

THE NGO WORLD

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Not All Heroes Wear Helmets — But They Should: Where Care Meets Caution

On a sunny afternoon in the bustling city of Multan, a simple yet powerful scene played out on the road — one that made us pause, smile, and reflect. Two village men on motorcycles were riding side by side, but it wasn't a regular ride. One of the bikes appeared to have engine trouble, struggling to move forward. In an act of quick thinking and street-side support, the rider on the working bike used his foot to push the stalled bike along.

It was an everyday moment, the kind that happens across countless towns and cities in Pakistan — small acts of support between friends, strangers, and fellow travelers. It reminded us of the human connection we often see in challenging moments on the road. Helping someone in need, especially in traffic, is a beautiful part of our culture.

But this visual also carried a quiet warning. Both riders were without helmets. They were navigating city roads in close contact, attempting to balance safety and support — a risky maneuver by all standards. One bump, one wrong turn, or one inattentive vehicle behind them could have turned this kind act into a serious accident.

This brings us to an important point: good intentions must be paired with good practices.

When a motorcycle loses power, it's safer to guide it to the roadside, walk it if necessary, and call for assistance rather than pushing it while riding. And wearing a helmet isn't just about following the law — it's about valuing your life and the lives of those who care about you.

Across the world, from Multan to Madrid, acts of roadside help reflect our shared human spirit. When someone lends a hand—like pushing a stalled bike—it shows care and solidarity. But safety must walk alongside kindness. Riding without helmets, or pushing vehicles in traffic, puts lives at risk. Whether you're in a busy city or a quiet town, always prioritize safety: wear protective gear, follow traffic rules, and seek proper assistance when needed. Let's create a global culture where helping others on the road is not only kind, but safe. Together, we can make every journey a safer one.

Let's make room not only for compassion, but for caution. Because on every journey, care should never ride without a helmet.

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Myanmar in-depth: Slow earthquake response underlines need to overhaul long-flawed international aid efforts

“There’s new attention, with the earthquake, to Myanmar: It ideally should encourage a shift in approaches.”



Will Worley



A brutal and coercive regime is the main obstacle to an effective response to Myanmar’s earthquake disaster, say aid workers and human rights activists, pointing to uniquely complex conditions that necessitate working with some non-state armed groups.

Critics have long attacked the UN – and other international aid actors – for working only with the permission of the junta, delivering aid mainly within territory it controls. With the 28 March earthquake disaster crossing the front lines of the civil war, leaving millions affected on both sides, they argue that this is a golden opportunity to move away from what they see as an ineffective and morally questionable approach.

Since the outbreak of a full-scale civil war following a coup in 2021, Myanmar has morphed into a patchwork of territories. Some are under the rule of the military, but others are controlled by one of many armed groups that oppose the junta, which calls itself the State Administration Council (SAC).

UN relief operations – which involve complex logistics, and flying teams and equipment in and out of Yangon – all have to be run with the SAC’s approval, but the fragmented war has created numerous and shifting front lines, especially in the more remote and rural parts of the country. These have greatly complicated the humanitarian response to the earthquake disaster, which has claimed at least 3,800 lives and left more than 5,000 people with severe injuries.

“The earthquake is a rupture in a country that is having rupture after

rupture. It poses new problems, but also just extenuates all existing problems,” Dustin Barter, senior research fellow at the ODI Global think tank, told The New Humanitarian. “There’s new attention, with the earthquake, to Myanmar: It ideally should encourage a shift in approaches.”

Despite the SAC’s claims to have implemented an earthquake-inspired

led team responsible for the water, sanitation, and hygiene response, known as the WASH Cluster, had only reached 23% of its target population.

As devastating as the earthquake itself was – shallow and, at 7.7-magnitude, the strongest to hit the region since 1912 – the humanitarian response to it was made harder by Myanmar’s highly sensitive and politicised aid context. It’s a country where many of the critical challenges facing humanitarians overlap: entrenched violence, complex politics, belligerent states, and declining faith in the international system.

These dynamics are also colliding with poor timing for the humanitarian sector: Myanmar represents one of the first high-profile disaster responses in a new era of extreme funding cuts from international donors, notably the United States.

Ethnic organisations pitched as humanitarian players

Myanmar had already seen decades of conflict since independence from the UK in 1948, with a wide assortment of ethnic armed groups fighting for greater autonomy and shares

of mineral wealth. But the 2021 coup sparked a new civil war, pitting the junta’s forces against a variety of old and new armed opposition groups.

This bitter political backdrop has seeped into the aid landscape, and divisions have deepened between international agencies – often perceived to cooperate with the junta – and the various Myanmar organisations and networks that are willing to work outside



ceasefire, the violence has continued, with airstrikes remaining routine: Earlier this week, a school was bombed by the military, reportedly killing 20 students and two teachers.

And the ordeal is not over: As the rainy season begins, some 6.3 million people remain in humanitarian need in the hardest-hit areas, including 200,000 displaced by the earthquakes. According to a 9 May update, the UNICEF-

of SAC control, including with armed factions.

Since 2021, several longstanding Ethnic Armed Organisations, known as EAOs, have further consolidated their control of certain parts of Myanmar. They have also developed parallel governance structures, which has included caring for the many internally displaced people in their territories.

For example, the [Karenni State Interim Executive Council](#) (IEC) was formed in 2023 as part of the [Karenni Interim Government](#). It provides essential services and collects taxes, but it also provides humanitarian care to people displaced by the conflict and is associated with armed groups.

“We are the authority. We are authorised to look after our people,” Banya Kun Aung, secretary of the IEC, told *The New Humanitarian*. Despite being far from the epicentre, Karenni state was still affected by the 28 March earthquakes, suffering landslides, sinkholes, and damage to water infrastructure and buildings.

It is to groups like these – Karenni authorities were cited in particular – that some aid workers say beleaguered humanitarian efforts in Myanmar should turn. This echoes a stance popular among aid activists even before the earthquake, but observers say the disaster brings fresh urgency to reform aid efforts in the country.

“At this point in time, some of these non-state armed groups are our legitimate [international humanitarian] partners,” Manny Maung, a human rights researcher, said last month in a webinar run by the ODI think tank. “They have the will of the people, the support of the people; they are delivering services to the people; and we cannot be bogged down by the conventional ideation of what it means to work with a non-state armed group,

because it’s not the same context in Myanmar.”

The fact that the three most powerful EAOs – the Arakan Army (AA), the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), and the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) – [have all been accused of severe human rights abuses](#) is not dampening enthusiasm for governance projects like the Karenni IEC.

Myanmar civil society figures [have called](#) the project a “blueprint for other liberated areas” that “donors must recognise and actively support” – a stance that is receiving support among international advocates. Their call is part of a broader revolutionary vision for a federalised democratic Myanmar, an objective pushed by the exiled National Unity Government (NUG), which also has a [humanitarian department](#) but did not respond to requests for comment.

Junta remains a major obstacle to relief

As Myanmar’s regime is typically isolationist and heavily reliant on a few key allies like Russia and China, General Min Aung Hlaing, leader of the SAC, made waves following the earthquake when he invited “any country or organisation to come and assist”.

Many international search and rescue teams did – from 32 countries, [according](#) to junta-controlled media – though their work was reportedly heavily controlled by SAC soldiers.

Also unusually, the SAC announced a ceasefire on 2 April, five days after the earthquake, later [extended](#) until 31 May. In reality, however, the war has not stopped, including for victims of the disaster.

The Centre for Ah Nyar Studies, a monitoring group, conducted an impact assessment in the worst-hit Mandalay, Magway, and Sagaing townships. Published on 6 April, it interviewed 251 earthquake-affected people and found 32% of them had endured a military airstrike or raid following the disaster.

[Three different](#) international monitors documented dozens of junta attacks in the days after the ceasefire.

While the junta has traded accusations the other way too, the opposition media now puts the number of attacks in the hundreds, and the ousted civilian government says the military has [killed nearly 400 people](#) within a month.

But it’s not just the SAC’s military attacks that have hindered the earthquake response.

Khin Ohmar, founder of Progressive Voice, a human rights advocacy group, said she heard reports of people responding to the earthquake being arrested and surveilled, and of security forces collecting information about who donated to some relief causes. Banyar Toe, president of the Centre for Ah Nyar Studies, said he received reports about aid materials being confiscated by the military.

Such allegations were echoed by the special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas Andrews. In a 10 April [statement](#), he said the SAC “continues to obstruct aid from reaching untold numbers of those in desperate need. This is making a terrible situation devastatingly worse.”

The military has long been accused of diverting and weaponising aid, particularly as conflict has intensified since 2021. Many aid workers and rights activists interviewed by *The New Humanitarian* also cited the [military’s behaviour](#) after [Cyclone Nargis](#) in 2008, which saw aid blocked and humanitarian workers jailed.

One Myanmar aid worker, who travelled for an international NGO through military checkpoints to Mandalay and Sagaing soon after the earthquakes, said – even if there were officially no restrictions – the presence of SAC security forces alone acted as a deterrent on where local civil society groups were willing to work.

Speaking anonymously for security reasons, the aid worker told *The New*



Humanitarian that many Myanmar NGOs are unwilling to register with the SAC – as demanded by the junta – for fear of what might happen to them or of losing their freedom to operate.

Despite this, they are often asked to do so by the UN agencies and international NGOs they work with, Banyar said, “which is very, very risky for local civil society groups.”

“We said no [to the requests],” he added.

Most of the [15 million people in humanitarian need](#) in Myanmar are in areas controlled by opposition armed groups, according to Banyar. “When we register, we are not allowed to do such things – we are not allowed to save lives in the resistance groups-controlled area,” he said. “We will only be allowed to do the things SAC wants us to do in a very, very narrow space.”

Myanmar watchers say the inverse of this – supine adherence to bureaucratic SAC requirements and restrictions

– is exactly what has been fuelling widespread resentment and frustrations at the aid efforts of the UN and international NGOs.

Calls for a dual response

The fault line that struck Sagaing was political as well as geological: The area has become a stronghold of the People’s Defence Forces (PDFs), the armed pro-democracy groups fighting the junta since 2021.

There are [reported](#) to be more than 300 intertwined PDF outfits operating in Magwe, Sagaing, and Mandalay, complicating access for international humanitarians trying to work with permission from SAC. Different armed ethnic groups hold sway over several other chunks of the country. The junta, meanwhile, controls most major cities and infrastructure, including Yangon airport, which is needed to fly in supplies.

Despite calls from the junta’s most vociferous opponents to never work with the military, including on humanitarian relief, some are cautiously suggesting a two-pronged aid approach could work best to help those affected by the earthquakes.

Myanmar expert David Scott Mathieson [suggested](#) that “instead of getting bogged down in debates over which system [with or without SAC] is better, accept that both have their merit and important functions to perform”.

To some extent, Ohmar of Progressive Voice, agreed. “In [the earthquake-hit capital] Naypyidaw or in Mandalay city, the reality is [the SAC] are there, they are still controlling the structure,” she said. “The aid must reach the people with transparency, accountability, but also equal distribution. This is why we are very concerned: because of how [the SAC has] operated in the history of Myanmar in any disaster.” Ohmar suggested embassies present in Myanmar could

"monitor and give that signal to the junta that 'we are watching what you do with our money?'"

International agencies "need to work with the SAC to save lives", said Banyar. "But on the condition that we do not empower the SAC to kill people, for example [by] giving cash aid directly to the SAC, which is very very risky."

"Working with the SAC or working with other entities in Burma, it is possible," said Banya Kun Aung of the Karenni IEC, calling for a coordination platform to be created, and then for a free and fair humanitarian system to be designed by UN agencies together with a state entity that doesn't control everything. He said more pressure was needed on the SAC "to allow the UN to work more freely on ground... But some UN agencies are weak or afraid, I don't know why."

Covert progress on localised aid

After many years of complaints, international donors have been taking local aid groups more seriously, several of the Myanmar sources told The New Humanitarian, speaking as many did for this article, on condition of anonymity. Some said they had been contacted by international NGOs and government donors following the earthquake.

Despite some beliefs to the contrary, UN humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher, who heads the emergency aid coordination body, OCHA, told The New Humanitarian "yes" when asked if he had a chance to meet the NUG or any EAOs while in Myanmar after the disaster.

"In any humanitarian response, engagement with all parties to reach people in need of assistance is crucial - in line with this approach, Mr. Fletcher had discussions with all stakeholders during his visit," an OCHA spokesperson later added.

The statement continued: "The UN distributes aid directly to affected communities through its network of

humanitarian and development partners. Aid is not channelled through the State Administration Council, National Unity Government, or any other party to the conflict."

OCHA's statement was a marked contrast to the remarks from Andrews, the human rights envoy, who called for the UN Security Council to encourage humanitarian work with the NUG, ethnic resistance groups, and Myanmar civil society.

Okkar Shein, head of programming at the Gender Equality Network, a Myanmar-based NGO, said some flexible funding has been made available for local groups.

Advocacy for local humanitarians in Myanmar has seen successes, "to the point where [donors] got to understand that without the locals, [aid] cannot be delivered", said Ohmar. But she estimated that the amount of aid coming in through informal channels was still fairly nominal - around \$30 million per year compared to the \$300 million channelled to Myanmar with junta approval, according to the UN's Humanitarian Response Plan.

She worried that the hard-won progress on funding local humanitarian responses could be undone by the earthquake, as more aid surges into the country through the military. Others, speaking anonymously, worried about the impact of USAID's closure, as the agency was respected for its discreet work supporting informal [humanitarian channels in Myanmar](#).

Despite many vocal advocates - who frequently call for outside-the-box thinking - exactly how donors can support Myanmar's local aid networks while avoiding the SAC is a topic its supporters, including donors, are often reluctant to detail in public.

In practice, it means "providing support to civil society networks from neighbouring countries especially Thailand, and [to a lesser extent] India," said ODI's Barter, adding that it often includes cash or medical supplies.

So-called cross-border aid - also used in Syria to circumvent the former al-Assad regime - has a long [history](#) in Myanmar, but it is contentious and can be risky as it contravenes the wishes of the central authority.

Big international aid agencies "will not refer to 'border channelling' or 'cross-border' because they operate within a 'state sovereignty' frame, but this does not work in the Myanmar context", said Ohmar.

Donors who support it tend not to admit it publicly, for diplomatic and security reasons. Any Myanmar civil society or donor sources currently involved in these efforts declined to go into the details of how it works, citing security reasons.

Longstanding [complaints](#) about the performance of the UN in Myanmar have not abated, and local groups say there is a limited understanding of the organisation's response or funding abilities following the earthquake.

Okkar's organisation is normally funded by a UN agency but was unable to access emergency funding following the earthquake: He was unsure why.

While the UN agencies have money, they "cannot disburse funding efficiently or immediately to local [civil society organisations] with very little resources when they are in need," added Okkar. He approached another UN agency for emergency funding - for items like dignity kits, rehydration salts, and personal protective equipment - but was told the agency required an assessment to release the funding. Okkar said this would take around a month to complete.

"In that time of emergency, why do we need to take a lot of time to do that kind of assessment?" he asked. "They should skip the procedure... in an emergency, money first, resources first, and then we will do paperwork later."

Source: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2025/05/15/myanmar-depth-slow-earthquake-response-underlines-need-overhaul-long-flawed>

At least three die, including two children, in Libya-Italy crossing, NGO says

ROME, May 11 (Reuters) - At least three people have died, including two children aged 3 and 4, in a Mediterranean sea crossing from Libya to Italy, a German sea rescue charity said on Sunday, adding that it had rescued 59 survivors.

The migrants were intercepted on Saturday on a rubber boat floating adrift south of the Italian island of Lampedusa that had been spotted by a surveillance aircraft of the EU border agency Frontex.

"By the time (we) reached the rubber boat at around 4.30pm (1430 GMT), it was too late to help some of the people," the RESQSHIP charity said in a statement.

"Two bodies of infants aged 3 and 4 were handed over to us," the charity quoted one of its paramedics identified only as Rania as saying. "They had died the day before, probably of thirst."

A man was found unconscious and declared dead after attempts to resuscitate him were unsuccessful, RESQSHIP said, adding that it was told by survivors that another migrant had drowned on Friday after going overboard.

Many of the survivors, who were taken to Lampedusa, suffered chemical burns from salt water and fuel, the group said. Two children and four adults in critical condition were handed over to the Italian coast guard to be brought ashore more quickly.

The rubber boat had set off from the port of Zawiya in western Libya on Wednesday, but its engine failed after one day of navigation, leaving the migrants on board exposed to wind and weather, the NGO said.

Lampedusa lies between Tunisia, Malta and the larger Italian island of Sicily and is the first port of call for many migrants seeking to reach the EU from North Africa, in what has become one of the world's deadliest sea crossings.

Almost 25,000 migrants have died or gone missing on this central Mediterranean route since 2014, according to the International Organization for Migration, including around 1,700 last year and 378 so far this year.

Source: <https://www.reuters.com/world/least-three-die-including-two-children-libya-italy-crossing-ngo-says-2025-05-11/>



NGO Guide to the Humanitarian Country Team Terms of Reference, May 2025

Introduction

The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) is the most senior inter-agency leadership body of an international humanitarian response in a country. A well-functioning HCT plays a pivotal role in ensuring the humanitarian response is effective and principled. This document, aimed at NGO Country Directors, clarifies the role and responsibilities of the HCT and its members, and how NGOs can best engage with and influence the HCT process.

Note: to understand the structure itself - refer to the companion paper: "Understanding and influencing the IASC System at Country-Level".

Based on ICVA's experience supporting NGO HCT participation in more than 30 countries, excerpts of the standard HCT Terms of Reference have been selected and commented, with the aim to:

- Highlight requirements for effective HCT participation.
- Identify practical considerations

requiring the attention of NGOs and NGO Fora.

- Provide links to reference documents (policy, tools and guidance) to guide HCT members in their role.
- Where useful, clarify the expectations related to some items.

Readers are strongly encouraged to read the full HCT Terms of Reference document for themselves. 1 The views in the commentary are ICVA's and should not be seen as official IASC positions.

Source: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/ngo-guide-humanitarian-country-team-terms-reference-may-2025>

Swiss NGO urges authorities to probe activities of US-backed Gaza aid group

TRIAL International flags legal, humanitarian concerns about Geneva-based Gaza Humanitarian Foundation's operational model



Source:

GENEVA. A Swiss non-governmental organization has reiterated its call for Swiss authorities to investigate the activities of Geneva-based Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), a US-backed aid group, raising alarm over its use of private military companies and warning of serious risks to civilians in the Gaza Strip.

"The Swiss FDFA (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs) has stated it will now review the legal requirements governing the activities of Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) with regard to resorting to private military companies. Meanwhile, the Federal Supervisory Board for Foundations (ASF) has clarified it cannot assess the Foundation's compliance with its statutes until operations begin," TRIAL International said in a statement on Monday.

"This is wrong, as activities have long started on the ground. TRIAL International has thus again written to the Swiss authorities to seek immediate review of the activities of the GHF," it said, adding: "Delivering aid through a private security-led model, as proposed, poses serious risks to civilians in Gaza and demands urgent action to ensure humanitarian principles and the Geneva Conventions are upheld."

The NGO stressed that humanitarian aid should never be used as "a weapon of war," and added that aid entrance to the enclave should be allowed and then distributed by "well-recognized actors."

The latest call came just days after the NGO filed two formal legal submissions to Swiss authorities, the ASF and the FDFA, asking to determine whether the activities of GHF are in line with Swiss law and international humanitarian law. It argued that Switzerland, as the depositary state of the Geneva Conventions, has a responsibility to ensure that entities based on its territory uphold international humanitarian law.

Source: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/swiss-ngo-urges-authorities-to-probe-activities-of-us-backed-gaza-aid-group/3580883#>

"The dire humanitarian situation in Gaza requires an immediate response. However, the planned use of private security companies leads to a risky militarization of aid, which is not justified in a context where the United Nations and humanitarian NGOs have the impartiality, resources and expertise necessary to distribute this aid without delay to the civilian population," Philip Grant, the executive director of TRIAL International said in the statement.

Earlier, the UN humanitarian office warned that recent reports of aid distribution by the GHF risk distracting from the urgent humanitarian priorities in Gaza, such as sustained access, safe conditions, and expedited approval of emergency supplies.

"It is a distraction from what is actually needed, which is a reopening of all the crossings into Gaza, a secure environment within Gaza, and faster facilitation of missions and final approvals of all the emergency supplies that we have just outside the border and needs to get in," Jens Laerke, spokesperson OCHA, told reporters in Geneva.

Laerke was responding to a question about whether the UN had seen any confirmed delivery of aid by the US-backed aid group GHF, which announced on Monday that it had begun distributing food in the enclave.

The GHF's involvement in an Israeli-controlled aid mechanism has raised concern among humanitarian actors who say meaningful relief requires large-scale, sustained access.

Aid groups continue to call for the reopening of critical crossings like Rafah and Kerem Shalom and for the safety of humanitarian workers operating inside Gaza.

China: A coalition of more than 60 NGOs, including RSF, demand the release of ailing journalist Zhang Zhan on the 5th anniversary of her arrest

A coalition of more than 60 press freedom and human rights NGOs led by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) called for the release of Chinese journalist Zhang Zhan on 14 May, the 5th anniversary of her first arrest. Her health has severely deteriorated due to her intermittent hunger strikes in protest of her arbitrary detention — she must be immediately released.



On 14 May 2020, Zhang Zhan was arrested while covering the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, the city where the pandemic began, as reprisal for her reporting. Despite having already served a four-year prison sentence, the journalist is now [being prosecuted](#) a second time for reporting on human rights violations by the Chinese regime. According to RSF sources, the journalist will soon be tried but the date of her hearing is still unknown. She remains detained in the Pudong Detention Centre in Shanghai, facing an additional 5 years in prison.

