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To commend and encourage the spirit of volunteerism, UN Volunteers in India implemented a nationwide campaign to mark International Volunteer Day 2020.

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## Together we can: celebrating Shramdaan, the spirit of volunteerism, in India

For centuries, selfless service or Shramdaan, community service or a voluntary contribution towards community welfare, has been central to India's social fabric and culture. To commend and encourage the spirit of volunteerism, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme in India ran a nationwide campaign to mark International Volunteer Day (IVD) 2020, under the theme Together We can Through Volunteering, organizing several activities in the run-up to 5 December.

### **#TogetherWeCan Anthem**

The [#TogetherWeCan Anthem](#) was composed by UNV in India, in partnership with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and its talented refugee volunteers. The anthem captures the motivation, spirit and joy of volunteering. The video of the anthem features UN Volunteers in the field, V-force volunteers and heads of UN entities to reflect solidarity and support.

Through the V-Force network, IVD 2020 social media campaigns led by 40 V-Force leaders and 400+ volunteers reached approximately 20,000 people.

### **Calendar 2021**

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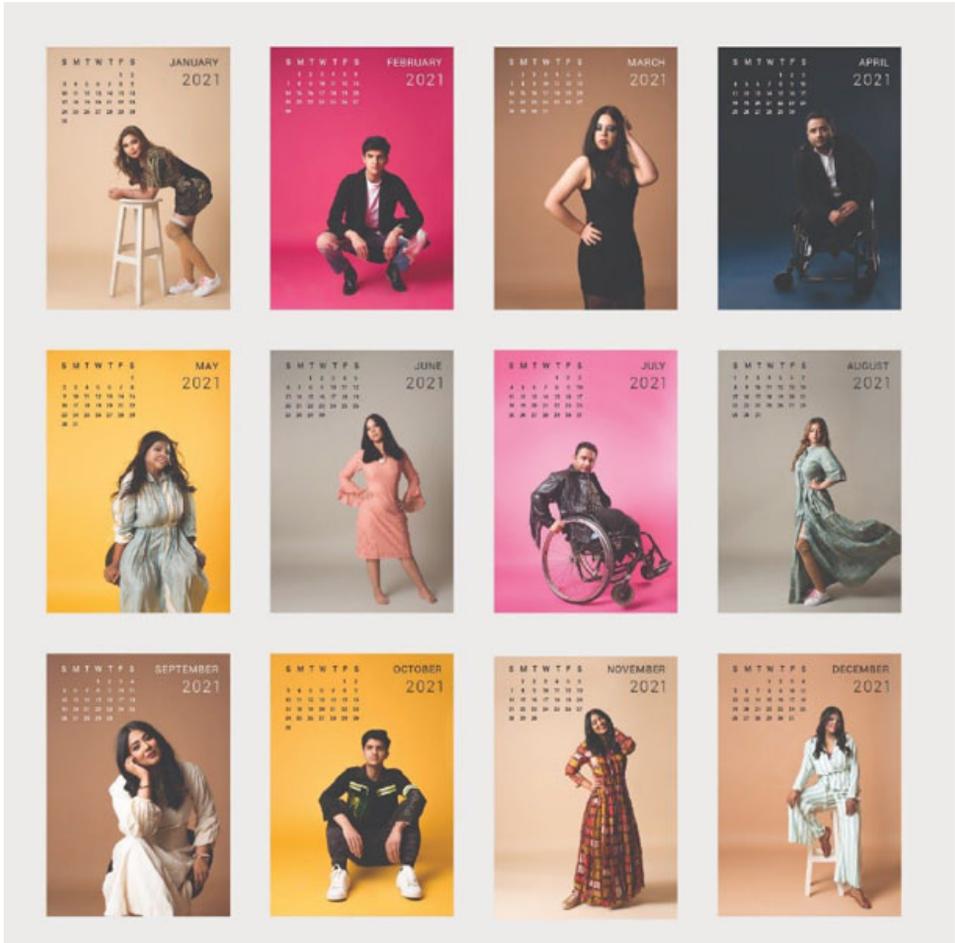
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On [3 December 2020](#), to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, UNV, in partnership with Families of Spinal Muscular Atrophy (FSMA) Trust, launched a unique [Annual Calendar for 2021](#), featuring differently-abled young warriors of change.



