

THE VOYAGE

THEORY TO PRACTICE | VOLUNTEERISM TO PROFESSIONALISM



VOLUME VI ISSUE No. 33 | (October - December 2025)



SDGs IN ACTION

Mental Health - Youth Leadership - Community Care



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FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Rajeev Kumar, Editor-in-Chief, The VOYAGE

In this quarterly edition of The Voyage (Volume VI, Issue 33; October–December 2025), we spotlight SDG 3: Mental Health in Communities—Bridging Care and Equity Gaps, underscoring the importance of integrating mental health into primary and community care. During this quarter, Association of Professional Social Workers and Development Practitioners (APSWDP) organized a national-level workshop, formalized MoUs with five partners, and actively participated in UN platforms, alongside capacity building and advocacy efforts to advance inclusive well-being. We thank our newsletter readers for their continued trust, engagement, and support.

FROM THE EXPERTS' DESK:



Prof. Harminder Pal Singh, Chairperson, Department of Environment Studies, Panjab University

It has been a meaningful experience collaborating with the Association of Professional Social Workers & Development Practitioners in promoting youth engagement on environmental issues. The jointly conducted youth and environment event was impactful and well-coordinated, reflecting APSWDP's strong commitment to social and environmental responsibility. I extend my best wishes to APSWDP, a United Nations-affiliated organization, for continued success in empowering youth and advancing sustainable development initiatives.

Sh. Deepak Babbar, Executive Director, Mission Aagaaz; Member, Environment Committee; Swachhta Abhiyaan Ambassador.”

On behalf of MISSION AAGAAZ, I extend my heartiest congratulations to Association of Professional Social Workers and Development Practitioners (APSWDP). Your tireless dedication to environmental conservation and sustainable development is truly inspiring. Achieving United Nations affiliation is a monumental milestone that reflects your growing global impact. We commend your unwavering commitment to building a greener, more resilient future for all.



Real-Time Interventions



Composite Targeted Intervention (CTIP), Chandigarh – progress and outcomes

During the third quarter of 2025 APSWDP reinforced HIV prevention, community screening and capacity-building under its CTIP and LWS projects – combining institutional reviews, refresher trainings, targeted awareness drives and community health camps to strengthen prevention, reduce stigma and improve referral linkages at the grassroots level.

A Quarterly Review Meeting organised by the Chandigarh State AIDS Control Society (CSACS) on 31 October 2025 at Park View Hotel provided a platform for programme performance review and strategic planning. APSWDP representatives actively participated in discussions on data trends, outreach effectiveness, and operational challenges, enabling informed corrective actions and priority setting for the coming quarter.

To strengthen field-level capacity, APSWDP staff participated in a two-day Refresher Master Trainer Training (TOT) held on 6–7 November 2025 at Clarion Inn, Zirakpur.



The training focused on updated intervention strategies for HRGs associated with spa and massage parlours and web-based platforms. Key themes included ethical outreach, risk-reduction counselling, effective use of IEC tools, and engagement with hidden populations. The TOT reinforced a cascading training model to ensure uniformity and quality of outreach across intervention sites.

On 1 December 2025, APSWDP organised a Community Health Camp and World AIDS Day observance at New Indira Colony, Manimajra. The camp combined free medical check-ups, medicine distribution, and intensive awareness sessions on HIV prevention, testing, treatment adherence, and stigma reduction. Peer educators and outreach workers played a critical role in mobilising the community. A total of 85 beneficiaries accessed health and IEC services during the event, making it a significant outreach milestone for the quarter.



SDG 3 in Action – Good Health and Well-Being



Link Worker Scheme (LWS), Samrala, Ludhiana – outreach, training and district-level engagement



Training of Trainers (TOT) conducted in Chandigarh in August 2025. Subsequently, trained resource persons were deputed to Moga district, where they conducted sensitisation sessions on 13 and 30 September 2025. These sessions focused on the HIV/AIDS (Prevention and Control) Act, 2017, and targeted Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) members, ASHAs, and Anganwadi workers. The objective was to equip grassroots functionaries with legal awareness and communication skills to promote rights-based HIV responses within their communities.