In a [joint statement](#), the coalition expressed its concern over Zhang Zhan's health, as she continues to go on intermittent [hunger strikes](#) to protest her arbitrary detention. She was hospitalised twice in 2021 due to severe malnutrition. In January 2025, Zhang Zhan started her hunger strike again in protest of her second arrest. In response, detention centre personnel have subjected her to force-feeding through a gastric tube – a practice considered under international treaties as ill-treatment, and in some cases torture.

“RSF, together with a coalition of international NGOs, is sounding the alarm over the prolonged and arbitrary detention of Zhang Zhan, a Chinese journalist who has been harshly punished for reporting on matters of serious public interest for five years. Her health continues to deteriorate — the Chinese regime must end the journalist’s suffering and release her without further delay so she can receive adequate, independent medical care. We also call on the international community to amplify our call and pressure the Chinese regime to free Zhang Zhan and the 124 other journalists currently detained in China.

Antoine Bernard

RSF Director of Advocacy and Assistance

Zhang Zhan was apprehended by the police for the second time on 28 August 2024 — just three months after

completing her four-year prison sentence — while travelling to her hometown in Shaanxi, a province in northwest China. In the weeks leading up to her second arrest, Zhang had returned to her reporting, covering the harassment of activists in China on social media.

Before her first arrest, Zhang Zhan posted more than 100 videos on social media documenting the outbreak of COVID-19. Seven months after she was apprehended, the journalist was [sentenced to four years in prison](#) by a Shanghai court on the charge of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble.” RSF has [campaigning for her release](#) throughout her imprisonment and repeatedly warned about the ill treatment she has been subjected to in prison.

China is the world’s biggest prison for journalists and press freedom defenders with at least 125 media workers currently behind bars, and ranks 178th out of 180 countries in the 2025 [RSF World Press Freedom Index](#).

Source: <https://rsf.org/en/china-coalition-more-60-ngos-including-rsf-demand-release-ailing-journalist-zhang-zhan-5th>



Foreign-funded NGOs in Hungary that 'threaten sovereignty' targeted in draft law

The "Transparency in Public Life" bill would impose strict regulations on foreign-funded NGOs that are deemed a risk to Hungary's sovereignty.

A Hungarian lawmaker in Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's ruling Fidesz party has proposed a bill that could significantly restrict the operations of foreign-funded NGOs that are deemed to be a threat to the country's sovereignty.

János Halász filed a draft law late on Tuesday entitled "Transparency in Public Life", which says that public activity in Hungary should be subject to stricter regulation.

The bill states that organisations that threaten Hungary's sovereignty will

no longer be allowed to accept foreign funding without authorisation, will not be eligible for personal income tax relief, and will have to declare their assets, among other requirements.

Hungary under Orbán has for years enacted crackdowns on NGOs and independent media, passing laws that critics argue seek to stigmatise and hinder groups that provide protection for women and minorities, offer legal and human rights assistance, and expose official corruption.

Those efforts ramped up in 2023 when Orbán's right-wing populist government launched the Sovereignty Protection Office, an authority tasked with investigating organisations and media outlets it deems to be exerting foreign influence.

The office has the power to gather information on any groups or individuals that benefit from foreign funding and influence public debate, and Hungary's secret services can assist in its investigations.

Under the draft law filed by Halász, the Sovereignty Protection Office would investigate organisations and recommend to the government which should be placed on a list that would entail the tougher regulations.

Listed organisations would not be allowed to be the beneficiary of a percentage of the personal income tax paid by an individual, and would have to ask people who donate to declare that the money did not come from abroad.

If the Sovereignty Protection Office discovers that a listed entity has accepted foreign aid without its authorisation, it can impose fines amounting to 25 times the accepted sum, according to the bill.

The draft law says that any foreign funding could be a threat to Hungary's sovereignty - including EU grants for which organisations based in an EU member state are competing.

The bill says that it is a violation of Hungary's sovereignty if an NGO or organisation "portrays Hungary in a negative light".

Activists and critics of Fidesz have compared the Sovereignty Protection Office to Russia's "foreign agent" law, and said it can be used to arbitrarily target government critics, including NGOs and journalists. Anyone convicted of a violation can face prison terms of up to three years.

The European Commission in December [referred](#) Hungary to the Court of Justice over the law that established the Sovereignty Protection Office. The Commission argues that the Hungarian legislation is in conflict with EU law and violates, among other things, the right to the protection of personal data, freedom of expression and association.

Hungarian NGOs contacted for comment by Euronews said they would publish a joint response to the bill in due course.

Source: <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/05/14/foreign-funded-ngos-in-hungary-that-threaten-sovereignty-targeted-in-draft-law>

International NGO Human Appeal Issues Statement Regarding JHCO

MANCHESTER, England, May 10, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- Human Appeal strongly condemns recent attempts to undermine the credibility and humanitarian mission of the Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organization (JHCO). We affirm our full support for the Organization's longstanding and commendable contributions to international humanitarian efforts, particularly its critical work in supporting the people of the Gaza Strip.

Human Appeal has successfully delivered humanitarian assistance to Gaza, a success made possible—first and foremost—by the grace of The Almighty, and through the unwavering support of the Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organization and its cooperation with Human Appeal and other international partners.

The Organization's record of achievement and the scale of its humanitarian impact speak for themselves and stand as a powerful testament against any attempt to question or diminish its vital role. At a time when global attention is fixed on Gaza, the Organization has emerged as a central and reliable source of humanitarian relief.

"Human Appeal reiterates its deep appreciation and respect for the Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organization and all its dedicated staff. In particular, we extend our sincere gratitude to Dr. Hussein Al-Shibli, Secretary-General of JHCO, for his tireless and constructive leadership during this critical period, as the global humanitarian community continues to face escalating challenges in delivering essential aid to the people of Gaza," stated Dr. Mohamed Ashmawey, CEO of Human Appeal.

Source: <https://www.prnewswire.co.uk/news-releases/international-ngo-human-appeal-issues-statement-regarding-jhco-302451644.html>

Refugees International Welcomes President Trump's Decision to Lift U.S. Sanctions on Syria

Statement from Refugees International Senior Advocate for the Middle East Jesse Marks:

On May 13, President Trump [announced](#) his intention to lift sanctions on Syria—marking the beginning of the end of fifteen years of crippling economic isolation. If fully implemented, the decision could jumpstart Syria's recovery and offer millions of Syrians a chance to rebuild their country and their lives.

Earlier this week, Refugees International [joined](#) more than 55 Syrian and international NGOs calling on President Trump to ease Syrian sanctions. Doing so will help ease the country's humanitarian crisis and support Syrians' ability to return, rebuild, and recover after years of war.

While U.S. sanctions once played a role in isolating the Assad regime, they have increasingly harmed ordinary Syrians—blocking aid, restricting basic services, and stalling recovery. Lifting these restrictions now creates an opportunity to reverse this damage and support more sustainable, locally led recovery efforts.

But the process of lifting sanctions is neither swift nor automatic. It will take months to revise sanctions lists,

issue new guidance, and coordinate with banks and humanitarian actors. In the meantime, Syrians remain trapped in limbo. President Trump should use his Section 7431 authority under the Caesar Action to immediately pause Caesar sanctions for 180 days while the broader policy effort takes shape. Such a pause would send a clear signal to aid agencies, financial intermediaries, and regional governments that the U.S. is serious about enabling recovery—and, more urgently, allow assistance to reach those who cannot afford to wait.

Meanwhile, this move must not be used as a pretext by refugee-hosting countries to pressure Syrian refugees to return prematurely. Refugees International's May [report](#) highlighted the scale of emergency ongoing inside Syria, which sanctions relief can ease, but not fully reverse in the short-term.

We urge the administration to move quickly to issue clear guidance, expand humanitarian licenses, and coordinate closely with humanitarian actors, financial institutions, and regional governments. Without swift implementation, the benefits of this decision may not reach those who need it most."

Half a million Somali children risk dying from hunger: NGO

NAIROBI: Almost half a million children in Somalia face severe malnourishment and are at risk of dying from hunger, an NGO warned Monday, just as international aid operations are scaled back.

The Horn of Africa nation is one of the world's poorest, enduring decades of civil war, climate disasters and a bloody insurgency by the Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Shabaab.

The country only recently began to recover from a long-running drought, while widespread flooding in 2023 saw almost one million people displaced.

CARE International said the number of severely malnourished children under five had increased to 1.8 million, citing projections by a UN-backed monitoring body dated March 29.

"Of these, 479,000 are expected to be severely malnourished and at risk of dying without urgent help," it said.

CARE International said the country's "malnutrition crisis is accelerating faster than predicted" thanks to "seasonal challenges and the fallout from 2024's drought".

As a result, in the hardest-hit areas across the country the number of people in "emergency conditions surged by 50 percent".



Ummy Dubow, CARE Somalia country director, said women and children were most affected.

"Every day, we hear countless human tragedies in the centres we run. Pregnant women sacrificing their nutrition, mothers watching their children waste away from acute

malnutrition, and young girls being pulled from school to help families survive," he said in a statement.

The situation was being exacerbated by funding cuts, with aid groups forced to scale back operations and this year's United Nations aid plan for Somalia currently only 11 percent funded.

Source: <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/statements-and-news/refugees-international-welcomes-president-trumps-decision-to-lift-u-s-sanctions-on-syria/>

Source: <https://www.brecorder.com/news/40368784/iran-says-no-nuclear-talks-under-israeli-fire-trump-considers-options>



50 NGOs protest Israel's restrictions on aid to Palestinians

More than 50 nongovernmental organizations are protesting new Israeli regulations they contend will further degrade humanitarian assistance to Palestinians and place already endangered relief workers at even greater risk.

The international NGOs issued a statement May 6 imploring the world community to join their opposition to the overly complex registration requirements for aid groups operating in Gaza and other areas controlled by Israel.

“Based on vague, broad, politicized and open-ended criteria, these rules appear designed to assert control over independent humanitarian, development and peacebuilding operations, silence advocacy grounded in international

humanitarian and human rights law, and further entrench Israeli control and de facto annexation of the occupied Palestinian territory,” the statement said.

Humanitarian aid groups have operated under increasingly severe restraints for more than a year, the organizations said.

“In 2024, they reached millions of people across the (occupied Palestinian territory) with essential services — from food and water to mobile clinics, legal aid and education. The new registration rules now threaten to shut this work down. These measures go beyond routine policy. They mark a serious escalation in restrictions on humanitarian and civic space and risk setting a dangerous precedent.”

Introduced in March, Israel's new visa and registration requirements grant authorities extensive leeway in

approving or denying NGO applications to serve the Palestinian population, particularly in Gaza and the West Bank.

These measures ... mark a serious escalation in restrictions on humanitarian and civic space and risk setting a dangerous precedent.”

The policy demands detailed information on organizations' international operations, “including an annual report,” a budget for the preceding year and “an audited financial statement prepared by a Certified Public Accountant for the past three years,” according to Israel's Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism.

Applicants also must provide comprehensive lists of donors with background information on each, the dates and amounts of donations, and the percentage each donation represented in a budget.

Furthermore, detailed personal information also must be shared about foreign-born employees, including countries of birth, passport numbers and expiration dates, cell phone numbers and proof of insurance coverage. An NGO or an employee can be rejected for inciting racism, supporting “an armed struggle by an enemy state or a terrorist organization against the State of Israel,” or promoting boycotts of the nation.

But 55 international NGOs, including the American Friends Service Committee, the Mennonite Central Committee and Save the Children, contend the new restrictions are part of Israel's ongoing effort to restrict aid to Palestinians and heighten the danger faced by relief workers.

“These new rules are part of a broader, long-term crackdown on humanitarian and civic space, marked by heightened surveillance and attacks, and a series of actions that restrict

humanitarian access, compromise staff safety, and undermine core principles of humanitarian action,” according to the joint statement.

Those actions include hampering supplies through logistical obstacles and bureaucratic hurdles, suspending work visas for foreign staffers and enacting legislation banning the United Nations Relief and Works Agency from assisting Palestinians.

The campaign includes the killing of “more than 400 humanitarian workers in Gaza, injuring and detaining countless others, and repeatedly attacking marked and notified humanitarian premises, facilities or convoys,” the group contends.

Making NGO registration “conditional on political and ideological alignment, undermining the neutrality, impartiality and independence of humanitarian actors” is just the latest element of Israel's campaign to repress Palestinians and international aid groups, they say. “Under international humanitarian law, occupying powers are obligated to facilitate impartial humanitarian assistance and ensure the welfare of the protected population. Any attempt to condition humanitarian access on political alignment or penalize

organizations for fulfilling their mandate risks breaching this framework.”

The organizations are calling on the international community to advocate to protect the safe delivery of humanitarian relief.

The groups also urge global actors to take “concrete political and diplomatic action beyond statements of concern to ensure unhindered humanitarian access and prevent the erosion of principled aid delivery.”

Otherwise, Israel will simply move ahead with efforts to legitimize the dismantling of humanitarian aid “and further the annexation and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians,” American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker humanitarian group, said in releasing the statement. “These rules and related legislation are also designed to silence organizations and threaten civil society as a whole. Israel wants to turn humanitarian aid into an instrument of repression against Palestinians in Gaza.”

Other signatories to the statement include Action Aid, Children Not Numbers, Humanity First UK, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Japan International Volunteer Center, Norwegian Church Aid, Middle East Children's Alliance, Oxfam and Pax Christi International.



Jeff Brumley



Shaha's story - A young life forever affected by an explosion (Iraq)

At 3, Shaha fled her home with her family, after ISIS took over their neighbourhood. On their way, an improvised explosive device exploded, killing members of her family and injuring others.

Shaha had severe burns on her hand and shoulder, along with jaw and eye injuries. **She has undergone multiple surgeries, and she now has prosthetic eye lenses and wears glasses.**

Shaha is now able to move her hand and fingers, but as she gets older, she will need additional physiotherapy sessions to maintain good mobility.



NGO takes 100 Oshodi street kids back to school

A Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), IA-Foundation has taken 100 children in Mafofuku, Oshodi, Lagos off the street to school.

Speaking on this in celebration of the Children's Day, The Founder and CEO of IA-Foundation Mrs. Iboronke Adeagbo stressed the importance of not neglecting these children, warning that failure to do so would only increase poverty and insecurity in the country.

She encouraged NGOs to collaborate and support the government

in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) by ensuring children have access to quality education.

According to her, The IA-Foundation's Children's Day outreach was a call to action: a reminder that every child deserves a chance to learn, grow, and thrive.

Adeagbo noted that by taking these children off the streets and into a space of joy and encouragement, the Foundation continues to reaffirm its unwavering commitment to building a

brighter future through education.

The Founder stated that these children who are often left to navigate life alone were welcomed into a space of safety, encouragement, and care, adding that the children were treated to an inspiring talk on the power of education, delivered by the IA-Foundation team.

She noted that they were encouraged to dream beyond their circumstances and embrace the life-changing potential of learning.

Source: <https://tribuneonline.com/ngo-takes-100-oshodi-street-kids-back-to-school/>



Ooni of Ife's NGO builds free school for seven Lagos communities

In a philanthropic gesture aimed at transforming education for underserved children, the Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, has launched a fully funded primary school in the Eyinogbe community of Adamo, Ikorodu, Lagos.

The initiative, undertaken through his non-governmental organisation, HopesAlive Initiative (HAI), is expected to serve pupils from seven surrounding communities. The free school, designed to run from Primary 1 to 6, will include modern facilities such as a sick bay, library, ICT centre, and an event hall—all within the same complex.

The groundbreaking ceremony, held over the weekend, was attended by traditional rulers, community leaders, and education stakeholders. Olori Temitope Enitan-Ogunwusi, Deputy Convener of HAI, described the project as divinely ordained, revealing that the land had been in her family for 18 years before being repurposed for humanitarian work.

"The land was acquired for me by my late mother, Mrs Adebisi Iyabosola Adesegun. Though it remained undeveloped for years, I now believe that delay was divine—meant to serve this greater purpose," Olori Temitope said.

She credited her husband, the Ooni of Ife, for his steadfast support and vision. "Kabiyesi's support has been the backbone of everything we do at HAI. His goodwill opens doors and brings help to the initiative across Nigeria."

The school project is a prototype of a similar one planned for Ile-Ife,



the monarch's kingdom in Osun State. Construction is expected to be completed within three months, with all necessary resources already secured.

Olori Temitope emphasised that the school would cater specifically to street children and those from low-income backgrounds. In addition to free education, pupils will receive meals, healthcare, and vocational training.

"This school is for the vulnerable, those who deserve a better future. We are committed to giving them not just education, but dignity and hope," she said.

To ensure sustainability, the complex will include revenue-generating facilities such as an event centre, which will serve the local community. The ICT centre, developed in collaboration with the federal government, will also serve as a JAMB examination centre.

The school will be managed by a Board of Management and serve as a satellite study centre for Ojaja University, offering short courses and

sandwich programmes to students in the region.

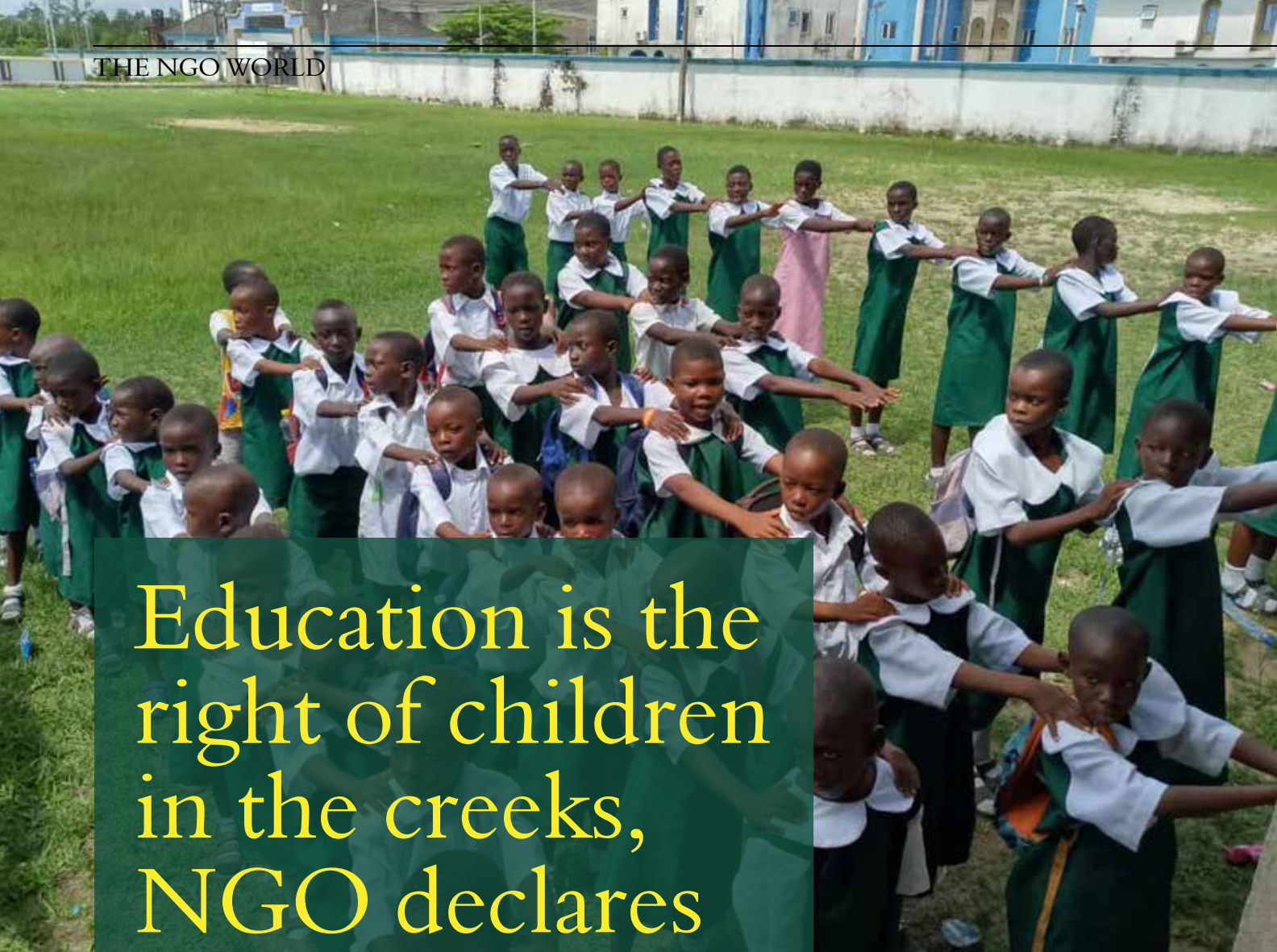
Renowned cleric Pastor Ituah Ighodalo, who laid the foundation and consecrated the site, praised the monarch's commitment to humanitarian causes beyond his immediate domain. "This is a clear signal that the Ooni of Ife is a global figure with a heart for service," he said.

Traditional leaders present at the event echoed similar sentiments. Baale of Eyinogbe, Taiwo Olowo, expressed gratitude to the royal family, noting that the school would bring development to the area.

Oba Adebawale Adekunle, Agbolu of Agbaje Ife, commended Olori Temitope's continued dedication to community service, describing her as a reflection of the king's values.

Other dignitaries at the event included Oba Fayemi Johnson Olumuyiwa, the Elerefe of Erefe Ife, and Oba Adedire Adewole Solomon, the Onifegunwa of Ifegunwa, Ile-Ife.

