

TANA BANA: Volume 18 Laadli@20



Note from the Director...

Twenty years ago, we dared to ask: where are our daughters disappearing? Why must a girl fight to be born, to be heard, to be seen? And what becomes of a society that forgets how to nurture half its soul?

Laadli was born not just as a campaign, but as an echo of unheard voices—a rebellion embroidered in courage and care. Over two decades, we've held space for hard conversations and made tenderness a tool of resistance. With every award, fellowship, and story amplified, we've stitched together a more equitable narrative—one that doesn't flinch from the truth. Our deepest gratitude to the visionaries who dreamt this into being—our late founder, legendary adman Bobby Sista, and the indomitable Dr A.L. Sharada, whose fire and foresight guide this journey.

To mark this moment, we turn to Gulzar saab, who always captures the unsaid:

“चुप कीज़िए, अभी रोने दीजिए
इन आँखों को खुलकर भीग लेने दीजिए
जो कह नहीं सकते अल्फ़ाज़
वो अशक़ कहते हैं”

Don't hush her. Let her cry.
Let her eyes flood without restraint.
What words dare not utter, tears declare.

These lines are for every silenced daughter, every determined journalist, every weary mother who dares to hope. Laadli carries them all—in its voice, its vision, and its vow to never stop asking better of the world.

We may be twenty, but our fire hasn't dimmed. If anything, it burns fiercer—with the wisdom of struggle and the glow of resilience.

Thank you to everyone who's stood with us, spoken up, written truth, demanded better, and believed that girls aren't charity—they are change. Here's to the next twenty years of dreaming louder, standing taller, and walking together towards a world where every Laadli lives free.

With fierce hope and enduring gratitude,
Yogesh Pawar
Programme Director, Population First

Contents



Director's Note
Page 01

The Lede
Page 02

Features
Page 08

The Laadli@20 event
Page 09

Masterclass
Page 13

The Quote Hanger
Page 15

Word Search
Page 17



The Lede

Chronicling Laadli's milestones and more...

(Dr A L Sharada's speech at the special event to mark Laadli@20)

Whenever I read Majrooh Sultanpuri's couplet:
 "Hum akele hi chale thhe jaanib-e-manzil magar,
 Log saath aate gaye aur kaarvaan banta gaya"

I can't help but reflect on how beautifully it mirrors *Laadli's* journey – from a modest initiative to a nationwide movement.

When the 2001 Census report revealed a deeply disturbing trend of declining child sex ratios, Mr Sista and I felt compelled to act. We realised that we had to harness the power of communication to challenge the deep-seated mindsets that failed to celebrate the birth of a daughter. I miss Mr Bobby Sista today, but I'm sure he's watching us with pride from wherever he is.

I still remember sitting with him, jotting down different names for a campaign for the girl child. We were both instantly drawn to one – *Laadli*. And so, *Laadli* was born. Today, it has become synonymous with girl child advocacy in India.

Though I wasn't a communications professional, I found myself dissatisfied with the logos presented by advertising experts – they seemed too stereotypical and contrary to the very essence of what we stood for. One late evening, my colleague Preeti and I sketched a simple stick figure that embodied the spirit we envisioned. We shared it with Vini Upadhyay, who created the final logo – a vibrant, celebratory depiction of a woman and girl. Thank you, Vini and Preeti



The message behind the logo was simple and clear: if we don't invest in women's empowerment, we cannot truly protect the girl child.

Laadli was launched on 9th June 2005, at a high-profile event at the NCPA, which soon became our regular venue partner. We are immensely grateful for this enduring partnership. Thank you, Team NCPA.





That inaugural event also featured a powerful street play titled *Laadli*, performed by students of Sophia College under the guidance of the brilliant Manjul Bhardwaj. Since then, Manjul and I have collaborated on countless impactful workshops for media professionals, students, and media houses. My heartfelt thanks to Manjul for taking the campaign to the streets and helping people confront their own internalised biases.

