

# Education for LIFE

*Renuka and Nisha Jagtiani, 55 and 27,  
Indian, co-founders LIFE Trust*

HARPER'S BAZAAR: IS THE PHILOSOPHY WOMEN FOR WOMEN INTERNATIONAL HAS OF WOMEN MENTORING AND SUPPORTING OTHER WOMEN ONE THAT RESONATES IN YOUR LIFE?

**RENUKA JAGTIANI:** Yes, I have been fortunate to have been a mentor, as well as be mentored by several people who have greatly influenced me in my personal and professional life. My greatest female mentor has been my mother, for whom self-development never stopped even after age 70. A friend and a woman I admire is Poonam Lalvani, a managing trustee and co-founder of Landmark International Foundation for Empowerment (LIFE Trust). She has taken the vision my husband Micky, chairman of Landmark Group, had of empowering people and created an institution. I believe my key role as vice chairperson of Landmark is mentoring people, encouraging them to challenge themselves to be entrepreneurs of tomorrow.

**NISHA JAGTIANI:** Luckily I've been part of a family where women have been considered on the same platform as men. I watched how my mum started a business and flourished. Consequently, my sister Aarti and I have followed down a similar path. Women have the ability to influence their children's values and therefore empowering women is the best catalyst for change.

**HB: WHAT APPEALS TO YOU ABOUT WOMEN FOR WOMEN INTERNATIONAL?**

**RJ:** It is difficult enough for women to break through age-old gender barriers, it is all the more difficult for women in war-torn regions. This is what makes this initiative so appealing, as it reaches out to help these women. Secondly, the approach adopted by Women for Women International 'one woman at a time' is commendable, this has a ripple effect which grows beyond the immediate.

**HB: IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU TO TAKE PART IN CHARITY PROJECTS AND GIVE SOMETHING BACK?**

**RJ:** Yes, I feel it is more and more important to

give back to society. Therefore, I have started involving myself not only with LIFE Trust but also two other initiatives Landmark has started. In Bengaluru, India, we are launching a Retail & Hospitality school to train young individuals with modest backgrounds to develop successful careers for themselves. This is to realise my husband's dream of empowering five million people to aspire to a better tomorrow. In the Middle East, our initiative is focused towards the society at large and is aimed at raising awareness regarding the growing incidence of diabetes, through the Beat Diabetes Initiative. **NJ:** Completely, however I feel giving back comes in different ways. Fortunately, a couple of years ago I travelled around India and met several people who have devoted their life to helping others. I learnt one very simple life lesson: it's really not important how much you give, it is about understanding what people need and knowing how to give it with the right feeling.

**HB: PLEASE TELL US ABOUT LIFE TRUST**

**RJ:** Micky [Jagtiani] and Poonam [Lalvani] founded LIFE Trust in 2000, in Chennai, India, as a home for destitute children. Today, the Trust has grown to become a full fledged NGO, with a primary focus on educating and empowering children and women. LIFE Trust is a dynamic, non-political, secular foundation that works in collaboration with the government to introduce various programmes at the school and pre-school level in order to improve the quality and accountability of the education system for under-privileged children.

The Trust also works extensively for the empowerment of women. For example, we conduct meetings for adolescent girls from the slums of Mumbai to motivate and counsel them on their career choices, education, the development of leadership qualities and to encourage them to garner self-respect and be aware of gender biases. In Anganwadi, India, we provide training for over 3,500 teachers in early childcare, health and nutrition, and we teach different types of handicraft. The LIFE Trust has also put in place a skills and development training scheme for adolescent girls and women living in the vicinity to make them self-reliant and help increase their confidence. Mothers at the Anganwadi care centre are also given regular training on domestic violence and the laws that are present to protect them against it.

**HB: HOW DOES THE CHARITY SPEAK TO YOU PERSONALLY?**

**RJ:** Twenty-five children, who have been groomed and educated with boarding and lodging in LIFE orphanages, have excelled in academics, sports and other extra curricular activities. It is very satisfying to learn that these children, who we started supporting 11 years ago, will soon be completing their education and have become self-reliant. ▶

To find out more about LIFE Trust, visit [Landmarkgroupme.com/social-responsibilitylife](http://Landmarkgroupme.com/social-responsibilitylife)



Angela's daughter, Margherita, wears Missoni's Women for Women T-shirt

## ANGELA MISSONI creative director, Missoni

**HB: IS THE WOMEN FOR WOMEN INTERNATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF MENTORING AND SUPPORTING OTHER WOMEN ONE THAT RESONATES WITH YOU?**

**AM:** Definitely. We have a very strong female thread in our family and company. We're very supporting and never envious of each other. It's as if each one of us was spontaneously mentored by the previous generations so that the essence of Missoni would be passed along.

**HB: HAVE THERE BEEN ANY WOMEN THAT HAVE MENTORED YOU?**

**AM:** Obviously my mother and my grandmother. I've always been surrounded by inspiring women growing up, but no one had the mentoring role that my grandmother had on me.

**HB: IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU AND YOUR LABEL TO DO CHARITY PROJECTS AND GIVE SOMETHING BACK?**

**AM:** It's important that each one of us uses their tools to bring attention and funds to charity causes we believe in. We work in fashion, hence the most natural thing for us to do is to take advantage of our product and of the media exposure we can create.

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PEOPLE TO BECOME  
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TOMORROW"**

*Renuka Jagtiani*



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