



Media Release

**The 13th JRD Tata Memorial Oration
&
Pre-view of *Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon* Season 2**

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and UNFPA Executive Director, calls for keeping human rights, dignity and choice at the centre of development

MARD founder Farhan Akhtar has extended support to women's empowerment through tele series *Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon*

April 24, 2015, New Delhi: "Empower, educate, employ," said Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund. He was delivering the 13th JRD Tata Memorial Oration on *Dignity and Choice for Girls and Women in the Post 2015 Framework* organised by the Population Foundation of India (PFI).

"India is on the cusp of having a large working-age population with fewer dependents, providing a time-bound opportunity to reap a demographic dividend from their age structure," said Dr. Osotimehin. "But such a dividend will only be possible if the working age population – both men and women – have the good health, the training and the opportunities for secure employment."

Ms Poonam Muttreja, PFI Executive Director, said that the vision of JRD Tata, the founder chairman of the foundation, continues to inspire. "Forty five years ago JRD Tata had advocated increased access to voluntary family planning and the recognition of the centrality of women for the prosperity of the community. When he received the UN Population Award in 1992 he had said: *I have always believed that no real social change can occur in any society unless women are educated, self-reliant and respected. Woman is the critical fulcrum of family and community prosperity.*"

This idea was central to the making of the trans media serial, *Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon– I, a woman, can achieve anything*, launched by PFI last year. The serial was telecast on DD National, DD India (reaching around 30 countries) and DD Bihar. It was broadcast on 157 radio stations across the country through All India Radio.

A preview of Season Two of *Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon*— *I, a woman, can achieve anything*, was screened during the event. Season Two was launched on April 4, 2015 after a very successful 52-episode run last year. Scripted, produced and directed by the renowned director, Mr Feroz Abbas Khan, the show synthesises education and entertainment and takes a bold stance by challenging entrenched social norms on child marriage, early pregnancies, contraceptive use and sex selection, women's education, health and empowerment. The series aims to enhance knowledge, change behaviour and transform social norms on gender rights and young people's issues.

"When we at Population Foundation of India started working on the series, we had many expectations, many aspirations, and to be honest, many apprehensions too. Will people, both women and men, accept and appreciate what we are trying to do for the health and rights of women? The reply we got was that over 58 million people had watched the serial and there were over 6.25 lakh phone calls from viewers!" Ms Muttreja added.

Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon turned out to be one of the top three serials during the course of its telecast on Doordarshan in its timeslot. The Interactive Voice Response System data highlighted that the serial was liked by men and women alike, as 48% of the men and 52% of the women regularly watched the show. House listing from an independent evaluation showed that 42 percent of households with TV have watched the serial in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh despite having high penetration of DTH and Cable networks.

Ms Muttreja thanked Farhan Akhtar for his involvement and commitment to Season 2 of *Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon*. She said, "Men are often left out of the dialogue and public discourse – whether it is the way we address the issues or the way we program our interventions. We strongly believe that we must stop referring to sexual abuse, violence and even family planning as only women's issues for these are as much men's issues, society's issues, moral issues, ethical issues, and issues of social justice and human dignity. PFI and MARD will work closely to make gender equality and a life free from violence a reality for women across India."

The series has been supported by the Department for International Development, the UNFPA and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

In his vote of thanks, Dr Vinay Bharat-Ram, Chairman, Governing Board, said Dr Osotimehin's thought-provoking oration had enthused the gathering in doing their bit to ensure that women and girls are valued in our society.

About The JRD Tata Memorial Oration

The JRD Tata Memorial Oration organised periodically since 1995, commemorates the visionary founder of Population Foundation of India. International and Indian leaders and intellectuals are invited to focus on critical issues related to population. Dr Manmohan Singh, Mr Chandra Shekhar, Mr Ramakrishna Hedge, Dr Najma Heptulla, Mr I K Gujral, Dr Nitin Desai, Mr Somnath Chatterjee, Mr Digvijay Singh, Dr Nafis Sadik, Mr K C Pant and Prof Amartya Sen have been among those who have delivered the oration. The oration is followed by distinguished guests and experts raising important issues, which the speaker responds to, creating a lively discussion and a diffusion of ideas.

About Population Foundation of India

Population Foundation of India promotes gender-sensitive population and development policies. The organisation was founded in 1970 by a group of socially committed industrialists under the leadership of the late JRD Tata and the late Dr Bharat-Ram.

The thrust of PFI's work is to address population issues within the larger discourse of empowering women and men so that they are able to take decisions related to their lives, health and wellbeing.

PFI works with the government and like-minded NGOs to give men and women the knowledge and means to plan and raise healthy families.

The *Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon* series has been produced after extensive research by PFI and entertainment education expert, Dr Arvind Singhal.

What people have to say about *Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon*

Mr Feroz Abbas Khan, Creative Director of the series: *Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon* is not just a television series, it is entertainment with social responsibility... Through Season One, people realized that there was more to family planning methods than sterilization. And that prenatal care is necessary to ensure a healthy pregnancy. People were able to find the voice to protest against gender based violence and mobilize support... The story of *Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon* revolves around the inspiring journey of Dr Sneha who represents the young Indian woman of today, emotionally torn between family and society, professional aspirations and personal commitment. Her struggles and triumphs form the core of this memorable soap opera. It will make you laugh, it will make you cry, but it will also make you think. It is television like you've never seen before."

Ms Poonam Muttreja, Executive Director, PFI: "After we saw the way we managed to engage with the audience on social issues, we were encouraged to go in for Season Two. As the show is based on real issues unlike most other soap operas, the show has a realistic and relatable connect with the audience."

Ms Naina Lal Kidwai, Country Head, HSBC India: "I think to have a serial like this, very much in the style of what people are used to, but with subtle messaging and positive female role models, even as it surfaces issues that women face in the country, is a phenomenal idea. A thinking, articulate, intelligent, young doctor is a very interesting way of focusing on the issues. Through her we are seeing the dismay and the bad stuff, and also her ability to make change. I am actually surprised nobody thought of this before!"