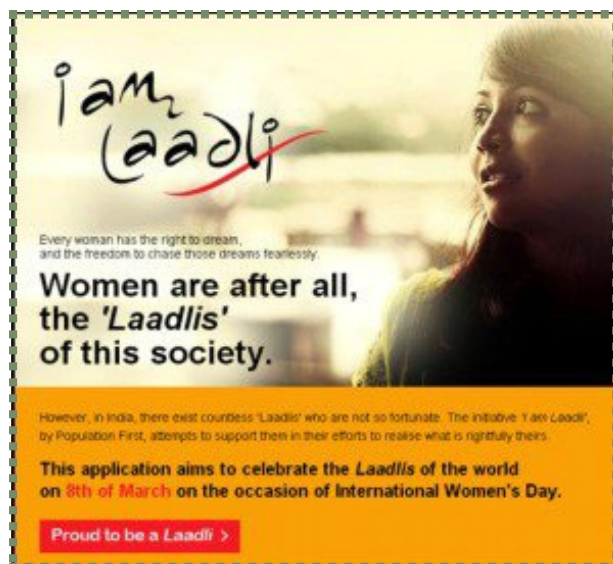
But how do we reach the community and the youth? That was a challenge.

A turning point came when we began involving students in community outreach. Through the networks of NSS and WDC, we trained students in street theatre, puppetry, songwriting, and other creative expressions. They took the message to the people – including Ganesh pandals. It was a big, beautiful collaboration. I offer my deepest gratitude to Prof. Vibhuti Patel, the NSS and WDC departments, and the students and faculty whose unwavering support helped amplify Laadli's presence in academic institutions.





We also have the distinction of organising Mumbai's very first flash mob. Students from 40 colleges performed across 40 locations in the city. I only wish we'd had today's smartphones and social media tools to capture those magical moments! We also pioneered a Twitterthon, which trended that day, and created digital badges for Facebook that read "I Am A Laadli" and "I Support Laadli." Renuka Shahane, Suneeta Rao, and Gauri Shinde lent their voices to the campaign, giving it incredible visibility.



But what about accountability?

We decided to hold up a mirror to the authorities on the widespread violations of the PCPNDT Act by diagnostic clinics. A coalition of NGOs was formed, and under the leadership of Ms Varsha Deshpande, 42 clinics were surveyed – of which 39 were found to be non-compliant. The findings were widely covered by the media, bringing the issue into the public domain. Based on this, we framed seven action points for the government and launched a multi-media Million Signature Campaign supported by the Government of India. We collected nearly 80,000 signatures, which were submitted to the Health Minister. Some of our demands were met, including the formation of a State Supervisory Board. Varsha, Anuja and I were able to contribute meaningfully to policies that ensured women's rights were not sacrificed in the zeal to stop sex-selective practices.

Laadli Alliance serves notice on MOH
Mumbai | Wednesday, Oct 10 2007 IST


The Laadli Alliance of ten NGOs in Chembur has served a notice on the Medical Officer Health (MOH) of M-ward (West) for inaction on clinics violating the Act banning sex selection.

The survey, done in 40 clinics in the ward in August this year, revealed gross violations of the Pre-Conception Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act.

The notice was sent on Friday, October 5, to Dr S D Deshmukh, the MOH of M-ward (W), who is also the Appropriate Authority (AA) for the ward.


How Mumbai will track sex determination offenders

Mumbai | Mid-Day.com | Updated: May 04, 2011 12:02 IST



MUMBAI: Alarmed at the declining figures of female population in Maharashtra, as revealed by the provisional census of 2011, the state health department has launched a crackdown on clinics, which illegally perform sex determination tests. According to department officials, they will deploy 'Decoy Sting Operation Teams' at the district level. This team, which consists of khabris (informants), will track down clinics performing sex determination tests. Local health NGOs will also be enlisted for the crackdown.

Dr A L Sharda of the NGO, Population First, which runs an exclusive project for girl child called 'Laadli', puts the blame on the authorities too. "There is poor implementation of the PCPNDT Act by the state. The authorities too fail to keep a check on number of sonography machines that are being used in various clinics. Appropriate administrative mechanisms need to be put in place immediately all over the country," she said. Activists say there's a direct co-relation between machines and lower sex ratio.



Home » News » India » Mumbai

Chembur clinics flout sex tests: Survey

Tuesday, 28 August 2007 - 1:06am IST

• [Deepa Suryanarayan](#)

Not one of the 40 clinics follow the rules prescribed in the Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act 1994, aimed at curbing female foeticide.

