

THE VOYAGE

THEORY TO PRACTICE | VOLUNTEERISM TO PROFESSIONALISM



Association of Professional Social Workers &
Development Practitioners

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SDGs IN ACTION

One Earth, One Future & One Responsibility



FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Rajeev Kumar, Editor-in-Chief, The VOYAGE

In this edition of The Voyage, we present our Spotlight Feature Article, "Environment: Building a Sustainable Future Through Communities, Conservation and Awareness," highlighting the importance of environmental stewardship and collective action. During this quarter, APSWDP observed World Environment Day through awareness campaigns, community initiatives, and capacity-building programmes that advanced sustainability and social inclusion. We sincerely thank our readers, contributors, partners, and supporters for their continued trust and encouragement. We hope this edition inspires meaningful action toward a more sustainable and inclusive future.

FROM THE EXPERTS' DESK:



Dr. Pooja Chopra, Founder: Orlina Ventures Pvt. Ltd. & PlanetGram Foundation

The remarkable journey of APSWDP stands as a testament to its steadfast commitment and dedication to advancing shared goals through collaboration and partnerships. I sincerely appreciate the organization's efforts in promoting climate action, advancing disability inclusion, and championing gender equality, as these are key pillars of resilient, equitable, and thriving communities. Congratulations to team APSWDP on its achievements. I extend my best wishes for continued success in creating a lasting impact and empowering communities for a brighter & sustainable future.

Adv. Indu Tomar, Founder, Srijan Foundation & Fine Balance

I sincerely appreciate the inspiring work being carried out by the APSWDP team in fostering an inclusive, equitable, and empowered society. Your unwavering commitment to disability inclusion, mental well-being, gender equality, and community development reflects a deep sense of purpose and social responsibility. I look forward to strengthening our partnership with APSWDP and working together on impactful initiatives that empower youth, promote mental well-being, and create lasting positive change for society. Wishing the entire APSWDP family continued success in its inspiring journey of transforming lives and building stronger, more compassionate communities.



Contents

Message Editor-in-Chief Page 1

Real-Time Interventions Page 2

Spotlight Feature Article..... Page 5

Our Members at a Glance.....Page 8

Grassroots Leadership for a
Sustainable India Page 9

Our VolunteersPage 12

Opportunities for YouthPage 12

Editorial Team Page 12

**"Never worry about numbers.
Help one person at a time, and
always start with the person
nearest you."**

— Mother Teresa

Real-Time Interventions

During the first quarter of 2026-27, APSWDP organized a high-level panel discussion on World Environment Day 2026, titled "Blueprint for Tomorrow: Reimagining Sustainable Living," bringing together policymakers, environmental experts, academicians, and civil society representatives to discuss climate action, biodiversity conservation, sustainable lifestyles, and community-led environmental governance. 1. Alongside this, APSWDP strengthened its Composite Targeted Intervention Project (CTIP) in Chandigarh and the Link Worker Scheme (LWS) in rural Ludhiana. These efforts focused on HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) prevention for High-Risk Groups (HRGs) through community screenings, refresher trainings, and intensified Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaigns, ensuring reduced stigma and improved healthcare referrals across more than 100 villages

World Environment Day 2026: Blueprint for Tomorrow – Reimagining Sustainable Living

On 5 June 2026, the Association of Professional Social Workers and Development Practitioners (APSWDP), in collaboration with Alliance Française de Chandigarh, organized a high-level panel discussion titled "Blueprint for Tomorrow: Reimagining Sustainable Living in Chandigarh" at the Alliance Française Theatre, Sector 36, Chandigarh. The event was held under the global World Environment Day theme, "Inspired by Nature. For Climate. For Our Future."

The session commenced with a welcome address by Ms. Fiona Guerra, Director, Alliance Française, followed by opening remarks by Dr. Vivek Trivedi, Founder, APSWDP. The session was moderated by Mr. Rajeev Kumar, Honorary Director, APSWDP. The distinguished panel included Ms. M. Geethanjali, IFS, Shri Parminder Pal Singh Sandhu, IAS, Dr. Anshu Kumar, Dr. Pooja Chopra, and Dr. Sumit Arora, who shared expert perspectives on sustainable development, climate governance, biodiversity conservation, ecotourism, behavioral change, and technology-enabled environmental management.