Grassroots Outreach and Capacity Building

Under the Link Worker Scheme (LWS), APSWDP continued its grassroots HIV prevention and awareness efforts across Ludhiana district, with a strong focus on stigma reduction, legal literacy, and community mobilisation. Supported by the Punjab State AIDS Control Society (PSACS), the interventions targeted frontline workers, community stakeholders, and vulnerable populations. During September 2025, APSWDP-LWS organised seven HIV/AIDS awareness and sensitisation programmes across key locations in Ludhiana district, including Civil Hospital Samrala, Sidhwanbet (Jagraon), Khanna, Machhiwara Sahib, Dehlon, Gujjarwal, and Payal.

These sessions engaged health workers, community leaders, and local stakeholders, focusing on HIV prevention, early testing, treatment adherence, and the rights of People Living with HIV (PLHIV). The sessions promoted informed dialogue and helped challenge stigma at the community level. Building on capacity enhancement initiatives, APSWDP district resource persons participated in a PSACS-led



In addition, LWS teams continued organising Comprehensive Health and HIV Awareness & Testing Camps, integrating counselling, testing, and referral services. These outreach efforts aimed to promote early detection, reduce transmission, and ensure linkage to treatment and care services at the community level.



SDG 10 in Action - Reduced Inequalities



Youth and the Environment: Advancing Climate Adaptation and Mitigation through NGO Leadership



(Two-day National Workshop – 20-21 December 2025, Golden Jubilee Hall, Panjab University, Chandigarh)

APSWDP, in collaboration with Vishwa Yuvak Kendra and Panjab University's Environment Dept., hosted a two-day national workshop "Youth and the Environment: Advancing Climate Adaptation and Mitigation through NGO Leadership." Held at Panjab University (Chandigarh), the workshop drew 100+ delegates – including academics, policymakers, civil society leaders, and youth – for panel discussions and action-oriented sessions. Dr. Vivek Trivedi (APSWDP Founder) opened the event by emphasizing collaborative leadership and community-driven climate solutions. Chief Guest Shri Kamal Kishor Yadav (IAS) reminded participants that climate action is integral to sustainable development. Dr. Rajan Welukar (former Mumbai University VC) delivered the keynote, calling on universities to "transcend conventional classroom boundaries and become active partners in community-driven climate action".

Panels addressed five key themes: Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation; Renewable Energy Solutions; Waste Management & Circular Economy; Green Skills & Livelihoods; and Youth Leadership in NGOs. Six participatory working groups tackled topics from zero-waste campaigns to building NGO leadership skills. These interactive sessions produced actionable roadmaps – for example, Group 1 developed youth-led waste recycling initiatives, while Group 6 outlined training plans for small environmental NGOs.



SDG 10 in Action – Reduced Inequalities



Workshop Highlights and Outcomes:

- **Journal Release:** Unveiled the new APSWDP International Journal of Social Work & Sustainable Development (Vol. 2, Issue 2) showcasing research on climate and social impact.
- **MoUs Signed:** APSWDP signed 4 Memoranda of Understanding with partner NGOs from Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh, cementing future collaboration on sustainability projects.
- **Social Impact Awards:** Presented the “Rekha Trivedi Leadership in Social Impact Award 2025” to 10 NGOs (e.g. YouVAH HP, Yuganta Chandigarh, Mission Aagaz Punjab) and 4 youth changemakers (e.g. Nitika Singla, Jyoti, Devender Sura) for exemplary climate action.

- **Action Frameworks:** Participants drafted consensus frameworks linking national climate goals to community solutions. The event concluded with a Youth Action Plan for Sustainability, launching mentorship schemes and pilot projects to implement the workshop’s ideas.
- **Youth Action Plan for Sustainability:** APSWDP and VYK announced a time-bound follow-up to incubate selected group projects, provide mentorship, and facilitate micro-grants for pilots .
- **Policy recommendations:** Workshop recommendations called for institutionalising youth advisory roles, integrating climate and health policies, and accelerating green skills development across vocational systems – details synthesised in the policy brief .
- **Partnerships catalysed:** Four MoUs signed with regional civil society partners to scale joint pilots and training initiatives; APSWDP will provide technical mentorship and platform support .