Widespread disregard of norms laid down by PCPNDT Act

If you thought Mumbai is free from the malice of female foeticide and sex discrimination, think again. A survey of 40 ultra-sound clinics in Chembur has thrown up a shocking revelation. Not one of the 40 clinics here follows the rules prescribed in the Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act 1994 (PCPNDT Act), aimed at curbing female foeticide.



Since *Laadli* came into being, many NGOs have launched or strengthened their own girl child initiatives, adding powerful momentum to the larger movement.

In 2007, we launched the *Laadli* Media Awards as a Mumbai-based initiative. With the unwavering support of UNFPA, it grew into an international event. My deepest thanks to all past and present members of UNFPA. I must especially acknowledge Anuja Gulati for her commitment to *Laadli* and Ms Frederika Meijer for her belief and trust in us.



The *Laadli* Media Awards owe much to Dolly Thakore, whose sheer determination ensured that powerful voices echoed *Laadli*'s message. We had an enviable list of personalities join us as guests, performers, resource persons, and sponsors – all thanks to Dolly's tireless efforts. Just the faintest whisper of a need, and Dolly would be on the phone, making it happen. Thank you, Dolly, for always being there – for me and for *Laadli*.

Laadli has also had the passionate support of Suneeta Rao, whose soulful music and tireless advocacy have added heart to our cause. Thank you, Suneeta, for being such a powerful voice for change.



The *Laadli* Media Awards brought editors, journalists, and media houses into our fold. My heartfelt thanks to every one of them.



Recognising the power of advertising in shifting social norms, Mr Sista and I reached out to stalwarts such as Ramesh Narayan, Srinivasan Swamy, Kaushik Roy, and Mr K. V. Sridhar. They lent their full support and helped us enter the advertising world. Collaborations with IAA and AAFA allowed us to expand the Awards to the South Asia region.



A special mention of Mr. Gokul Krishnan Murthy is only appropriate here – for taking a leap of faith and launching a regular column analysing ads from a gender perspective in Campaign India magazine. I had the privilege of writing it for over 13 years, highlighting subtle gender biases and encouraging more sensitive storytelling.

We can proudly say that India was the first to introduce a gender category in the ABBY Awards – long before Cannes introduced the Glass Lion. Kudos to all our *Laadli* champions in advertising.

Our foray into engaging scriptwriters wouldn't have been possible without Mr Anjum Rajabali, who initiated gender conversations among his peers. My sincere thanks to him and to the Screenwriters Association for embracing this cause.



I am also deeply grateful to our trustees — past and present — for their invaluable support and guidance.

And of course, none of this would have been possible without the passionate efforts of my colleagues, past and present, who stood by me through thick and thin. A huge thank you to each one of them.

Let me not forget our guests, participants, and award winners — your encouragement and appreciation have always been our biggest strength and motivation.

Yes, we began this journey alone. But along the way, more and more people joined in — and together, we built a movement.

On this 20th anniversary of *Laadli*, I take this moment to acknowledge each and every person who has lent their voice, energy, and heart to this cause. You are all *Laadli* champions.

There is still a long road ahead. But together, hand in hand, we will continue — to build a world that is more just, more equal, and more hopeful for every woman and child.

Thank you.

(Population First's Founder-Director and Trustee, Dr. A.L. Sharada is a sociology doctorate media analysis expert with over 35 years of experience in gender and development. This recipient of the Gender Warrior Award from the International Advertising Association has steered the *Laadli* campaign from its inception in 2005)



Feature

Laadli at 20: A Daughter Grown, A Legacy in Bloom

(UNFPA representative Anuja Gulati's speech at the special event to mark Laadli@20)

It's truly heartening to see Laadli turn twenty—not just older, but stronger, bolder, and more determined than ever. What began as a fledgling initiative has grown into a confident young woman—standing tall, challenging gender stereotypes, and gently nudging society to unlearn deeply rooted biases.

I often refer to Laadli as our campaign because it was born out of a cherished and enduring partnership between UNFPA and Population First. Together, we set out to reshape the communication ecosystem—media, advertisers, filmmakers, and influencers—by amplifying the voices of women, girls, and marginalised communities, and advocating for gender-sensitive content.

In the past two decades, Laadli has sparked a sustained movement, weaving gender sensitivity into the fabric of media and advertising. A single, thoughtfully repeated advertisement has the power to dismantle stereotypes and plant the seeds of equality more effectively than lengthy discourses. That's the magic Laadli harnesses.