The discussion emphasized community-led conservation, responsible waste management, environmental education, Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES), AI-supported governance, and the need to transform awareness into sustained environmental action. An engaging audience interaction, particularly with youth participants, reinforced the importance of collective responsibility in building climate-resilient communities. The event concluded with a call for stronger collaboration among governments, institutions, communities, and citizens to create a greener and more sustainable future.



COMPOSITE TARGETED INTERVENTION (CTI), CHANDIGARH

Strengthening Community Outreach through Awareness, Prevention and Support

During the quarter, APSWDP's Composite Targeted Intervention (CTI) Project continued to strengthen HIV prevention initiatives among vulnerable and high-risk communities in Chandigarh through awareness programmes, community support, and stakeholder engagement.



Ratri AIDS Suraksha Abhiyan

8 May 2026 | New Indira Colony, Manimajra

The CTI team organised a Ratri AIDS Suraksha Abhiyan Camp to improve awareness on HIV prevention and encourage safer health practices among vulnerable populations. Outreach workers and peer educators interacted with community members, addressing misconceptions about HIV/AIDS and promoting regular HIV testing, counselling services, consistent condom use, and access to government-supported healthcare facilities. IEC material was distributed to reinforce key prevention messages and encourage healthy behaviour. Community participation reflected growing trust and engagement with APSWDP's interventions.



Quarterly Review-cum-Orientation Meeting

To strengthen programme implementation, APSWDP participated in the Quarterly TI Review-cum-Orientation Meeting organised under Chandigarh State AIDS Control Society (SACS). The meeting reviewed programmatic, financial and operational progress of Targeted Intervention and OST projects while identifying strategies for improving service delivery and outreach.



Promoting Dignity and Social Inclusion

Recognising that health extends beyond medical services, APSWDP organised a community support initiative at the CTI Drop-In Centre, Manimajra. Under the guidance of Project Director Smt. Kavita Rawat, 40 Kurta-Pyjama kits were distributed among members of the transgender and Female Sex Worker (FSW) communities. The initiative promoted dignity, social inclusion and strengthened trust between the project team and community members.

CTI Snapshot

- Awareness Camp : 1
- Quarterly Review Meeting : 1
- Community Distribution Drive : 40 Kits
- Focus Groups : Transgender Community & Female Sex Workers

LINK WORKER SCHEME (LWS), LUDHIANA

Expanding Healthcare Access at the Community Level

Under the Punjab State AIDS Control Society (PSACS), APSWDP's Link Worker Scheme organised comprehensive Health Awareness and HIV Screening Camps across villages to improve healthcare access for High-Risk Groups (HRGs), People Living with HIV (PLHIV), and vulnerable communities.



Community Health Camps

Health camps were organised at:

- Ramgarh
- Guwaddi
- OOAT Centre, Payal

The camps provided outpatient consultation, HIV counselling and testing, medical examination and health education through qualified doctors, Community Health Officers and laboratory technicians.



Health Camp Highlights:

Across all three camps,

- 223 people received OPD consultation.
- 146 individuals voluntarily underwent HIV testing.
- Zero HIV reactive cases were reported.
- 8 new HRG beneficiaries were enrolled under the project.
- Comprehensive healthcare services were extended to 22 PLHIVs in Ramgarh.

Building Trust through Community Outreach

The camps strengthened early detection, encouraged voluntary HIV testing and promoted regular health check-ups among vulnerable communities. By combining awareness, counselling and healthcare services at the village level, APSWDP continued to improve access to essential services while reducing stigma associated with HIV/AIDS.