Youth the Environment: Advancing Climate Adaptation and Mitigation through NGO Leadership

<p>Participants</p>  <p>100+ Delegates (Academics, Policymakers, NGO Leaders, Youth)</p>	<p>Panels</p>  <p>3 Expert Panel Discussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 Mitigation & Adaptation 🚨 Disaster Preparedness 🌱 Green Jobs 🌬️ Environment-Health-Clean Air 	<p>Awards</p>  <p>6 Thematic Groups (Produced Roadmaps)</p>
<p>Outputs</p>  <p>APSWDP International Journal of Social Work & Sustainable Development Vol. 2, Issue 2 – Formally Released</p>	<p>Working Groups</p>  <p>4 Memoranda of Understanding with CSOs from Himachal, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh</p>	<p>Rekha Trivedi Memorial Leadership in Social Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 NGOs + 4 Individual Changemakers Honored



APSWDP Signed MoUs with Five Civil Society Organizations from North India:

The Association of Professional Social Workers and Development Practitioners (APSWDP) marked a significant milestone on 21 December 2025 by signing Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with five civil society organizations from Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Chandigarh.

The organizations that entered into MoUs with APSWDP include:

- YouVAH (Youth for Voluntary Action in Himachal)
- Uttar Pradesh Voluntary Health Association (UPVHA)
- Balajee Sewa Sansthan (BSS)
- Dhauladhar Cleaners
- Global Youth Federation



Spotlight Feature Article



Mental Health in Communities: Bridging Care and Equity Gaps

-Dr Monica Munjal Singh, Chairperson

Centre for Social Work, Panjab University, Chandigarh

Introduction

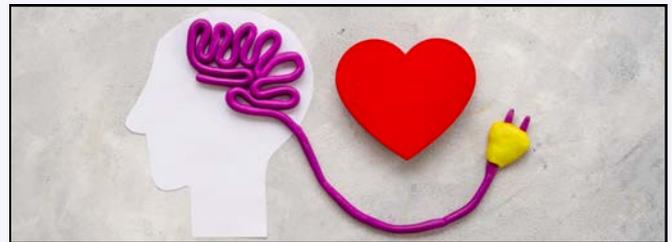
Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages is the third Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of the United Nations. Even while physical health outcomes have seen tremendous improvement, mental health is still a neglected aspect of overall wellbeing, especially at the community level. Mental health is a condition of well-being in which people can manage daily stressors, work effectively, and make significant contributions to their communities rather than only the absence of mental illness.

Mental Health as a Public Health Concern

Mental health issues like anxiety, depression, substance misuse, and stress-related disorders have become more prevalent in all demographics in recent years. Rapid urbanisation, unemployment, scholastic pressure, social isolation, and economic instability are some of the factors that have made mental health vulnerabilities worse. The COVID-19 epidemic revealed and exacerbated these issues, underscoring the precarious condition of mental health care systems, particularly in environments with limited resources.

• Inequalities in Mental Health Care

In India, there are significant disparities in access to mental health services. While hospitals, psychologists, and psychiatrists are more easily accessible in urban areas, there is a severe lack of facilities and qualified personnel in rural and isolated places. Many people are forced to rely on unofficial or unqualified providers of treatment due to economic restrictions that further limit access.



Social variables like poverty, gender inequality, caste discrimination, unemployment, unstable housing, and exposure to violence have a significant impact on mental health. Due to caring duties, domestic abuse, and a lack of autonomy, women frequently bear a disproportionate burden. Stress levels are higher among urban poor populations and migrant workers because of their precarious employment and lack of social support networks

• Nutrition, Hygiene, and Lifestyle Issues

Mental health results are strongly influenced by lifestyle factors, nutrition, and cleanliness. Food insecurity and malnutrition have an impact on stress management and mental health, while unsanitary housing conditions and poor sanitation lead to psychological anguish. Substance abuse, sleep deprivation, and physical inactivity are examples of unhealthy lifestyle choices that raise the likelihood of mental health issues, particularly in vulnerable populations, and exacerbate already-existing gaps in mental health care.