More recently, Laadli has stepped into boardrooms, engaging editorial leadership in vital conversations—not just about the content they produce but also the gender dynamics within their organisations. What started as a modest campaign has evolved into an agent of cultural transformation—reshaping both narrative and newsroom.

And the change is visible. Sensationalism is slowly giving way to sensitivity. Advertisers are no longer merely selling products but are actively challenging norms. From showcasing women in non-traditional roles to celebrating diversity, creatives are now telling stories that reflect a more equitable world.

Laadli reminds us that change is not just possible—it is inevitable when pursued with purpose and persistence. She has shown us the power of questioning the status quo, breaking moulds, and shifting narratives towards a more inclusive future.

As we celebrate this milestone, I offer heartfelt thanks on behalf of UNFPA—to the late Mr Bobby Sista, whose vision birthed this campaign; to Dr A.L. Sharada, whose unwavering dedication nurtured it into what it is today; and to the next generation of *Laadli* champions—Mr K.V. Sridhar, Yogesh Pawar, and the entire Population First team—whose energy and conviction light the way forward.

UNFPA deeply values this partnership and looks forward to walking alongside *Laadli* in the years to come—towards a world where every voice is heard and every girl celebrated.



The Laadli at 20 event

A Journey of Change, Conviction, and Collective Courage

On 12th July 2025, Population First marked two decades of its flagship initiative *Laadli* with an evocative celebration at the prestigious Nehru Centre in Mumbai. What began as a modest campaign has grown into a nationwide movement, unwavering in its commitment to advancing gender sensitivity, reshaping media narratives, and challenging entrenched social norms.

The evening brought together trustees, long-time partners, media professionals, and cherished supporters – each a fellow traveller on Laadli’s remarkable journey.



A Welcome Steeped in Memory and Meaning

The programme opened with a heartfelt welcome by Executive Trustee and ad industry veteran, Mr K.V. Sridhar. A specially curated film, *Laadli@20*, was screened, its moving visuals and narration drawing tears and smiles in equal measure. The film offered a powerful reflection of the campaign’s evolution – and the passion that fuelled it.

Dr A.L. Sharada on Two Decades of Purpose

Dr A.L. Sharada, Founder-Director and Trustee of Population First, anchored her keynote with the words of poet Majrooh Sultanpuri: “Hum akele hi chale thhe jaanib-e-manzil magar, log saath aate gaye aur kaarvaan banta gaya.” She described Laadli’s birth as a response to the declining child sex ratio revealed by the 2001 Census – a wake-up call that spurred her and the late Mr Bobby Sista into action.

Sharing warm anecdotes from the early days, Dr Sharada recalled naming the initiative “Laadli” and designing its iconic logo – a vibrant representation of a woman and girl celebrating life. She detailed Laadli’s many pioneering milestones, including India’s first flash mobs, digital campaigns, and advocacy efforts to hold diagnostic clinics accountable under the PCPNDT Act. With gratitude, she acknowledged stalwarts like Dolly Thakore, Suneeta Rao, Gokul Krishnan Murthy, and Anjum Rajabali for championing Laadli’s vision in their respective domains.





UNFPA Reflects on a Powerful Partnership

Ms Anuja Gulati, Programme Management Specialist at UNFPA – Laadli’s long-time partner – described the campaign as “a confident young woman” challenging stereotypes and nudging society towards introspection. She spoke of Laadli’s evolution from a fledgling initiative to a culture-shifting force that is now influencing content creators, newsroom cultures, and advertising narratives.

Ms Gulati commended Laadli’s sustained advocacy and reaffirmed UNFPA’s continued support for this vital collaboration. Paying tribute to Mr Bobby Sista and acknowledging Dr Sharada’s extraordinary leadership, she warmly referred to Mr K.V. Sridhar and Mr Yogesh Pawar as the “Laadlas of Laadli”, applauding their commitment and energy in carrying the mission forward.

Tributes from Friends and Fellow Champions



Veteran theatre icon Ms Dolly Thakore and pop singer-performer Ms Suneeta Rao – both long-standing supporters of the campaign – paid moving tributes to Laadli and its founder. Their deeply personal reflections added richness and warmth to the celebration, reminding all present of the emotional resonance Laadli carries beyond its programme outcomes.