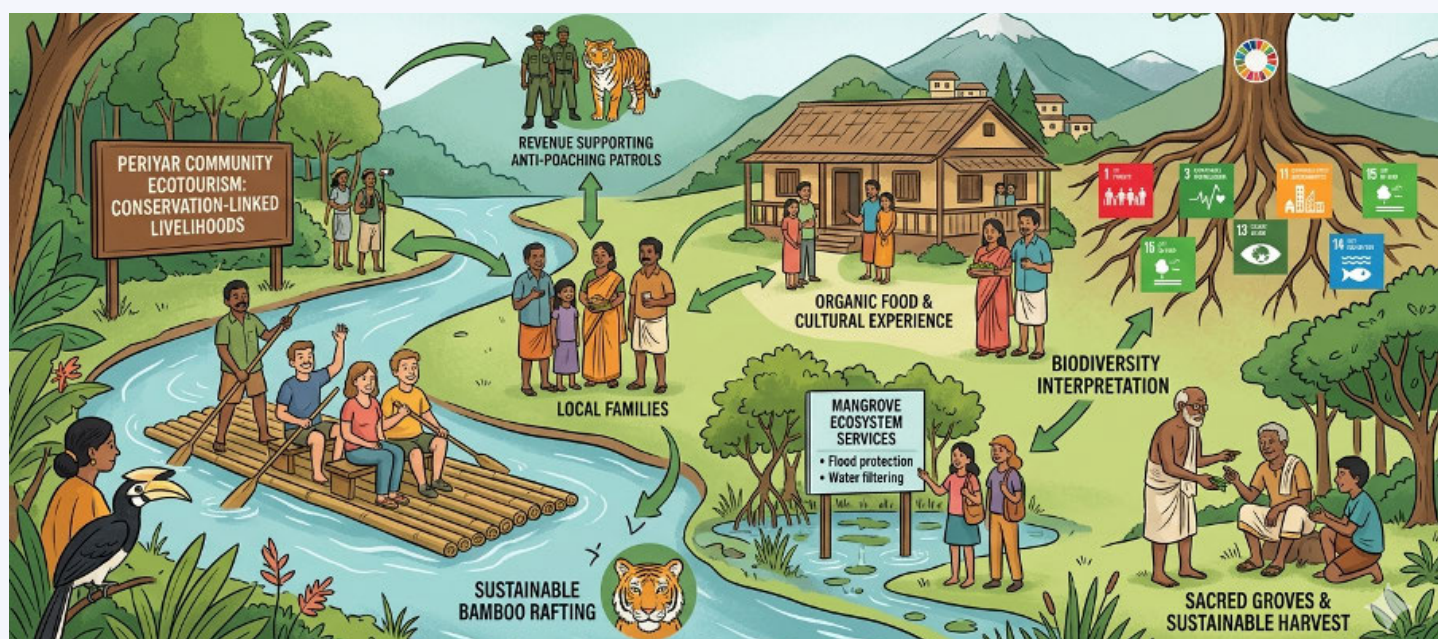
Spotlight Feature Article

Environment: Building a Sustainable Future Through Communities, Conservation and Awareness

Dr. Pooja Chopra

Founder: Orlina Ventures Pvt. Ltd. & PlanetGram Foundation

Across diverse landscapes, including remote villages to bustling cities, people are increasingly realizing that their prosperity is closely linked to the health of the natural world. Forests, wetlands, rivers, grasslands and oceans provide essential services that sustain economies, support livelihoods and enhance quality of life. The future of sustainable development depends on the health of our environment. Nature serves as the foundation for clean water and food security to climate resilience and opportunity, nature underpins every aspect of human well-being. This interdependence is reflected in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which provide a global framework for a sustainable future. While some goals address environmental concerns, including Climate Action (SDG 13), Life Below Water (SDG 14) and Life on Land (SDG 15), the environment is connected to nearly every SDG. Healthy ecosystems are fundamental to poverty reduction, health, resilient communities and prosperity.