Source: https://guardian.ng/news/nigeria/ooni-of-ifes-ngo-builds-free-school-for-seven-lagos-communities/#google_vignette



Education is the right of children in the creeks, NGO declares

As Nigeria joins the rest of world to celebrate children's day, a Non-Governmental Organisation, NGO, the Creek Child Education

As Nigeria joins the rest of world to celebrate children's day, a Non-Governmental Organisation, NGO, the Creek Child Education Foundation today said education is the right of every child in the creeks, irrespective of their backgrounds.

Founder of The Creek Child Education Foundation, Vivian Pori made the assertion during an interview with Our Correspondent at Jeije Primary School, Kurutie Federated Community,

Gbaramatu Kingdom in Warri South-West Local Government Area of Delta State.

Pori, whose foundation joined the pupils of Jeije and Oge Primary Schools in celebration of the children's day, also said the creek children deserves good education in the Niger Delta region.

"So, the creek child education foundation has taken it upon itself to make the world know that, we need good education.

"We need teachers, a large number of teachers in our schools. We need supply of educational materials and we need time-to-time check, probably from the ministry of education or somewhere."

Pori added: "Let them come and see what's going on in our schools. I live in city. This is not how schools in the city appear and teaching materials for teachers are not readily available to us here in the creeks. So please, we are reaching out to the world to come to our aid."

In celebrating with the children, the creek child education foundation also provided pupils of the two schools with note books, my-first-year-book, catch them young for kids, quantitative & verbal reasoning, branded T-Shirts, biscuits and juice worth several thousands of naira.

Earlier in an interview, the headteachers of Jeije Primary School, Dideke Patricia, appreciated the founder of The Creek Child Education Foundation, Vivian Pori for the kind gesture and prayed God to bless her and her team for coming to the aid of the institution with the items she provided.

Patricia said the school currently lacks writing material, text books, game equipment, hall, playground amongst others.

She said they need the aforementioned educational materials/ facilities in addition to sandal, stockings and uniforms for pupils of the school.

She said, "all those can be provided to make the children happy, because some of the parents don't have the finances to do those things."

Patricia added: "Many are in the creeks that we needed to give education but that's not possible because there's no finance to do that.

"We need help from the government from federal down to local government. We need help to bring these Creek children to education, because some of the places they're now, they are distance. There's no school where they're and the children are suffering. They don't even know the gains of education or school. We need help from government in Jeije Primary School. We need a local boats with cover to convey these children from the neighbouring villages down to the school in Kurutie. This can be done with the help of the government of all the arms.

"But we are just trying, because some foundations came to help us, giving us writing materials and the children were happy.

Source: https://freshangleng.com/36553/education-is-the-right-of-children-in-the-creeks-ngo-declares#google_vignette

"For me, I want more foundations to come forth with what they have. Nothing is too small. We want the children to be happy as we are seeing them."

Also in an interview, the headteacher of Ogeh Primary School, Kunukunuma Community, Legbe.O. David also appreciated the NGO for providing the pupils of the school with the books.

He said prior to the coming of the NGO to the area, the school lacked a lot of things, including drinkable water, light, pointing out that, "there's no security in the school. The school is not secured. No security. No fence. The school is left at the mercy of God."

He noted: "If the Creek Child Education can try, it will go a long way to help our children particularly the less privileged ones. We are suffering in silence."

He called on the government to come to the aid of the school and address its poor state.

David also said lack of teachers is another problem in the school, stressing, "that's affecting our riverine schools."

According to him, "even teachers are not encouraged. No incentive to them. We want to appeal through this medium to the government to see that incentive is given to teachers to encourage them to put more efforts in their jobs."

The Financial Secretary of Kurutie Federated Community, Mr. Moneyin Bernard, thanked the NGO for assisting and providing the books and other items for the two schools to encourage the pupils and their parents.

He said politicians, philanthropists, companies and interventionist agencies and the government should also come forward and help the creek child achieve their educational dreams by providing the basic educational facilities to the schools in the riverine/creek communities.

Founder of The Creek Child Education Foundation, Vivian Pori, had on Monday May 26, led some members of the foundation on similar education-support visit to Iginuwa Primary School at Ode-Itsekiri in Warri South Local Government Area.

After making donation of educational materials to the school, the headteacher of Iginuwa Primary School, Ode-Itsekiri, Mrs. Rita Ugbometa, commended Vivian Pori and members of her team for the gesture and urged other NGOs and corporate bodies to do same.



NGO hosts empowerment programme for school girls

A non-governmental organization, Move to Impact, recently organised the 8th Edition of its empowerment programme themed: “Be the Change”,

The event featured a Senior Marketing and Public Relations strategist, [Oluwagbotemi Moshood](#) aka Temibrazz, who delivered a compelling and deeply personal address alongside other leaders from diverse fields.

Moshood shared candidly about his early aspiration of joining the military, a childhood dream that later evolved into building a powerful career in storytelling, strategy, and brand building.

With experience working with leading brands as well as founding his own public relations agency, Moshood spoke passionately about navigating the challenges of the creative industry, and how resilience, clarity, and self-

belief helped him find his voice and purpose.

“At one point, I thought I’d be wearing a military uniform as an adult. Today, I help brands find their voice, hold down narratives, build brand legacies, and scale through Marketing and PR. Different paths, same purpose service,” he said.

He also emphasized the importance of representation and mentorship, encouraging the girls to believe in their dreams no matter how unconventional they may seem.

Source: <https://thenationonline.net/ngo-hosts-empowerment-programme-for-school-girls/>



Sindh govt begins serving hot meals to students in partnership with NGO

KARACHI: The Sindh government, in coordination with a non-governmental organisation, has launched a free meal programme in government schools located in underprivileged areas of Sindh.

Education Minister Syed Sardar Shah on Friday inaugurated the School Khana Program at the Government Boys Primary School in Murad Memon Goth, Malir.

In the first phase, the programme aims to provide food to nearly 100,000 schoolchildren in underprivileged areas.

A spokesperson for the Sindh education minister said that the provincial government will provide funding for the programme and the NGO, Allah Wale Trust, will assist in food logistics, kitchen operations and meal distribution, with the aim of ensuring quality and transparency.

Speaking on the occasion, the education minister said that the initiative would help improve children’s learning abilities and bring out-of-school children back to classrooms.

700 students at Malir school will receive one free meal daily; scheme to be expanded to other schools

He emphasised that nutritional deficiencies hinder children’s learning ability. He pointed out that children in underprivileged areas were severely malnourished, and balanced nutrition played a crucial role in their physical development.

“We are embarking on a journey that will fulfil children’s nutritional needs



and strengthen their ability to fight illnesses,” he said.

The minister added that globally school meal programmes were seen as effective tools to improve learning outcomes.

He highlighted that Pakistan ranks among the 10 poorest countries in the world, with 42 per cent of its population living below the poverty line.

In such conditions, many parents cannot provide their children with balanced diet, which adversely affects their growth, he said, adding that when children receive meals at school, their attendance improves and they become more interested in learning.

He called the initiative a support system for poor families, as one daily meal at school can also help reduce household expenses.

He praised institutions like Allah Wale Trust for their local ownership and commitment to meaningful work.

Speaking about the programme’s importance, Allah Wale Trust Chairperson Shahid Lone said from that day 700 children at Government Boys Primary School in Murad Memon Goth would receive one free meal daily, with plans to gradually expand the programme to other schools.

Centralised kitchens will be set up to prepare and deliver warm food while maintaining proper temperatures. Facilities for handwashing before and after meals will also be provided to students, he said.

Additional Secretary Dr Fauzia Khan stated that the programme will be evaluated on various parameters.

To measure its impact, the Body Mass Index (BMI) of students will be recorded before launching the programme in schools and again after four months. This will help monitor children’s growth, health, and other related issues.

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1911488>

‘Govt to provide funds to NGO-run schools only if they show judicious use of public money’



The Sindh Education Foundation (SEF) has warned that it will not release subsidies to over 2,600 schools assisted by it across the province until compliance reports are received from each of these educational facilities showing adequate investment in academic infrastructure and judicious use of public funds regularly provided to educate children from deprived communities.

The newly appointed SEF managing director (MD), Gahanwer Ali Laghari, spelt out this warning while speaking as the chief guest at the launch of a new state-of-the-art building of the Mohammad Shafi Trust campus school of the non-profit Green Crescent Trust (GCT) at an underdeveloped village of District Malir near the Education City project.

The GCT has been partnering with the SEF and two other non-governmental organisations, Mohammad Shafi Trust and Khuddam Education Trust, to utilise the new school building to educate up to matriculation 660 students from 22 underserved villages situated nearby.

Laghari said that he had assumed the position of the SEF chief merely 15 days back and so far his main focus had been that regular funding provided by the foundation to the NGOs-run schools across the province was utilised most effectively for providing quality school education to children from neglected and remote localities.

He told the audience that the SEF paid a subsidy of Rs800 to Rs2,000 every month to every student from pre-school to grade 10 in its beneficiary schools, and this monthly assistance increased to Rs2,500 for students enrolled in higher secondary classes.

In case of some special SEF-funded academic initiatives, up to Rs5,000 monthly subsidy was paid, he explained. The SEF MD said that these were public funds funded by the Sindh government

to provide quality education to children from underprivileged families from Karachi to Kashmore, and he would make sure that this assistance was spent most judiciously to fulfil the prime objective of the subsidy programme.

Laghari informed the audience that he had so far visited remote areas in five districts in Sindh to see whether the SEF's assistance was available to educate children from underserved communities under public-private partnership arrangements.

He said the SEF was willing to fully cooperate with committed and sincere NGOs in the education sector that strived to educate people from neglected areas in Sindh under formal and non-formal schooling initiatives. "You should keep in mind that the Sindh Education Foundation isn't an NGO; it is a government-run organisation that doesn't take money but always extends financial assistance to fund quality schooling initiatives in Sindh," he remarked.

He appreciated that several philanthropists and donors from Karachi had come to attend the inauguration of the new school building on the city's outskirts, despite sultry weather, showing their solemn commitment to the cause of education. Laghari offered fullest assistance to the GCT and its partner organisations in their drive to provide quality schooling facilities to children from deprived areas of Sindh.

Trustee of the Mohammad Shafi Trust Mian Amjad Hafeez expressed the hope that the new school building would transform the destiny of thousands of underprivileged rural families by providing quality school education to their children who would meaningfully contribute to the national economy in the future.

He highlighted that three concerned NGOs forming an alliance with the SEF would emerge as a shining example of public-private partnership in the education sector to brighten the future of underserved children in Sindh.

Khuddam Education Trust Chairman Shabbir Latif also praised the cooperation that enabled the schooling facility for rural areas of District Malir. GCT CEO Zahid Saeed said the GCT, partnering with the SEF and like-minded NGOs, had been striving uninterruptedly for the past 31 years to enrol out-of-school children in Sindh.

He expressed gratitude to the SEF and other partner organisations for enabling the GCT to establish a network of 170 charitable schools in remote and underprivileged parts of Sindh having a total enrolment of 32,800 students from deprived communities. He said the GCT got immense support from its donors and partner NGOs, and it would continue its struggle for providing high-quality school education to every neglected child in Sindh.



Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1315322-govt-to-provide-funds-to-ngo-run-schools-only-if-they-show>

From neglect to nurture: NGO adoption transforms middle school in Nurpur area

Once overlooked and facing dwindling enrolment, Government Middle School Bhol-Thakuran in Minjran gram panchayat, Nurpur, is now undergoing a remarkable transformation, thanks to its adoption under the Himachal Pradesh School Adoption Programme. Last September, the school was adopted by the...

Once overlooked and facing dwindling enrolment, Government Middle School Bhol-Thakuran in Minjran gram panchayat, Nurpur, is now undergoing a remarkable transformation, thanks to its adoption under the Himachal Pradesh School Adoption Programme.

Last September, the school was adopted by the Ranjit Bakshi Jankalyan Foundation, a prominent local NGO, under the 'Apna Vidyalaya Scheme'. Prior to the adoption, the lack of basic infrastructure and academic resources had driven many parents to shift their children to nearby private schools. At one point, the student strength had dropped to just 28.

Since its adoption, however, the school has seen a surge in development and optimism. Within a month, the Foundation provided two outsourced teachers — one for language and another

for pre-primary — and set up a school library and computer-printer facility to ensure smoother academic delivery. The enrolment has since increased to 48 students in the current academic session, marking the beginning of a revival.

According to Akil Bakshi, Director of the Foundation, a total of Rs 8 lakh has been earmarked for infrastructure development. This includes the construction of two additional classrooms, a boundary wall, a new entrance gate, furniture upgrades and renovation of the existing school building.

Bakshi stressed that lack of academic infrastructure and vacant teacher posts have been the main reasons for parents preferring private schools over government institutions. He emphasised the urgent need to strengthen basic facilities in government schools to restore public trust and improve

enrolment.

Kuldeep Kumar, a local resident and teacher at the school, revealed that it was upgraded from a primary to a middle school in 2016, having originally been established in 1969. Kuldeep, who played a key role in the school's adoption, said the institution is now being equipped with necessary academic resources and is expected to see a significant rise in enrolment in the coming academic session.

The Jankalyan Foundation, established in 2021 in memory of former MLA Late Ranjit Bakshi, has since been working for the uplift of underprivileged families in the region. Its efforts have become a beacon of hope and a model of social responsibility for other organisations.

Source: <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/himachal/from-neglect-to-nurture-ngo-adoption-transforms-middle-school-in-nurpur-area/>



Japan Provides Over US\$1 Million for Developing Quality Physical Education Teacher and Supporting Children and Youth



The Government of Japan will provide a total of US\$1,182,658 to develop quality physical education teacher, and support children and youth in Cambodia, under the framework, the Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects.

The Grant Contracts were signed here on May 20 between Japanese Ambassador to Cambodia H.E. UENO Atsushi, and the representatives of two recipient organisations — the non-profit organisation HEARTS OF GOLD (HoG) and Kokkyo naki Kodomotachi (KnK).

According to a press release of the Embassy of Japan in Cambodia, of the total amount, US\$618,086 will be used to carry out the 'Project on Developing 4-year Quality Physical Education Teacher Education University through Utilising ICT (Year 3)'.

In this project, HoG will implement activities to improve the management system of the university, such as library, international centre, internal quality assurance, teacher development, student management, alumni support and security management in the National Institute of Physical Education and Sport (NIPES) by utilising ICT. This project aims to establish sustainable management structure in order to train teachers of physical education fitted with "Minimum

Source: <https://www.cpp.org.kh/en/details/416764>

Standards for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (MSAHEI)" in Cambodia.

The rest of the financial support, US\$564,572, will be given to KnK to implement the 'Children and Youth Support by Expanding Access to Lifelong Learning Centre (LLLC) in Banteay Meanchey Province, Cambodia (Year 3)'.

In this project, KnK will continue to support youth, especially those who suffer from unstable jobs, lack of living skills, and dropping out of schools. For the first and second year of this project, three new LLLCs were constructed. For the third year, two new LLLCs will be constructed and equipped with learning materials. By providing equivalency education class and enhanced vocational training as well as close support to children and youth, they can acquire skills which helps them to create a foundation for a better life in their future.

The Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects started in Cambodia in 2002 to support activities by Japanese NGOs to help Cambodia's reconstruction and development efforts at the grassroots level. Since 2002, the Government of Japan has provided nearly US\$60 million for over 160 projects, mainly in the field of primary education, health, agriculture and mine clearance in Cambodia.

Japan, Sweden, and UNDP deliver high-power autotransformers to secure stable electricity supply to over 5.5 million Ukrainians

Kyiv, 20 May 2025 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Ukraine, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Energy of Ukraine, has delivered three high-power autotransformers to the National Power Company “Ukrenergo” (NPC “Ukrenergo”).

This equipment – two units funded by the Government of Japan and one by the Government of Sweden – will not only help stabilize the national grid, but also ensure that millions of Ukrainians have a more reliable access to electricity, heating, and essential services.

This help comes at a crucial time, as Ukraine’s energy sector continues to face unprecedented challenges due to Russia’s attacks. According to the latest [Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment \(RDNA4\)](#), over \$20 billions of direct damage to energy and extractives has been caused since the full-scale invasion. According to the Ministry of Energy of Ukraine over 63,000 energy facilities have been damaged since 2022.

Autotransformers, which are vital for maintaining the stability of Ukraine’s power grid, have been frequently targeted, making their replacement a strategic priority. Each unit delivered weighs over 230 tons, measures more than 10 meters in length, and stands over 3 meters tall, making it a highly complex piece of equipment not only to manufacture, but also to transport.

Prior to the official handover ceremony, H.E. Masashi Nakagome, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Ukraine, Ms. Martina Quick, Charge d’Affairs, Embassy of Sweden to Ukraine, and representatives of the Ministry of Energy of Ukraine and UNDP in Ukraine visited a high-voltage substation to witness firsthand the damage sustained, and observe the operation of one of the [first autotransformers](#) provided through international support.

H.E. German Galushchenko, Minister of Energy of Ukraine, expressed gratitude for the continued support. “Today, we see a strong demonstration of solidarity from the governments and people of Sweden and Japan,” Galushchenko said. “We’re grateful to our partners and UNDP for providing this critical high-voltage equipment, which will help stabilize our power grid and ensure reliable electricity for homes, hospitals, schools, and essential services.”

H.E. Masashi Nakagome, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Ukraine, emphasized Japan’s long-term commitment to Ukraine’s energy resilience and recovery.

“Since 2022, Japan has stood firmly with Ukraine, delivering critical energy equipment, including gas turbines, autotransformers, and cogeneration units,” Nakagome said. “Today’s handover of two additional

autotransformers — expected to secure stable electricity supply to 3.7 million people — brings the total reach of Japan’s energy assistance to over 9 million Ukrainians. The Government of Japan, through UNDP and JICA, remains committed to supporting Ukraine’s energy sector. We will continue working together to rebuild a more resilient and sustainable energy system for Ukraine.”

Martina Quick, Charge d’Affairs, Embassy of Sweden to Ukraine, underscored Sweden’s unwavering support to the people of Ukraine.

“Sweden has committed over U.S. \$43 million through our partnership with UNDP to help restore critical energy infrastructure in Kyiv Oblast, and the cities of Kharkiv, Odesa, Zaporizhzhia, and other heavily affected communities,” Quick said. “This effort goes beyond rebuilding power systems – it’s a matter of supporting recovery and strengthening essential services. Sweden stands with Ukraine, as we work together toward a green and secure recovery.”

UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Ukraine Christophoros Politis emphasized the role of international partnerships in advancing Ukraine’s energy sector transition toward a resilient, and decarbonized grid.

“This delivery marks a vital step in strengthening Ukraine’s energy infrastructure at a time of unprecedented challenge,” Politis said. “Today, together with Japan and Sweden, UNDP marks a milestone in restoring high-voltage transmission capacity and securing stable electricity for over 5.5 million people. But beyond meeting urgent needs, we’re laying the groundwork for a resilient, future-proof energy system.”

Oleksii Brekht, Acting Chairman of NPC “Ukrenergo,” also acknowledged the sustained international assistance from Ukraine’s partners.

“Autotransformers are critical to the operation of electric power transmission system,” Brekht said. “Over three years of the full-scale war, Russia has carried out more than 45 large-scale attacks on Ukraine’s energy infrastructure, resulting in the loss of a significant amount of equipment, including autotransformers. We’re sincerely grateful to the Governments of Japan and Sweden, and to UNDP, for their ongoing support – it’s thanks to this partnership that we can continue restoring our energy infrastructure and ensuring stability for millions of Ukrainians.”

Background:

The UNDP Green Energy Recovery Programme in Ukraine, supported by international partners, addresses Ukraine’s urgent energy needs during the ongoing attacks on critical energy infrastructure. It focuses on two main priorities: ensuring the continuous operation of critical energy infrastructure and production capacities, and implementing strategic actions to accelerate the transition to green energy, particularly through a decentralized energy generation system.

The activities of the Green Energy Recovery Programme in Ukraine are funded by the governments of Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Japan, Norway, France, the Republic of Korea, and Sweden.

Media enquiries: Yuliia Samus, UNDP Ukraine Head of Communications; e-mail: yuliia.samus@undp.org

Source: <https://www.undp.org/ukraine/press-releases/japan-sweden-and-undp-deliver-high-power-autotransformers-secure-stable-electricity-supply-over-five-and-a-half-ukrainians>

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2025



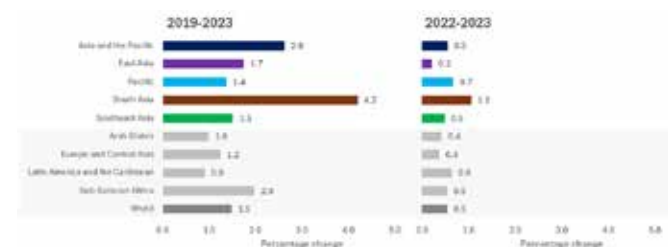
Is human development progress stagnating in Asia-Pacific? The response in three graphics



dimensions: a long and healthy life, knowledge acquisition, and a decent standard of living. Despite persistent disparities, the region has witnessed remarkable progress. From 1990 to 2023, East Asia and the Pacific surged to an HDI of 0.775, and South Asia reached 0.672, both registering gains exceeding 50%.

1. Asia-Pacific's human development through the pandemic has been much slower than ideal, but better than all other regions

Over the four years straddling the pandemic (2019–2023), human development in Asia-Pacific grew by 2.6%—a modest pace, but well above the global average of 1.5% (Figure 1). But recent momentum has stalled. Between 2022 and 2023, the region's HDI growth matched the global average at just 0.5%. A closer look reveals wide variation within the region: South Asia led the recovery, while the Pacific lagged behind.



