

THE VOYAGE

THEORY TO PRACTICE | VOLUNTEERISM TO PROFESSIONALISM



VOLUME VII ISSUE No. 34 | (January-March 2026)

AIDSCON - 14

...wards AIDS Free World

7th February 2026

SDGs IN ACTION

Empowering Women, Empowering India



FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Rajeev Kumar, Editor-in-Chief, The VOYAGE

In this quarterly edition of The Voyage (Volume VII, Issue 34; January-March 2026), we spotlight “Empowering Women, Empowering India: Redefining Progress Through Inclusive Development and the Spirit of ‘Give to Gain,’” emphasizing gender equality, collective responsibility, and inclusive growth. During this period, APSWDP observed World Social Work Day virtually and actively engaged in various United Nations forums. These efforts, alongside capacity-building and advocacy initiatives, have strengthened community resilience and promoted inclusive well-being. We sincerely thank our readers for their continued trust, engagement, and valuable support throughout this journey.

FROM THE EXPERTS’ DESK:



**Awadhesh Kumar
Executive Director, Balajee Sewa Sansthan**

It is a privilege to be associated with APSWDP, an organization holding observer status with various UN agencies and making significant contributions in the field of environmental sustainability. My participation in the National Workshop on Youth and Environment at Chandigarh was a truly enriching experience. We are pleased to have a formal MoU with APSWDP, enabling us to collaboratively work towards shared social development agendas and create meaningful, lasting impact within communities through a unified vision.

**Ambrish Kumar, Managing Trustee
SSSSC Trust, Sri Sathya Sai Educare Vidya Pratishthan**

On behalf of MISSION AAGAAZ, I extend my heartfelt 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.



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Inspiring Thought: We rise by lifting others.”

— Robert Ingersoll

Real-Time Interventions

During the fourth quarter of 2025–2026, APSWDP convened a plenary session at AIDSCON 2026 and commemorated World Social Work Day 2026 through a virtual platform. The organization conducted two online sensitization programmes focusing on (i) Social Defence Issues and (ii) Rehabilitation of Persons Engaged in Begging. In addition, APSWDP strengthened its efforts in HIV prevention, community screening, and capacity-building under its CTIP and LWS projects. These initiatives integrated institutional reviews, refresher trainings, targeted awareness campaigns, and community health camps—aimed at enhancing prevention strategies, reducing stigma, and improving referral linkages at the grassroots level.

Breaking Barriers in HIV Care: APSWDP Panel at AIDSCON 2026

On 27th February 2026, from 2:30 PM to 3:30 PM, APSWDP India organized an insightful panel discussion on “Breaking Barriers in HIV Care for Special Populations” at AIDSCON 2026. The session was moderated by Mr. Rajeev Kumar and chaired by Dr. Vivek Trivedi, Social Development Officer, Municipal Corporation Chandigarh. The panel featured eminent speakers including Dr. Sumit Arora, President, APSWDP India; Dr. P. V. M. Laxmi, Professor, School of Public Health, PGIMER Chandigarh; Adv. Gautam Bhardwaj, Advocate, Punjab & Haryana High Court and Dr. Amit Agarwal, Project Lead, Department of Telemedicine, PGIMER Chandigarh.

The discussion highlighted structural barriers, stigma, legal challenges, and service gaps affecting MSM, FSW, transgender persons, migrants, and adolescents. Panelists emphasized community engagement, digital



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26th – 27th, February 2026 | Chandigarh

NACO
National AIDS Control Organisation

nar, APSWDP

a, President, APSWDP

ni, Professor, Dept. of Community Medicine & SPH,

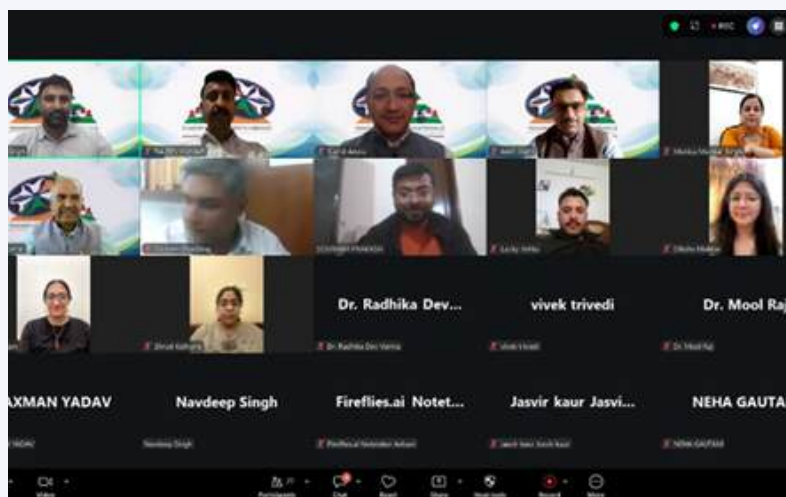
Bhardwaj, Advocate, Punjab & Haryana High Court

