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Foreword

Much has changed in India in the 15 years since the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation was established. There is undoubtedly enhanced economic prosperity. However, there is also much continuing deprivation, as India's poor human development indicators reveal. In a country of India's size, the scale of our challenges is too great to be met by government alone.

John Kenneth Galbraith rightly warned of the perils of private affluence and public squalor. At a time when India's economy is picking up speed and there is visibly greater private wealth, it is all the more important to work for the welfare of those who remain marginalized. Individually and as a society, we must learn to care more and to give more. Only then will the ethic of social responsibility take firm root.

It was to nurture this ethic that the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation came into being, dedicated to the well-being of the poor, the handicapped and the many deprived sections of our society. It seeks to keep alive Rajivji's values and vision and to contribute in a modest way towards the creation of a more just society. From small beginnings, the work of the Foundation has gradually expanded. The scope of its activities is now nation-wide. Its programmes are both humanitarian and developmental and try to fill some critical gaps.

Terrorism is much in the news, but its victims are all-too-quickly forgotten. It gives me much satisfaction that the Foundation has been a pioneer in offering sustained help to the many children who are orphaned by terrorist violence in different parts of the country, bringing them back from trauma and grief to resilient well-being. It has promoted an extensive chain of village and slum libraries in 21 states, giving village children and first generation learners access to much-needed reading material beyond their textbooks. Through programmes of teacher education and child-friendly buildings, it is trying to improve the quality of education in government schools. Its motorized tri Wheeler awards confer independence and mobility on the disabled, opening up a whole new world of opportunity to them. In recent years, in response to the growing water crisis, rainwater harvesting has been undertaken on a significant scale in Rajasthan. More than 200 anicuts have been built with a very high level of community support.

A new item on the Foundation's agenda is the cause of sanitation and the promotion of a leadership role for women designed to make sanitation programmes more effective. Sanitation and clean water are critical if India's health indicators are to improve. Women must become the prime agents of sanitation change.

I am conscious that while the demands are enormous, our resources are severely limited. Whatever the Foundation has done has only been possible through the generous financial support of individual and corporate donors and its many well-wishers. I thank them warmly for their continuing support, as well as our partner organizations and our staff for what they have achieved.



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Chairperson