Panel: Gender in the Newsroom – Where Are We Now?



A compelling conversation moderated by Population First’s Programme Director, Mr Yogesh Pawar, brought together acclaimed journalist and academic Sameera Khan, filmmaker and *Laadli* awardee Santoshee Mishra, and journalist–author Kunal Purohit. The panel explored persistent gender imbalances in media, the invisibilisation of women’s perspectives, and the urgent need for intersectional and inclusive journalism.

All the panellists agreed that Population First’s *Laadli* initiative has been instrumental in sensitising mediapersons by fostering critical engagement with gender issues through workshops, fellowships, and the *Laadli* Media Awards. By encouraging inclusive, stereotype-free storytelling, it is steadily transforming reportage to be more empathetic, equitable, and reflective of diverse voices, they averred.

Audience participation was spirited, with students, journalists, and media professionals engaging in a candid and solution-oriented dialogue that acknowledged the road ahead while celebrating progress made.

Comedy as Commentary: Laughter with a Purpose





The event took a sharp, satirical turn with a trio of powerful stand-up performances that used humour to dismantle patriarchy and spotlight gender inequality. Veteran theatre person Ms Mahabanoo Mody-Kotwal, theatre-maker and Laadli awardee Ms Ulka Mayur, and comedienne Ms Deepika Mhatre wove lived experiences with biting wit to highlight the absurdities of societal expectations around women's bodies, roles, and freedoms.

Their sets elicited both laughter and reflection, proving that comedy can be a transformative tool for social critique and empowerment.

A Poignant Close

As the evening drew to a close, Population First's Assistant Director, Mr Sumedh Haralkar, delivered a heartfelt vote of thanks – acknowledging the performers, panellists, Nehru Centre staff, and the audience. Special thanks were offered to young emcee Tanvi Pawar, who carried the evening's programme with poise and charm.

The celebration culminated with a live performance of the specially composed Laadli anthem by Ms Suneeta Rao – her soulful voice bringing the evening to a stirring, emotional close.



Looking Ahead

With nearly 100 invitees in attendance, Laadli@20 was more than just an anniversary. It was a reaffirmation of a shared vision – a tribute to the power of communication, collective action, and enduring partnerships in shaping a more equitable future.

As Laadli steps into its third decade, the road ahead may yet be steep. But it is illuminated by the unwavering light of 20 years of resilience, conviction, and hope. And if this evening was anything to go by, that light is only growing stronger.



A Very Special Evening: Honouring Vision, Impact, and Legacy

26th March 2025 was no ordinary evening—it marked both the birth anniversary of our founder, Mr Bobby Sista, and the Foundation Day of Population First.



A visionary committed to inclusive social change, Mr Sista's pioneering initiatives—*Laadli* and *Amchi*—won not just admiration but also the support of icons such as Mr Ratan Tata.

The evening at Worli's Nehru Centre – which had more than 100 attendance – also saw Tata Trusts and Mahindra Foundation's *Nanhi Kali* being honoured with the Beyond Business Impact Awards. Brand and communication expert Santosh Desai delivered a compelling keynote, highlighting how CSR can be a powerful catalyst for development.



A soulful violin recital by Ms Sunita Bhuyan turned into a delightful impromptu jam when renowned tabla exponent Anuradha Pal joined in—using beatboxing in place of her instrument.



Filmmaker R. Balki graced the event as chief guest, alongside Perna Langa, CEO of the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat, adding to the significance of the celebration.



Laadli's Gender Lens – A special Masterclass

Celebrating World Population Day with a Masterclass in Gender-Sensitive Reporting

Brought to you by Population First, supported by UNFPA in partnership with the Mumbai Press Club

Venue: Mumbai Press Club

Date: 11th July 2025

A Powerful Conversation for a Juster Tomorrow

This World Population Day, Population First and UNFPA came together to host a compelling Masterclass on 'Gender Lens in Media Reporting' for the bright young minds studying journalism. Held at the Mumbai Press Club which had partnered for the event which welcomed an assorted mix of 48 journalists, activists and students of media courses from KC College, Sophia College and Don Bosco College, turning a classroom experience into a mission-driven movement for inclusive and ethical journalism.

