2026-2027 WomenLeaders India Fellowship Application FAQs

1 What is the WomenLeaders India Fellowship?

The WomenLeaders India Fellowship powered by Reliance Foundation invests in extraordinary women leaders to drive an ambitious, urgent agenda for women's leadership in India and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Launched in 2022 and implemented together with technical partner Vital Voices Global Partnership, the Fellowship has since empowered 100 exceptional Indian women leaders in the social sector with the knowledge, skills, and network necessary to spearhead transformational changes in society. Through leadership development workshops, mentorship opportunities, and industry exposure, the programme helps social sector leaders and social entrepreneurs to refine their vision, build their capacity, and accelerate their impact. Six months after graduating, the large majority had grown their leadership confidence, strengthened their work, made concrete changes to their organisations, and grown their SDG projects.

In 2026–2027 (Cohort 3), the Fellowship aims to support another 50 Indian women leaders who are addressing urgent economic and social issues across four key thematic areas:

- Women's Empowerment & Economic Agency — advancing gender equality, economic mobility, leadership, and digital inclusion for women and girls.
- Children's Well-Being & Foundational Learning — supporting early learning, health, nutrition, protection, and foundational outcomes for children.
- Youth Development, Education & Skills for the Future — enabling future-ready skills, employability, entrepreneurship, and leadership pathways for young people.
- Agriculture, Rural Livelihoods & Climate-Resilient Communities — promoting climate-smart agriculture, rural livelihoods, technology-enabled solutions, and improved market access for farmers and rural communities.

Under these thematic areas, Fellows will be divided into two professional-development tracks based on their experience: Social Sector Leaders and Social Entrepreneurs.

1. SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS: refers to women founders or co-founders who hold key decision-making authority and own or hold at least 50% equity in a social enterprise—whether for-profit or not-for-profit—that uses entrepreneurial models to address social impact challenges aligned with the fellowship's thematic areas.
2. SOCIAL SECTOR LEADERS: Women leaders and executives (i.e. CEO, president, executive director, vice-president, etc.) who hold significant decision-making or leadership roles within non-profit, for-profit, civil society, or philanthropic organisations and who drive community-centred programmes, influence, or systems change efforts aligned with the fellowship's thematic areas.

What will I receive?

- Two (2) webinars per month extending over an 8-month period, focused on leadership development, foundational content areas, and track-specific customized training sessions
- Ten (10) leadership circles over a 10-month period, focused on peer discussion, alumni connection, and resource sharing based on thematic areas and needs of the cohort
- Five (5) 1-on-1 mentoring sessions spreading across the 8-month period
- Monthly peer group meetings based on similar SDG impact projects and thematic areas, self-hosted on the Vital Voices Hub
- Two (2) in-person convenings at the beginning and end of the Fellowship in India, including a selective showcase of your SDG/social impact project during the final convening
- Access to supportive services such as tools and resources, visibility and mentorship opportunities through the Vital Voices Global Network
- Access to the Vital Voices Community Hub, a global online leadership and networking platform, for leaders in Vital Voices to share and obtain resources and support, and effectively collaborate and communicate with one another.

2 Who can apply?

Applicants who meet the general criteria AND additional track-based criteria are eligible to apply. Please see the general criteria below and follow the chart to assess your eligibility and the track you should apply to.

General criteria:

- Identify as a woman and be an Indian national currently residing and working in India.
- Have at least five years of experience leading or contributing to initiatives aligned with one or more of the fellowship's thematic areas:
  1. Women's Empowerment & Economic Agency
  2. Children's Well-Being & Foundational Learning
  3. Youth Development, Education & Skills for the Future
  4. Agriculture, Rural Livelihoods & Climate-Resilient Communities
- Demonstrate a commitment to advancing the SDGs through innovation, partnerships, and where relevant technology- and AI-enabled approaches.
- Show leadership potential, a collaborative mindset, and readiness to apply learning to strengthen their organisation or initiative.
- Possess at least intermediate proficiency in written and spoken English.
- Not currently participating in or have recently graduated from another Vital Voices leadership programme within the past year.

Additional Criteria for Social Entrepreneurs

- Applicants must be entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs, or key decision-makers at a qualifying business or social enterprise in one or more of the four thematic areas.
- Have demonstrated leadership and key decision-making authority within their business, social enterprise, or initiative, and show high potential for future leadership development.
- Have demonstrated impact and a commitment to incorporating innovative solutions within their business or social enterprise.
- The social enterprise should be based in India, should employ at least 3 full-time staff (or the part-time equivalent), and should have been in operation for at least 5 years at the time of application

Additional Criteria for Social Sector Leaders track

- Applicants must be spearheading programmes at development-sector / non-profit / for-profit/ civil-society organisations in one or more of the four thematic areas.
- Have demonstrated leadership and key decision-making authority within their organisation and show high potential for future leadership development.
- Have demonstrated impact and a commitment to incorporating innovative solutions within their organisation.
- Have a track record of at least 5 years carrying out activities in the thematic areas listed above at the time of application.
- The organisation must be registered with the Government of India as a foundation, trust, non-profit organisation, for-profit, or a Section 8 Company (erstwhile Section 25 Company) under the Companies Act 2013, with a track record of at least five years carrying out activities in the areas listed above at the time of application.

3 Do I have to be a fluent English speaker to participate?

In order to take advantage of all the training, learning, and collaboration opportunities the programme has to offer, applicants must demonstrate a minimum of an intermediate level of English speaking, writing, and listening skills to participate in the programme.

