

## 1. Ramon Magsaysay Award 2025

Recently, Foundation to Educate Girls Globally (popularly known as Educate Girls) became the first Indian organisation to win the Ramon Magsaysay Award, Asia's most prestigious public service honour.

### Overview of the Ramon Magsaysay Award

**Asia's Nobel Prize** – The Ramon Magsaysay Award, established in 1957, is widely regarded as Asia's equivalent of the Nobel Prize, recognising outstanding individuals and organisations in Asia for their courage, integrity, and selfless service to society.

**Founding Background** – It was set up jointly by the Trustees of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (USA) and the Philippine Government to honour the legacy of the late Philippine President Ramon Magsaysay.

**Award Components** – Each awardee receives a medallion embossed with Magsaysay's image, a certificate of recognition, and a cash prize, symbolising the global respect associated with this honour.

**Award Ceremony** – The award is officially announced on August 31 (Magsaysay's birth anniversary), while the formal presentation ceremony is held in November in Manila, Philippines.

### Ramon Magsaysay Award 2025 – Current Awardees

**Educate Girls (India)** – Honoured for its transformative work in addressing cultural stereotyping, ensuring access to education for girls in rural areas, and empowering them with skills, courage, and agency to realise their full potential.

**Shaahina Ali (Maldives)** – Recognised as a grassroots environmentalist, dedicated to combating plastic pollution and raising awareness about sustainable practices in island communities.

**Flaviano Antonio L. Villanueva (Philippines)** – Awarded for his humanitarian efforts as a Catholic priest, providing psychosocial, spiritual, and livelihood support to families affected by extrajudicial killings in the Philippines.

### Indian Connection with the Ramon Magsaysay Award

**First Indian Recipient** – Acharya Vinoba Bhave, in 1958, for his leadership in the Bhoodan Movement, became the first Indian to receive the award.

**Other Notable Indian Laureates** – Over the years, Indians such as Arvind Kejriwal (anti-corruption activism), Ravish Kumar (journalism), Bezwada Wilson (eradication of manual scavenging), and Sonam Wangchuk (innovations in education and environment) have been recipients.

**India's Global Standing** – The award highlights India's strong tradition of grassroots leadership, social



reform, and people-centric innovation.

### About Educate Girls (India's 2025 Awardee)

**Founded in 2007** - Initiated by Safeena Husain in Rajasthan, Educate Girls was born out of the recognition that rural girls faced systemic educational exclusion.

**Mission** - To mobilise community participation and leverage government resources in order to bring out-of-school girls into classrooms and ensure their continued education.

**Core Motto** - "One girl at a time" - signifying a personalised, grassroots-oriented model of social change.

**Approach** - Identifies the most educationally backward communities. Enrols out-of-school girls and supports their reintegration into formal education. Ensures that these girls remain in school long enough to acquire foundational skills and opportunities for higher education or employability. Challenges deep-rooted cultural stereotypes that restrict girls' education.

**Impact** - Reached 30,000+ villages across India. Successfully re-enrolled more than 7 lakh girls in schools in Rajasthan and beyond. Positively impacted the learning outcomes of 2 million+ children. Built a grassroots volunteer network of 23,000+ "Team Balika" members, who act as change agents in their local communities.

#### Flagship Programmes -

1. **Vidya Programme** - Ensures enrolment of girls up to the age of 14 in schools.
2. **Pragati Programme** - Provides a second-chance education pathway through open schooling for young women aged 15-29 who earlier dropped out.

### About Ramon Magsaysay (1907-1957) - The Man Behind the Award

**Background** - Born in 1907, Magsaysay was the seventh President of the Philippines (1953-1957). He came from a humble background, the son of a blacksmith father and a teacher mother, and initially worked as an automobile mechanic.

**World War II Role** - Served as a guerrilla leader resisting Japanese occupation during the Pacific War (1941-1945), earning respect for his courage.

**Political Career** - Elected as a Congressman (1946-1950). Appointed Secretary of National Defence (1950), where he implemented reforms to fight communist insurgency. Became President in 1953, where he was celebrated for integrity, accessibility, and connecting governance with the ordinary people.

**Legacy** - Remembered as the "People's President" of the Philippines, who bridged the gap between government and citizens through humility and ethical governance.

**Death** - Tragically, he died in a plane crash in 1957 while still in office, leading to the establishment of the award in his memory.

Source - <https://www.newsonair.gov.in/educate-girls-ngo-wins-ramon-magsaysay-award-2025-becomes-first-indian-organisation-to-get-the-honour/>