The sessions were conducted by two passionate champions of gender equality:

Dr. A.L. Sharada, Trustee & Founder-Director, Population First

Ms. Anuja Gulati, Programme Management Specialist, UNFPA

Together, they explored how young journalists can tell gender-sensitive stories, challenge stereotypes, and rewrite narratives that have long marginalised women and girls.



What the Workshop Aimed to Do?

To equip the next generation of journalists with tools to:

- Report on violence against women with sensitivity and respect.
- Use a survivor-centred lens to challenge sensationalism.
- Understand the systemic roots of gender-based violence.
- Spot everyday bias and reshape the narrative.

Session Highlights

Gender, Media & Social Conditioning (Led by Dr. A.L. Sharada)

Dr. Sharada reminded students that gender is not biological—it's social. From childhood, we are moulded by family, media, education, and religion, she said and highlighted how:

- Media often reinforces gender stereotypes.
- Women remain underrepresented in news leadership and hard news.
- Girls and boys are stereotyped in ads and entertainment content.

She urged students to:

- Challenge sexist portrayals
- Promote inclusive messaging
- Use respectful language
- Prioritise accuracy over speed
- Protect the identity of survivors

"Media is a mirror," she said, "but it can also be a torch. It can illuminate, challenge and inspire change."



Reporting Gender-Based Violence Responsibly

Led by Ms. Anuja Gulati

Ms. Gulati opened her session by reaffirming that women’s rights are human rights, echoing global frameworks like the Vienna Declaration (1993) and Beijing Platform for Action (1995).

She explained:

- Violence against women (VAW) is widespread, systemic, and deeply rooted in gender inequality.
- Real-life cases show that violence cuts across caste, class and age.
- Women are more vulnerable during pregnancy, illness, displacement, or social crisis.

The key message: Media can be a powerful ally. Ethical storytelling can shape policies, influence mindsets, and spark conversations that matter.

“The goal isn’t to report trauma—it’s to build empathy and understanding through truth,” she said.

Student Reflections

Participants debated, questioned, and shared candid insights from their coursework and internships. For many, this was their first structured exposure to gender-focused reporting—and it left a lasting impact.

Acknowledgements

A warm thank you to our collaborators:

- UNFPA India, for their continued partnership.
- Mumbai Press Club, for providing the venue and logistical support.
- The participants, for their energy, questions, and commitment to fair storytelling.

Final Thought

As *Laadli* celebrates 20 years of amplifying gender-sensitive media, this masterclass reminded us why it all began—to create a more just, inclusive, and equitable world. Because when young journalists learn to see the world through a gender lens, the stories they tell can help change it.

Let’s keep the conversation going. Let’s keep the *Laadli* lens sharp.



THE QUOTE HANGER...

Thanks for having me at the Laadli milestone event. It was an interesting, enriching evening. As a woman journalist and digital media founder, I know the grind of proving one's worth beyond gender. The glass ceiling feels like iron. Yet, the courage and creativity of the women we report on continues to inspire—and helps us break through.

- Roli Srivastava, Founder-Editor of The Migration Story

“ Laadli as a movement is doing a terrific job in advocating gender equality... But such equality cannot really be achieved by empowering only one half of society — we must also engage men and boys to question patriarchy, redefine strength, and embrace care and equality. Without transforming masculinity, we risk reinforcing the very structures we seek to dismantle.

- Kunal Purohit. Independent journalist and author of H-Pop: The Secretive World of Hindutva Pop Stars

It's truly heartwarming to see our Laadli turn 20 today and transform into this confident young woman standing tall and fearlessly challenging gender stereotypes, revisiting conversations on gender and working to shift deep rooted mindsets

- Ms Anuja Gulati of UNFPA

“ A big shout-out to the Laadli initiative for underlining how gender equality within the newsroom is vital—not just for fairness at the workplace, but because diverse voices shape diverse stories. Without equity behind the scenes, even the most gender-sensitive reporting risks being superficial or skewed. We cannot thank Laadli and Population First enough for seeding such sensitivity and awareness.

- Santoshee Mishra, Independent journalist and documentary filmmaker.

Population First's Laadli initiative has sparked a vital shift in how gender is represented across Indian media, encouraging sensitivity, accountability, and inclusive storytelling. By recognising and rewarding gender-just narratives, it has inspired journalists to challenge stereotypes and centre the voices of women and marginalised communities.