4 How long will my application take?

The application takes approximately 45-60 minutes to complete, including time to answer all essay questions thoroughly and uploading a video.

Thematic Track Eligibility

Do you meet all the general requirements?

No → You are not eligible for the programme at this time

Yes ↓

Do you have leadership and key decision-making authority within non-profit, for-profit, civil society, or philanthropic organisations and who drive community-centred programmes, influence, or systems change efforts aligned with the fellowship's thematic areas?

Yes ↓

You should apply for the Social Sector Leaders track

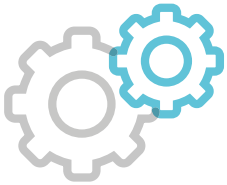


No ↑

Are you a female founder or co-founder who holds key decision-making authority and own or hold at least 50% equity in a social enterprise—whether for-profit or not-for-profit—that uses entrepreneurial models to address social impact challenges aligned with the fellowship's thematic areas. ?

Yes ↓

You should apply for the Social Entrepreneurs track



5 Can I save my application and return to it?

When you start your application, please click the "Save and Continue Later" box that appears at the top right corner of the page and enter your email address. You will receive an email with a personal link that you can use to return to your application at any time. Be sure to save your work as soon as you begin your application to ensure a prompt automated email from noreply@alchemer.com.

If you cannot locate the email right away, please check your junk or spam folders. We recommend you download your completed application at the end for reference and confirmation. For any questions, please contact WomenLeadersIndia@vitalvoices.org

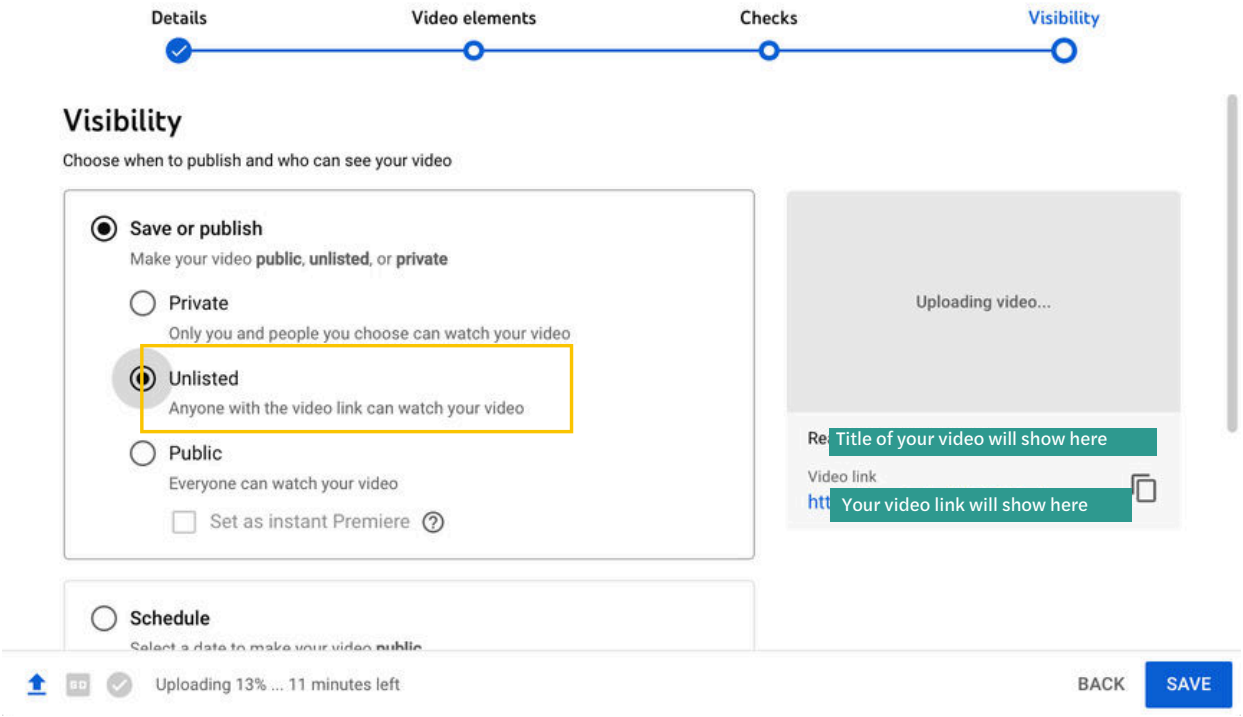
6 How can I upload a video link?

An unlisted YouTube link is recommended. Please see instructions and screenshot below:

1. Record your video on a smartphone or computer. Be sure to save the video to your computer.
2. Sign up for a free YouTube account.
3. In the top right-hand corner of the screen, click the video camera icon
4. Select "Upload Video"
5. Click "Select Files"
6. Select the video file you saved on your computer
7. Click "Open"
8. Add a title for your video that includes your name + WomenLeaders India Fellowship Application
9. Scroll down and click "No, it's not made for kids."
10. Along the top, far right, click "Visibility"
11. Select "Unlisted"
12. Click "Save"
13. Copy video URL and paste it onto your application.



Screenshot of YouTube Video Upload Page



7 Who can I contact if I have questions about the application?

If you have any questions or challenges with the survey, please email WomenLeadersIndia@vitalvoices.org with the subject line: 2026-2027 WomenLeaders India Fellowship Application (Cohort 3).

8 What happens after I apply?

Once all applications are received on 16 November 2026, they will undergo a thorough review process from Reliance Foundation and Vital Voices. Selected candidates will be notified by the second week of December 2026. All other candidates will be notified by the end of December 2026.