

And the nominees are...

Three finalists have been shortlisted for the award

HERE ARE the three finalists for the Social Entrepreneur Award for the year 2008. This is an initiative of the Nand and Jeet Khemka Foundation, Schwab Foundation in collaboration with UNDP and *Hindustan Times*.

One of them will win the award which is being announced on Friday.

PREMA GOPALAN – SWAYAM SHIKSHAN PRAYOG

Swayam Shikshan Prayog was founded by Prema Gopalan in 1990 to enable rural women to set up their own businesses in partnership with private corporations. The organization has focused mostly on creating rural retail businesses for clean energy home appliances and bio-fuel, home groceries and rural health funds.

Working in only three states — Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu — the organization has created 1,820 women retail entrepreneurs with a total consumer base of 63,000 families and cumulative earnings of Rs 2.30 crore (as of 2008).

Gopalan's initiative has impacted 3,20,000 families in 1,000 villages of the states it has been working in.

"This nomination comes as recognition for the grass root's women," said Gopalan, adding, "that they have survived the disasters and emerged as key actors in building economic resilience that has truly impacted their economic opportunities, decision making in the local governance for health, water & sanitation, basic issues of survival."

BRIJ KOTHARI – PLANETREAD AND IIM AHMEDABAD

Using the simple tool of same language sub-titling on popular song-based programs on

television, PlanetRead helps promote functional literacy among an estimated 300 million 'literate' or 'neoliterate' in India who have attended primary schools but have weak reading and comprehension skills.

Same Language Subtitling is the simple action of inserting subtitles on TV or video programs in the 'same' language as the audio. This helps people sharpen their ability to read and comprehend without having to go through some torturous learning process. It makes learning fun.

"I am very humbled at being short listed as a finalist," Kothari said, adding, "being a part of this group is a great honor for me."

ARBIND SINGH – NIDAN

NIDAN is developing sustainable businesses, cooperatives, trade unions and 'people's institutions' led by the informal urban poor in Bihar. The organization has promoted 20 independent ventures that are governed and owned through shares by the most-excluded categories of the urban poor. These enterprises are extremely flexible, offering workers a wide range of options. For example, the National Alliance of Street Vendors, a member-based, multi-tiered organization covers 20 states and serves as a platform for vendors to negotiate services in the mainstream economy and solicit business.

Beginning in 1995, Singh now has 11 offices covering almost the whole of Bihar.

"Recognition of this nature (being shortlisted for the award) may also influence entrepreneurs who have abandoned Bihar to come back," Singh said.

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