• Social and Cultural Barriers

One of the biggest barriers to getting treatment is still the stigma associated with mental illness. Mental health issues are frequently misinterpreted or linked to supernatural origins, fate, or moral weakness. People consequently put off or avoid seeking professional assistance, which exacerbates their problems and causes social marginalisation



Indian Context

Due to stigma, ignorance, and restricted access to mental health services, mental health issues are common in India yet are notably underreported. India, the most populous nation in the world, is characterised by a great deal of regional, cultural, and socioeconomic variety, which further influences mental health requirements and care accessibility. Mental health issues are more common in marginalised communities, women, children, the elderly, migrants, and rural populations. Mental health is a crucial area of concern under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 because, despite the increasing burden, it frequently receives little attention in policy planning and health service delivery.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Pathways Forward and Achieving SDG 3

Reducing Stigma and Building Awareness

Reducing stigma and promoting help-seeking behaviour can be achieved through community awareness campaigns, peer support groups, and the inclusion of mental health education in school curricula. Supportive environments for mental well-being can be created by involving civil society organisations, self-help groups, and local leaders.



Integrating Mental Health into Primary Care

To guarantee early detection, basic therapy, and prompt referrals at the community level, mental health services should be improved at primary health facilities and Health & Wellness facilities.

Increasing Community-Based Interventions

By raising awareness, conducting screenings, and providing ongoing community assistance, social workers, ASHA and Anganwadi workers, and community volunteers can help close care gaps. Ensuring Equitable Access for Vulnerable Groups By removing social obstacles and offering culturally responsive services, special attention must be given to women, children, migrants, the elderly, and marginalized populations.

Achieving SDG 3 requires moving beyond hospital-based care to inclusive, community-driven mental health systems that ensure well-being for all.



Encouraging Multi-Sectoral Collaboration

The socioeconomic determinants influencing mental health can be addressed through cooperation between health, education, social welfare, urban development, and civil society organisations.

Strengthening Policy Implementation

To attain equitable mental health coverage, programs like the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) and District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) must be implemented effectively.



Key Recommendation!

Although India's improved SDG ranking in 2025 is a start in the right direction, there are still significant gaps in nutrition and health. India has the risk of falling short of SDG 3 targets if high maternal and child mortality, low life expectancy, and expensive healthcare are not addressed. India can provide the groundwork for a stronger and healthier Viksit Bharat by 2047 by increasing universal health coverage, funding primary healthcare, utilizing digital health tools, and incorporating health teaching into schools.



“Health cannot be a question of income; it is a fundamental human right.”

— Nelson Mandela

Our Members at Glance

Profiles of our dedicated professionals



Mohammad Rajab
Development Professional

Mohammad Rajab is a social sector professional with 4+ years' experience in child protection, mental health, and community outreach under initiatives like Mission Vatsalya. Founder of PsychAwareness, a YouTube and Instagram platform with 122K+ subscribers, he creates SDG-aligned content promoting inclusion and capacity building. Skilled in counseling, digital outreach, and program coordination, he empowers youth and underserved communities through education, mentorship, and strategic social impact initiatives.

Chaitanya Gandhi is a technology and business professional with expertise in telecommunications and strategic management. Holding an MCA and MBA, he serves as Deputy General Manager at Vodafone Idea Limited, New Delhi, driving initiatives in digital solutions, operational efficiency, and stakeholder engagement. Skilled in project management, data analysis, and team leadership, he contributes to innovative business strategies, process optimization, and capacity building within the telecom sector.



Chaitanya Gandhi
Corporate Professional



Sweety Kumari
Public Sector Professional

Sweety Kumari is a government professional with a background in Arts, working as a Postal Assistant at the Department of Posts (India Post) under the Ministry of Communications, Government of India. Skilled in administrative operations, customer service, and organizational management, she contributes to efficient postal services and community outreach, supporting public access to essential communication and delivery services.