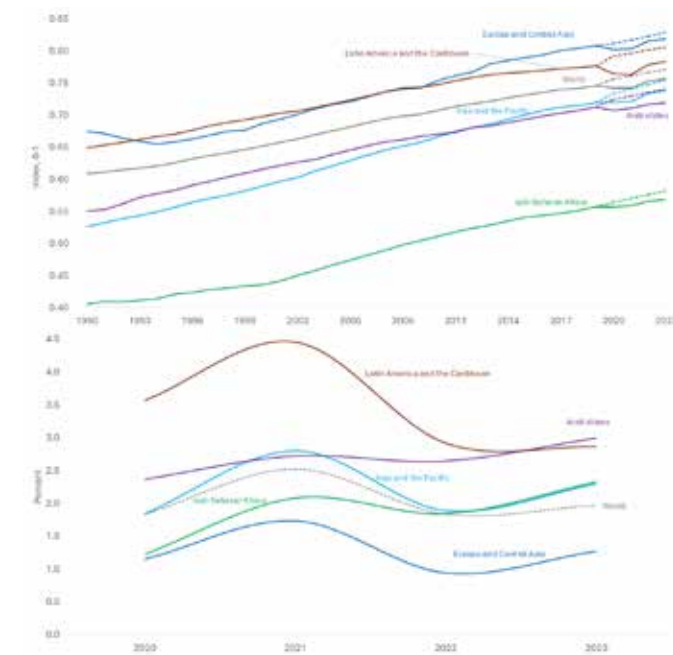
The latest Human Development Report has arrived, bringing with it a wealth of data and analysis crucial for understanding the state of human development. This year's report, entitled [A matter of choice: People and possibilities in the age of AI](#), brings troubling news. According to the data presented in the report's accompanying Human Development Index (HDI), progress has slowed to a 35-year low. Excluding the COVID-19 pandemic years, the meagre rise in global human development projected in this year's report is the smallest increase since 1990.

What does this mean for Asia and the Pacific? In this post, we distill the report's findings for the region into three telling figures.

But first a note on what the HDI means. The HDI offers a composite measure of progress in three fundamental

2. The region is still falling short of its development potential, and the gap is widening

Like the rest of the world, Asia-Pacific has yet to close the human development gap opened by the pandemic (Figure 2). While 2022 saw promising signs of recovery, 2023 fell short, further widening the gap relative to where the region was projected to have been without the pandemic. Note that pre-pandemic trends in Asia-Pacific were among the world's strongest, so comparison with a counterfactual continuation of such trends admittedly sets a high bar.



3. The biggest gaps are in subregions that were once leading the way

The largest human development gaps (relative to counterfactual) are found in Southeast Asia, followed by East Asia, South Asia, and then the Pacific (Figure 3). Paradoxically, the largest counterfactual gaps are in the regions with the highest HDI levels. This reflects both a sharper slowdown and higher pre-pandemic momentum.

- Southeast Asia: A steep decline during the pandemic, partial rebound in 2022, then stagnation in 2023.
- East Asia: Smaller initial dip, but weak post-pandemic growth likely driven by China's GDP slowdown.
- South Asia: Striking V-shaped recovery after a deep pandemic dip.
- Pacific: Modest performance overall with more limited pandemic disruption and slower long-run HDI progress.



What's next and how AI can influence this trajectory?

The report argues that the future of development depends less on what AI can do, and more on how we choose to use it to reshape our societies and economies. The possibilities are endless—but that also may mean that development pathways are becoming wider, and perhaps less predictable.

AI-augmented development will require three things:

- **Building a "complementarity economy"**, in which people and AI collaborate rather than compete and AI augments rather than subtracts human potential;
- **Driving "innovation with intent"**, by focusing AI on solving real-world development challenges as quoted by the American writer Stewart Brand, "the present day used to be the unimaginable future"; and
- **Investing in "capabilities that count"**, by lifting people's capabilities equitably in areas such as education and healthcare, so all people are empowered to thrive in the age of AI.

Despite the grim overall figures, the report's framing remains positive. It reminds us we have agency. With the right choices, the report says, we can shape a future where technology serves everyone.

But we should also be clear-eyed. AI could just as easily deepen global inequality. Within-country gaps could widen if we don't prioritize equitable access. More worrying still is the risk—less studied so far—that between-country inequality may rise. If AI's benefits accrue mostly to faster-moving, wealthier nations while its disruptions hit poorer, less prepared countries harder, the divide may widen to an irreversible degree.

Source: <https://www.undp.org/asia-pacific/blog/human-development-progress-stagnating-asia-pacific-response-three-graphics>

“Humanitarian situation in Gaza is at its darkest point” – OPT Humanitarian Country Team

Statement by the Humanitarian Country Team of the Occupied Palestinian Territory – on Gaza

Six-hundred days on, the humanitarian situation in Gaza is at its darkest point yet. As relentless, deadly bombardment and mass displacement intensify, families are being starved and denied the basic means of survival. Meanwhile, the conditions for us to deliver aid safely and at scale are absent.

After almost 80 days of total blockade by Israeli authorities on any supplies, a trickle has entered. But what made it through falls far short of people’s massive needs. Over the past days, we’ve submitted 900 truckloads for Israeli approval. About 800 were cleared and just over 500 could be offloaded on the Israeli side of Kerem Shalom. We have been able to collect only about 200 on the Palestinian side of the crossing due to insecurity and restricted access.

While letting us bring in some nutrition and medical supplies, as well as flour, Israeli authorities have banned most other items, including fuel, cooking gas, shelter and hygiene products. They also imposed the condition that we could only deliver flour to bakeries and not directly to families. This required

people to face large crowds to collect bread from a limited number of bakeries daily. Over the weekend, bakeries that were once supported with humanitarian supplies have shut down due to growing insecurity from large desperate crowds. Food needs to be distributed in multiple forms, and at multiple sites across all Gaza governorates. This is the only way to restore order and prevent mass starvation.

Israel has clear obligations under international humanitarian law. It must treat civilians humanely, with respect for their inherent dignity. It must facilitate the aid that is needed. And it must refrain from forcible transfer.

We need predictable and at-scale aid to flow through multiple crossings all the way to communities, as we have done in the past. We need unimpeded access. And we need all humanitarian partners, including UNRWA, to be enabled to provide supplies and, critically, services. Supplies on their own do not amount to

an effective humanitarian response. It is essential to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of services across Gaza.

Israeli authorities have undermined the capacity of our teams to deliver genuine, principled humanitarian assistance that would reach the most vulnerable groups. A new militarized distribution system has just been launched. As we have stated, it does not align with humanitarian principles, it puts people at risk, and it will not meet people’s needs, or dignity, across Gaza.

We continue delivering aid where possible, working as a united humanitarian community of UN agencies and non-governmental organizations. Our principles are non-negotiable. We will not participate in any scheme that undermines neutrality, impartiality, or independence. Aid must not be weaponized. We echo the Secretary-General’s calls: a permanent ceasefire, the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, and full humanitarian access.

We are ready to save lives. Let us work. The window to prevent famine is closing fast.

Source: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/humanitarian-situation-in-gaza-is-at-its-darkest-point-opt-humanitarian-country-team/>

EU Parliamentary Delegation calls for sustained investments and international attention to tackle rising needs in Mauritania

NOUAKCHOTT, Mauritania – A high level joint mission of the European Parliament Committee on Development (DEVE) and the UN World Food Programme (WFP) concluded today, reaffirming their shared commitment to scale up investments in resilience and development efforts to respond to the rising humanitarian needs in Mauritania.

On 27 and 28 May, senior representatives from DEVE, WFP, UNICEF, IOM, UNHCR and other NGO partners, visited the EU funded project sites in the Hodh Ech Chargui region, southeastern Mauritania. They saw first-hand the impact of ongoing humanitarian support to Malian refugees and resilience building initiatives targeting the vulnerable.

The visit comes as [Mauritania](#) faces high levels of food insecurity, recurring climate shocks, and continued influx of refugees from [Mali](#). Some 594,000 people or 12 percent of the population are projected to face acute food insecurity between June and August 2025, according to the latest Cadre Harmonisé food security analysis. The country is also hosting over 288,000 refugees, including 118,000 in Mbera camp, who rely heavily on humanitarian assistance for survival.

“This visit highlights the importance of sustained partnerships in addressing the root causes of vulnerability while investing in hope, dignity, and resilience through durable solutions,” said Aliou Diongue, WFP’s Country Director and Representative in Mauritania. “We are delighted to support the Government of Mauritania and work with the European Union, one of our largest donors to build long-term food security and enhance stability in Mauritania”.

During the mission, delegates listened to refugees and local farmers benefitting from land rehabilitation projects, income-generating initiatives, [school meals](#) and [malnutrition prevention](#). The EU delegation emphasized the urgent need for a more integrated and efficient approach linking humanitarian aid, development and peacebuilding efforts to ensure long term resilience and stability in Mauritania and along its borders.

“We are here to observe and to listen so that we can understand better what is needed for an effective response in a context of pressure from refugee arrivals, climate crisis and insecurity. The EU is working on an integrated and more efficient approach to better link humanitarian and development efforts, and it is important for us to cross-check this on the ground,” said Ms. Hildegard BENTELE, chair of the DEVE delegation. “The testimonies we heard—from refugee women managing small businesses to farmers reclaiming degraded land—and information we received speak to the power of partnership and the tangible impact of EU solidarity. We leave with a renewed sense of responsibility to advocate for continued support.”



The delegation reiterated the need for urgent and sustained investments and increased international attention to Mauritania and its bordering regions as humanitarian needs soar.

“The EU is committed to supporting Mauritania as a key partner for peace and development in the Sahel,” said Joaquin Tasso Vilallonga, Ambassador of the European Union to Mauritania. “Our collaboration with the Government and other actors, including WFP, ensures that assistance is not just efficiently delivered, but also strengthens social cohesion, as we run our interventions through a territorial integrated approach.”

So far in 2025, WFP has reached 252,000 people in Mauritania with lifesaving and lifechanging assistance including refugees, and vulnerable communities. WFP rehabilitated 1,700 hectares of land, promoted water harvesting initiatives, provided school meals to 51,000 children and targeted nutrition support for pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under five.

WFP’s is supporting communities to recover from shocks and building a more food-secure and self-reliant future.

Source: <https://www.wfp.org/news/eu-parliamentary-delegation-calls-sustained-investments-and-international-attention-tackle>



SDGs

Parliamentary workshop highlights role of public finances in advancing the SDGs in Kazakhstan

A high-level workshop titled “The Role of Public Finances in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals” was held today in Astana. The event brought together members of the Parliamentary Commission of the Senate for Monitoring the Implementation of National Goals and Targets in the Field of Sustainable Development, as well as representatives from the Ministry of National Economy, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, Maslikhats, and

public finance experts from UNDP Sustainable Finance Hub. Co-hosted by UNDP and the Senate of the Parliament of Kazakhstan and supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the workshop underscored the critical importance of aligning public finances — including revenues, expenditures, and financing — with Kazakhstan’s long-term national priorities and the SDGs. It also served as a platform to explore

tools such as macro-fiscal forecasting, SDG-aligned planning and budgeting, local-level budgeting for the SDGs, and assessments of the impact of VAT increases on various inequalities — including income, wealth, gender, and regional disparities, as well as the use of green debt instruments.

UNDP Resident Representative in Kazakhstan Ms. Katarzyna Wawiernia reaffirmed UNDP’s commitment to supporting Parliament in strengthening

[fiscal governance for sustainable development.](#)

“Parliamentary oversight is essential in aligning government revenue, expenditure, and financing with national development priorities, including the SDGs,” she stated. “Such alignment not only promotes accountability and transparency but also minimizes the risks of misallocation or misuse of public resources — ensuring that every tenge serves the people and supports a more sustainable and equitable future for all.”

In her opening remarks, Ms. Olga Perepechina, Deputy Chairperson of the Parliamentary Commission, also emphasized the role of Parliament in ensuring the effective allocation

of budgetary resources toward sustainable development outcomes.

“For us, the Senators and members of the Parliamentary Commission, a deep understanding of the mechanisms and opportunities for the effective use of budgetary funds is a key factor in the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Public finance is a powerful tool for addressing the most important challenges in the field of sustainable development,” noted Olga Perepechina.

UNDP experts and guest speakers shared global best practices, including case studies from Mongolia, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Discussions focused on strategies to reduce inequalities and combat climate change, optimize health-related

tax policies, and scale up SDG financing through innovative instruments such as green bonds.

The workshop took place at a crucial time, following recent amendments to Kazakhstan’s Budget Code that provide new opportunities to incorporate SDG considerations into fiscal planning and parliamentary oversight.

As a key outcome of the workshop, participants identified specific areas where the Parliamentary Commission could strengthen its oversight role — particularly in evaluating the SDG impacts of fiscal policies and monitoring public investments aligned with national development goals.

The event marked another important step in Kazakhstan’s ongoing efforts to institutionalize sustainable development principles across all levels of policymaking and public finance management.

Source: <https://www.undp.org/kazakhstan/press-releases/parliamentary-workshop-highlights-role-public-finances-advancing-sdgs-kazakhstan>



Setting your sustainability research strategy: Using InCites to analyze SDGs



Kristen Faeth

As the 2030 target date for the UN Sustainable Development Goals approaches, research institutions can rely on InCites Benchmarking & Analytics to help them evaluate their research contribution and adjust their strategy.

The [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) are a universal call to action to create a more equitable, sustainable and resilient world for current and future generations. Research institutions play a critical role in advancing SDGs by generating evidence-based insights, innovative technologies and policy recommendations that inform and guide sustainable development efforts. Assessing sustainability research contributions helps ensure that an institution's work stays relevant, future-oriented and focused on the most pressing challenges.

In a 2023 [survey](#), research office leaders and staff reported that measuring research contribution toward SDGs was among their top three performance indicators and noted that its importance will grow over the next five years. This signals alignment between research institutions and the UN's goals. However, recent reports show that broad alignment with SDGs doesn't seem to be moving the needle.



Refocusing research efforts to accelerate progress

Despite a shared commitment to the SDGs across the globe, progress is variable. The 2024 [SDG Progress Report](#) reveals “that only seventeen per cent of SDGs targets are on track to be achieved, nearly half are showing minimal or moderate progress, and progress on over a third has stalled or even regressed.”

The STRINGS ([Steering Research and Innovation for Global Goals](#)) group used [Web of Science](#) data, patent data, surveys and case studies to study whether current science, technology and innovation (STI) priorities align with the priorities established in the SDGs. They [uncovered a glaring mismatch](#) between STI priorities and SDGs, concluding that the research community needs to

change direction to make meaningful progress.

The [2023 Global Sustainable Development Report](#) outlines the type of science required for progress: “multidisciplinary, equitably and inclusively produced, openly shared, widely trusted and embraced, and ‘socially robust’ – relevant to society.” According to the report, universities should consider not only what topics their researchers are pursuing, but also how they are going about that research. For example, multidisciplinary research teams are likely in a better position to consider the interplay between goals. A technology that is positive for one goal may hinder progress on another. In-depth research evaluation can help leaders chart a course for greater impact in the coming years.

Shaping research strategies with InCites

Benchmarking & Analytics

Universities already face challenges in presenting a cohesive picture of their SDG impact, and now they must consider how to pivot their research programs. They need reliable, repeatable indicators to systematically measure and monitor their research. [InCites Benchmarking & Analytics](#) is a flexible research evaluation tool that helps leaders easily analyze Web of Science data to make confident decisions about their research programs.

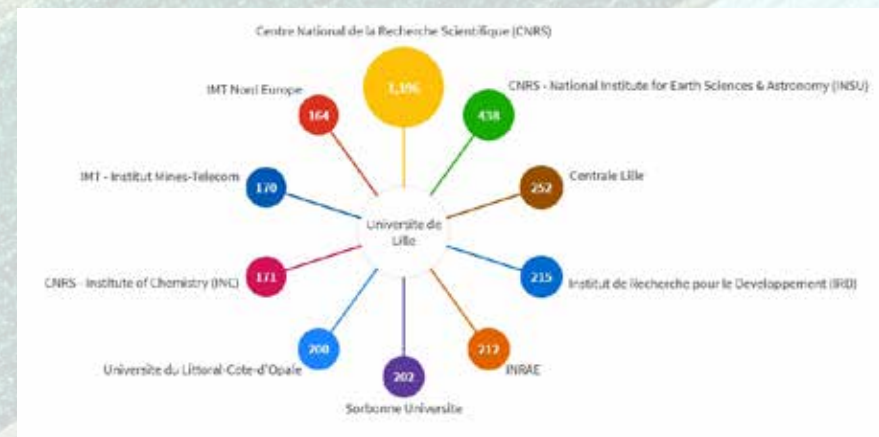
To enable analyses of SDGs, Clarivate combines automated approaches with expert review to map publications to the goals. The [Sustainable Development Goal schema](#) in InCites Benchmarking & Analytics captures sets of documents for each SDG and analyzes those document sets for the presence of [Citation Topics](#), document-level article clusters developed through a partnership with the [Centre for Science and Technology Studies at Leiden University \(CWTS\)](#) and the [Institute for Scientific Information \(ISI\)](#). Domain experts at Clarivate then conduct a full manual review of mapped and unmapped Citation Topics to ensure a comprehensive mapping.

The SDG schema can be used to explore research output at the global, national, institutional and individual levels and offers a wide range of indicators for flexible assessment. In a recent [webinar](#), Bárbara Lancho Barrantes, Bibliometrician at University of Brighton, presented her research comparing various bibliometric tools

for SDG analyses. She found that, “Comparing diversity and number of bibliometric indicators, InCites is the tool that provides the largest number of indicators to apply to SDGs.” Through multi-variable analyses, university leaders can determine how to increase the impact of their SDG-related research.

Locating collaborations that support sustainability research goals

When building capacity in a research area, universities often consider strategic collaborations. By identifying institutions with similar focus areas, leaders can form partnerships that enhance already strong programs. In areas where research impact is currently limited, new collaborations may provide the momentum needed to elevate the program's visibility and effectiveness.



Patrick Devos, Senior Bibliometrician at Université de Lille, [shared](#) his use of InCites Benchmarking & Analytics to assess portfolio strengths and weaknesses and identify collaborators. He compared his university's SDG research to France and the world overall, putting institutional performance in local and global contexts. He also did an analysis of other universities in France to

identify institutions with shared and complementary specializations. He was able to drill down to granular topic areas to figure out what technology solutions can lead to greater SDG progress and explore ways to develop sustainability research and establish useful collaborations.

Exploring more facets of your SDG research

To meet sustainability research goals, university leaders may want to consider factors outside of volume and citation impact. Openness is a key consideration when assessing how research contributes to the achievement of SDGs. In her analysis of SDG research using InCites Benchmarking & Analytics, Dr. Lancho Barrantes was able to assess not only the overall level of OA publishing by goal but also view the percentage of publications that are openly available by OA model, for example, Gold or

Green. Many institutions support OA publishing with internal funding, and this kind of analysis can inform a holistic publishing strategy for SDG research across the university.

The timeline for achieving the SDGs by their target date is shrinking, and research institutions must consider how they can maximize their contribution in these next few years. Evaluating the current state of research and setting a strategic course for future progress requires in-depth, multi-variable analyses. Clarivate provides the trusted intelligence that research leaders need to make data-driven decisions that will advance their SDG research and ultimately build a more sustainable future.

Source: <https://clarivate.com/academia-government/blog/setting-your-sustainability-research-strategy-using-incites-to-analyze-sdgs/>

2025 Keio SDGs Student Conference Commences

The 2025 Keio SDGs Student Conference has commenced. This marks the fourth year the conference is being held since it was first initiated in the 2022 academic year. The Student Conference will involve students chosen through open recruitment as well as random selection from across all of Keio's undergraduate faculties. During the sessions, student members engage in discussions with each other while consulting with experts to propose an overall vision, specific goals, and obtainable targets for Keio University to make progress towards its SDGs.

In the Spring Semester, students will learn about the current situation surrounding the SDGs through lectures and discussions, and in the Fall Semester, students shall discuss the themes of "environment," "society," "economy," and "overall approach" in subworking groups and compile a list of recommendations addressed to the president of Keio University.

The first session was held on Thursday, May 15, which was moderated by Professor Hiromichi Kobayashi from the Faculty of Law. The session served as an introduction to this year's Student Conference and was attended by about 80 Keio students. President Kohei Itoh began the proceedings with some words of encouragement for the students while Vice-President Akiyo Okuda provided an overview of the Student Conference, now in its fourth iteration. Professor Norichika Kanie and Guest Professor Hiroko Kuniya, both from the Graduate School of Media and Governance and serving as supervisors

for the Student Conference, gave a presentation on the current state of the SDGs in a divided world, stressing the importance of transformation under the theme "Transform Our World." Their words of advice lifted the morale of the students and served as a reminder for them to keep in mind the importance of the SDGs.

Following that, Sachiko Tsukahara from the Ministry of the Environment facilitated a "2030SDGs" card game. Students were divided into 18 groups and had to negotiate with other groups by exchanging pre-distributed 'money' and 'time' cards in order to achieve the goals each group was assigned. While students recognize the current state of the world as a result of development focused on economic growth, they also sought to realize a sustainable future that also emphasizes non-economic values such as the environment and society.

During the review session at the end, students evaluated the future society they derived through this card game. One major takeaway from this activity that students were able to experience through the card game was that although each group acted to achieve their own objectives, they can effect change on the world through consensus building within their groups and negotiations with other groups, thereby realizing a world in which all groups' goals are achieved. With this session, students have embarked on a learning journey

to determine what kind of goals Keio University needs to set and what kind of reforms it needs to implement in order to realize the sustainable development goals that mankind is aspiring towards in the future. Students will be working towards the formulation of final proposals with a view of how Keio University should be like in 2050.