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EX... ER Chandigarh



Commemorating World Social Work Day 2026: Voices United for Hope and Harmony



The Association of Professional Social Workers and Development Practitioners (APSWDP) commemorated World Social Work Day 2026 on 22 March 2026 through a virtual event, aligning with the global theme “Co-Building Hope and Harmony: A Harambee Call to Unite a Divided Society.” The programme provided a dynamic platform for dialogue, knowledge sharing, and reflection on pressing social issues, while reinforcing the values of social justice, human dignity, and collective responsibility.

Strengthening Social Defence & Inclusive Rehabilitation: Virtual Awareness Initiatives

In February 2026, the Association of Professional Social Workers and Development Practitioners (APSWDP), in collaboration with the National Institute of Social Defence and Crime Control & Social Development Organization, successfully organized two Virtual Awareness Programmes addressing critical social defence concerns.

The first session, held on 13 February 2026, focused on Social Defence Issues, aiming to deepen understanding of social protection systems, human rights frameworks, access to justice, and inclusive development practices. It brought together students, professionals, and civil society members for meaningful dialogue on policy mechanisms and community-based solutions. The second session, conducted on 14 February 2026, highlighted the Rehabilitation of Persons Engaged in the Act of Begging, emphasizing humane, rights-based approaches that promote dignity, inclusion, and sustainable empowerment.

The event featured distinguished experts who shared rich field-based insights. Rajeev Choudhary emphasized intergenerational solidarity, highlighting community-based models that foster mutual learning and social cohesion. Amit Joshi focused on strengthening capacity building through continuous, practice-oriented training and grassroots engagement. Dr. Mool Raj Verma discussed inclusive urban development, advocating for participatory planning to address diverse generational needs. Dr. Monica Munjal Singh underlined the importance of mental health and psychosocial support in crisis situations, stressing culturally sensitive and community-based approaches. Dr. Sumit Arora highlighted social work as a catalyst for gender equality and social justice through advocacy, empowerment, and policy engagement.



Both sessions, conducted via Google Meet, witnessed active participation and reinforced APSWDP's commitment to advancing inclusive, rights-based social development.

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

APSWDP celebrated the 77th Republic Day of India with great enthusiasm and a strong sense of social responsibility at New Indira Colony Gurudwara, near Shiv Kheda Mandir, Manimajra, Chandigarh. The event was graced by Chief Guest Kavita Rawat Project Director, CTIP & Founder CCSDO, whose presence added significance to the occasion. The celebration reflected the spirit of patriotism and community service, bringing together community members and individuals from high-risk groups to honour the nation's democratic values.



Quarterly TI Review-cum-Orientation Meeting



The Quarterly Targeted Intervention (TI) Review-cum-Orientation Meeting was convened under the guidance of the Project Director, Chandigarh State AIDS Control Society (SACS), and was effectively moderated by the Deputy Director (Prevention). The meeting was held at Park View Hotel, Sector 23, Chandigarh.

The session focused on a comprehensive review of programmatic, financial, and operational performance of all TI projects and Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST) centres for the quarter ending December 2025. It served as a vital platform for assessing progress, addressing implementation challenges, and strengthening strategies to enhance the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS prevention initiatives under Chandigarh SACS.

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

APSWDP's LWS project enhanced community healthcare outreach across seven villages by organizing health awareness and check-up camps. A total of 218 individuals received OPD services, while 168 underwent HIV testing, all results being non-reactive. Medical Officers, CHOs, and Link Workers ensured quality service delivery, recording vital health parameters and focusing on high-risk groups. The initiative strengthened early detection, promoted awareness, and improved access to essential healthcare services in underserved rural communities.