Navdeep Sharma is the General Manager – Sales at VRB Consumer Products Pvt Ltd (formerly known as Veeba). An MBA in Marketing and HR, he brings over 18 years of leadership experience in the FMCG sector. He is known for driving sales excellence, building high-performing teams, and strategic market expansion. Alongside his corporate journey, he is deeply committed to philanthropy, social work, and community empowerment, contributing through various impactful initiatives.



Navdeep Sharma
Business Professional

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3. Confirmation: You will receive a copy of your Profile Form via email for your records.

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Website: www.apswdp.org
E-mail: apswdp@gmail.com, Phone: +91 7087060356

“Lets come Together to Experience the Power of Ground-Based Social Impact.”



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By Scanning
The Qr Code**



Grassroots Leadership for a Sustainable India

“Real stories, real impact, straight from the ground.”

Introduction

Across India, sustainable development is increasingly being driven not only by policies and institutions, but by committed individuals and local governments who translate vision into action at the grassroots level. Environmental protection, women’s leadership, and community-driven governance are no longer abstract ideals but they are living realities shaped by people who lead through example.

This study highlights three inspiring case studies that demonstrate how individual commitment, women-led leadership, and responsive local governance can collectively advance environmental sustainability and social development. These stories—from Haryana, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh offer valuable lessons for practitioners, policymakers, and communities alike.

Case Study 1

The Tree Man of Haryana: Turning Duty into Environmental Devotion

In an era marked by ecological stress and climate anxiety, Police Constable Devender Sura, popularly known as the “Tree Man of Haryana,” stands out as a symbol of individual environmental stewardship. Over the last decade, he has planted more than two lakh trees in Sonipat district, transforming barren landscapes into green spaces and inspiring countless citizens. Devender Sura’s journey began in 2011 when he moved to Chandigarh and was deeply influenced by the city’s planned greenery. Motivated by the idea that environmental well-being is a collective responsibility, he returned to Sonipat with a clear vision: if one city could become green through systematic planning, the same model could be replicated elsewhere.

Starting in 2012, Sura initiated plantation drives with discipline and persistence. His work went beyond planting saplings; he actively raised awareness about tree



conservation, nurturing a sense of ownership among local residents. Over time, his efforts evolved into a community movement, with citizens joining hands to protect and sustain the green cover.

Recognizing his contribution, former Minister of State Darshana Jardosh described him as a **“champion of the environmental cause,”** emphasizing the power of individual leadership in addressing environmental challenges. Devender Sura’s work demonstrates how consistent grassroots action can create long-term ecological and social impact.

Case Study 2

Neeru Yadav - The 'Hockey Wali Sarpanch': Leadership, Empowerment, and Environment

Neeru Yadav, widely known as the “Hockey Wali Sarpanch,” represents a new generation of women leaders redefining rural governance in India. Elected as the youngest Sarpanch of Lambi Ahir village in Jhunjhunu district, Rajasthan, Neeru challenged entrenched gender norms and demonstrated how local leadership can become a catalyst for holistic development. Driven by her passion for hockey, Neeru established a women’s hockey team in her village, personally funding playgrounds, equipment, uniforms, and professional coaching from her own salary.



She organized inter-district and inter-state tournaments, enabling rural women to step beyond social constraints and embrace confidence, teamwork, and ambition. Her leadership extends far beyond sports. Neeru has actively promoted education, skill development, and women’s economic empowerment. Under the PMKVY scheme, she facilitated training for young women and supported their placement in multinational companies. Her commitment to farmers’ welfare led to her appointment as Chairperson of a Farmers Producer Organization (FPO) by NABARD. Equally significant is her environmental initiative “My Tree, My Friend,” aimed at fostering ecological consciousness within the community. Through tree plantation drives, awareness camps, and the involvement of children and youth, Neeru emphasized not only planting trees but nurturing them as a shared responsibility. Her innovative campaigns such as Garbage-Free Marriage Functions using steel utensils and converting food waste into manure reflect her integrated approach to sustainability.