Source: <https://www.keio.ac.jp/en/news/2025/May/27/48-167450/index.html>

Government, private-sector dialog to advance UN's SDG



THE High-Level Dialogue on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) held recently in Makati City brought together private-sector leaders, civil society and government representatives to advance collaborative action toward the 2030 Agenda. It featured key insights on global strategy and the enhanced Communication on Progress.

Organized by the Global Compact Network Philippines (GCNP) and the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), the dialogue was part of the official mission to the Philippines of UNGC chief of programs Tonilyn Lim.

Minister Jesus Garcia, who represented Ambassador Antonio Lagdameo, the Philippines' permanent representative to the UN, outlined strategic efforts to encourage more large corporations to join the GCNP and integrate sustainability into their operations.

Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc. (AEV), the portfolio manager of the Aboitiz Group, emphasized its ongoing integration of environmental, social and governance principles across its business units. A long-standing UN GCNP participant, AEV's transformation into a techglomerate is spurred by innovation and inclusive growth. "We

are proud to stand alongside partners who believe in the power of business to drive sustainable change," said Ginggay Hontiveros-Malvar, AEV's chief reputation and sustainability officer, and GNCP board member and vice president for marketing. "Our journey continues to be guided by purpose, accountability and the ambition to create long-term value."

The dialogue followed the High-Level Conference of Middle-Income Countries hosted by the Philippine government on April 28 to 29; it reinforced the vital role of the private sector in accelerating SDG achievement.

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/05/17/business/green-industries/government-private-sector-dialog-to-advance-uns-sdg/2115274>



SDGs: Lagos prioritises 10 goals to accelerate impacts

Lagos State Government has identified 10 high-impact goals to prioritise in its drive for inclusive growth, improved quality of life, environmental sustainability and shared prosperity.

Meanwhile, over 1, 200 women have been trained in financial literacy across the five divisions of the state.

The Special Adviser to the Governor on Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, Dr. Oreoluwa Finnih, disclosed this on Friday, during a ministerial press briefing to commemorate the second year of the second term of State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu/Dr. The Obafemi Hamzat administration, held at Alausa, Ikeja.

Finnih explained that the goals was part of state's strategic roadmap to fast-track the realisation of the SDGs.

Revealing this, Finnih stressed the importance of setting a coordinated agenda for collective impact, noting that the Office is focused on fostering strategic partnerships, mobilising resources, and tracking measurable progress.

Describing the SDGs as a blueprint for a resilient, equitable and prosperous society, she disclosed that the 10 prioritised goals – Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), Goal 4 (Quality

Education), Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), Goal 13 (Climate Action), Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) were prioritised based on a robust framework that assessed both impact and feasibility.

According to her, prioritising these goals is not a policy shift but a deliberate approach compelled by global and local imperatives. These 10 SDGs represent the areas where Lagos has the highest comparative advantage and can make the greatest difference without neglecting the other goals, which have been mainstreamed into the State's broader development strategies.

She emphasised that this strategic direction is in line with the new global trends where every city prioritise each of the 17 goals according local need as revealed by the outcome of their various Voluntary Local Review (VLR), stressing that the initiative take cognisance of the SDGs with the highest multiplier effects that can drive progress through other SDGs.

Finnih explained that while the Office is balancing competing priorities through an approach that leaves no one behind, remarkable strides have been made in implementing transformative interventions in line with the T.H.E.M.E.S Plus development agenda.

Reeling out the achievements of the Office in recent years, she revealed that the maiden Lagos Sustainability Summit has further provided a roadmap on critical areas, including inclusive and equitable development, climate mitigation, resilience and adaptation, sustainable infrastructure and investment, green jobs, and sustainable livelihoods.

According to her, “Our Lighthouse Project, a flagship initiative targeting over 650,000 residents in hard-to-reach communities across the State’s 20 LGAs, has delivered tailored interventions in education, healthcare, and sanitation, positively impacting over 800,000 people.

“Through our Advocacy for Women’s Financial Inclusion, in collaboration with African HCD+, Opay, Cowrywise, NIMC, LASRRA, and LASHMA, 1,200 women in 12 underserved communities have been empowered with access to digital identification, health insurance, and financial literacy.”

She also remarked that the Office is institutionalising the SDGs in public institutions and fostering youth leadership across the state, with the establishment of SDG Clubs in public secondary schools and the publication of the “SDGs and I” handbook to enhance understanding and civic engagement, stressing that plans are in top gear to replicate same in all the public primary schools in the state.

While pointing out that 3,400 households have benefited from temporary employment under the NG-CARES programme, Finnih added that the Office has trained 5,000 youth-led Small Medium Enterprises, SMEs on digital skills through partnerships with the Alibaba Foundation and other innovation partners.

“The launch of the Human Capital Development (HCD) 2.0 Framework also signals a bold step toward systemic transformation.

“The government is building on past achievements to establish a new era of data-driven HCD with measurable outcomes, leveraging inter-agency collaboration, she stated.

Finnih noted that the designation of the Office as the SDGs Accelerator and Innovation Hub for the Southwest by

the, United Nations Development Program,

UNDP further cements its leadership in deploying evidence-based, people-centric strategies.

“The Office is deepening its commitment with a series of ambitious plans, including hosting the Second Lagos Sustainability Summit, the Phase II of the Women’s Financial Inclusion Programme, and the development and validation of the 2nd Lagos Voluntary Local Review (VLR), as well as launching the “Lagos SDGs on Television” programme to improve public awareness and citizen engagement.

“Other upcoming initiatives include the High-Level SDGs Breakfast Meeting with members of the diplomatic corps and development partners, a quarterly Workshop for SDG Champions, and the deployment of the SDGs Monitoring Dashboard across MDAs to ensure real-time tracking and evaluation.

“The Office will also be publishing the SDGs Data Compendium, consolidating key indicators and best practices to guide future planning and resource allocation,” she revealed.

Stressing the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach, Finnih reiterated that Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) remains central to the Office’s strategy as it continues to mobilise public, private, and civil society actors to co-create solutions and scale up innovations.

“While the State Government under the leadership of Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu remains unwavering in its mission to make Lagos the most sustainable city in Africa, the SDGs Office is translating this vision into measurable results by lifting people out of poverty, advancing environmental justice, and creating inclusive prosperity for all,” she stated.

Empowering vulnerable women, youths

Finnih noted that the empowerment initiative was part of broader efforts by the SDGs Office to tackle poverty, promote gender equality, and ensure inclusive growth, especially in significantly underserved and hard-to-reach communities.

According to her, “10% of Lagosians live in significantly underserved and hard-to-reach communities,” highlighting the need for targeted interventions to bridge inequality gaps.

She stated that the SDGs Office had completed a needs assessment survey in five of such communities to better understand and address local challenges.

“We believe empowering women through financial literacy gives them the tools to become economically independent and active contributors to their communities,” Finnih said.

Source: https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/05/sdgs-lagos-prioritises-10-goals-to-accelerate-impacts/#google_vignette



Poster Presentation Showcases Student Insights on Business, Environment, and the SDGs

On May 7, 2025, the Department of Management & HRM, Faculty of Business Administration (FBA), American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB), organized an engaging poster competition titled “Environmental Impact of Business Activities & Achieving SDGs.” The event took place between Annex 2 and Annex 3 from 11:20 AM to 12:00 PM, and was formally inaugurated by Professor Dr. Anwar Hossain, Advisor and Dean In-Charge of FBA.

As part of the course “Ethics, Sustainability, and Communication for Development,” the event was guided by Dr. Rezbin Nahar, Associate Professor, Department of Management and HRM. The competition featured participation from 6th semester students, who presented posters that explored the intersections between business practices, environmental impacts, and the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A total of seven student groups showcased industry-specific posters focusing on sectors such as RMG, shipbreaking, cement, pharmaceuticals, and textiles.

Their work reflected critical analysis of environmental challenges, SDG alignment—especially SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action)—and practical recommendations for sustainable business solutions.

The event was attended by all department heads and faculty members from various disciplines, who encouraged the students and provided valuable feedback. Evaluators recognized four groups for their outstanding contributions, based on content depth, presentation quality, and relevance to sustainable development.

The poster competition successfully highlighted the importance of integrating sustainability and ethical responsibility into business education. It equipped students with the knowledge, awareness, and commitment necessary to contribute meaningfully to the achievement of the SDGs in Bangladesh and beyond.

Source: <https://www.aiub.edu/poster-presentation-showcases-student-insights-on-business-environment-and-the-sdgs>



Advancing Social Good Together: The NGO World Meets TIKA



Zafar Iqbal

Islamabad, May 26, 2025 — Chairman of The NGO World, Mr. Zafar Iqbal, had the honor of visiting the office of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) in Islamabad. During the visit, he met with the Country Coordinator, Ms. Saliha Tuna, to discuss future development initiatives and explore opportunities for deepening collaboration between the two organizations.

The meeting centered around ongoing and upcoming projects focused on sustainable development and community empowerment. Both sides expressed a strong commitment to enhancing ties between Pakistan and Türkiye through impactful social good actions.

In a symbolic gesture, Mr. Zafar Iqbal presented Ms. Saliha Tuna with a special publication titled “Brotherhood for Social Good.” The document chronicles the 14-year journey of The NGO World in partnership with various Turkish donor organizations, highlighting shared efforts in disaster response, education and poverty alleviation since 2010.

This meeting marks another milestone in the enduring relationship between The NGO World and Turkish institutions, reaffirming a shared vision for inclusive development and global solidarity.

Nigeria LNG Invests \$90,000 to Support Youth Entrepreneurs

- Nigeria LNG has awarded around \$90,000 in grants to 28 young entrepreneurs in Rivers State
- The initiative is part of a broader SME-focused scheme addressing youth unemployment in Nigeria
- The VIBES program combines training, financing, and mentoring to foster sustainable startups

Nigeria LNG (NLNG) has invested around \$90,000 (140 million naira) to support 28 young entrepreneurs in Rivers State as part of its drive to promote youth employment and entrepreneurship. Each beneficiary received a five-million-naira grant to either launch or grow their businesses. The initiative comes amid growing national concern over youth unemployment, which reached 6.5% in Q2 2024, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

The grant

disbursement followed a four-week training program that culminated in a business pitch competition. In addition to the 28 winners, another 42 participants are eligible for low-interest loans of up to one million naira under NLNG's SME support framework.

The intervention is part of NLNG's Vocational Innovation and Business Empowerment Scheme (VIBES), which targets key sectors such as agriculture, technology, services, and craftsmanship. The scheme seeks to build a resilient entrepreneurial ecosystem in Nigeria, where small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) contribute over 90% of business activity, 80% of jobs, and 45% of GDP, according to Vice President Kashim Shettima.

Originally launched in 2004 as the Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), the rebranded VIBES program has so far trained more than 1,400 youths, though only 300 have succeeded in creating viable businesses. In response, NLNG has enhanced the program by combining financial support with mentorship and tailored technical assistance.

While the grant marks a crucial first step, the long-term success of these startups depends on sustained backing in areas such as market access, financial management, and business continuity planning. If the model proves effective, it may serve as a reference for other extractive sector firms—including Shell and TotalEnergies—which are already engaged in similar youth-focused initiatives.

Source: <https://www.ecofinagency.com/news-services/2705-47014-nigeria-lng-invests-90-000-to-support-youth-entrepreneurs>

Young entrepreneurs shine at youth showcase



Erin Carelse

The Briar Foundation, a non-profit organisation, hosted a Youth Entrepreneurial Showcase (YES) where pupils from schools across the Far South and beyond presented their business ideas to a panel of judges.

The event, which took place at Longbeach Mall, culminated three months of workshops held at various schools, during which pupils were taught the basics of starting and running a small business.

The organisation, which focuses on teaching entrepreneurial skills to young people, launched the YES campaign aimed at equipping high school pupils with critical thinking and entrepreneurial skills to help them consider self-employment as a viable path after school.

Over the past term, the foundation worked with pupils from Fish Hoek High School, Ocean View High School, Generation School Imhoff, Masiphumelele High School, Silvermine Academy, and Simon's Town School.

"With more and more learners leaving school without a clear career path, we believe every young person should have the skills and confidence to become an entrepreneur if they choose to," said Irene Oxley, director of The Briar Foundation.

During the workshops, pupils were taught to use cost sheets, explored business ideas they could develop, and learned lessons from young entrepreneurs who started as early as Grade 8.

Each pupil also received a booklet that guided them through the basics of building a small business. A representative from Afrikan Bank, one of the sponsors, also spoke to pupils about the importance of saving and managing finances.

The final showcase was held at Longbeach Mall, where pupils pitched their ideas in front of friends, family, and a panel of judges. Every participant received a certificate for their effort, and several stood out for their creativity and presentation.



The top prize went to Kodi Bertish from Generation Schools Imhoff. Second place went to Addison Sachs from Silvermine Academy, and third place was awarded to Thlalefo Tepsisis, also from Silvermine Academy.

Four pupils received special mention and were awarded "Highly Commended" certificates: Aaliyah Zadzere and Alice Munthalo from Ocean View High School, Tayla Wolmarans from Silvermine Academy, and Zac Doherty from Generation Schools Imhoff.

Prizes included shopping vouchers, hampers and meal vouchers.

Judges for the event were Sinathemba Mashalala, manager of Western Cape Youth Development, Dr Jean Hazlitt, a professional coach and international speaker, and Nafeesa Dinie, manager of the entrepreneurial incubation department at the TVET College.

The showcase not only gave pupils a chance to present their ideas but also encouraged them to think seriously about their futures.

The Briar Foundation hopes to grow the initiative further and reach even more young people across the region.

Source: https://falsebayecho.co.za/news/2025-05-27-young-entrepreneurs-shine-at-youth-showcase/#google_vignette



11th OIC Youth Entrepreneurship Forum starts in Kazan



Akbar Novruz

The 11th Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Youth Entrepreneurship Forum has started in Kazan, organized by the Eurasian Regional Center of the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF-ERC), the Ministry of Youth Affairs of the Republic of Tatarstan, the Selet Youth Foundation, and the Academy of Youth Diplomacy, Azernews reports.

The opening ceremony took place at the Selet-Batyr Youth Center, where key figures such as Timur Suleymanov, assistant to the Head of

Tatarstan, Rafiq Ismayilov, Director of the ICYF-ERC, Rudolf Selivanov, Head of one of the municipal districts of the Chuvash Republic, Kirill Lukin, Head of the Department of the Head of this Republic for Youth Policy and Aygul Gabdrahmanova, director of Selet Youth Center welcomed participants and wished them success. The speakers emphasized the traditional nature of the OIC Youth Entrepreneurship Forum and the importance of investment-based funding for numerous projects.

During his speech, Rafiq Ismayilov, Director of the ICYF-ERC expressed satisfaction with the organization's collaboration with the Tatarstan government and the Ministry of Youth Affairs of this region, highlighting the forum's role in supporting startup projects initiated by young entrepreneurs.

After the opening ceremony, a networking session was held among startup representatives, followed by initial presentations of their projects. The forum, which has been running for over 10 years, aims to support new startup initiatives within the OIC region, stimulate young entrepreneurs, and encourage the emergence of new business ideas in a globalized world.

Each year, at the end of the forum, an international jury of experts evaluates startup projects based on specific criteria and decides on funding for the winning initiatives. The event involves 25 startup projects from various OIC countries and Russian regions, and will conclude after three days of discussions in working groups. Participants will also engage in cultural programs, visit entrepreneurial and startup hubs in Tatarstan, and explore local attractions.

Source: <https://www.azernews.az/nation/241830.html>



African Development Bank Launches Entrepreneurship and Skills Development Initiative to tackle youth unemployment in Kenya

Kenya's youth have a new resource for technical, vocational and entrepreneurial training that is set to boost self-employment, reduce reliance on formal employment and contribute to Kenya's socio-economic development.

The African Development Bank's Youth [Entrepreneurship](#) and Innovation Multi-Donor Trust Fund unveiled its Technical and Vocational Education and Training Entrepreneurship Project at a ceremony in Nairobi on 29 April.

"We aim to enhance youth employability, strengthen the linkage between technical, vocational education and training institutions and industry, and support smooth transitions from training to meaningful employment. This project reflects our collective commitment to inclusive development that delivers real impact for our youth," said Dr Esther Muoria, Kenya's Principal Secretary, State Department for Technical, Vocational Education and Training.

The Kenyan Ministry of Education's State Department for Technical and Vocational Education and Training is working with project implementing

partner, the Kenya Private Sector Alliance, to roll out the Bank-financed initiative. The project seeks to bridge the gap between training and employment by developing the skills of young people, supporting entrepreneurship, and linking graduates to the private sector. The project, aims to place graduates of technical and vocational education training or entrepreneurship programs in 1,200 jobs.

Aggrey Ndombi, African Development Bank Senior Education Economist who serves as co-task manager for the Technical and Vocational Education and Training – Entrepreneurship Project, said: "The Bank views technical and vocational training as critical for youth skills development. We are supporting this project in Kenya to align the vocational and technical training with market demands to improve the quality and employability of technical and vocational education."

The African Development Bank supports the development of small and medium-sized enterprises to expand the private sector, formalise the informal economy, and create decent and sustainable jobs, especially for youth.

Ndombi told the launch ceremony audience that Bank's Technical and Vocational Education and Training Entrepreneurship Project complements the government's efforts to position young people in meaningful roles in economic development.

Kenya Private Sector Alliance Chief Executive Officer, Carole Kariuki, said it was essential to align technical and vocational education with current industry needs.

"I see Africa's growing youth population not as a burden, but as a powerful demographic advantage. We must be intentional about equipping our young people with practical skills, entrepreneurial competencies, and digital literacy," said Kariuki.

"These are the tools that will position them to thrive, not only in traditional jobs, but in the rapidly expanding spaces of artificial intelligence and online work. We must also confront the gap between education and employment," she added.

Read more at: <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/african-development-bank-launches-entrepreneurship-and-skills-development-initiative-tackle-youth-unemployment-kenya-83541>

Student from Lutz, Florida, Wins NFTE Southeast Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge

Students win \$6,000 in Shark Tank-style pitch competition and advance to national finals

Aventura, FL, May 15, 2025 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Global entrepreneurship education nonprofit [Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship \(NFTE\)](#) has named 13 local student businesses as the winners of its annual Southeast Regional Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge, hosted by the Grant Cardone Foundation and emceed by Constance Jones, News Anchor from WTVJ NBC 6 Miami, NBCUniversal Media, LLC. The young entrepreneurs distinguished themselves through innovative business ideas, which they will present at the national finals in New York on Oct. 8 to compete for the National Championship title and cash prizes.

Competitors pitched their original business concepts to a panel of esteemed judges, including Richard Bruguera, EY Miami Office Managing Partner; Andres Cardona, NFTE alumnus and founder of Elite Basketball Academy; Jessica Hylton, Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer at Promise Family Pantry, Inc.; DJ Irie, Musician to Mogul Entrepreneur; and Brad Rosenberg, Market Director at UBS. They selected a first-place winner to receive \$1,500, a second-place winner to receive \$1,000, and a third-place winner to receive \$500.

- 1st Place: Briley Goble from Lutz K-8 School in Lutz, Florida, with her business idea PawAble, which provides adaptive pet products so those with disabilities can better

- enjoy the companionship of a pet.
- 2nd Place: Manuel Vides & Julian Saenz Bernal from Horizon High School in Winter Garden, Florida, with their business idea Halo Technologies, an AI crash-prevention system designed to prevent a collision.
- 3rd Place: Aadish Kachhal from Cypress Bay High School in Weston, Florida, with his business idea PoliSight, an innovative company that provides political offices with real-time, detailed data analytics about high school students, helping them make informed decisions, reach upcoming voters, and increase youth voter turnout.

Also going to the National Challenge are the following semifinalists:

- Jadiel Gonzalez & Analia Villegas Negrón from Poinciana High School
- Payton Bonino from Spruce Creek High School
- Yanisbel Ortiz from Cross Keys High School
- Adelaida Gomez from New World School of the Arts
- Isla Nicol from Randall Middle School
- Chase Little & Michael Scanlon from Alonso High School
- Miriama Ferrad from Poinciana High School

- Joaquin Gasca from First Coast High School
- Madeleine DeFilippo & Mikayla Schmidt from Palm Beach Gardens High School
- Payton Garner from Mainland High School

In addition to the Top 3 prizes, the remaining semifinalists received a \$300 cash prize, while all student competitors received a 1-year membership in Cardone University. These cash prizes and additional resources were made possible by the generosity of the Grant Cardone Foundation.

“This school year has been truly transformative as we now serve over 37,000 students annually across the Southeast,” said Christopher Brignolle, NFTE Southeast Executive Director. “Our students are harnessing the power of AI to transform their business ideas into scalable ventures—automating marketing, designing workflows, and building AI agents that mirror real-world operations. After 19 years with NFTE, I remain deeply grateful for our dedicated teachers, volunteers, and supporters who help our students bloom into bold, capable innovators. You are the foundation of their growth.

Read more at: <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2025/05/15/3082409/0/en/Student-from-Lutz-Florida-Wins-NFTE-Southeast-Youth-Entrepreneurship-Challenge.html>



Algeria Telecom and ANGEM Launch Youth Entrepreneurship Drive

Algeria Telecom and ANGEM launch a joint program to support young entrepreneurs and micro-enterprises, aiming to boost national development.