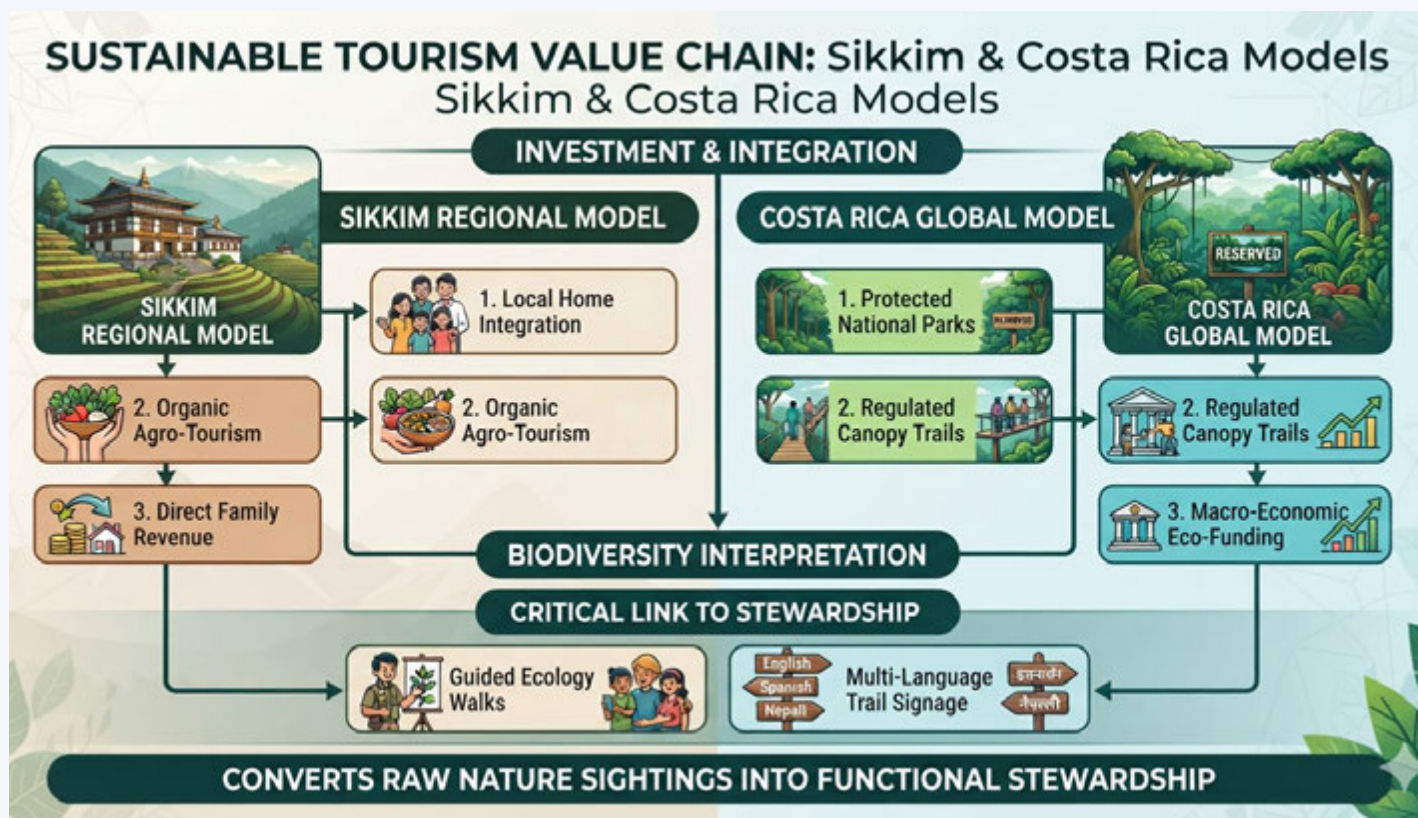
Today, environmental conservation is increasingly moving beyond the traditional model of protecting nature through restrictions and regulations alone. A more holistic approach is emerging - one that recognizes the importance of involving local communities, creating sustainable livelihoods, and building environmental awareness. Community-based ecotourism and biodiversity interpretation are two powerful tools that are helping bridge the gap between conservation and development.

Community-based ecotourism is founded on a simple but powerful principle: when local communities benefit from conserving nature, they become its strongest protectors. Rather than viewing conservation as an obstacle to development, this approach demonstrates how environmental protection can generate

livelihoods and economic opportunities. India offers several inspiring examples. In Kerala's Periyar Tiger Reserve, local communities actively participate in ecotourism activities such as nature walks, bamboo rafting, birdwatching, and visitor interpretation. Many individuals who once depended on forest resources for their livelihoods now earn income through conservation-linked tourism. This has not only improved household incomes but has also strengthened local support for wildlife protection.

"The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it."

— Robert Swan



Similarly, in the mountain villages of Sikkim, community-run homestays have become a successful model of sustainable tourism. Visitors are welcomed into local homes, experience traditional culture, enjoy locally grown organic food, and learn about the region's unique biodiversity. Tourism revenue directly benefits local families while encouraging the preservation of natural and cultural heritage.

Internationally, Costa Rica is often regarded as a benchmark for sustainable tourism and environmental stewardship. Over the past few decades, the country has transformed itself into a global ecotourism destination by investing in protected areas, forest conservation, environmental education, and community participation. Today, ecotourism contributes significantly to the national economy while supporting biodiversity conservation. Costa Rica demonstrates that protecting nature and promoting economic development can go hand in hand when managed responsibly.