Awarded the “Shiksha Shree” for her contributions, Neeru Yadav’s journey illustrates how passion, education, and perseverance can reshape rural development and inspire collective action.

Case Study 3

Thanedhar Panchayat: Strengthening Sustainability through Local Governance

The Thanedhar Panchayat in Himachal Pradesh offers a compelling example of how responsive local governance can promote environmental sustainability and improve community well-being. Recognizing the growing challenge of solid waste management, the Panchayat installed a garbage waste management plant, marking a significant step towards cleaner and healthier surroundings. The initiative has multiple benefits: it reduces pollution caused by open dumping and burning, improves sanitation, and creates opportunities for recycling and composting. By conserving resources and minimizing landfill dependence, the plant contributes directly to environmental protection and local economic development. Complementing this effort, the Panchayat invested in a Mahindra pickup vehicle, strengthening its operational capacity. The vehicle enables efficient garbage collection, supports multi-purpose developmental activities, and enhances service delivery. Cost-effective and durable, it has become a vital asset in ensuring timely and effective implementation of Panchayat responsibilities.



Together, these initiatives position Thanedhar Panchayat as a model of environmentally responsible, people-centric local governance, demonstrating how strategic investments can yield long-term social and ecological dividends.

Summary

These three case studies underscore a powerful truth: sustainable development is most effective when driven by local leadership, community participation, and ethical commitment. Whether through individual action, women-led governance, or Panchayat-level innovation, these examples show that meaningful change begins at the grassroots. As India advances towards its sustainable development goals, such stories serve as guiding lights—reminding us that empowered individuals and institutions can collectively build a greener, more inclusive, and resilient nation.

APSWDP at National and International Forums:



50 Leading Lights Asia Pacific 2025

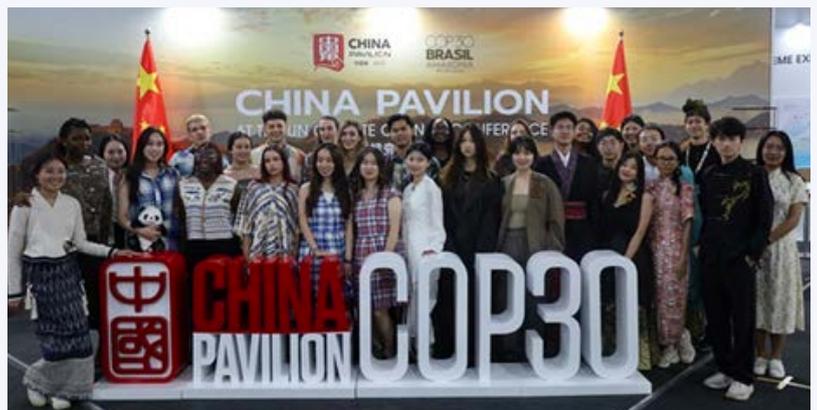
Dr. Vivek Trivedi Honored at Kindness & Leadership – 50 Leading Lights Asia Pacific 2025

Dr. Vivek Trivedi was recognized among the Kindness & Leadership – 50 Leading Lights Asia Pacific 2025 at The Eden, British High Commissioner’s Residence, Singapore. Engaging with global leaders from UNESCO, UNITAR, UNEP, UNFCCC, Oxfam, and GSEF, he celebrated the transformative power of kindness and compassionate leadership in driving resilient communities. This recognition builds on his sustained impact in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and youth advocacy, reinforcing his lifelong commitment to meaningful change.



APSWDP at COP30: Amplifying Youth and Community Voices from the Amazon

The Association of Professional Social Workers & Development Practitioners (APSWDP) marked a strong and diverse presence at COP30, held in Belém, Brazil, from 10 to 21 November 2025. through the active participation of youth and community representatives committed to climate justice, culture, and people-centered solutions.



Youth Voice and Activism: Caio Vilar Sousa

Caio Vilar Sousa represented APSWDP with accredited access to the Blue Zone. As a Youth Climate Ambassador, he leveraged audiovisual storytelling to document and “artivate” lived experiences from the Amazon—demonstrating how art and communication can bridge gaps that technical discourse often cannot.

