WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT FELLOWSHIP

India's first Fellowship for Women in Politics

January 2023 - June 2023
Femme First Foundation is a non-partisan, non-profit organisation committed to amplifying women’s leadership in Indian politics through capacity-building, mentorship, and advocacy. Our aim is not limited to increasing women’s representation but also to enhance the quality of their representation.

**Vision:** A world where leaders are truly representative of the people they lead.

**Mission:** We seek to amplify leadership of women in Indian politics through the following ways:

- Make politics an attractive career option
- Reduce entry-barriers
- Enhance the quality of representation
- Build a network of women politicians
- Amplify impact
It gives me immense pleasure to announce the next batch of India’s first fellowship for women in politics. If you are wondering why do we offer a fellowship exclusively for women politicians? Let me share my story.

Having faced racism throughout my life, I have always aspired to create a world where nobody’s voice will be suppressed because of their identity. As a 20-year-old, I entered politics, believing it to be the best way to change the status quo. After two election victories within months, I was elevated to national politics. For five years, I lived and breathed politics. It was a great learning curve.

But navigating the labyrinth of the political world is tough, especially for women. The political system is mired with sexism where women are denied opportunities, face tokenism, are trolled, and also subjected to physical and sexual violence often.

To push back and survive, I constantly endeavored to upskill and equip myself with new ideas and best practices of politicking. With no organization in India focusing on women politicians and no intra-party institutional support, it wasn’t easy. As a first-generation-woman in politics, I wish I had a mentor who could show me the ropes.

As a fellow at Vital Voices, an American NGO by Hillary Clinton, I was mentored by former women prime ministers and developed strong relationships with women politicians from across the globe. The intensive Public Narrative workshops by Prof Marshall Ganz at Harvard Kennedy School made me more aware about myself and in effect, about the people around me, instilling in me a stronger purpose and mission.

For a few years now, I’ve been reflecting on how to advance women’s participation in politics based on all that I have seen and experienced firsthand -- the good and the bad. Femme First Foundation is the result of that reflection and is fully committed to amplifying women’s leadership in Indian politics. Women in Government Fellowship is the organization’s flagship program and my own way of paying it forward. It is designed with the opportunities I got and wished more women had; and the opportunities I wished somebody had given me. I hope you’ll make the most of it.
India ranks 148 out of 193 countries in women’s representation in parliaments

In the Lower House of India’s bicameral Parliament, there are merely 14.3% women, which is significantly below the global average of 25.1%. The figure in State Legislative Assemblies is more dismal with an average of 8%

These figures are from 2019 Parliamentary elections, which demonstrate the largest number of women (78 out of 543 seats) represented in the Lok Sabha

Lack of representation translates to neglect of the needs of many sections in the society, especially women.
Women in Government Conclaves
This is an international platform that brings together political leaders with different party affiliations from across the world to discuss and share ideas on how to advance women’s participation in politics.

Gendered Leadership Course
A 6-week course that educates on how gender practices play out in everyday life. Learners understand the history and waves of feminism; concept of intersectionality; the need for mainstreaming gender in policy-making, and the importance of gendered leadership.

#WomenChangemakers in Governance
This was a campaign in collaboration with Twitter India to recognise and highlight women leaders in public office who have been adopting innovative approaches, specifically social media and Twitter, to make governance more accessible to the public during the pandemic.

Women in Government Awards
These awards recognize and celebrate women political leaders. With these awards, we aspire to highlight women politicians across various categories: Sarpanch, Corporator, MLA, and MP.
This is a 6-week course that educates on how gender practices play out in everyday life. Learners understand the history and waves of feminism; concept of intersectionality; the need for mainstreaming gender in policy-making, and the importance of gendered leadership. It has completed 6 cohorts.
The annual Women in Government Conclave started in New Delhi in 2019 and has completed four editions. The recent Conclave was held in Guwahati, Assam. The platform has hosted more than 70 political and thought leaders from across the world, including the Prime Minister of Peru, Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, Member of Parliaments, Ministers, and MLAs.
These awards recognize and celebrate women political leaders. With these awards we aspire to highlight women politicians across various categories: Sarpanch, Corporator, MLA, and MP.