Spotlight Feature Article

Empowering Women, Empowering India: Redefining Progress Through Inclusive Development and the Spirit of “Give to Gain”

-Dr. Rajeev Kumar

RGNIYD, Regional Centre, Chandigarh

The idea of “Empowering Women, Empowering India” has evolved into a central pillar of national development, reflecting the understanding that sustainable progress cannot be achieved without ensuring gender equality. Women’s empowerment is not merely a social objective but a multidimensional process encompassing economic independence, educational access, political participation, and social dignity. In India, this transformation has been guided by a comprehensive policy framework and institutional mechanisms designed to uplift women across all sections of society. The initiatives led by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, as highlighted in the 2025 Press Information Bureau report, represent a significant step towards redefining women’s empowerment through an integrated and inclusive approach. In this evolving discourse, the theme of International Women’s Day 2026 “Give to Gain” adds a powerful ethical dimension, emphasizing that meaningful empowerment begins with collective contribution.



Visibility challenges traditional norms that often marginalize women and highlight their role as agents of change. Similarly, giving credit where it is due ensures that women’s efforts are acknowledged, fostering confidence and motivation. Recognition not only empowers individuals but also inspires others to pursue their aspirations.

Education and knowledge are powerful tools of empowerment, making it essential to give knowledge through formal and informal means. Initiatives such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao have demonstrated how education can transform lives by improving gender parity and promoting awareness. Beyond formal education, providing workshops, training, and mentoring opportunities enables women to acquire skills and build capacities necessary for personal and professional growth. Giving mentoring and role models creates pathways for guidance and inspiration, helping women navigate challenges and achieve their goals.

Economic empowerment requires deliberate efforts to give opportunities, funding, and resources. Access to financial support, such as through the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, enables women to establish enterprises and achieve independence. Providing budget allocations and sponsorship opportunities further strengthens their ability to participate in economic activities. Giving equal pay for equal work is a fundamental aspect of economic justice, ensuring that women receive fair compensation and recognition for their contributions.

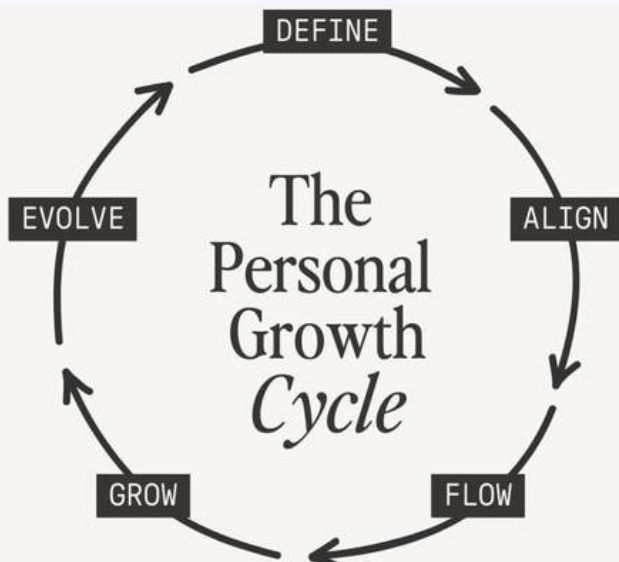
When women are given access to financial resources and opportunities, they become active contributors to economic growth and development.

“Give to Gain”

The philosophy of “Give to Gain” is rooted in the idea that progress is reciprocal. When individuals, institutions, and communities contribute selflessly—whether through support, opportunities, or recognition—they create an ecosystem where women can thrive. Giving, in this context, is not limited to material contributions but extends to respect, dignity, knowledge, and opportunity. It is a worldwide call to action that encourages people to give from the heart, recognizing that empowering women ultimately strengthens families, communities, and the nation as a whole.

Empowerment begins with the fundamental principle of giving respect. Respect forms the foundation of gender equality and influences how women are perceived and treated in society. When respect is embedded in social interactions at home, workplaces, and communities, it dismantles stereotypes and creates a culture of inclusion. Alongside respect, giving a voice to women is equally essential. Women must be encouraged to express their opinions, participate in decision-making processes, and contribute to public discourse without fear or hesitation. This aligns with democratic ideals and ensures that development policies are inclusive and representative.

The importance of giving visibility cannot be overstated in the context of empowerment. Women’s achievements, contributions, and leadership must be recognized and celebrated across all sectors.



