

Concept Note: AIWEFA Nina Sibal Memorial Award – Women in Distress Category

The All India Women's Education Fund Association (AIWEFA) has administered the AIWEFA Nina Sibal Memorial Award since 2003, recognizing innovative and exceptional organizational work for children with disabilities. The award has been instituted by Shri Kapil Sibal, Senior Advocate and Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha), in memory of his late wife, Smt Nina Sibal. It carries a grant of ₹10 lakhs, along with a trophy and a citation.

This year, AIWEFA expands the scope of the award to include a dedicated focus on **Women in Distress**, acknowledging organizations working with women facing acute social, economic, and psychological vulnerabilities. These women often experience exclusion, lack of access to basic rights, and limited support systems, requiring targeted interventions for protection, rehabilitation, and empowerment.

Under this category, the award will recognize impactful work across the following areas:

1. Abandoned and widowed women and elderly women without social support

Women who are widowed, deserted, or rejected by their families experience acute social and economic vulnerability. Often lacking property rights, income security, and emotional support, they face isolation, stigma, and increased risk of exploitation. Their marginalization is intensified in patriarchal contexts where identity and security are tied to marital status. Older women, particularly those without family support or financial security, often face social neglect, health challenges, and economic dependency, making them highly vulnerable to isolation and inadequate care.

2. Survivors of Violence, Abuse, and Trafficking

This category includes women and girls affected by domestic violence, child abuse, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking. These survivors face long-term physical, psychological, and social consequences, often compounded by lack of legal awareness, stigma, and inadequate rehabilitation systems. Addressing their needs requires integrated legal, psychosocial, and economic support mechanisms.

3. Women with Disabilities (Physical, Mental, and Emotional)

Women with disabilities experience compounded discrimination due to both gender and disability. They face barriers in education, employment, mobility, healthcare, and social participation. Many are at higher risk of neglect, abuse, and exclusion, with limited access to assistive services and inclusive infrastructure.

4. Transgender

Transgender women face systemic exclusion, including family rejection, limited livelihood opportunities, and discrimination in healthcare and public services. Despite legal recognition, social stigma and lack of institutional support continue to push many into precarious living conditions, making targeted interventions essential.

5. Economically Vulnerable & Migrant Women

Women engaged in informal, low-paid, and insecure work—including migrant labourers—face multiple layers of deprivation. Migration often results in loss of social support, unsafe living conditions, wage exploitation, and limited access to healthcare, childcare, and social protection. These women remain largely invisible in policy systems despite being central to urban and rural economies.