**Winners of WIG Awards 2020**

- **Ms. Yamin Kidwai**, Winner of Outstanding Sarpanch
- **Ms. Divya Kumar**, Winner of Outstanding MP
- **Ms. Sowmya Reddy**, Winner of Outstanding MP
This was a campaign in collaboration with Twitter India in 2021 to recognise and highlight women leaders in public office who have been adopting innovative approaches, specifically social media and Twitter, to make governance more accessible to the public during the pandemic.
Women in Government Fellowship is a six-month program that seeks to enhance and improve the quality of political representation of women via capacity-building, training, and mentorship.

The objectives of the programme are -

- To equip with skills and strategic knowledge to effectively run for office, legislate, and govern
- To develop a deeper understanding of the nuances and challenges of the Indian democratic system and various political theories
- To gain exposure to policy-framing under renowned practitioners and domain-experts
- To be mentored directly by seasoned women politicians
- To build a network of women leaders, policy experts, and campaign professionals, draw upon shared knowledge, and exchange best practices
The three-pronged approach will:

- Provide academic & strategic grounding of democratic frameworks & policy-making
- Build fellows' personal brands through personalised Public Narrative trainings
- Up-skill with practical know-hows of electioneering & legislating
- Help learn the ropes directly from a mentor who is living the realities & tackling the challenges of being a woman in public life
- Access to a network of politicians and policy-makers
The fellowship will strengthen the candidate’s capacities and capabilities across the following:

### Electioneering
- Campaign Design and Management
- Entry & Advocacy in Politics
- Constituency and Stakeholder mapping
- Resource Mobilisation

### Politics & Policy
- Public Policy Analysis
- Gender Mainstreaming in Policy
- Constitutional frameworks
- Governance
- Legislation

### Personal Skills
- Public Narrative*
- Effective Communication using technology & media
- Intersectionality in Leadership

### Ideologies
- Political theories of Indian parties
- Theories & Waves of Feminism
- Styles of Leadership

*Public Narrative is an elaborate personalised training of every Fellow on their stories and storytelling as a leadership tool by Coaches from Harvard Kennedy School’s Public Narrative team

--> Individual mentorship by seasoned women politicians will happen in the final two months
The first cohort of the WIG Fellowship was launched in April 2021 with 18 women leaders from across the country, representing various political ideologies. They were selected from a pool of 150+ applicants. The Fellows underwent rigorous virtual learning sessions and workshops for a period of 6 months. They were personally mentored by seasoned women politicians on their respective career goals. Additionally, they also got to interact and learn from four women members of the Swedish Parliament.
FIRST COHORT: FACULTY & MENTORS*
(*alphabetically)

Aditi Parekh
PN Coach, Harvard Kennedy School

Amb Klas Molin
Ambassador
Embassy of Sweden

Anjali Rodrigues
PN Coach,
Harvard Kennedy School

Ankush Singh
Core Team,
Governance Collective

Annu Tandon
Former Lok Sabha MP

Camilla Hansén
MP, Green Party,
Sweden

Charu Pragya
National Media Panelist, BJP

Chakshu Roy
Head of outreach
PRS Legislative

Dr. Sasmit Patra
Rajya Sabha MP,
Biju Janata Dal

Dr. Shashi Tharoor
Lok Sabha MP,
Congress

Dr. Ujjaini Halim
Association for Democratic Reforms

Emilia Töyrä
MP, Social Democratic Party, Sweden

Johanna Silva Waki
Vice President,
EMILY’s List

Juhie Singh
Spokesperson,
Samajwadi Party

Karin Enström
MP, Moderate Party,
Sweden

Manira Alva
Vice President, Vital Voices
Margaret Alva  
Former Governor & Union Minister

Mukta Tilak  
MLA, BJP & former Mayor, Pune City

Pragya Tiwari  
Editor, Indian Policy Collective

Priyanka Chaturvedi  
Rajya Sabha MP, Shiv Sena

Prof. Harsh Pant  
International Relations, King’s College London

Prof. Marshall Ganz  
Senior Lecturer, Harvard Kennedy School

Prof. G Mohan Gopal  
Former VC, National Law School of India University

Prof. Rajeev Gowda  
Former Rajya Sabha MP, Congress

Shivani Kumar  
Advocacy professional

Sushmita Dev  
Member of Parliament, TMC

Tanvi Girotra  
PN Coach, Harvard Kennedy School

Tina Acketoft  
MP, Liberal Party Sweden

Vandika Shukla  
Democratic Governance and Innovation Fellow, Harvard Ash Centre

*FELLOWSHIP FACULTY & MENTORS*  
(*)alphabetically)