The principle of giving access extends beyond financial resources to include access to education, healthcare, technology, and institutional support. The government's initiatives, such as Mission Shakti, reflect this approach by creating systems that ensure women's safety, security, and empowerment. One Stop Centres have assisted over 10.61 lakh women, providing integrated services ranging from medical aid to legal support. Similarly, the Women Helpline (181-WHL) offers immediate assistance to women in distress, demonstrating the importance of giving protection and safety. These measures ensure that women have the necessary support systems to overcome challenges and lead secure lives.

Health and well-being are critical components of empowerment, making it essential to give care, protection, and time to women's needs. The implementation of Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 have significantly improved access to nutrition and healthcare services for women and children. With nearly 9.88 crore beneficiaries and extensive infrastructure support, this initiative highlights the importance of sustained investment in health. The decline in the Maternal Mortality Ratio from 130 to 97 per lakh live births reflects the positive impact of such interventions. Giving time, attention, and care to women's health not only improves individual well-being but also strengthens the overall health of the nation.

Justice and equality form the backbone of empowerment, emphasizing the need to give justice and truth in all spheres of life. Initiatives like Nari Adalat provide accessible platforms for grievance redressal, ensuring that women can seek justice in a fair and timely manner. Legal awareness and institutional support are essential in protecting women's rights and addressing issues such as discrimination and violence. Giving truth also implies transparency and accountability in governance, ensuring that policies are effectively implemented and benefits reach the intended recipients.

At the community level, empowerment is strengthened by giving introductions, networking opportunities, and platforms for collaboration. Social capital plays a crucial role in enabling women to access opportunities and build connections. Providing stretch assignments and leadership roles allows women to demonstrate their capabilities and gain confidence. These experiences contribute to professional growth and create a pipeline of future leaders.

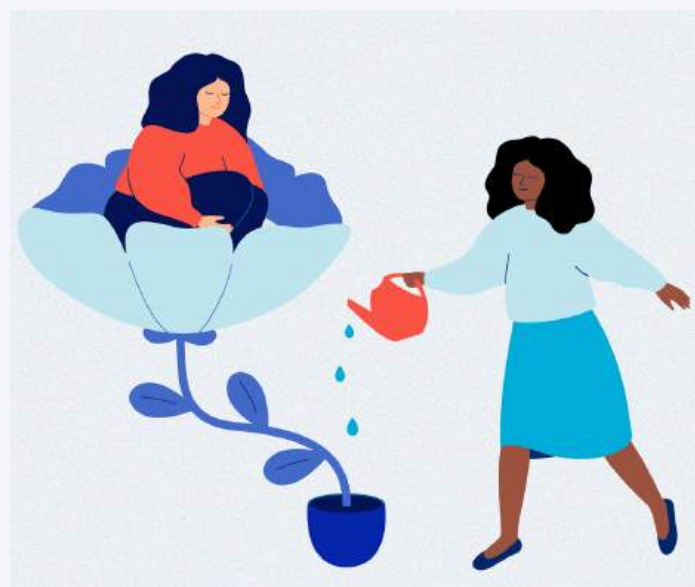
At the community level, empowerment is strengthened by giving introductions, networking opportunities, and platforms for collaboration. Social capital plays a crucial role in enabling women to access opportunities and build connections. Providing stretch assignments and leadership roles allows women to demonstrate their capabilities and gain confidence. These experiences contribute to professional growth and create a pipeline of future leaders.



The concept of giving celebration is equally important, as it recognizes and honours women’s achievements. Celebrating success stories not only boosts morale but also challenges societal norms that undervalue women’s contributions. Giving momentum to women’s initiatives ensures continuity and sustainability, enabling long-term impact. This momentum is further reinforced by creating an environment that supports growth, innovation, and resilience.

The socio-economic impact of such a comprehensive approach to empowerment is profound. When women are empowered, they contribute significantly to economic productivity, social development, and community well-being. They invest in education, health, and the future of their families, creating a ripple effect that benefits society as a whole. The integration of policies, programs, and community efforts demonstrates that empowerment is a collective responsibility that requires active participation from all stakeholders.

Despite the progress made, challenges such as gender-based discrimination, wage inequality, and limited access to opportunities persist. Addressing these challenges requires sustained efforts, including policy reforms, awareness campaigns, and cultural transformation. The “Give to Gain” philosophy provides a practical framework for overcoming these barriers by encouraging individuals and institutions to actively contribute to women’s empowerment.



