

UN INDIA DIGEST

News and updates from the
26 entities of the UN Country Team



UNITED NATIONS
INDIA



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At the Hornbill Festival in Nagaland, attendees visit a Sustainable Development Goals information booth set up by the state Government and UNDP. Photo: UNDP

India steps up to review progress towards SDGs

India is this year undergoing the Voluntary National Review (VNR) – the self-assessment of a country's progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). NITI Aayog kicked off the VNR process with a series of consultation sessions supported by UN India. The sessions brought together groups from across society, including government officials, civil society, the private sector and vulnerable communities, to highlight the biggest achievements and challenges since the last VNR. The consultations will feed into the report to be presented at the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York in July. The consultations are also part of a broader initiative led by NITI Aayog to facilitate meaningful engagement with Leave No One Behind (LNOB) groups.



Photo: PIB



Photo: PIB

Women peacekeepers lead the way

The value that women in blue helmets bring to peacekeeping was the focus of a major conference hosted by India in February. Representatives gathered in Delhi from 35 countries across the Global South to discuss women and peacekeeping. The UN's peacekeeping chief Jean-Pierre Lacroix underlined that data shows peace operations are more successful and impactful when they involve more women. The conference followed calls for inclusive peacekeeping by both UN Resident Coordinator Shombi Sharp and UN Women Country Representative Susan Ferguson at a seminar organized by the Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK) and Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) a month earlier.

Protecting traditions and lives: UN at Maha Kumbh

From protecting the vulnerable to preventing disease, United Nations agencies in India worked with authorities to ensure safety, health and heritage preservation in one of humanity's greatest mass gatherings: the Maha Kumbh festival in Uttar Pradesh. WHO helped intensify immunization services, polio surveillance, and fever-rash surveillance to detect measles-rubella cases. UNICEF supported the state's *Khoya Paya* (Lost and Found) initiative, providing psycho-social support, family tracing and reunification for missing individuals, including women and children, across 10 main and satellite centres, with a team of barefoot counselors and supervisors spread across the mela area. While visiting the festival, UNESCO's Representative to India, Tim Curtis, noted Kumbh Mela's 2017 inscription in the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, highlighting its role in fostering social cohesion, boosting economic activity, and inspiring generations.



Photo: UN News



Photo: UNESCO



Photo: PIB

Top UN envoy calls for global digital cooperation

The UN's top official on technology has called upon countries to work together to ensure that digital technology and AI can be used by all. During an official visit to India, Amandeep Singh Gill, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Digital and Emerging Technologies, met ministers, private sector companies, civil society, academics and experts to discuss ways to implement the Global Digital Compact adopted by UN Member States last year.

Turning the lens on art and inclusion

From compelling portraits to striking landscapes, the winning photos at the Global Ability Photography Challenge are a reminder of how the click of a camera can capture a moment of wonder. The Challenge, led by Youth4Jobs Foundation and UNESCO, and now in its third edition, is a unique contest open exclusively to photographers with disabilities. At the launch of an accompanying exhibition, Rajesh Aggarwal, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Secretary, stressed the importance of eliminating barriers to inclusion.



Photo: UNIC

Infusing profit, principles & circularity in business

Business and human rights expert Professor Surya Deva highlighted the need for responsible business practices within the textile industry at a roundtable with UN agencies, representatives from the Clothing Manufacturers Association of India and textile industry players UN Resident Coordinator in India, Shombi Sharp, underlined the UN's long-standing partnership with clothing brands and the Ministry of Textiles as part of Project SU.RE, the Indian apparel industry's largest voluntary commitment to sustainability.



Photo: UNIC

Robust data to drive development decisions

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation led a capacity-building workshop in Bhopal in January on monitoring frameworks of Sustainable Development Goals, co-organised by the Government of Madhya Pradesh with technical support from UNDP. Participants shared best practices on compilation of environment accounts, and gender statistics, emphasizing the need for data-driven policy making for inclusive development. A report titled 'Ocean Ecosystem Accounts in India- A Framework: A report by the Expert Group' was released during the event.



