

## Jijabai Awardees 2013 – 14

### **Sabbah Haji (Education & Children)**



In Kashmir 3.2 percent villages have education facility at village level while the percentage is 11.1 in Jammu. Doda, Poonch and Udhampur are the backward districts in terms of education in Jammu. Human Rights Watch (2006, 13) states that 640 educational buildings have been destroyed since the conflict began in the region.

Sabbah Haji has set up Haji Public school in Breswana, a 10-hour drive from Jammu to Doda and then a five-hour trek across the mountains. From two rooms of her father Saleem Haji's home in May 2009, HPS today has its own building and nearly 200 children on its rolls, besides two branches, in Parsholla and Shadiwan. Sabbah raises funds through social media sites and invites volunteers to teach at her school that has seen no dropouts in the past five years. In this terror prone part of Kashmir Sabbah is nurturing hope.

### **Dr Laxmi Gautam (Social Welfare: Abandoned Widows)**



India has the largest recorded number of widows in the world—33 million (10 per cent of the female population, compared to only 3 per cent of men) . In Vrindavan alone, an estimated 10,000 widows

struggle to survive. Younger widows are forced into prostitution and older ones are left to beg and chant for alms from pilgrims and tourists.

Dr Laxmi Gautam, a professor, takes care of these widows, providing them with a warm meal, a blanket, takes care of their medical needs and provides them the much-needed emotional care. Over the years Dr Gautam has helped bury bodies of 100s of widows who no one wants to claim.

She has been awarded the 'Nari Shakti Puraskar' for the year 2015, by the President of India, Pranab Mukherjee, on the International Women's Day (March 8,2015) at Rashtrapati Bhawan.

**Usha Choudhary ( Women & Child: Child Marriages)**



Usha Choudhary, the co-founder of Vikalp Sansthan. Usha's adult life had been a tough battle against the society. Her parents decided to get her married when she was 13. She went against her family and broke her engagement which was struggle in itself.

She has stopped 450 child marriages in Rajasthan and has done outstanding work on stopping Child Marriage, Girl Child Rights and Violence Against Women.

**Laxmi(Acid Attack victim &Volunteer in Stop Acid Attacks Campaign)**



An acid attack on Laxmi in New Delhi's busy Khan Market back in 2005 led her family to lose all they had in a gradual turn of events. She was only 16 then. Though unlike many other survivors of acid attacks, Laxmi got immediate help and treatment, her family ended up losing all their finances and resources on her treatment and their fight for justice.

Laxmi also filed a PIL in the Supreme Court urging for regulation on sale of acid in 2006. In her plea, she had sought framing of a new law or amendment to the existing criminal laws like IPC, Indian Evidence Act and CrPC for dealing with the offence, besides asking for compensation.

It is because of the efforts of Laxmi that the plight and struggle of acid victim has come to the fore. Laxmi desires that sale of 'acid' in shops should be immediately banned. Her struggle forced government to rethink on this issue in totality. New clause has been added to IPC which deals with acid attacks.

In March 2014, US First Lady Michelle Obama felicitated Laxmi after she won the International Women of Courage Award for successfully leading the campaign against acid attacks on women in India.

### **Manju Singhanian & Jo McGowan(Health & Disability):Dehradun, Uttarakhand**



In a region where even basic healthcare is a distant reality, Manju Singhanian and Jo McGowan Chopra are giving back.

The two friends started karuna Vihar, a centre for children with Cerebral Palsy, Autism and Down syndrome. Today this school is responsible for transforming more than 1500 lives.

They've also set up a vocational training college for the children who graduate from the school and an Early Intervention Centre at the Doon Hospital.

### Vimla Kaul(Education & Children):Delhi



For Vimla Kaul sitting at home was never an option. A visit to the Madanpur Khadar Village in Delhi in 1994 and Vimla knew she wanted to do something for the villagers. She started by teaching tailoring to the women in the village so that they could be financially independent. Vimla also noticed that there were children just whiling away their time in the streets. These children needed to be taught the basics before any school would give them admission. So she started a class for four to eight-year-olds in '96 with ten children. She also hired a teacher—a village girl who had learnt tailoring under her. By 1997 she was teaching almost 70 kids. Vimla Kaul also pushes for these kids to get admission in mainstream schools. 11 of her students have made it to the Sarvodaya School in the capital.

### Shobha Lal (Woman Empowerment And Economic Upliftment)



She has been working in the field of rural woman empowerment and economic upliftment for the past 3 decades. In this long ongoing journey of woman development she organised countless awareness camps for rural woman irrespective of any Govt. or NGO support.

She made these camps interactive by means of sharing success stories of women across the world, informed them about the latest surveys & news related to woman development and the schemes launched for their benefit (*old age pension, widow pension, kanyadan scheme, girl scholarship, ladli scheme, insurance schemes, girl education, special schemes for SC/ST & minorities*). she used her music

& poetry skills to make these sessions lively, involved them with indoor games, role plays, drawing, dance etc. which enabled me to change the mindset of thousands of rural woman who were trapped in pardha system and animal husbandry, making them aware of their own strengths and capabilities.