In conclusion, the vision of “Empowering Women, Empowering India” is deeply interconnected with the spirit of “Give to Gain.” Empowerment is not achieved in isolation but through collective efforts that prioritize equality, inclusion, and justice. By giving respect, opportunities, knowledge, resources, and support, society can create an environment where women can thrive and realize their full potential. The initiatives undertaken by the government, combined with the active participation of communities, demonstrate a strong commitment to this vision. As India continues its journey towards inclusive development, the empowerment of women will remain a cornerstone of progress, proving that when we give to women, we ultimately gain as a nation.



Our Members at Glance

Profiles of our dedicated professionals



Prof. Rajan Welukar
Academician

Dr. Rajan Welukar is a distinguished academician, author, and former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mumbai, with decades of experience in higher education and public administration. Known for his visionary leadership, he has played a pivotal role in strengthening academic systems, promoting research, and enhancing institutional governance. Dr. Welukar has contributed extensively to educational reforms, curriculum development, and policy advocacy in India. An accomplished writer and speaker, he has authored several books and articles reflecting his deep interest in literature, culture, and societal development. His work often bridges academia and public discourse, making complex ideas accessible to a wider audience. Dr. Welukar continues to inspire students, educators, and policymakers through his lectures and engagements at national and international forums. His contributions to education and literature make him a respected voice in India's intellectual and academic landscape.

Dr. Arun Kumar Aggarwal is a distinguished public health expert with over three decades of experience in community medicine. He serves as Professor and Head of Community Medicine and the School of Public Health at PGIMER, Chandigarh. Holding an MD in Preventive and Social Medicine and a DNB in Hospital Administration, he combines clinical and administrative expertise. He has held key leadership roles at PGIMER and contributed to national bodies such as NHSRC and PHFI. His work focuses on health systems strengthening, implementation research, and quality of care. He has played a key role in developing Child Death Review guidelines and advancing IMNCI practices internationally. Dr. Aggarwal is the founder of AHSAS and Chief Editor of a leading health systems journal, with over 200 publications. He has received several prestigious fellowships, reflecting his significant contributions to public health.



Prof. Arun Kumar Aggarwal
Public Health Expert



Kavita Rawat
Philanthropist & Social
Activist

Kavita Rawat is founder of Crime Control and Social Development Organisation (CCSDO) and a dedicated professional committed to advancing inclusivity and empowerment through sports and social initiatives. With extensive experience in promoting adaptive sports, she has played a pivotal role in advocating for equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. As the President of the Wheelchair Cricket Federation of India, she leads efforts to develop and popularize wheelchair cricket across the country, fostering talent and building competitive platforms. Her work emphasizes community engagement, capacity building, and policy advocacy to strengthen grassroots participation. Known for her leadership and vision, Kavita continues to inspire change by bridging gaps between sports, accessibility, and social development, contributing significantly to the growth of inclusive sports in India and empowering individuals to achieve their full potential.

Advocate Aman Yadav holds a B.Sc. degree and a background in law. He is an entrepreneur managing a crockery distribution business, with strong organizational and community engagement skills. Actively involved in social service, he contributed to COVID-19 relief efforts through food distribution and support for the underprivileged. As an APSWDP member, he is committed to humanitarian work, grassroots development, and creating a positive community impact.



Advocate Aman Yadav
Business Professional

Grassroots Leadership for a Sustainable India

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

Introduction

These case studies highlight two innovative sustainability models in Punjab—regenerative agriculture through the Grow Indigo “Aadi Project” and the Model Solar Village Initiative in Ghudani Kalan. Both initiatives address climate change while improving rural livelihoods. They demonstrate how integrating environmental sustainability with economic incentives can create scalable solutions. Together, they offer replicable pathways for a low-carbon and resilient rural economy.

Case Study 1

Regenerative Agriculture Carbon Credit Project: A Case Study of Punjab and Haryana (Grow Indigo “Aadi Project”)

Regenerative agriculture has emerged as a transformative solution to address environmental degradation and climate change while ensuring agricultural sustainability. In India, Punjab and Haryana—historically known for their high agricultural productivity—have experienced significant ecological stress due to decades of intensive farming practices introduced during the Green Revolution. Excessive use of chemical fertilizers, over-irrigation, monocropping, and stubble burning have led to declining soil health, groundwater depletion, and increased greenhouse gas emissions. In this context, the Grow Indigo “Aadi Project” represents an innovative approach that combines sustainable agriculture with carbon credit mechanisms to restore ecological balance and enhance farmers’ income. The project promotes climate-smart agricultural practices such as no-till or reduced tillage, direct seeded rice (DSR), crop residue management without burning, and the use of cover crops. These practices help reduce soil disturbance, improve soil organic matter, and



enhance microbial activity, thereby increasing the soil’s capacity to sequester carbon. Improved soil health not only reduces emissions but also enhances crop productivity and resilience to climate variability.

