

THEIRWORLD AWARDS 2017

London, Tuesday 7 March 2017, Today the humanitarian work of Syria's female White Helmets and pioneering Afghani sportswoman Khalida Popal were recognised at a special event hosted by children's charity Theirworld ahead of International Women's Day.

The awards were given as part of an International Women's Day breakfast to kickstart Theirworld's #RewritingTheCode campaign, which aims to draw attention to the obvious and less obvious attitudes preventing girls and women around the world from fulfilling their full potential.

Sarah Brown, President of Theirworld, said "Every year Theirworld presents awards to individuals who have made real transformations in their lives and work that inspire progress in transforming children's lives. This year we have two very special winners. Our Challenge award goes to Khalida Popal for her courage and efforts to empower women. Highlighting the issues females face by encouraging more girls and women to get involved in sport."

"Our second award to the White Helmets is recognising their everyday battles to save the lives of children and adults caught in the conflict in Syria. Whilst most times people think of the men of the white helmets rushing in to save lives, today we wanted to honour women, who have worked tirelessly and courageously" added Sarah Brown.

Two female members of The White Helmets accepted the Theirworld Hope 2017 award in honour of their courageous and life-saving missions in Syria. There are now 100 women volunteering for the White Helmets, who offer medical care, rebuild essential infrastructure and carry out search and rescue operations - all in the middle of a warzone.

Khalida Popal established eight women's football teams in Afghanistan in the 2000s, despite the Taliban banning women from participating in sport or attending matches. She became captain of Afghanistan's first national women's team in 2007 and continued to use her position to raise awareness of women's rights. She led the team in international tournaments and in the face of strong public opposition at home, where the team was forced to play behind closed doors on a NATO compound.

In 2011 the hostility towards the team was so strong that Khalida had to flee the country and seek asylum in Denmark. But her experience has strengthened her resolve to get more women and refugees into sport and she founded [Girl Power](#) in 2014. The non-profit, grassroots organisation aims to increase social participation and integration of women through sport and movement. She is also event director of the Afghanistan women's football committee

In the past Theirworld have given awards to Nobel Prize winner Kailash Satyarthi for his work in tackling child labour in India, to Shelley Esque and Holly Gordon for founding Girl Rising

campaigning for girls education and many of our courageous Global Youth Ambassadors around the world who campaign tirelessly for every child to be in school.

Support the #RewritingTheCode Campaign at theirworld.org/campaigns/rewritingthecode

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Notes to editors:

- About Theirworld: Theirworld is a children's charity that believes all children everywhere deserve the best start in life. We work for a future where all children are born safely, have a quality education and the chance to change the world. For more information go to www.theirworld.org