However, conservation cannot succeed through protection measures alone. People are more likely to value and protect nature when they understand its importance. This is where biodiversity interpretation becomes

critically important. Biodiversity interpretation is the process of communicating information about nature in a way that is meaningful, engaging, and inspiring. It goes beyond simply presenting facts and statistics. Its purpose is to create emotional and intellectual connections between people and the natural world. Consider a visitor walking through a wetland. Without interpretation, they may simply see a body of water with birds and vegetation. With effective interpretation, they begin to understand that wetlands act as natural water filters, reduce flood risks, recharge groundwater, support fisheries, store carbon, and provide habitat for countless species. The same landscape suddenly becomes far more valuable and meaningful.

Biodiversity interpretation can take many forms. Nature interpretation centres, interactive exhibits, storytelling sessions, guided walks, audiovisual presentations, citizen science programs, and informative signage all help visitors understand the ecological significance of a place. Effective interpretation transforms a visit into a learning experience and often inspires long-term environmental stewardship.

Across India, interpretation is increasingly being integrated into conservation and ecotourism initiatives. The Sundarbans, for example, offer opportunities to educate visitors about mangrove ecosystems, climate resilience, wildlife conservation, and the relationship between local communities and nature. Similarly, nature interpretation centres in national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and biodiversity parks help create awareness among students, tourists, and local residents.



Yellowstone have developed world-class interpretation programs that help visitors understand wildlife behaviour, geological processes, ecosystem dynamics, and conservation challenges. These experiences not only enrich visitor satisfaction but also encourage responsible behaviour and public support for conservation. Environmental awareness is becoming increasingly important in the context of climate change. Rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, extreme weather events, and biodiversity loss are affecting communities across the globe. India is already witnessing the impacts of climate change through heat waves, floods, droughts, changing agricultural patterns, and increasing pressure on natural ecosystems. Addressing these challenges requires both large-scale policy interventions and individual action. Environmental education and interpretation play an important role in helping people understand the causes and consequences of environmental problems while encouraging sustainable practices.

An important aspect of environmental conservation is the recognition of traditional knowledge. Indigenous and local communities often possess generations of ecological wisdom that can complement modern scientific approaches.

In India, many communities have historically protected sacred groves, conserved water resources, and practiced sustainable agriculture. Integrating traditional knowledge with contemporary conservation strategies can lead to more effective and culturally appropriate solutions.

The future of environmental sustainability lies in collaboration. Governments, local communities, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and the private sector must work together to address environmental challenges. Community participation, scientific research, environmental education, and sustainable economic opportunities need to be integrated into conservation planning and implementation.



Ultimately, the environment is not separate from human progress - it is the very foundation upon which progress depends. Protecting ecosystems, empowering communities, and fostering environmental awareness are investments in a healthier, more resilient, and more sustainable future.

The choices we make today will determine the quality of life for generations to come. By embracing conservation, education, and community participation, we can create a future where development and nature thrive together, ensuring that environmental sustainability becomes not just an aspiration, but a shared reality.



Our Members at Glance

Profiles of our dedicated professionals



Shruti Kathuria

Culinary Instructor | Recipe Developer | Menu Consultant | Food Strategist

Shruti Kathuria is a culinary professional, food strategist, and human resource practitioner with over a decade of experience in recipe development, bakery technology, menu consultation, employee engagement, and professional training. Alongside her professional career, she is actively engaged in social development initiatives and is a Life Associate Member of the Association of Professional Social Workers and Development Practitioners (APSWDP). Through APSWDP, she contributes to initiatives promoting community empowerment, inclusive development, gender equality, and sustainable livelihoods. Passionate about skill development and entrepreneurship, she believes in leveraging professional expertise to create meaningful social impact and strengthen resilient, inclusive communities.

Manoj Goel is a graduate in Information Technology from Veermata Jijabai Technological Institute (VJTI), Mumbai. He began his professional career with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), where he worked for three years before pursuing the Civil Services Examination, reaching the Personality Test (Interview) stage on four occasions. During this journey, he was also selected as a Naib Tehsildar in Punjab. Currently, he manages his family business in Mohali while actively contributing to social development as the State Patron, Special Olympics Bharat – Haryana and is associated with the Association of Professional Social Workers and Development Practitioners (APSWDP) in promoting inclusion, disability rights, community participation, and social development.