Aadi Project uses methods to measure carbon sequestration. Baseline soil data is collected, and MRV systems track changes. Verified increases are converted into carbon credits, where one credit equals one tonne of CO₂ stored.



The project aggregates carbon credits from sustainable farming and sells them in global markets, generating additional income for farmers. This incentivizes regenerative practices by reducing risks and costs. It improves soil health, reduces emissions, lowers input expenses, and raises awareness about climate-smart agriculture through collaboration among farmers and experts. The Grow Indigo Aadi Project shows farmers can become climate champions with support and incentives. Blending sustainability with income, it turns challenges into opportunities and makes agriculture a powerful solution.

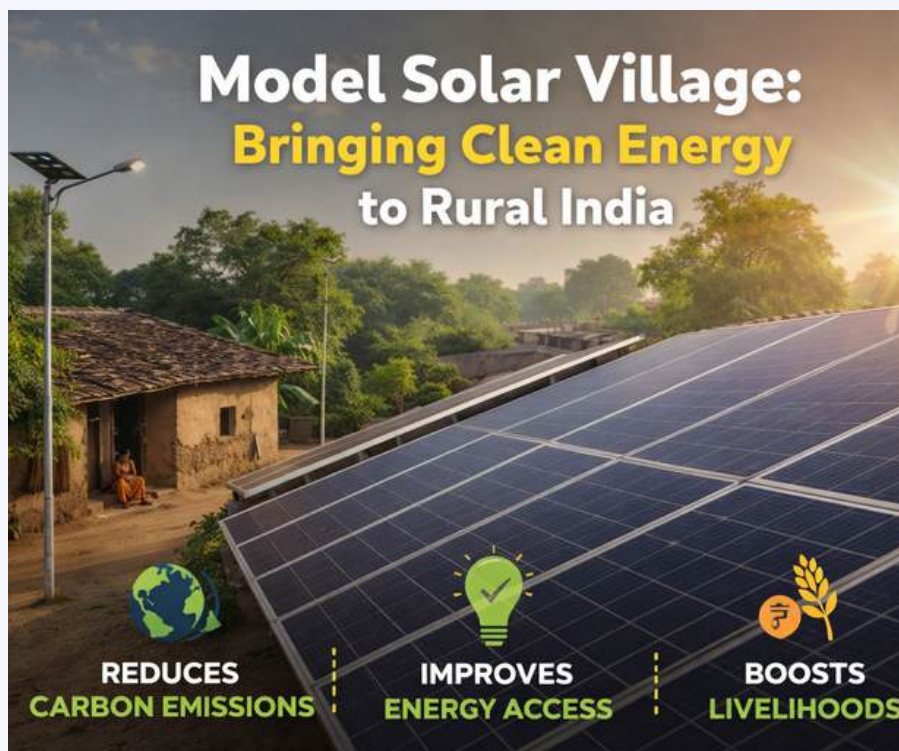


Case Study 2

Model Solar Village Initiative: A Case Study of Ghudani Kalan

The Model Solar Village Initiative in Ghudani Kalan, located in Ludhiana district of Punjab, exemplifies how renewable energy can drive sustainable rural development. With rising energy demands, erratic electricity supply, and increasing environmental concerns, the need for clean and reliable energy solutions has become critical. This initiative promotes decentralized solar energy systems to create a self-sufficient and environmentally sustainable rural community.

The program focuses on the widespread adoption of solar technologies at household and community levels. Rooftop solar photovoltaic (PV) systems have been installed in homes, schools, and public buildings, enabling local electricity generation. Solar-powered street lights have improved safety and reduced dependence on grid electricity. Importantly, solar-powered irrigation pumps have replaced diesel-based systems, providing farmers with a cost-effective and reliable energy source.