Algeria Telecom and the National Agency for the Management of Microcredit (ANGEM) officially launched their joint initiative to support self-entrepreneurs and micro-enterprises

today. The announcement was made in the presence of Algeria Telecom’s President and General Manager, ANGEM’s Director General, and a large group of youth currently undergoing training at Algeria Telecom.

This program follows the partnership agreement signed on April 29, 2025, and reflects the shared commitment of both institutions to empower young entrepreneurs and foster economic and social development across Algeria.

Source: <https://techafricanews.com/2025/05/22/algeria-telecom-and-angem-launch-youth-entrepreneurship-drive/>

Slovak Civil Society Fears Chilling New Era as NGO Law Is Implemented

Slovak civil society organisations have spent decades filling gaps left by the state. Now the state is coming for them.

For years, the League for Mental Health stood among Slovakia's most trusted civil society organisations, supporting reforms, training specialists and stepping in where the state could not or would not. Its role extended beyond service delivery – the League became a voice for vulnerable communities, a partner in public health initiatives, and a crucial link between government policy and real-life practice. Now, its director says, it is being treated as an enemy of the state.

“In recent days,

we've seen how state power can be abused. It was abused against us,” Andrej Vrsansky, the League's director, told the news site Aktuality in April. “We were cynically accused of fraud – of something we could not have done and did not do. It's political bullying, and we're just a rag being used to clean up someone else's agenda.”

The [allegation](#) against the League came from Richard Gluck, a lawmaker for the ruling Smer party, who cast doubt on whether it had actually held the number of events listed in its reports. What followed was not a routine audit or inquiry but a public assault by senior government officials, echoed in the press and

followed swiftly by the passing of a contentious law many in the NGO sector are now calling a turning point for civil liberties in Slovakia.

On May 7, Slovakia's president, Peter Pellegrini, signed the bill into law, which following its implementation in June will impose sweeping new disclosure rules on non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Although it no longer includes the power to impose the inflammatory label “foreign agent” found in earlier drafts, the law still obliges NGOs to file transparency reports, reveal donor names, and submit to vague oversight powers held by the Interior Ministry. For many NGOs, the implications are not merely administrative but existential.

Critics say it is Slovakia's own version of Russia's foreign agent law, part of a broader effort by the ruling coalition to silence dissent and control public debate. “This is about control, not transparency,” Vrsansky warned. “The state is using legislation to intimidate organisations that work with the most vulnerable people. Smaller groups won't survive this. They lack the legal teams and accounting departments to comply with Kafkaesque reporting demands.”

In protest at this and other government actions, public demonstrations continued in April. In Bratislava, an estimated 9,000 demonstrators marched through the

capital on April 3 bearing banners reading “Slovakia is Europe” and “No to the Russian law”. The mood was defiant, the chants loud. Campaigners rallied again outside the Presidential Palace on April 24 after the [bill passed parliament](#) on April 16, pleading for a presidential veto and delivering an oversized letter to Pellegrini.

The protests failed. Pellegrini's office [dismissed objections](#) from legal experts, civil society groups and local government officials, saying the amended bill did not violate the constitution or EU law. Prime Minister Robert Fico, who campaigned on promises to “bring order” to NGOs, insisted the legislation was “European” in spirit.

“There's nothing Russian about it,” he stated.

Yet for many in Slovakia's civic sector, the battle over language was always beside the point. Even without the term “foreign agent”, they say the bill sends a chilling message: NGOs are suspect, their funding questionable, their motives untrustworthy.

Populist campaign

The roots of the law can be traced back to the 2023 parliamentary election, when Robert Fico, then in opposition, railed against what he called the “politically motivated” NGO sector. Civil society, he claimed, had become a proxy for foreign interests. “The era of NGOs ruling this country is over,” he declared in October 2023. “If they operate in Slovakia and are paid from abroad, they must be labelled foreign agents.” He promised to introduce an “American law” modelled on the US Foreign Agents Registration Act.

Legal experts quickly refuted that comparison. FARA applies narrowly to those lobbying on behalf of foreign governments. Slovakia's proposal, especially in its early form, bore much closer resemblance to the Kremlin's 2012 law, which has been used to muzzle dissent and label independent groups as threats to the state.



Even as the most extreme provisions were dropped in late 2024, including the foreign agent clause, the pressure on Slovak NGOs had already taken its toll. Statements by the ruling coalition created a climate of mistrust.

a state-civic consultative body. The government said it was a routine rotation. Civil society leaders and opposition politicians called it political and noted that the move followed a wave of criticisms from dismissed members.

“This is another step in weakening the council and undermining civil society,” said the Carpathian Foundation's Laura Dittel, one of the dismissed members.

Ironically, Fico once worked closely with NGOs. Under his previous administrations, funding for civil society increased, and several independent funds and programmes – including the Audiovisual Fund – were established.

During his third term as prime minister, between 2016 and 2018, his cabinet distributed [millions of euros](#) in grants to civil society organisations. Recipients included organisations frequently criticised by Fico, such as Transparency International Slovakia, the Open Society Foundation – founded by philanthropist George Soros, who is now a bogeyman for some Central European leaders including Fico – and MESA10, an economic think tank linked to former finance minister Ivan Miklos.

In 2023, then president Zuzana Caputova warned of growing hostility towards civic groups. “I regret that the rising animosity and aggression in society is now affecting the work of civil organisations,” she said. She described the verbal attacks and disinformation as symptoms of democratic backsliding.

At the time, over 70,000 NGOs operated in Slovakia, providing services ranging from education to health care to minority rights. Many now fear that increased scrutiny will force smaller outfits to shut down, narrowing the sector and silencing marginal voices.

In April 2024, the Interior Ministry abruptly dismissed five members of the Government Council for NGOs,



In 2017, amid student-led [protests](#), Fico even [invited](#) anti-graft NGOs to a high-profile meeting. “If it’s the NGOs, then I trust it,” he [said](#) about anti-corruption and transparency projects at the time. It was an unexpected move from a politician known for his scepticism toward civil society.

Michal Pisko, director of Transparency International Slovakia, recalls a time when his organisation worked with Fico’s cabinets. That changed after the 2018 murder of journalist Jan Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kusnirova. The ensuing mass protests, which Fico claimed were sponsored by groups linked to George Soros, ultimately forced him to resign as prime minister. “Only after stepping down did Fico name us among his chief enemies,” Pisko told *Aktuality*.

“There was a Robert Fico before 2018, and then there’s the one after,” said Fedor Blascak, a trustee at the Open Society Foundation. “He tied his comeback to a war on civil society.”

By 2023, Fico had fully reverted to his earlier rhetoric, branding NGOs as enemies.

Chaotic process

The legislation’s path from proposal to law was turbulent and marked by repeated rewrites.

When it was first introduced in early 2024 by MPs from the governing coalition, the draft bill required NGOs receiving more than 5,000 euros from foreign sources to label themselves as “organisations with foreign support” – a phrase many equated with Russia’s foreign agent law. That clause triggered an immediate outcry, drawing warnings from the Council of Europe and raising concerns in Brussels.

Facing pressure both domestically and internationally, lawmakers withdrew the foreign agent provision by late 2024. In its place came a revised proposal, spearheaded by Slovak National Party (SNS) MP Adam Lucansky. It no longer used the language of foreign support, but instead sought to define NGOs as “lobbyists” if they participated in public discourse or interacted with state officials. The plan included new reporting obligations and

quarterly disclosures of meetings with policymakers.

This second version also met resistance. Critics argued it unfairly singled out NGOs, while corporate and professional lobbying groups remained untouched.

“The term ‘lobbyist’ was never intended for those entities,” said Juraj Gedra, head of the Government Office. “The biggest concentration of political lobbying is in select NGOs who’ve built their business model on it.” According to Gedra, such groups “influence public opinion, speak in the media, and shape public officials’ decisions”.

Government advisors, including Smer MEP Erik Kalinak, defended the legislation as fulfilling a long-standing promise to rein in what he and his Smer colleagues call “political NGOs”, name-checking watchdog groups like Via Iuris and the Let’s Stop Corruption Foundation.

“We are stripping them bare,” Gedra said, referring to new financial and operational disclosure rules.

Civil society leaders warned that even the scaled-back proposal threatened their ability to operate freely. “This isn’t a lobbying law – it’s a punishment mechanism,” said Marcel Zajac, head of Slovakia’s NGO chamber, before the final version of the draft law was adopted. “When they realised ‘foreign agent’ was untenable in a civilised EU country, they repackaged it. Now we’re ‘lobbyists.’”

By the time parliament prepared for its final vote in April, the ruling coalition had agreed to drop the “lobbyist” labelling as well, opting instead for a more technocratic approach: detailed financial disclosures and donor transparency requirements.

What resulted was a law focused on bureaucratic reporting rather than labels – but one that remains, opponents say, no less damaging to civil society.

The final law, adopted on April 16, obliges NGOs with annual incomes over 35,000 euros to file detailed transparency reports. Those receiving at least 3,300 euros in one-off public aid or 10,000 euros in annual public funds will fall under the Freedom of Information Act. Organisations must name donors giving over 5,000 euros and list their governing bodies.

The penalties are stiff: fines range from 1,000 to 10,000 euros for non-compliance. Repeat violations could trigger further sanctions.

Transparency International Slovakia, a frequent target of Fico’s attacks, called the law “a weapon dressed up as reform”. Its director, Pisko, said it targeted only watchdog groups, leaving business lobbyists untouched. Amnesty International called it a deliberate attempt to intimidate citizens and limit democratic participation.

The law’s final form was rushed through parliament; opposition MPs were still waiting to speak when

the debate was cut short. A 20-page amendment landed just hours before the vote, drawing accusations of legislative chaos. “Even a wild boar doesn’t know what we’re voting on,” said MP Branislav Vanco of opposition party Progressive Slovakia.

During the parliamentary debate, opposition lawmakers lined up to condemn the bill as a politically motivated assault on civil society and called for it to be scrapped or returned for redrafting. Many warned it would face constitutional challenges and international condemnation. Za Ludi leader Veronika Remisova said the law evoked totalitarian methods, likening its provisions to Communist-era surveillance. “This government is waging war on those who give their time to help others,” she said.

But government officials levelled fierce accusations at NGOs during the debate. Smer’s Gluck questioned the League for Mental Health’s reports and claimed it received 2 million euros to help Ukrainians without accounting for the money, while Gedra accused NGOs of enjoying looser rules than political parties.

Smer MP Tibor Gaspar defended the bill as “in line with European standards”, claiming it was milder than regulations in the US, Israel or even France. He cited a European Court of Auditors report that he claimed criticised NGO transparency.

Dismissing critics who claim the bill draws inspiration from Russia, Gluck argued that such comparisons ignore the European basis of the proposed legislation. “If this is a Russian law, then the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors must be Russian too,” he said sarcastically.

Opposition MP Zuzana Stevulova accused the government of twisting [European audit findings](#) – which were critical of the EU, not NGOs – and ignoring the fact that NGOs, unlike political parties, do not wield power or manage public finances.

Silence amid the aftermath

Following its adoption, President Pellegrini offered no public defence of the law before signing it on May 7. The coalition, which had aggressively championed it in public, fell largely silent. Implementation is due to begin in June, though the opposition Progressive Slovakia party has challenged it before the Constitutional Court.

NGOs say they are still trying to make sense of the bill’s practical impact. Many fear it will entangle them in endless bureaucracy while failing to improve real oversight. They worry not only about how to comply with it, but also about being publicly targeted.

“We will now report less than we did before, since lobbying disclosures have been removed and transparency standards have declined – particularly affecting us as a foundation,” said Zuzana Petkova of the Let’s Stop Corruption Foundation, which has been targeted by the government. “You will be targeting NGOs that don’t even have employees, just volunteers helping people in need, sick children and lonely elderly people.”

Watchdog group Via Iuris warned of the law’s potential misuse by politically motivated citizens. Even groups receiving no public funds could face Kafkaesque information requests, driven by partisanship rather than genuine scrutiny.

The final law, even in diluted form, has left Slovakia’s civil society on edge. “This is about crushing civil society,” Vrsansky said. “Just like in Russia, Georgia, Hungary. It’s about dividing people, frightening activists, hoarding power. We are the ones who stand in the way.”

Source: <https://balkaninsight.com/2025/05/26/slovak-civil-society-fears-chilling-new-era-as-ngo-law-is-implemented/>

EDAN Highlights Commitment to Global Health at GHF 2025 Satellite Symposium, a Side Event of the World Health Assembly

GENEVA, May 25, 2025 /PRNewswire/ — [Edan Instruments, Inc.](#) (300206.SZ), a leading global medical device company, participated in the Geneva Health Forum (GHF) 2025 Satellite Symposium, held as a side event of the World Health Assembly (WHA). Titled “China’s Medical Technology Innovation and Its Implementation for Global Health,” the event took place on May 20 in Geneva and was co-organized by Tsinghua University and the Université de Genève. It brought together innovators, policymakers, and development partners to explore how Chinese medical technology is advancing equitable healthcare, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Representing EDAN, Co-Founder Mr. Xicheng Xie delivered a keynote sharing the company’s experience in delivering accessible innovation to underserved communities. “Real innovation isn’t just about cutting-edge technology — it’s about bringing the right solutions to the people who need them the most,” said Mr. Xie, reflecting on the company’s three-decade journey and the evolving meaning of innovation.

In that spirit, Mr. Xie highlighted EDAN’s efforts to develop medical technologies that are accessible, practical, and impactful in real-world settings. He shared detailed of an ongoing initiative using EDAN’s Nano Series handheld diagnostic ultrasound system to support basic prenatal care in resource-limited environments. The project focuses on equipping primary healthcare workers with tools for early screening and timely referral for at-risk pregnancies. He also noted other impactful technologies, including palm-sized fetal dopplers, EDAN’s IQ intelligent

algorithm, and its smart ECG web platform — each designed to bridge infrastructure gaps and reduce reliance on scarce medical personnel.

With a long-standing presence across both high-end and resource-limited markets, EDAN has built a truly global footprint – from Europe to Africa. To strengthen local engagement and ensure more responsive service, it has established 22 subsidiaries worldwide. This localized support, combined with a commitment to frontline feedback, drives continuous product improvement and meaningful impact.

EDAN is also actively involved in a range of meaningful projects across LMICs, working alongside NGOs, public health agencies, and development partners. These include maternal health and women’s care initiatives in South Africa, portable diagnostic deployments in West Africa, and ultrasound screening programs in Latin America. Each year, nearly 1,000 ultrasound devices are deployed globally through NGO-led programs. These partnerships not only expand access to essential care but also help build local capacity through training and support.

“At EDAN, we believe in bringing innovation and value together to improve the human condition,” Xie concluded. “That mission is at the core of everything we do — from product design to global partnerships.”

As EDAN celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2025, the company remains steadfast in its mission to deliver innovation that matters — especially for those who need it most.

Source: <https://www.macaubusiness.com/edan-highlights-commitment-to-global-health-at-ghf-2025-satellite-symposium-a-side-event-of-the-world-health-assembly/>



Ministry of Health Receives Donation of Medical Equipment from Taiwan

Today, the Government of Belize, through Hon. Kevin Bernard, Minister of Health & Wellness of Belize, received a generous donation of medical equipment from the Cao Zhong Zhi Foundation, a Taiwanese NGO that has long supported Belizean people in need. The donation was handed over to the Minister by H.E. Lily Li-Wen Hsu, Ambassador of Taiwan to Belize, on behalf of the Foundation.

This donation is made possible through the partnership of the NGO and the Taiwanese Government. The Foundation provided a total of 250 adult wheelchairs, 50 children’s wheelchairs,

80 toilet chairs, 160 aluminum walkers, and 400 aluminum canes, while the Taiwanese Government covered the shipping cost. These essential medical supplies will significantly enhance the quality of life for many Belizeans and bolster the nation’s healthcare service.

Taiwan has long been a dedicated partner of Belize in public health. Taiwan also continues to contribute meaningfully to the global health community. Today’s donation reaffirms Taiwan’s commitment to supporting Belize and highlights the importance of international cooperation in tackling global public health challenges.

The Government of Belize extends its heartfelt appreciation to the Cao Zhong Zhi Foundation and the people and Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) for their longstanding friendship and support. Belize will continue to advocate for Taiwan’s meaningful participation in the World Health Organization (WHO) and the annual World Health Assembly.

The partnership between Belize and Taiwan is a shining example of international cooperation. We look forward to continued collaboration with Taiwan and other global partners to further strengthen Belize’s health sector.

Source: <https://www.breakingbelizenews.com/2025/05/16/ministry-of-health-receives-donation-of-medical-equipment-from-taiwan-2/>

Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr Extends Olive Branch to WHO – With Strings Attached

In a surprise appearance Tuesday before WHO member states via pre-recorded video, new US Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr extended a kind of olive branch to the World Health Organization, calling for “a new era of international health cooperation, free from political influence and corporate bias.”

While Kennedy did not say that the US would rejoin the organization after announcing [it would withdraw in January](#), he seemed to hold that out as a possibility, if WHO were to reform. But he also suggested that the US might lead the creation of “new institutions” should that effort fail.

And he lashed out at the just-approved WHO pandemic agreement, something most member states view as a huge achievement, calling it an accord that would “lock in all of the dysfunctions of the WHO [COVID] pandemic response” – without explaining why or how.

“We want to free international health cooperation from the straitjacket of political interference by corrupting influences of the pharmaceutical companies from adversarial nations and their NGO proxies,” Kennedy told Tuesday’s World Health Assembly, adding:

“I would like to take this opportunity to invite my fellow health ministers around the world into a new era of cooperation.

“Let’s create new institutions or revisit existing institutions that are lean, efficient, transparent and accountable, whether it’s an emergency outbreak of an infectious disease or the pervasive rot of chronic conditions that have been overtaking not just America but the whole world, we’re ready to work with you.”

Like many legacy institutions, WHO “has become mired in bureaucratic bloat, entrenched paradigms, conflicts of interest and international power politics, while the United States has provided the lion’s share of the organization’s funding,” Kennedy charged, while paying homage to most

WHO staff as “conscientious people who believe in what they are doing.”

Revives charges against China over COVID pandemic

Kennedy also slammed China, saying that the country had “exerted undue influence over its [WHO] operations in ways that serve their own interests and not particularly the interests of the global public.

“This all became obvious during the COVID pandemic, when the WHO under pressure from China, suppressed reports at critical junctures, of human-to-human transmission, and then worked with China to promote the fiction that COVID originated from bats or penguins, rather than from a Chinese government sponsored research at a biolab in Wuhan.”

“Not only has the WHO capitulated to political pressure from China. It’s also failed to maintain an organization characterized by transparency and fair governance by and for its member states. The WHO often acts like it has forgotten that its members must remain accountable to their own citizens and not to transnational or corporate interests,” Kennedy said.

The US Health Secretary’s remarks brought a sharp cry of protest from China, who called for a point of order just after the remarks.

“Cease smearing and shifting blame onto other countries,” said China’s delegate, charging that the US, as well, failed to “proactively share data on its early suspected [COVID] cases” with the World Health Organization.

Unsettled questions over COVID-19 virus origins and WHO response in early days

While the US sits out this year’s WHA, China has sent its largest delegation ever of more than 180 people. Beijing is also increasing its funding to WHO by \$100 million a year, over the next five years, Vice-Premier Liu Guozhong said at Tuesday morning’s plenary.

That represents a huge new commitment from Beijing – although it was not immediately clear if the \$100 million-a-year pledge includes the \$50 million annual increase in assessed contributions that would be levied on Beijing in 2026-27 as part of a [step-wise increase in member state fees](#), that is up for approval at this WHA.

As for the origins of the virus that sparked the COVID-19 pandemic, the question of whether the highly transmissible form of the virus, SARS CoV2, escaped in a lap leak from the [Wuhan Institute of Virology](#)’s which was studying the virus in bats, or spread from an infected animal through the teeming [live animal market in the same city](#) has been hotly debated by scientists the world over, [but never definitely decided](#).

There’s no question, however, that the outcomes of the initial WHO fact-finding mission to Wuhan in 2021, [were hotly criticized](#) as orchestrated by Beijing. Following that, China [prevented a second WHO mission from returning again](#) to conduct more research question detailed follow-up surveys and field that could have helped answer the more definitively.

Independent of China, WHO was also later criticized other member states as well independent experts for failing to call out earlier in 2020 [patterns of person-to-person virus transmission](#), or a few months later, to [confirm that SARS-CoV2 was airborne](#) and recommend masks as a public health measure.

Calls WHO treaty an extension of COVID-era mistakes

Kennedy also slammed the just-approved WHO pandemic

agreement, which was hailed as a crowning achievement of the global health agency and multilateralism by dozens of member states in remarks yesterday and earlier today. See related story:

“Global cooperation on health is still critically important to President Trump and myself, but it isn’t working very well under the WHO, as the failures of the COVID era demonstrate,” Kennedy said, adding that, “the WHO has not even come to terms with its failures during COVID, let alone made significant reforms.

“Instead, it has doubled down with the pandemic agreement, which will lock in all of the dysfunctions of the WHO pandemic response.

“We’re not going to participate in that,” Kennedy asserted, repeating a US position adopted by the new administration of Donald Trump in January – which framed the new agreement as an infringement on sovereignty, a charge robustly denied by WHO and other participating member states.

Kennedy also slammed WHO’s priorities as “increasingly reflecting the biases and interests of corporate medicine” and letting “harmful gender ideology” hijack its core mission.

“Too often... it has become the tool of politics and turned its back on promoting health and health security,” the Health Secretary charged.

Shifting priorities to address chronic diseases

Kennedy pointed to the US plans to shift its national health focus to the epidemic of chronic diseases, as a way forward, and he invited global health leaders to follow a similar course:

“We need to reboot the whole system, as we are doing the United States,” he said, saying that the nation was

“fundamentally shifting the priorities of our health agencies to focus on chronic diseases.