- Sameera Khan, Journalist, researcher and co-author of Why Loiter? Women and Risk on Mumbai Streets.



THE QUOTE HANGER...

Laadli has played a pivotal role in inspiring journalists to consistently look at stories from the gender perspective by lauding the efforts of those who do so. The positive approach of encouragement has gone a long way and has nurtured generations of journalists who take pride in the awards and their nuanced work, and who instill a sense of emulation among the younger lot, feeding into a pipeline of journalists to challenge their own traditional perspective.

- Vinaya Deshpande Pandit, Maharashtra Chief of Bureau,
The Hindu

“ Twenty years ago I made a commitment to the Girl Child. From creating the curtain raiser song and video, to being on the jury of and performing at the LAADLI Media Awards, the rewards have come in small but powerful ways – for instance my most precious memory being when I sang “ Kesaria hai roop maro”, to the magnificent Bhanwari Devi at the LMA’s. Performing in the presence of this powerful woman, and that too a song inspired by her rich Rajasthani heritage, it felt like a coming together of her incredible story and my lifelong passion for spreading awareness and speaking against injustice through my music. My eternal gratitude to the late Mr. Bobby Sista, for creating this platform and making me a part of it.

- Suneeta Rao, Singer-performer

Laadli has opened up a new network of individuals in my life who are driven by the same commitment to gender sensitivity. The opportunity to celebrate this journey—with three awards and one fellowship —has been incredibly valuable to me.

Being a ‘Laadli’ isn’t just about networking; it comes with the responsibility of sharing this framework with others who may not yet have the opportunity to understand or practice it. Laadli is not just about optics—it carries a deeper meaning. Every day, I find myself either learning something new or sharing my learnings to help others make more informed and conscious choices.

I’m especially glad that the project is led by a man—because being gender-sensitive does not mean being anti-men. Sadly, in today’s world, many influencers are spreading misinformation about feminism. As much as we need Savitris, we also need more Jyotibas. This space, in that sense, is truly gender-inclusive and inspirational.

- Alka Dhupkar

“ Laadli holds a deeply personal place in my journey—not just as Programme Director at Population First, but as a journalist of three decades who has reported on gender, and once stood proudly as both a Laadli Media Awardee and Fellow. To see this initiative complete 20 years is both moving and momentous. Laadli has shown us that words can shift mindsets, and that stories—when told right—can become instruments of change. The journey ahead remains long, but if the last two decades are anything to go by, the path is lit with hope.”

- Yogesh Pawar, Programme Director, Population First



**What's the good word?
A Laadli@20 special...
Find the words hidden in the puzzle below!**

P O P U L A T I O N L A A D L I C A R E
 E Q U A L I T Y X C H A N G E P A T B H
 A G E N C Y O R Y U M A T S U T R A A E
 C G O L W R D G E N D E R F H C L M C A
 E Y G R O W T H D H T K R I G H T S E L
 R W Z I O U Q D D O U F N A R E T L B T
 T H M D I S C R I M I N A T I O N S R H
 O L I R L N E J W B P I R R H T D I U A
 L A A D L I I M E D I A C K I P O Y N N
 E A D G U R M V T Q C H O I C E E E A D
 R E S E N S I T I V I T Y L N M C C N J
 A T R M F H E A L T H S T G E C D I E S
 N L O M H G B I S E Y I A Y W C S M C C
 C O P A T R I A R C H Y S E S S I D N R
 E P Y T I R O I T A R I P M E T N I G T
 S A C C E S S A E C A E P D U S I A Y I
 S F Q W E R T Y U I O P L K J H G F D S
 H Y O U T H K A G J E U W P E A C E B A
 C M E D I A P L H M Z X C V B N M Q W E
 G R O W T H R B V C L A J T P P O U Y T

Words to Find:

- | | | |
|----------------|-----------|-------------|
| PATRIARCHY | GENDER | CHANGE |
| ACCESS | AGENCY | POPULATION |
| YOUTH | GROWTH | SENSITIVITY |
| EQUALITY | CHOICE | PEACE |
| CARE | TOLERANCE | HEALTH |
| DISCRIMINATION | LAADLI | RIGHTS |
| MEDIA | | |

Population First

Volume 18



Laadli

Celebrate Her Life

An Initiative by Population First

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AMCHI

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