He also advocated for the Icoaraci Climate Rights Charter, bringing grassroots realities into restricted negotiation spaces. Beyond formal sessions, Caio highlighted the power of informal exchanges in common areas, where young artists, communicators, and educators built strong global networks. His participation further extended to a sustainable fashion show organized by the Global Alliance of Universities on Climate, underscoring the intersections of climate action with culture, fashion, and art.



Inclusive Climate Action and Networking: Jessica Monteiro

Jessica Monteiro represented APSWDP with a focus on advancing inclusive climate action and strengthening community voices in global discussions. Her engagement centered on implementation, sustainability, and climate justice, reinforcing APSWDP’s commitment to people-centered climate solutions through collaboration and networking.



APSWDP



International Journal of Social Work And Sustainable Development (IJSWSD)

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Volume: 03 | Issue: 01 | Year: 2026 | ISSN: 3048-7811

Open Access, Double Blind Reviewed, Referred and Biannual Journal

A Publication of the

Association of Professional Social Workers and Development Practitioners (APSWDP), India

- Sustainable Development Goals ● HIV/AIDS ● Drug Addiction ● Family and Marriage ● Environment and Climate Change ● Demography ● Waste Management ● Child Rights ● Sustainability in Urban, Rural, Local and Global Development ● Social Enterprises and Entrepreneurship ● Urban Transportation ● Social Work and Related Fields ● Flagship Schemes of Government ● Eco-Tourism ● Agriculture, Food and Environment ● Social Policy and Public Policy ● Gender and Development ● Inequality, Mobility, and Stratification ● Disaster, Resilience and Emergencies ● Social (Corporate) Responsibility ● Public Administration ● International Relations and Non-Profit Management



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Key Timelines

Abstract Submission: 20 February 2026
Full Paper Submission: 31 March 2026
Review Process: 30 April 2026
Notification of Acceptance: 15 May 2026
Publication: 30 June 2026

For More Information

+91-7087060356 (WhatsApp)
Email: ijswsd.apswdp@gmail.com
Website: www.apswdp.org

© APSWDP INDIA | Price: Nil | Subject: Multidisciplinary | Frequency: Quarterly | Language: English | Published by: APSWDP INDIA | Published at: c/o Ananat Enterprise, 782/15, Khalsa Market Complex, Opposite Community Centre, Manimajra, Sector-13, Chandigarh - 160011, India

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1. Young Professional - NITI Aayog (Govt. of India)

- Eligibility: Master's degree (any discipline) + minimum 1 year relevant experience
- Salary: ₹70,000 per month (approx.)
- Nature: Contractual | High exposure with Government of India
- Last Date: Rolling / Rotational basis

Apply: <https://workforbharat.niti.gov.in/join-niti-aayog/>

2. Mukherjee Fellowship (1-Year Fellowship Program)

- Eligibility: Bachelor's degree (completed or pursuing)
- Experience: Not mandatory
- Duration: 1 Year
- Stipend: ₹50,000 per month
- Last Date: 1 February 2026

Apply: <https://mukherjee.ppgf.in/faq>

3. Research Intern - Low Carbon Economy Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW)

- Eligibility: Graduates / Postgraduates with interest in climate, energy & policy
- Nature: Paid Research Internship
- Last Date: Rolling / Rotational basis

Apply: <https://www.ceew.in/careers/research-intern-low-carbon-economy>

4. SSA Consultant (Additional Team Leader) World Food Programme

- Eligibility: Master's degree)
- Experience: 1 year
- Location: Lucknow, India
- Stipend: ₹1,15,000 to ₹1,19,000 per month
- Last Date: 29th January 2026

Apply: https://wd3.myworkdaysite.com/en-US/recruiting/wfp/job_openings/details/SSA-Consultant--Additional-Team-Leader--JR119656

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C/o Ananat Enterprise, 782/15, Khalsa Market Complex, Opposite Community Centre, Manimajra, Sector-13, Chandigarh-160011
Website: www.apswdp.org, E-mail: apswdp@gmail.com, Phone: +91 7087060356



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