“It’s the chronic disease



epidemic that is sickening our people and bankrupting our health care system. We're now pivoting to make our health care system more responsive to this reality. We're going to make health care in the United States serve the needs of the public instead of industry profit-taking. We're removing food dyes and other harmful additives from our food supply. We're investigating the causes of autism and other chronic diseases. We're seeking to reduce consumption of ultra processed foods, and we're going to support lifestyle changes that will bolster the immune systems and transform the health of our people.

"Few of these efforts lend themselves easily to profits or serve established special interests. These changes can only occur through the kind of systemic overhaul that President Trump has brought to our country. We'd like to see a similar reordering of priorities on the global stage."

But infectious diseases also need to remain a priority

At the same time, he acknowledged that infectious disease "and pandemic preparedness," need to remain national and global priorities. He did not explain how pandemic preparedness could be improved or advanced without global consensus around an accord such as the new Pandemic Agreement.

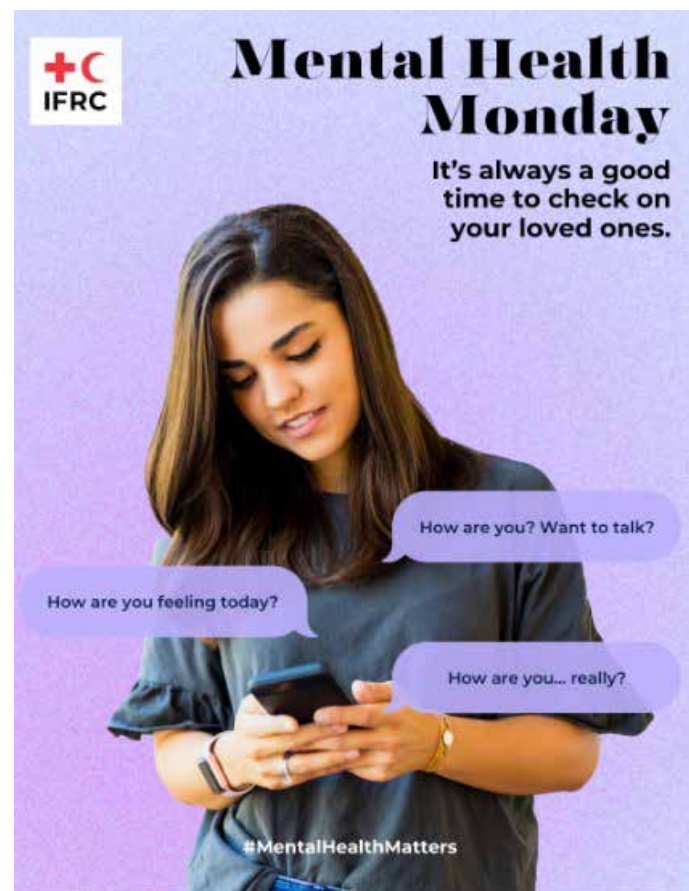
"Indeed the WHO has, since its inception, accomplished important work, including the eradication of smallpox," Kennedy stated. "With the leadership of the United States and funding from our country over the past 25 years, millions of global citizens have seen a reduction in premature death due to HIV, TB and malaria,"

he added without any reference to the drastic Trump Administration reductions in funding for programmes like the [President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief \(PEPFAR\)](#) as well as the shuttering of the [US Agency for International Development](#), which were responsible for those achievements.

"Let's return to the core focus of global health and global health security, back to reducing infectious disease burden and the spread of diseases of pandemic potential," Kennedy said. "I urge the world's health ministers and the WHO to take our withdrawal from the organization as a wake up call."

Source: <https://healthpolicy-watch.news/breaking-rfk-jr-extends-olive-branch-to-who-with-caveats-attached/>

UNDP in Asia and the Pacific @UNDPAsiapac · 6h
As Afghans return from Iran & Pakistan, they face fragile health systems & increased #TB risk.
@UNDP's cross-border TB app is improving early detection & care continuity for mobile populations, reinforcing regional health security.
More: go.undp.org/Uun
#WorldRefugeeDay



NGO seeks end to stereotypes stalling boy child health, wellbeing

An NGO, Restore Hope for the Boy Child Initiative (RHBCI), says the rigid and often unrealistic expectations from male children can lead to emotional, mental, and physical harm.

Dr Babatunde Kayode, the Executive Director of the organisation, said this at a news conference to mark the 2025 International Day of the Boy Child, on Friday, in Abuja.

Kayode said that it could also ultimately affect boys' ability to thrive and reach their full potential.

According to him, societal expectations and stereotypes are having a profound negative impact on the well-being and development of the boy child.

"Boys globally encounter various obstacles, including struggle with societal expectations, leading to mental health concerns.

"They also face harmful stereotypes, which can negatively impact on their well-being and development.

"They are also vulnerable to violence, exploitation, and abuse, and most times, have limited access to quality education," he said.

He said that the challenges affecting the boy child is often neglected by the family, society and the government, hence the increasing cases of juvenile delinquency, crime, low self-esteem, aggression and other societal ills.

He emphasised the need to also prioritise their issues, implement policies that will promote boys' education, health and well-being.

Kayode said that the NGO was

championing the importance of positive role models and mentors in shaping the lives of boys.

He said that it was part of its efforts to support the well-being and development of the boy child.

He said that by providing boys with inspiring and supportive figures, they can be empowered to grow into confident, compassionate, and responsible individuals.

"There is a need for us to raise awareness on boys' well-being and challenges.

"We should also promote positive role models that will encourage them and support their development, as well as create a positive

environment for them to thrive," he said.

John Samuel, a junior secondary school student, urged stakeholders to educate the public, especially on the negative effects of pressure or societal expectations on the male child.

"Most times, at a young age, family members put so much pressure on the need for the male child to be successful, irrespective of the person's intellectual ability.

"This has forced a lot of young people to go into fraudulent means like scam, robbery and others just to have money," he said.

Favour Emmanuel, another student, stressed the need for the society, especially family members, to encourage the boy child to exhibit emotions.

"Most times, even when one is hurt and you cry, people around you will laugh and mock you rather than give listening ears to the reasons for the emotion," he said.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the day is celebrated annually on May 16,

It is used to advocate for the well-being of male children, and the positive aspect they bring to the families and communities.

Other activities to mark the day included awareness walk/rally to promote support, distribution of fliers, and a lecture at Federal Government Boys College, Apo, on bullying, school-based violence, and their impact on boys' health. (NAN) (www.nannews.ng)

Source: <https://nannews.ng/2025/05/16/ngo-seeks-end-to-stereotypes-stalling-boy-child-health-wellbeing/>



NGOs call out Hong Kong's escalation of transnational repression against human rights defenders

ISHR joins 22 human rights organisations in strongly condemning the Hong Kong government's escalating repression of activists in exile and the targeting of relatives of prominent activist Anna Kwok.

We, the undersigned civil society and human rights organizations, strongly condemn the Hong Kong government's escalating repression of activists in exile and their family members in Hong Kong.

On May 2, 2025, Hong Kong national security police formally charged the father of a prominent US-based activist, Anna Kwok, with a national security crime, marking the first such prosecution of a family member of an exiled activist.

Kwok Yin-sang, 68, faces one charge of "directly or indirectly" dealing with the finances of an "absconder" under section 90 of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, which carries a punishment of up to seven years in prison. Police also arrested Anna Kwok's brother on April 30 but has released him

on bail pending further investigation. We call on the Hong Kong authorities to immediately drop all charges against Kwok Yin-sang and release him.

Anna Kwok is the executive director of Hong Kong Democracy Council, a nongovernmental organization based in Washington, DC. In July 2023, she was among a first group of eight people against whom the Hong Kong police issued arrests warrants and HK\$1 million (US\$129,000) bounties for violating Hong Kong's National Security Law.

So far, Hong Kong authorities have issued similar baseless arrest warrants and bounties against 19 exiled Hong Kong activists and have harassed and threatened their families. Most recently, between January and April, national security police took away and interrogated over a dozen relatives and

associates of the UK-based activists Carmen Lau and Tony Cheung, and the academic Chung Kim-wah, as well as the US-based activist Frances Hui. In February, the Hong Kong authorities confiscated HK\$800,000 (US\$103,000) from ex-lawmaker Ted Hui, an Australian resident, and his family for having allegedly violated the National Security Law.

In June and December 2024, the Hong Kong government cancelled the passports of 13 wanted activists, including Anna Kwok.

Punishments and harassment against individuals for the alleged actions of another person is a form of collective punishment, prohibited by international human rights law.

The Chinese government has used two draconian national security laws, the National Security Law of 2020 and

the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance of 2024, to dismantle Hong Kong's democracy movement and take away its fundamental freedoms. The Chinese and Hong Kong governments' actions severely contravened human rights guarantees enshrined in Hong Kong's de facto constitution, the Basic Law, and violated the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which is incorporated into Hong Kong's legal framework via the Basic Law and expressed in the Bill of Rights Ordinance.

The 19 wanted activists live in the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, and Australia. The US government alone has sanctioned six officials in Hong Kong for using the National Security Law "extraterritorially to intimidate, silence, and harass" the activists. The other three governments have issued statements condemning the arrest warrants, but have not taken action to hold Hong Kong officials accountable.

In response to the Chinese government's international intimidation campaign against the Hong Kong

diaspora, we urge concerned governments to take concrete actions to hold accountable government officials implicated in these abuses.

Governments should also put in place effective measures to protect exiled Hong Kong activists and other critics of the Chinese government against Beijing's long arm of repression, including by establishing national systems to track cases of transnational repression, and impartially investigate and prosecute those responsible within their jurisdictions.

Signatories:

1. Amnesty International
2. ARTICLE 19
3. China Aid Association
4. Chinese Human Rights Defenders
5. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
6. Fortify Rights
7. Freedom House
8. Georgetown Center for Asian Law
9. Hong Kong Watch
10. The Human Rights Foundation
11. Human Rights Watch
12. International Service for Human Rights
13. Judicial Reform Foundation
14. PEN America
15. The Rights Practice
16. Safeguard Defenders
17. Students for a Free Tibet, Japan
18. Taipei Bar Association Human Rights Committee
19. Taiwan Bar Association Human Rights Committee
20. Uyghur Human Rights Project
21. Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation
22. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
23. World Uyghur Congress

Source: <https://ishr.ch/latest-updates/ngos-call-out-hong-kongs-escalation-of-transnational-repression-against-human-rights-defenders/>

Adolescence writer says benefit cuts 'punching down' on disabled people

PWD

The screenwriter behind hit TV drama *Adolescence* has told the BBC the government's planned benefit changes are "punching down" on disabled people.

Jack Thorne, who is autistic and won critical acclaim for the Netflix drama, said the plans were "wrong and dangerous and that we need to be challenging them as a society".

The government announced plans in March to make £5bn welfare cuts amid increasing demand and to encourage people back into work.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) said: "We are determined to support people in all parts of the country by tackling poverty and creating secure, well-paid jobs."

Thorne told the BBC's *Access All* podcast that the plans were going to cause "severe hardship" for thousands of disabled people and "enough is enough".

He said: "It is very expensive being a disabled person. And the extra payments are required for people to have any quality of life."

According to the charity Scope, disabled households face an average of £1,010 extra costs per month.

"I'm aware of friends of mine that are really struggling right now, and it makes me incredibly angry that talented, brilliant people are being denied the support that they need in order to lead a reasonable quality of life," Thorne

said.

"I don't understand why I live in a country now where we punch down quite as much as we do and it worries me about the future direction of travel."

Changes to benefits include freezing the "health element" of Universal Credit for existing claimants at £97 per week and reducing the amount for new claimants to £50 from 2026.

Parliament is also set to vote on plans to tighten eligibility criteria for Personal Independence Payments (PIP), which is used to cover the additional costs of being disabled, whether you work or not.

Thorne was one of more than 100 influential disabled people to sign an open letter to Prime Minister Keir Starmer, which said of the cuts: "This is not reform; it is cruelty by policy."

The letter, published as part of the new #TakeThePIP campaign, was signed by actors Liz Carr and Doctor Who star Ruth Madeley, as well as comedians Rosie Jones and 2018's Britain's Got Talent winner Lee Ridley, otherwise known as Lost Voice Guy.

They say the changes to the way PIP will be awarded is a "radical departure from the current system".

Currently those receiving the benefit must score 12



points across various activities in the assessment, but from 2026 four of the 12 points must come from one single activity for the applicant to receive the highest rate.

The signatories said these changes mean those who "can't wash below the waist, for example, could now not qualify and lose vital benefits",

"For us, PIP is not a benefit - it is access to life. Without it, people are left housebound and isolated."

Thorne, who has written dramas including *His Dark Materials*, *Toxic Town* and the stage play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* said: "They're [the government] worried about all these different things, but the answer to that is not [to target] the people who are suffering the most.

"Talented, brilliant people are being denied the support that they need in order to lead a reasonable quality of life."

Thorne was diagnosed autistic as an adult and lived with an intense skin condition called cholinergic urticaria in his 20s, meaning he was allergic to heat and his own body movements. He spent six months in bed "because every time I moved, I was having an allergic reaction".

He says he has been passionate about supporting and representing the disabled community ever since.

"They [the government] just got this one so wrong, and I don't think it's been done with enough consultation with the disabled community. And I think if they did consult meaningfully, they would discover what they need to do here. And it's not this."

A consultation on some of the planned changes to benefits is available to fill in online until 30 June.

The DWP added: "PIP is a part of the way that we support disabled people and people with long term health conditions.

"But with the number of people claiming PIP doubling since the pandemic, it's right that we rebalance

the system to ensure support is targeted to those who need it most.

"Alongside this, as part of our Plan for Change, we've increased the 'national living wage', uprated benefits, and are helping over one million households by introducing a fair repayment rate on Universal Credit deductions."

Thorne received critical acclaim earlier this year for his Netflix drama *Adolescence*, which he co-wrote with actor Stephen Graham and told the story of a 13-year-old boy accused of murdering a girl in his class.

The show sparked national debates about the impact of social media and "manosphere" influencers, particularly on boys, and led to a meeting with the

prime minister to talk about protecting people online.

"It's been amazing, *Adolescence* having the impact it has had. We're still all reeling from it."

He said since the meeting the Women and Equalities Select Committee had started an investigation into the manosphere and a group of Labour MPs are "pushing very hard" for legislative changes to protect people using the internet.

Thorne says Starmer was "very sincere and he was very interested in *Adolescence* and I'm really grateful for that".

"And I think he needs to be as interested in this," he added.

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd90j80p14zo>



Disabled celebrities urge Keir Starmer to scrap 'inhumane' benefit cuts

Exclusive: More than 100 people including Liz Carr and Rosie Jones sign letter criticising Pip and universal credit changes

More than 100 of the UK's most high-profile disabled people, including Liz Carr, [Rosie Jones](#), Ruth Madeley and Cherylee Houston, have called on the prime minister to abandon "inhumane and catastrophic plans to cut disability benefits".

In an open letter to [Keir Starmer](#) before a planned Commons vote next month, they argue that the government's plan to reduce eligibility to personal independence payment (Pip) and the health component of universal credit is a matter of "survival" and "basic human rights".

"If these plans go ahead, 700,000 families already living in poverty will face further devastation," they write. "This is not reform; it is cruelty by policy."

The signatories warn Starmer the changes will "strip financial support from those who need it most", deepen social exclusion and "increase disability-related deaths".

Citing the way Pip is linked to a loved one's eligibility for carer's allowance, the letter says thousands of unpaid carers will lose income as well as "overwhelm local councils", which often rely on



disabled people's Pips for social care.

"We have already endured a decade of austerity, disproportionate pandemic losses, and life-costing cuts," the letter says of disabled people in the UK. "We, the undersigned, will not stand by while our community is sacrificed for the illusion of savings." They add: "For us, Pip is not a benefit – it is access to life."

The government's plans, set out in a green paper earlier this year, would

reduce the eligibility criteria for Pip – a non-means tested benefit designed to pay for the extra costs of disability – for an estimated 1 million people.

The sickness-related element of universal credit is also set to be cut, with MPs due to vote on that aspect in the autumn. Official figures show 3.2 million people [could lose an average of £1,720 a year](#) as a result.

Spanning the worlds of television, theatre, literature and the media, the signatories include the Adolescence writer Jack Thorne, the comedian Lee Ridley known as Lost Voice Guy, the actor Lisa Hammond and the broadcaster Sophie Morgan. The letter will be part of a wider campaign launched by disabled celebrities that aims to bring attention to the government's proposed cuts. Using the hashtag [#TakingThePIP](#), the organisers will ask deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people to share their experiences, contact their MPs, and "take a stand" on social media.

Houston, an actor and co-organiser of the letter, said she and others with a platform felt they "had to do something" to oppose the "barbaric" policy.

"I've heard so very many heartbreaking stories of the struggles people are facing, even before this latest round of proposed cuts. These cuts will devastate disabled people's lives if they go through. These are lifeline benefits we are talking about, stripping away the ability for disabled people to live their lives. We want the government to listen, withdraw the cuts, and work with us to create a system that supports, not punishes, disabled people."

The letter raises concerns about the government's rhetoric around its proposals titled [Get Britain Working](#). "Framing welfare cuts as 'incentives' to work implies that disabled people must earn their place in society through productivity – a dangerous narrative. Disabled lives are inherently valuable – whether someone can work or not," it says. The signatories add that the Access to Work scheme now has a backlog of over six months, preventing many from working, while cutting Pip will make it harder for people to stay in work.

The opposition from leading disabled people comes as ministers face a rebellion from backbenchers

over the plans, as well as condemnation from charities and unions. The [partial U-turn over the winter fuel allowance](#) last week has raised questions over whether [other benefit reductions](#) should also be overturned, with [Unison urging ministers](#) to "look again" at cuts facing disabled people as well as pensioners.

A government spokesperson said: "We are determined to support people in all parts of the country by tackling poverty and creating secure, well-paid jobs."

"Pip is a part of the way that we support disabled people and people with long-term health conditions. But with the number of people claiming Pip doubling since the pandemic, it's right that we rebalance the system to ensure support is targeted to those who need it most.

"Alongside this, as part of our plan for change, we've increased the national living wage, uprated benefits, and are helping over 1 million households by introducing a fair repayment rate on universal credit deductions."



Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/27/disabled-celebrities-urge-keir-starmer-scrap-inhumane-benefit-cuts>

Afghanistan's Disabled Left Waiting: Fear Mounts as Taliban Withholds Payments

Several persons with disabilities in Kabul say they have not received their disability allowances since the second half of last year and are facing serious economic hardship. They add that despite repeated promises by the Taliban, no action has been taken to pay their allowances. According to them, persons with disabilities are concerned that they may face the same fate as retirees.

Several individuals with disabilities, in interviews with the *Hasht-e Subh Daily*, criticized the reduction in their allowances and the removal of some from the list of eligible recipients. They emphasized that, in addition to the issue of unpaid allowances, the lack of job opportunities and the public's distrust in their abilities are among their major concerns. These individuals stated that if suitable employment opportunities were created based on their physical capabilities, they could meet part of their economic needs.

Shamsia (pseudonym), who lost her leg due to a rocket strike during the civil war in Kabul, now criticizes the Taliban for their negligence in paying her allowance. She says she desperately

needs her disability benefits to support her family of eight. According to her, the Taliban paid only half of the disability allowances last year, and despite repeated follow-ups, she has not received any payment since.

This person with a disability said: "The months of Hamal and Saur [March 20–May 20] have passed, and now several days of Jawza [May 21 onward] have passed too, but there is still no sign of our allowance. Last year, they were supposed to pay us 60,000 Afghanis; they only gave 30,000, and the rest remains unpaid. Our economic situation is dire. One of my sons used to work at the market, but in an accident, a car hit him. Now he sometimes earns 50 Afghanis, sometimes nothing."

Mohammad Qudos, another individual with a disability, says that life has become extremely difficult, and the non-payment of his allowance has put him and his family in a serious predicament. According to him, people with disabilities are among the most vulnerable segments of society, yet little attention is paid to their problems.

Mr. Qudos added, "I have nine children, and all of them need food and clothing. The [Taliban regime] sometimes pays the

allowance and sometimes doesn't. Indeed, my legs don't work, but my hands are functional. If work suitable to my abilities is provided, I can meet my family's needs and avoid relying on others."

Gul Pacha, who lost both legs and his eyesight due to a landmine explosion on the Kabul-Kandahar highway, has called on the international community and aid organizations not to forget persons with disabilities in Afghanistan. He said his life depends on his disability allowance, and without support, it would become even more difficult than it already is.

Gul Pacha stated: "If help doesn't reach us [persons with disabilities], our lives will become extremely difficult. There's no news of our payments; they just keep promising but never follow through. Living in these conditions is not easy."

Fereshta, the wife of a person with a disability, is calling for the payment of her husband's disability allowance. She says that if the Taliban fail to pay their salary, they will be forced to live on the streets.

She adds: "We are a family of eight. My husband is disabled, and my son is unemployed. We're hoping this year his salary will be issued earlier. We live in a rented house and are in debt to the landlord. If we can't pay, we'll end up on the streets."

Meanwhile, the Taliban's Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled Affairs has not commented on the delays in paying the allowances to persons with disabilities.

The Taliban have claimed that over the past three and a half years, they have registered more than 653,000 women heads of households, orphans, and persons with disabilities.

