees improving their status within the organization. Moreover, awardees include more powerful stories on gender in their work which is credible.

One of the jury members informed about the position and grace this award provides to the awardees. Awardees bring their parents and children to the function which could be seen as positivity amongst media professionals. Juniors follow their seniors and peers because of the recognition and motivation that comes from this award.

Some jury members were also of the opinion that in addition to looking good on the CV, such awards do not make any significant contribution to the professional career of the awardees, primarily because LMA is not well recognized yet and many media houses may not have even heard about it.

Chapter 4: Recommendations

During discussions with awardees and jury members, and from analysis of the data gathered, certain recommendations for consideration of Population First have emerged, which are summarized here:

- Population First should spend resources to popularize the award beyond the media world with an intention to place these in line with Oscar for media. More and more professionals should aspire to win the award.
- Population First should collaborate with the media houses to ensure sufficient recognition for the awardees including pay hikes and other cash/in-kind rewards. This will encourage more professionals to seek awards.
- Find ways to attract more male media professionals to apply for the award and win it as well.
- Provide adequate time for preparing the entries (6-9 months) so that media professionals spend adequate time, undertake research regarding their work and do appropriate packaging of their content.
- Tie-up with professional bodies like the Advertising Council of India as the topic would be of their interest as well and their contribution and inputs can refine the process.
- Get some international collaboration with professional bodies for standardizing the process. This will also provide international recognition to LMA. The engagement of international experts as jury will also strengthen the panel.
- Convert awards into competition mode so that people start preparing for the same as per guidelines.
- Regular awareness programmes about gender equity are a must for media professionals as well as media students, media educators and media owners. Motivate more media professionals to participate.
- Have nominations from known personalities for good gender-sensitive media output as many times due to over-busy schedules, media professionals miss the opportunity to apply.
- Promote regional medium more as Hindi/English gets the most attention, through social media and other channels.
- Categories of awards must be refined to bring in more clarity, to make the categories distinctly non-overlapping.
- Population First should rationalize the number of categories, reducing them to a manageable number.
- Publicize the names of the Jury along with the awards. The stature of the Jury always improves the status, recognition, and value of the awards.
- Organizer should properly communicate the purpose, categories, and plan for the awards.
- Reduce the number of awards such as one award for one region and category and felicitate the awardee in the best way to motivate others.
- Information on LMA must be communicated to various media houses, universities and autonomous institutes working in mass media and communication units to attract entries more in number and better in quality.

- Jury members must be given adequate and sufficient time to do justice as the majority of them are seniors and may have limited time to devote to this task.
- There should be a third-party agency identified through a scientific process for the initial screening of entries. The agency should develop a scientific process to identify the first cut of finalists and then a team of juries can zero down the finalists.
- Under the categories, more weightage should be given to the media advertisement category.
- Inclusion of cash awards along with recognition would yield more weightage to the awards. The cash prize should be significant enough to catch attention.
- Recognize the calibre and contribution that goes beyond articles and stories. Awards like Lifetime Achievement Award can be introduced.

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Population First



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Celebrate Her Life

An Initiative by Population First

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