Harvard Kennedy School  
EMILY’S LIST  
Embassy of Sweden  
New Delhi
Women who have contested election at any level i.e college, university, RWA, local govt, MLA etc
Women in nominated political party positions for at least 3 months
Women who have worked in civil-society/media/policy organisations for at least 12 months
Women who are/were LAMP/Acumen/Gandhi/Teach for India Fellows and aspire to join politics
Must be an Indian Citizen

If you don’t fit in any of the above but think you deserve a seat, write to us at contact@femmefirst.org

Eligibility criteria:

- Women who have **contested election at any level** i.e college, university, RWA, local govt, MLA etc
- Women in **nominated political party positions** for at least 3 months
- Women who have **worked in civil-society/media/policy organisations** for at least 12 months
- Women who are/were **LAMP/Acumen/Gandhi/Teach for India** Fellows and aspire to join politics
- Must be an Indian Citizen

**Intake will be on the lines of the previous cohort.**

Though the overall program cost is INR 2 lakh/person, we are charging a discounted nominal fee of INR 35,000/- only. However, financial constraint should not be an obstacle for application. Admission fee waivers (up to 100% scholarship) are available on merit-cum-means basis.

Application form available on: [https://www.femmefirst.org/](https://www.femmefirst.org/)
After attending the sessions, my whole point of view about affirmative action policies has changed. This is a change that I can see in me. I am thankful to this course for giving me clarity on feminism as well.

I joined the fellowship purely because of the faculty. I think this journey has been more special because of the fellows. The day I see the fellows contesting for elections even if they are from the opposing party, as sisterhood, I will vote for them.

I was always a staunch advocate of women in politics. But I think the conditioning of the fellowship has made me so much more active about it, that now in every discussion I am talking about more women running for office, more women in politics.

Through this program, my self confidence has increased a lot. Everyone believes that I can do everything, but I also needed a lot of support, which I found in this program.
My confidence has increased a lot during these classes. Now, I don’t accept wrong. What is wrong is wrong whether I am speaking to a senior, or junior, whether I cry or laugh while putting forth my point. I will definitely not accept the wrong. My self-respect has become my priority.

All thanks to Public Narrative Sessions, I am a better story-teller now. I am more confident of sharing my story and in a very good manner. I just have to say that there are many strong and amazing women, like me, and we are going to change this world, super soon.
PAST SPEAKERS AT FFF EVENTS

Violeta Bermudez  
Former PM, Peru (2020-2021)

Shri. Bhuspesh Bhegel  
Hon. CM, Chhatisgarh

Abhinandita Dayal Mathur  
Advisor, Govt. of Delhi

Adirana Hinojosa  
Former MP, Mexico

Aditi Singh  
MLA, Rae Bareli

Anjana Meghwal  
Zila Parishad Member, Jaisalmer

Archana Verma, IAS  
Principal Secretary, Govt. of Assam

Arunima Sen Chaturvedi  
Development Consultant & Ex-UNDP, UN Women, World Bank

Brinda Karat  
Former MP, Rajya Sabha

Chitra Ahanthem  
Senior Journalist, Manipur

Colette Avital  
Former Israeli MP & First woman in Israel to run for the presidency

Dr. M S Lakshmi Priya IAS  
Deputy Commissioner of Bongaigaon

Dr. Rosie Kalita APS  
Superintendent of Police, (Chief Minister’s Special Vigilance Cell)

Fleur Hassan-Nahoum  
Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, Israel

Isata Kabia  
Former Minister of Social Welfare, Gender, Children’s Affairs; Government of Sierra Leone

Jothisani  
MP, Lok Sabha

Juhie Singh  
National President, Samajwadi Party Women’s Wing

Karma Paljor  
Editor in Chief, EastMojo

Karpum Pegu  
Entrepreneur

Lalitha Kumarmangalam  
BJP leader & Former Chair, National Commission for Women

Makepeace Sithou  
Journalist

Nazia Erum  
Author

Nishtha Gautam,  
Opinion Editor – The Quint

Oana Bizgan,  
MP, Romania

Padmaja Joshi  
Editor, Times Now
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Former Governor & Union Minister

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Samajwadi Party member & Former Lok Sabha MP

Ms. Charu Pragya
Spokesperson, BJP

Dr. Sasmit Patra
Rajya Sabha MP & Spokesperson, Biju Janata dal
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