“ It is important that people see us with respect instead of pity! This calendar attempts to normalize the employment of persons with disabilities in various industries, including in fashion. --Faisal Ashraf, a

“ change maker from India, speaking at the launch of the calendar

### **#TogetherWeLearn: A language and cultural exchange**

UNHCR and UNV organized an online language and culture exchange where volunteers belonging to the [Arabic](#), [Mizo](#) and [Dari](#) cultures shared about their language, traditions, food, culture, clothes and more.

Hanan Ali, Arabic language volunteer, said that the diversity and beauty of our world can only be experienced if we learn and appreciate each other's cultures.

### **#MyVolunteeringStory campaign**

A social media campaign under the hashtag [#MyVolunteeringStory](#) was implemented with the support of the MASH project foundation. The campaign received stories of volunteerism and response to COVID-19 from all over the country.

### **#TogetherWeRise: Artists for Change**

UNV, together with the MASH Project Foundation, also organized an event titled [#TogetherWeRise: Artists For Change](#), engaging students from cultural societies studying in colleges in India, who performed to show solidarity and appreciation towards volunteers.

### **IVD 2020 celebrations and V-Awards ceremony**

The [main event](#) for IVD 2020 was celebrated in the presence of Honorable Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Shri Kiren Rijiju, along with Secretary (Youth Affairs), Smt. Usha Sharma, and Joint Secretary (Youth Affairs), Shri Asit Singh. The IVD 2020 ceremony promoted volunteerism and recognized volunteer contributions to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The IVD 2020 ceremony started with the launch of the IVD anthem, followed by an address by Shalina Miah, UNV Regional Manager for Asia and the Pacific, who thanked the volunteers for their undying spirit of altruism.

“ When all else stood still in the world, the young men and women of India carried their people to safety, security and most importantly, to progress and hope, against all odds. Over a million volunteers in India have taken action to combat the threat posed directly by COVID-19, and also thereafter, helping to tackle the after-effects of the pandemic. --Shri Kiren Rijiju, Honorable Minister of State (Independent

## “ Charge), Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports India

Shri Kiren Rijju, Honorable Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports concluded his key note address by thanking the UN, NYKS, NSS and community volunteers for their extraordinary efforts. "I wish all a very happy International Volunteer Day!" he said, continuing, "I am committed to working with all young people out there to fight COVID-19."

Shri Kiren Rijju also announced the names of the V-Awardees for the year 2020 and congratulated them for their community outreach efforts. The [V-Awards 2020](#) winners – Chetan Pardeshi, Vijayambigai Thulashidos, Nupur Agarwal, Rohan Modi, Yashoda Pandey, Harshit Gupta, Chaitanya Prabhu, Pradeep Sharma, Akriti Gupta and Poorvaprabha Patil – highlighted the motivation behind their projects and their mission going forward.

Ms Shoko Noda, UNDP Resident Representative in India, addressed the audience, reiterating UNDP's commitment to work with millions of talented and compassionate volunteers to find new ways of interpreting the fast-changing realities.

Shri Asit Singh, Joint Secretary (Youth Affairs) emphasized the role of volunteers in drafting the youth policy and policy for volunteerism. Smt. Usha Sharma, Secretary (Youth Affairs), focused on volunteerism being the cornerstone for the long-term vision of India realizing its full potential.

Mr Arun Sahdeo, Country Coordinator UNV in India, delivered the vote of thanks, reiterating that volunteers are the greatest renewable resource and thanked the 1 billion volunteers across the globe for giving their time and efforts selflessly for social good.

The celebrations concluded with cultural classical dances of India performed by celebrated Kathak, Odissi and Bharatanatyam performers. International Volunteer Day is a tremendous opportunity to celebrate and rejoice in the spirit of volunteerism and encourage active citizenship for the challenges to sustainable development. In this hour of need, the contributions of volunteers are critical for a better today and a tomorrow with hope.

## Asia and the Pacific

• COVID-19 • Coronavirus • IVD2020 • TogetherWeCan • India

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)