Photo: UNDP

Sharing best practices on SDG data

Participants from across India came together for a national workshop organized by NITI Aayog in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, focused on reporting progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The UN in India organised a panel discussion at the workshop. Panellists representing the Government, civil society, think tanks and industry offered their perspectives on India's Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2020, which was unique for its whole-of-society approach, and how India's VNR in 2025 can encapsulate its SDG efforts for the past 10 years and offer a blueprint for its strategy for a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.





Photo: CDC

Team UN bats for circularity in the textile chain

UN India showcased its system-wide efforts to boost sustainability in the country's booming textile and fashion industries at [Bharat Tex](#), the world's largest textile expo held recently in New Delhi. Manufacturers, exporters and industry figures from more than 100 countries participated at the expo. UNEP, UNIDO, UN Women, UNESCO and the Resident Coordinator's Office joined forces with an exhibition stand, panel discussions, workshops and the launch of a supply chain directory to encourage sustainability across the entire textile value chain.

General Assembly chief lauds digital advances

India has made "remarkable progress towards digital transformation" and serves as an inspiration for other countries, the UN's [General Assembly President](#) says. Philémon Yang made the remarks near the end of a four-day official visit to India, where he met President Droupadi Murmu, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, UN India Country Team leadership and tech industry figures. The visit – which included stops at the Gandhi memorial and a hospital that features pioneering Indian digital health initiatives – was focused around one of his key priorities as Assembly President: "turbo-charging the Sustainable Development Goals through digitalization".



Photo: UNIC



Photo: WHO

Assam eyes accessible vision correction push

In India, more than half the population experiences some form of visual impairment related to refractive errors. A pair of prescription spectacles is all it takes to fix it. [SPECS 2030 initiative](#), launched in Assam under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and WHO, seeks to plug gaps in eye-care services and access to affordable spectacles. The initiative aims to identify community initiatives for vision care that can be scaled up, such as comprehensive doorstep screening in rural and remote areas, referrals for treatment and cost-effective procurement systems to ensure the uninterrupted supply of spectacles.



Photo: ILO

UN labour chief flags gender threat from AI

"If we are not careful, AI will increase the divide between men and women," the International Labour Organization (ILO) chief has warned during an official visit to India. Gilbert F. Hougbo, ILO Director-General, said automation disproportionately threatens female-dominated jobs. "Many clerical activities in jobs are more dominated by females... We have to make sure that AI does not create new or worsen the digital divide." While in India, Mr. Hougbo praised the country's progress in advancing social protection, responsible business practices and workers' rights. He noted that India is emerging as an innovation hub with its talented pool of young professionals.



'India leading the charge in renewable energy'

Click to [watch](#) as Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, explains the social and economic benefits of transitioning to renewables. Read our [web story](#) for more details about the UNFCCC chief's visit to India in February.



Photo: JLF

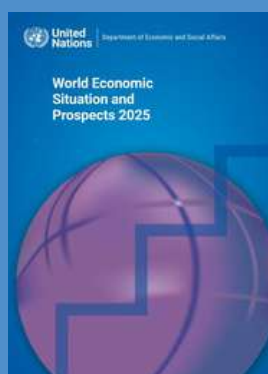
Writing a fresh chapter on disability

The subject of bridging barriers to disability inclusion was front and centre at the Jaipur Literature Festival, India's annual high-profile celebration of books and reading. At a panel discussion on disability, UN Resident Coordinator Shombi Sharp noted that data demonstrates that inclusion leads to greater economic and social success for all. He was joined on the panel by Paralympian Deepa Malik, Jaipur Foot founder DR Mehta and photographer Vicky Roy, whose exhibition *Everyone is Good at Something* was also on show at the Festival.