Manoj Goel

State Patron Haryana State Special Olympic Bharat



Arunasandra K
Social Worker

Arunasandra K is a UGC-NET qualified professional social worker from Kerala with a Master's in Social Work from Indira Gandhi National Open University. He has completed over 1,200 hours of clinical and community fieldwork and holds an Advanced Diploma in Psychological Counselling and Clinical Techniques, along with certifications in Child Protection and Ending Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. A Life Member of the Association of Professional Social Workers and Development Practitioners (APSWDP), he is dedicated to mental health, counselling, drama therapy, and community-based psychosocial education initiatives.

Naresh Raja is a social worker and graphic designer with over a decade of experience in community development, NGO programme management, and social inclusion. Holding a Master's degree in Social Work, he has worked extensively to empower marginalized communities, particularly waste picker families, orphaned children, and older persons, by facilitating access to social welfare services and government schemes. He is committed to promoting dignity, inclusion, and sustainable community development through grassroots action and innovative communication.



Naresh Raja
Social Worker

Grassroots Leadership for a Sustainable India

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

Introduction

Sustainable development takes root when ordinary people and communities transform local challenges into lasting solutions. The following case studies showcase inspiring grassroots initiatives that promote environmental conservation, social inclusion, women’s empowerment, and value-based community development, demonstrating how local leadership can contribute meaningfully to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Case Study 1

From Exclusion to Stewardship: Engaging Persons with Disabilities in Ocean Conservation through Accessible Ocean Tourism

Globally, an estimated 1.3 billion people which is approximately 16% of the world’s population live with a significant disability, yet many continue to face physical, social, and institutional barriers that restrict access to coastal and marine environments (WHO, 2023). Such exclusion limits recreational opportunities, environmental education, and participation in marine conservation. To address these challenges, the Accessible Ocean Tourism Initiative, supported by Ocean Literacy programmes, promoted inclusive access to marine ecosystems while strengthening environmental awareness and community participation.

The initiative built capacity through partnerships with HSA and certified diving centres, providing adaptive scuba training and accessible marine experiences for persons with disabilities across multiple coastal destinations.

At Kadmat Island, Lakshadweep, the programme supported a disability centre, promoting confidence, inclusion, and environmental learning through ocean-based activities.

Beyond diving, the programme brought together tourism operators, diving professionals, local communities, youth, and students through marine conservation workshops, beach awareness drives, ocean literacy sessions, and citizen-science activities.



Students from hospitality and tourism institutes learned how to promote responsible tourism, accessibility, and marine protection. The initiative showed that inclusive tourism and conservation go hand in hand, encouraging stronger connections with nature and collaboration among communities, institutions, and stakeholders for sustainable ocean management.

This case illustrates that inclusive conservation is both a social and environmental imperative. By removing barriers and expanding opportunities for participation, Accessible Ocean Tourism provides a replicable model for advancing disability inclusion, sustainable coastal tourism, and long-term marine conservation. The initiative directly contributes to SDG 14 (Life Below Water), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Case Study 2

From Period Poverty to Menstrual Equity: The PAD Bank Model for Sustainable Menstrual Health Management

Menstrual health remains a significant public health and gender equity challenge, particularly for women engaged in the informal workforce. According to UNICEF, over 500 million women and girls worldwide lack adequate menstrual hygiene facilities, while the World Bank estimates that nearly 1.9 billion women are of menstruating age, many of whom face financial and social barriers to accessing safe menstrual products. Addressing this challenge requires sustainable, community-driven interventions beyond one-time donation campaigns.

The Period Awareness and Distribution (PAD) Bank Initiative, conceptualized by Kavita Rawat under the Society Change Maker Movement and implemented by the Crime Control & Social Development Organisation (CCSDO), provides an innovative account-based model to promote menstrual equity and reduce period poverty. Unlike conventional charity-driven approaches, the initiative establishes individual PAD Bank



Accounts and issues beneficiary passbooks to systematically record monthly sanitary product distribution and monitor continuity of support.

The programme has demonstrated encouraging grassroots impact. Beginning with over 100 registered beneficiaries, it expanded to more than 150 women within the first three months, while establishing a replicable pilot in Chandigarh through collaboration with local urban livelihood stakeholders. With a long-term target of reaching 1,000 women, the PAD Bank model illustrates how structured beneficiary tracking, community participation, and preventive health education can improve menstrual health outcomes and social inclusion. The initiative contributes directly to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Case Study 3

Sri Sathya Sai Educare Vidya Pratishthan: A Beacon of Love, Learning, and Service

Nestled amidst the serene hills of Himachal Pradesh, about fifteen kilometres from Dharamshala in the village of Khalui, Slate Godam, Yol Cantt., Sri Sathya Sai Educare Vidya Pratishthan stands as a living testimony to the transformative power of selfless love. Established in 2010 in a humble mud house with only thirty-three students, the school began as a noble initiative of dedicated Sri Sathya Sai Youth. Today it flourishes as a completely free day-boarding institution with 200 students from nursery to Class X, and ensuring that every child receives quality education without any financial burden.

