

CHENNAI

Banyan co-founder gets global recognition

STAFF REPORTER

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Vandana Gopikumar, co-founder of The Banyan, the non-governmental organisation working with people with mental illness, was recognised as one of the Heroines of Health for the year 2021 by Women in Global Health (WGH), a US-based global network promoting gender equality in health leadership.

In a recorded speech delivered at an online event to honour the awardees, Ms. Gopikumar thanked WGH for creating a platform where women leadership can be displayed and discourses around how leadership needed to evolve could be constructed.

She highlighted the need for leadership that was empathetic, courageous, that used both the rational and emotional mind, transparent and showed integrity and intellectual humility to address the inequities and promote social justice.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organisation, who also delivered a recorded speech, said that recognition of healthcare workers cannot happen without recognising women. He said that though seven out of ten healthcare workers were women, they accounted for a smaller fraction in leadership roles.

He said that WHO was committed to promoting gender transformative policies to address inequities and eliminate gender-based discrimination.

Roopa Dhatt, executive director, WGH, said that sidelining of women in decision-making, made the health systems weaker.

She said that COVID-19 pandemic had shown that global health security depended on women. Women working in healthcare from countries like Ethiopia, Lebanon, Pakistan, Kenya, Panama, and Sierra Leone were among the six other women recognised as Heroines of Health for 2021.

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