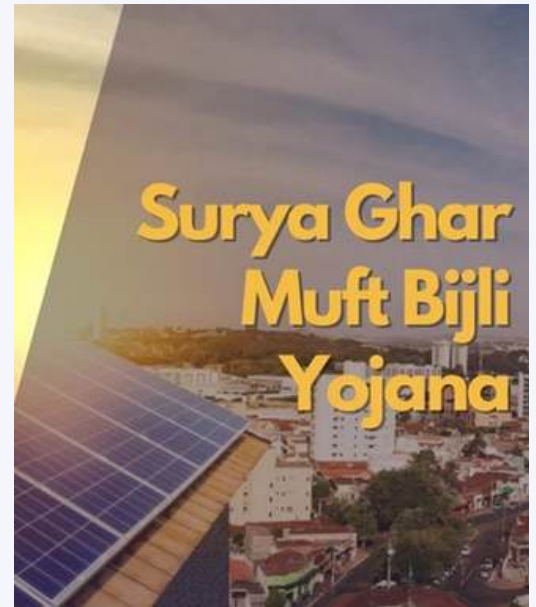
The initiative's success is rooted in its collaborative approach. It involves government agencies, private sector partners, and active community participation. Support from the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has played a key role by providing subsidies, financial assistance, and policy backing. Awareness campaigns and training programs have further empowered villagers to adopt and maintain solar technologies effectively.

Environmentally, the initiative has reduced carbon emissions by replacing fossil fuel-based energy sources with clean solar power. It also strengthens energy security by reducing dependence on external energy supplies. The potential integration of carbon credit mechanisms could further enhance its impact by generating additional income streams for the community.

Despite its achievements, the initiative faces certain challenges. High initial installation costs, even with subsidies, can limit adoption among some households. Maintenance and technical support are essential for long-term sustainability, but limited local expertise can create operational issues. Effective integration with existing energy systems also requires careful planning and management.

To address these challenges, continued policy support, investment in skill development, and strengthening of local technical capacities are necessary. Public-private partnerships and integration with broader rural development programs can further enhance scalability and sustainability.

In conclusion, the Model Solar Village Initiative in Ghudani Kalan illustrates the transformative potential of renewable energy in rural settings. By improving energy access, reducing environmental impact, and enhancing livelihoods, it provides a replicable model for sustainable rural development. When combined with supportive policies and community engagement, such initiatives can significantly contribute to India's transition toward a low-carbon and resilient future.



APSWDP at National and International Forums:

Youth as Change Architects: Future-Proof Nudges for Sustainable Shifts



The Department of Management Studies (DoMS) hosted an insightful seminar on March 30, 2026, titled “Future-Proof Nudges: Youth for Sustainable Shifts.” The session featured Dr. Vivek Trivedi, Social Development Officer at the Municipal Corporation Chandigarh and Founder of APSWDP, and was moderated by Prof. Mousami Prasad..

Dr. Trivedi delivered a thought-provoking talk on the role of behavioural design and nudges in promoting sustainable change, particularly in a rapidly evolving, market-driven world. He emphasized that influencing behaviour remains a key challenge, but also a powerful opportunity for long-term impact.

A key highlight of the session was the evolving role of youth—from being mere advocates to becoming architects of “choice architecture,” actively shaping sustainable behaviours within their communities. The discussion also underscored the critical role of NGOs in enabling grassroots transformation by bridging academic knowledge with real-world action.

The session concluded on an inspiring note, leaving participants motivated to drive meaningful and sustainable change.

Opportunities for Youth (Jobs & Fellowship)

1. SBI Youth for India Fellowship (SBI Foundation)

Sector: NGO | Rural Development | CSR

A 13-month fellowship with ₹16,000/month + allowances and ₹1.1 lakh completion bonus.

Education: Graduation (any discipline) | Age 21-32 years.

Work with NGOs across rural India.

Apply Link: <https://youthforindia.org/application/>

2. Teach For India Fellowship 2026

Sector: NGO | Education | Social Development

A 2-year fellowship with ₹25,344/month + housing allowance.

Education: Graduation (any stream) completed by 2026.

Teach in under-resourced schools.

Apply Link: <https://apply.teachforindia.org/>

3. Programme Assistant – UNICEF India (YuWaaH)

Sector: UN Agency | Youth Development | Government Projects

₹55,000-₹75,000/month (approx.).


Education: Bachelor's/Master's in Social

Sciences/Development/Education + 2 years experience.

Based in New Delhi.

Apply Link: <https://jobs.unicef.org/en-us/filter/?search-keyword=&location=india>

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APSWDP Supports Sustainable Development Goals