Publications

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UNITED NATIONS IN ACTION | HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2024



Camel dressing contest at the Year of Camelids celebration led by FAO in Rajasthan



Community leaders host a play at a WFP awareness campaign to boost consumption of fortified rice in Chhattisgarh



Refugees from Sri Lanka skill up at a hospitality industry workshop hosted by UNHCR



Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveils a stamp at the launch of the 2025 UN Year of Cooperatives



Participants at a trade masterclass hosted by UNCTAD in New Delhi for women entrepreneurs in South Asia



Para athlete Suvarna Raj wins UN SDG Action Award for advocating for persons with disabilities



President Droupadi Murmu leads the Human Rights Day commemoration in New Delhi



UNOPS leads Jal Utsav awareness sessions for water sustainability in Rajasthan



Photo: UN Women



Photo: UNHCR



India's unified stand against gender violence

UN Women India, in partnership with the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Ministry of Rural Development, launched a national campaign, *Ab Koi Bahana Nahi*, during the 16 Days of Activism. This landmark initiative mobilized action across India, reaching 142 million people. Events included a gender-inclusive tourism conference in Munnar, the Kerala Declaration on Women-Friendly Tourism, and a gender rights walkathon in Kozhikode. Women in Kerala's spice sector and Assam's tea gardens raised awareness through advocacy artwork. The campaign culminated in a strategic roundtable on the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), with insights contributing to the Beijing +30 process. State pledges and urban safety plans further strengthened commitments to gender equality.

UN equips refugee women with survival skills

Refugee women came together for a primer in digital and physical safety at a session hosted by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and facilitated by the UN's Department of Safety and Security (DSS) in New Delhi. Participants were trained to recognize threats, sharpen their instincts and practice every day self-defence, and were provided an overview of the nuances of staying safe in online spaces.

Kids take the mic on World Children's Day

The World Children's Day 2024 theme, 'Listen to the future', was marked in India with a renewed commitment to protecting and promoting child rights as UNICEF commemorated 75 years of partnership with the Government of India. More than 16 state offices activated programs like 'Go Blue', which saw iconic monuments and buildings across the country being lit up in blue to mark the day. In **Hyderabad**, more than 150 children gathered at the State Child Parliament to submit a Charter of Demands and voice their concerns for child rights. In **Bengaluru**, young changemakers took over community radio and interviewed officials and experts as part of the Kids Take Over campaign. In **Lucknow**, more than 350 children participated in the Pragati 2024 fest to share experiences and learn from one another. In **Chennai**, children with disabilities shared their hopes for an inclusive future with senior government officials under the theme 'Building an Inclusive Future for Children'. The global launch of the *State of the World's Children 2024* report also marked the day, with the full report available in our publications section.



Chennai



New Delhi



Hyderabad



Lucknow



Bengaluru

UNICEF YuWaah turns five!



Chit Chaat with UN in India: Children Take Over



Click to watch *Chit Chaat*, a video series of conversations about how the United Nations in India is working on the ground to make a difference. In this special Children's Day episode, Resident Coordinator Shombi Sharp and UNICEF India Representative Cynthia McCaffrey host some special guests

India eyes a TB-free tomorrow

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has intensified its efforts to eliminate tuberculosis with a 100-day campaign to improve case detection, reduce diagnostic delays, and boost treatment outcomes. Launched in December 2024, the campaign covers 347 districts across 10 states, with WHO providing technical support. Leveraging the country's vast network of more than 160,000 health and wellness centres, the campaign brings TB services directly to high-burden areas.



Photo: WHO



Photo: YuWaah

Giving youth a stronger voice

YuWaah, with the support of UNICEF, UNFPA and UNHCR, have launched technical guidelines to help marginalized communities better tackle the issues facing vulnerable youth populations and promote inclusive advocacy. The guidelines, launched by UNICEF India representative Cynthia McCaffrey, UNHCR India Chief of Mission Areti Sianni, UNFPA India Deputy Representative Lorna Rolls and YuWaah's Dhuwarakha Sriram in the presence of Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports Joint Secretary Nitesh Kumar, aim to ensure that young people at the margins are prioritised in programming and decision-making.

UN News Hindi South Asia in Focus



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2025: United Nations turns 80

At a glance

25-27 Mar: Second Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health, Cartagena

26 Mar: SG to speak at Petersburg Climate Dialogue, Berlin

30 Mar: International Day of Zero Waste

31 Mar: International Transgender Day of Visibility

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