The mission of the institution is to impart holistic education rooted in the Sri Sathya Sai System of Education. Alongside academic excellence, equal emphasis is placed on character building, self-confidence, and a lifelong commitment to the welfare of humanity. Special care is taken to extend educational opportunities to children from rural, economically disadvantaged, and educationally backward communities, enabling them to blossom into individuals of noble thought and action.

The students have distinguished themselves through remarkable performances in academics, State level cultural programmes, Yoga, Athletics, Veda chanting, public speaking, village seva, and State Level sports. They have become true messengers of Sai's message of love and service. The school's influence extends beyond its campus, bringing about a visible transformation in neighbouring villages. Through bhajans, nagarsankirtana, parenting workshops, and community service initiatives such as road construction and temple cleanliness drives, the Sai Youth continues to inspire rural communities towards collective upliftment.



Sri Sathya Sai Educare Vidya Pratishthan reflects the transformative power of value-based education, where knowledge is nurtured alongside compassion, service, and human values. Its students excel in academics, athletics, yoga, and cultural activities, carrying forward the principles of truth, peace, love, and non-violence. Through humanitarian initiatives and community service, the institution extends its impact beyond classrooms. Recognized internationally for excellence in value-based education, SSSEVP stands as a model for developing responsible, compassionate, and socially conscious citizens.

Sri Sathya Sai Educare Vidya Pratishthan advances the SDGs by promoting quality education, equality, compassion, and community service.



Sponsor's Spotlight

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-By Shruti Kathuria Yadav

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Opportunities for Youth (Jobs & Fellowship)

1. Program Coordinator: Sampark Foundation

📍 Locations: Maharashtra, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh & Rajasthan

👤 Type: Full-Time

✉️ How to Apply: Email resume to jobs@samparkfoundation.org, subject: "Program Coordinator - " + 2 short answers (100 words each).

2. Field Facilitator – Water For People

📍 Location: Multiple Locations

💰 Salary: ₹22,000–25,000/month

👤 Type: Full-Time

✉️ How to Apply: jobs.deel.com/water-for-people

3. Young Professional – National Council for Vocational Education & Training (NCVET)

📍 Location: New Delhi

💰 Salary: ₹70,000/month

📅 Application Deadline: 14 August 2026

✉️ How to Apply: -Through the official NCVET recruitment portal <https://ncvet.gov.in/office-orders/> before 14 August 2026.

4. Associate Project Officer – Digital Games | UNESCO MGIEP

📍 Location: New Delhi

💰 Salary: Up to ₹32 LPA

✉️ How to Apply: -Through the official UNESCO Careers Portal <https://careers.unesco.org/go/All-jobs-openings/784002/>.

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✉️ Send us your feedback, comments and suggestions at apswdp@gmail.com

Our Volunteers:



Ms. Eknor Sandhu represents the true spirit of change at APSWDP. Her journey from a passionate grassroots volunteer to a dedicated Youth and Community Outreach Associate reflects her deep commitment to

social equity and the UN 2030 Agenda. Through her work in public health, community empowerment, and digital inclusion, she has supported vulnerable groups, including FSWs, Transgenders, and PLHIVs. Her compassion and dedication continue to inspire meaningful change and future development leaders.

She actively coordinated the World Social Work Day training workshop in 2021 and the national-level World Social Work Day celebration in collaboration with RGNIYD in 2022.

APSWDP is immensely proud of Eknor's dual mastery of grassroots public health interventions and digital resource mobilization as she continues to inspire the next generation of development leaders.

EDITORIAL TEAM (THE VOYAGE)

GUIDING OUR MISSION FORWARD



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Prof. Monica Munjal Singh
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Associate Editors



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Dr. Maneet Sharma

Association of Professional Social Workers and Development Practitioners (APSWDP)

In Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations since 2019. Affiliated with the Department of Global Communications (DGC) of the United Nations; accredited under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); holds Observer Status with the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); and is an Affiliate Member of the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Alliance.

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