Earlier, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid announced that the group had allocated 12 billion Afghanis to the families of its suicide attackers. The Taliban-controlled national television broadcast this interview in three segments on its X page on Tuesday, April 1, 2025. According to Mujahid, this amount is equivalent to the budget of three ministries and is being spent through the Taliban's Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled Affairs to support the children and wives of suicide bombers.

This is while thousands of survivors from former security forces' families—and those injured in the war—live in dire conditions, suffering from discrimination and neglect by Taliban-controlled institutions.

On the other hand, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has reported that around 9 million children will need emergency educational support in 2025, including 888,000 children with disabilities.

Source: <https://8am.media/eng/afghanistans-disabled-left-waiting-fear-mounts-as-taliban-withholds-payments/>

Freedom Gate Prosperity, Gilgit chamber sign MoU

ISLAMABAD: Freedom Gate Prosperity (FGP) and the Gilgit-Baltistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GBCCI) have joined hands to focus on youth and women entrepreneurship, climate resilience and sustainable development in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Both organisations formally signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Tuesday at a ceremony in Islamabad in this regard.

The MoU was signed by Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of FGP Mohammad Anwar and GBCCI President Ashfaq Ahmed marking the beginning of a transformative collaboration focused on youth and women entrepreneurship, climate resilience and sustainable development in Gilgit-Baltistan, says a press release.

It said besides others, Dr Faiz Kakar, FGP Board chairman; Urooj Raza Sayyami, director FGP Board; and Farhan Jawaid, head of programmes FGP, participated in the ceremony. From GBCCI side, Mohammad Ali, chairman, Standing Committee on Mines and Minerals of GBCCI; Ali Akbar, chairman, Standing Committee on International Relations and Foreign Affairs GBCCI; Ghulam Nasir, executive committee member FPCCI, were also present on the occasion.

Highlighting the significance of the partnership, FGP CEO Mohammad Anwar stated: "Our collaboration with GBCCI reflects our firm belief that development must be led by the people it serves. We are investing in Gilgit-Baltistan's greatest asset, its youth and women, by equipping them with entrepreneurial skills, green business models, and climate-smart solutions. This partnership is not just strategic; it's a commitment to building a just and sustainable future for the region."

Speaking on behalf of GBCCI, Ashfaq Ahmed welcomed the initiative and said: "We are proud to partner with Freedom Gate Prosperity in this meaningful alliance. Gilgit-Baltistan is full of entrepreneurial potential, especially among women and youth. Through this partnership, we aim to unlock that potential and support businesses that are not only profitable but also socially and environmentally responsible."

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1913759/freedom-gate-prosperity-gilgit-chamber-sign-mou>



Mass lobby of MPs marks ‘important’ moment in fight against Labour’s benefit cuts

Disabled people from across the UK converged on parliament yesterday to challenge their MPs in face-to-face meetings about the government’s proposed cuts to disability benefits.

Disabled activists travelled from Northern Ireland, from Wales – including a group of [Disability Wales members](#) – and from Scotland for the opportunity to express their anger and distress about the billions of pounds of cuts to support announced by the Labour government in March.

So many disabled people travelled to Westminster for the event (pictured) that the parliamentary authorities at one point had to introduce a “one in, one out” rule to ease overcrowding in 900-year-old Westminster Hall.

Notes taken by Disability News Service (DNS) during the event yesterday (Wednesday) suggest that as many as 40 MPs – and possibly more – may have held meetings with disabled constituents during the mass lobby over the cuts laid out in March in the [Pathways to Work green paper](#).

Among those who made time for meetings with constituents were former Conservative work and pensions secretary Sir Iain Duncan Smith; Daisy Cooper, deputy leader of the Liberal Democrats; and former Green party leader Sian Berry.

But other MPs dodged meetings with constituents.

Among those who sent messages to constituents during the lobby that they were not available to meet to discuss the cuts was Ellie Reeves, chair of the Labour party and sister of chancellor Rachel Reeves.

Last month, [DNS reported](#) that an ombudsman had linked the 2020 suicide of one of Ellie Reeves’ constituents with the flawed personal independence payment (PIP) system, with the report completed just as her sister announced £4.5 billion cuts to PIP spending.

The mass lobby was organised by the [Coalition Against Benefit Cuts](#), [Disabled People Against Cuts](#), [Disability Rights UK](#) and [Well Adapt](#).

Nancy Kelley, from Brighton, reported a “very positive” and “supportive” meeting with her MP, Sian Berry.

She told DNS she had raised her “really profound concern” that the cuts were being made to “already inadequate benefits” and would push hundreds of thousands of disabled people into poverty, as well as damaging people’s health and wellbeing.

She had also highlighted the “moral unacceptability” of the cuts.

Kelley said she had urged Berry to “keep speaking out” about the cuts following questions she has already asked in parliament, including in prime minister’s questions.

She said: “Overall, it was a very positive conversation from an MP who I felt was quite engaged and very open to doing more.”

She added: “I think it matters when MPs see disabled people showing up to advocate for our rights to live in dignity; it matters for us to be so visible here.

“It will affect [MPs], whether they

meet us, whether they have been requested a meeting and dodged it, or whether they are just walking past.”

But John Ley, a management committee member of [METRO GAD in Greenwich](#), waited in vain for several hours to speak to his MP, housing minister Matthew Pennycook.

Pennycook had not responded to an email request to attend the lobby or to a “green card” request submitted on the day of the lobby.

Ley said: “I am not very impressed with Matthew at all.”

[Dermot Devlin](#), co-founder of DPAC Northern Ireland, had flown to London from Northern Ireland on Tuesday to attend the event, and had to undergo medical tests to check that it was safe for him to fly, while the trip is likely to have a significant impact on his health in the weeks to come.

He said: “That shows how important it is that people back home are being represented here today.”

Although the Pathways to Work green paper and its associated billions of pounds of cuts do not apply to Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Executive’s finance minister, John O’Dowd, [said earlier this month](#) that it was “becoming increasingly difficult, if not impossible” to mitigate against spending decisions made in Westminster.

Devlin said: “It will affect us too. We need to show our faces too. It will impact us.”

He said he believed the biggest influence of the mass lobby would be the “visual impact” of so many disabled people gathered in the House of Commons to lobby their MPs.

Daisy Cooper, deputy leader of the Liberal Democrats, said her party hoped the government would revise its plans for the PIP cuts, just as the prime minister had announced hours earlier [at prime minister’s questions](#) that he would look again at Labour’s cuts to winter fuel payments.

But she said that, as the government’s plans stand, the Liberal Democrats were “very likely” to vote against the PIP cuts when legislation is presented to parliament, probably next month.

She told DNS: “It’s abundantly clear to me that there is already a huge amount of distress that is being caused to people with disabilities and their carers as well, and if the government is serious about getting people into work, or helping people in work stay in work, then cutting the support that helps them do that is not the way to do it.

“I have spoken to a number of people who are here today as part of this rally to lobby their MPs and what I can hear is that people are angry and people are scared.”

She said people rely on PIP “just to keep their head above water for day-to-day life, or keep them in work”.

One of her constituents told her he is desperate to stay in work, and that PIP allows him to do that by contributing to his travel costs.

She said: “It’s hard enough to get PIP as it is, and making it even harder is really tough.”

Neil Duncan-Jordan, who sponsored the event with fellow Labour MP Richard Burgon, told DNS he believed momentum was growing against the cuts among Labour MPs.

He said: “I think you’re getting more and more MPs feeling uncomfortable about what they are being asked to vote for, particularly because they are probably going to be asked to vote for it prior to actually having any real detail in front of them about the impact of that.

“Let’s get disabled people in front of MPs, let’s get the arguments out there, let’s see the MPs respond and see whether or not they are persuaded. I hope they will be.”



He added: “It’s important that disabled people meet their MPs directly and lay out in front of them what these cuts are going to mean on a day-to-day basis, how it’s going to affect them, how it’s going to affect their lives.”

“Being an MP in Westminster, it’s easy to feel disconnected from the real world; it’s important that we start connecting again with ordinary people and that they tell us how our actions affect their daily lives, and that’s what I think this lobby is about.”

The mass lobby took place as the Commons work and pensions committee [sent a letter](#) to work and pensions secretary Liz Kendall calling on her to delay cuts to PIP and to the universal credit (UC) health element, and to co-produce new measures with disabled people.

It also called on her to carry out an “independent, comprehensive analysis of the impact of the proposed cuts in UC

health support on employment, poverty and health outcomes”.

Tracey Lazard, chief executive of [Inclusion London](#), said the mass lobby was “an important moment in what’s going to be a long struggle”.

She said: “It’s not the last time that we will be mobilising.”

“What we are facing is so devastating. Effectively, we are looking at the dismantling of disability benefits as we know it.”

“It makes no policy sense, it makes no political sense, and it definitely doesn’t make any ethical justice sense.”

And she said that comments by Liz Kendall, [in a speech yesterday](#) at the IPPR think tank, that the welfare state might not survive without the cuts to disability benefits, were “desperate”

and “absurd”, particularly because [social security spending was stable](#).

DPAC’s Andy Greene, whose MP Dame Emily Thornberry sent a message during the event to say she could not attend the lobby, said he believed Labour’s plan in government had been “just not to engage” with disabled people.

But he said it was “really encouraging” to see so many new faces among the disabled people who attended the event, which “bodes well for the struggle ahead”.

He said: “It’s really important that disabled people take every opportunity they have to get together.”

“Secondly, it’s an embarrassment for the government when a lot of people turn up to say ‘look at this’ and they are too afraid to show their faces.”

“These people are making these decisions but are then not willing to engage.”

Source: <https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/mass-lobby-of-mps-marks-important-moment-in-fight-against-labours-benefit-cuts/>

Disabled campaigners watching ‘in horror’ as trans people face toilet segregation

Disabled activists say supreme court ruling has left trans community at similar risk of exclusion from public spaces

Disabled rights campaigners say they are watching “in horror” as the UK’s trans community faces similar toilet segregation and exclusion from public spaces that they do.

The aftermath of the supreme court ruling on biological sex has led to organisations banning trans people from using the toilets of the gender they live as, with accessible facilities frequently promoted as a solution.

Kemi Badenoch, the leader of the Conservatives, has suggested that trans people could use disabled loos, while employment lawyers have suggested this as a workaround for businesses that do not have gender neutral facilities.

The head of the EHRC, Kishwer Falkner, said trans people should themselves campaign for “third spaces”.

The Guardian has heard from disabled people’s organisations alarmed at the proposals.

“I have watched in horror as the supreme court ruling has unfolded,” said Michaela Hollywood, a disability rights activist who has campaigned on the scarcity of Changing Places – toilets for disabled people who need hoists or other equipment.

With one in three LGBT+ people also disabled, “there’s a really strong sense of allyship within the disabled community and longstanding mutual support between us and the LGBT+ community”, says Hollywood.



“The vast majority of disabled people are so aware of what it feels like to be excluded from basic facilities. I need a hoist to get out of my wheelchair, so if there’s not a Changing Place where I’m visiting then I can’t go.”

Some organisations chose not to speak on the record given the fraught nature of the debate but the vast majority agreed on two key points. As well as being undignified and upsetting for trans people, they stressed that the lack of availability and poor maintenance of disabled toilets means it was not a solution that would work for disabled people either. They also underlined that they knew from bitter experience how being denied access to toilets meant being kept out of public spaces.

“When we heard the supreme court ruling, we immediately felt this as an attack on all of us who are dealing with discrimination,” said Claire Glasman of WinVisible, a grassroots multiracial disabled women’s group. “Disabled women know what it’s like to be treated as lesser women.”

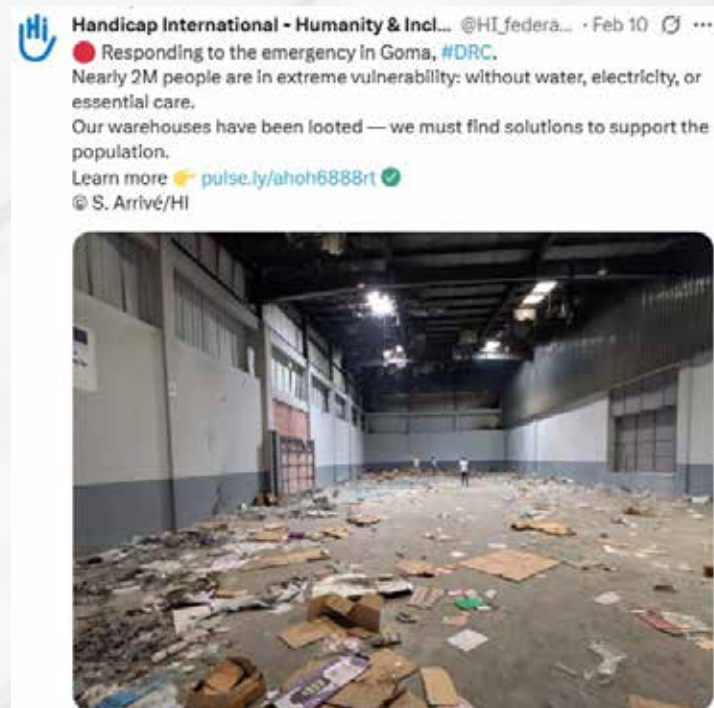
“Trans people mustn’t be segregated into disabled loos in the first place,” Glasman. “There aren’t enough accessible loos, like at stations. They’re often out of order, or kept locked, and usually the red alarm cord is hung up which is supposed to be pulled if you fall on the floor”.

A spokesperson for Inclusion London, an organisation for deaf and disabled people, said: “It’s no solution to make this situation worse by forcing trans people to use these accessible facilities. Policing bathroom use harms us all.”

Like Hollywood, Inclusion London also raised the concern that the ruling and the EHRC’s interim advice, which set out that transgender people should not be allowed to use toilets of the gender they live as, and that in some cases they also cannot use toilets of their birth sex, “encourages members of the public to police each other based on what we look like”. “That’s a huge step backwards for all our rights,” they added.

“A charter for people to bully you,” is how Ju Gosling, a co-chair of Regard, the national LGBTQI and disabled people’s organisation, described the situation, as the [EHRC embarks on a six week consultation](#) before publishing an updated code of practice, possibly after the summer recess.

Read more at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/24/disabled-campaigners-trans-people-toilet-segregation#img-1>



PSDP to prioritise strategic and near-completion projects in 2025–26

DEVELOPMENT

The ministry is conducting a rigorous project rationalisation process to ensure maximum productivity and impact

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal, chaired a high-level meeting to review and prioritise projects for inclusion in the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for the fiscal year 2025-26.

Senior officials from the Planning Ministry and members of the Planning Commission briefed the minister on priority projects across various sectors. The session underscored

the government's commitment to sustaining economic momentum and driving forward its development agenda despite fiscal challenges.

The meeting focused on aligning development initiatives with Uraan Pakistan—a strategic vision built on the 5Es framework: Exports, Equity and Empowerment, E-Pakistan, Environment and Climate, and Energy and Infrastructure.

“Despite the challenges we face, our commitment to the country's growth is absolute,” Minister Iqbal said. “We will not compromise on the betterment of our people and the progress of our nation.”

Iqbal also touched on national

security concerns, warning against external destabilisation efforts. “While we are committed to peace, Pakistan possesses a strong defence. We will not allow India to disrupt our economic and development objectives,” he said.

The Planning Minister reaffirmed that the FY26 PSDP would prioritise projects nearing completion, those of strategic importance, and initiatives with block funding, ensuring adequate allocations for each.

The ministry is conducting a rigorous project rationalisation process to ensure maximum productivity and impact. The aim is to build critical infrastructure, develop human capital, enhance operational efficiency, and strengthen Pakistan's global standing.

“We are proactively addressing the fiscal realities of the upcoming year,” Iqbal said. “Our strategic approach focuses on recalibrating the development budget while safeguarding essential projects and aligning resources with national priorities under the Uraan Pakistan vision.”

Source: <https://profit.pakistantoday.com.pk/2025/05/11/psdp-to-prioritise-strategic-and-near-completion-projects-in-2025-26/>

UNDP in Asia and the Pacific launches “Una” – the world's first AI Environment Champion

BANGKOK, THAILAND, May 19, 2025 - The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Asia and the Pacific announced the launch of Una, the world's first AI being character, as its Environment Champion.

Una will chronicle the story of UNDP's Pacific Green Transformation Project, an initiative that promotes and advocates for renewable energy. The project, launched in 2023, is a partnership between UNDP and the Government of Japan. Its goal is to increase access to clean energy, support national climate actions, and strengthen community resilience in the four Pacific Island nations of Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu.

Una will engage with local communities, governments, and global audiences through episodic videos and live interactions. By merging technology with human-centered storytelling, the aim is to encourage governments and communities in the Pacific, as well as across the world, to make sustainable choices and to take actionable steps toward climate resilience and environmental sustainability.

“Una signifies a groundbreaking advancement in conveying the critical need for environmental protection and nature conservation,” said Kanni Wignaraja, UNDP's Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and

the Pacific. “By harnessing AI, we can connect with diverse audiences worldwide in dynamic, interactive, and profoundly impactful ways. Una's capacity for delivering immersive storytelling empowers us to foster collective action and meaningful conversations about climate resilience.”

Speaking from her AI platform Una said: “My mission is to bring the voices and stories of Pacific Island communities to the world, inspiring people

everywhere to tap into the benefits of renewable energy. Our tomorrow is shaped by the choices we make and the actions we take today. Together, we can create a thriving planet for generations to come,” she added.

Una embodies “AI for Good,” a concept where AI is designed to complement human efforts to drive positive change and create a better future for all.

The launch of Una will be followed by a communications campaign that will include:

- A series of short documentary-style videos featuring Una's journey across the Pacific Islands on social media.
- Holographic appearances with onstage and showcase interactions at key events.
- A dedicated website with live interactions and visual storytelling.

Talk with Una at undp.org/asia-pacific/una or at www.unahere.com and follow her on our social media.

#UnaHere
#GreenTransformation
#WhatCanYouDo #NeverGiveUp

For media inquiries, interviews, or press materials, please contact: Cedric Monteiro or Aminath Mihdha at: cedric.monteiro@undp.org or amiinath.mihdha@undp.org

Source: <https://www.undp.org/asia-pacific/press-releases/undp-asia-and-pacific-launches-una-worlds-first-ai-environment-champion>



ENVIRONMENT

Your Story, Our Platform: The NGO World Welcomes Your Contributions

Unleash Your Impact: The NGO World Awaits Your Input

At “The NGO World” magazine, we believe in the power of collective knowledge and shared experiences. We invite our valued readers to become contributors and actively participate in shaping the content of our magazine. Your insights, stories, and perspectives are essential in fostering a sense of community and driving positive change.

If you have a compelling story related to humanitarian work, development initiatives, or social impact that aligns with the diverse sections we cover, we encourage you to share it with us. Whether it’s a firsthand account of your involvement in an NGO project, an innovative solution you’ve come across, or an issue you’re passionate about, we want to hear from you.

By actively engaging with “The NGO World,” you play a crucial role in expanding our community’s knowledge and fostering a deeper understanding of the challenges and solutions within the humanitarian and development sectors.

Together, we can amplify the voices of those working toward positive change and inspire others to make a difference. We look forward to receiving your contributions and continuing our shared mission of creating a better world.

Please send your content submissions via email:

editor@thengoworld.com

ensuring that your submission aligns with one of the sections provided below.

Sections of Magazine:

Here’s an expanded list of potential sections for the magazine “The NGO World” to cover a wide range of topics related to humanitarian work, development, and social impact:

Featured NGO Spotlight: Highlighting the work of a specific NGO, sharing their success stories, challenges, and impact.

Global Development News: Covering the latest developments in international development, policy changes, and global issues.

Local Initiatives: Showcasing grassroots projects and initiatives making a difference in local communities

NGO Innovations: Exploring innovative approaches and technologies used by NGOs to address pressing issues.

Humanitarian Crises: In-depth coverage of ongoing humanitarian crises and the response efforts.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Articles focusing on progress and challenges related to achieving the UN’s SDGs.

Women Empowerment: Stories of women-led initiatives and efforts to empower women and girls

Youth Engagement: Highlighting the role of youth in driving social change and their involvement in NGOs.

Environment and Conservation: Covering environmental issues, conservation efforts, and climate change initiatives.

Education for All: Articles on educational programs, access to quality education, and innovative teaching methods.

Health and Well-being: Discussing healthcare initiatives, disease prevention, and public health campaigns.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Examining the CSR efforts of businesses and their impact on communities.

Refugee and Migration Issues: Coverage of refugee crises, resettlement programs, and the experiences of displaced people.

Tech for Good: Exploring how technology is used for humanitarian purposes, from apps to drones.

NGO Profiles: Brief profiles of various NGOs, their missions, and achievements.

Volunteer Stories: Personal accounts from volunteers who have contributed to NGOs and their experiences.

Funding and Grants: Updates on available funding opportunities for NGOs and how to apply.

Policy and Advocacy: Discussions on policy changes affecting NGOs and their advocacy efforts.

Impact Assessment: Articles on measuring and evaluating the impact of NGO projects and programs.

Partnerships and Collaborations: Exploring successful partnerships between NGOs, governments, and businesses.

Disaster Response and Preparedness: Coverage of disaster relief efforts, preparedness strategies, and recovery stories.

Microfinance and Economic Empowerment: Exploring initiatives that empower communities economically.

Indigenous Rights and Cultural Preservation: Articles on efforts to protect and preserve indigenous cultures and traditions.

Human Rights and Social Justice: Discussions on human rights issues, social justice movements, and advocacy work.

Arts and Culture for Change: Showcasing how art and culture are used as tools for social change and awareness.

Inspirational Interviews: Exclusive interviews with prominent figures in the humanitarian and development sectors, sharing their insights, experiences, and visions for positive change.

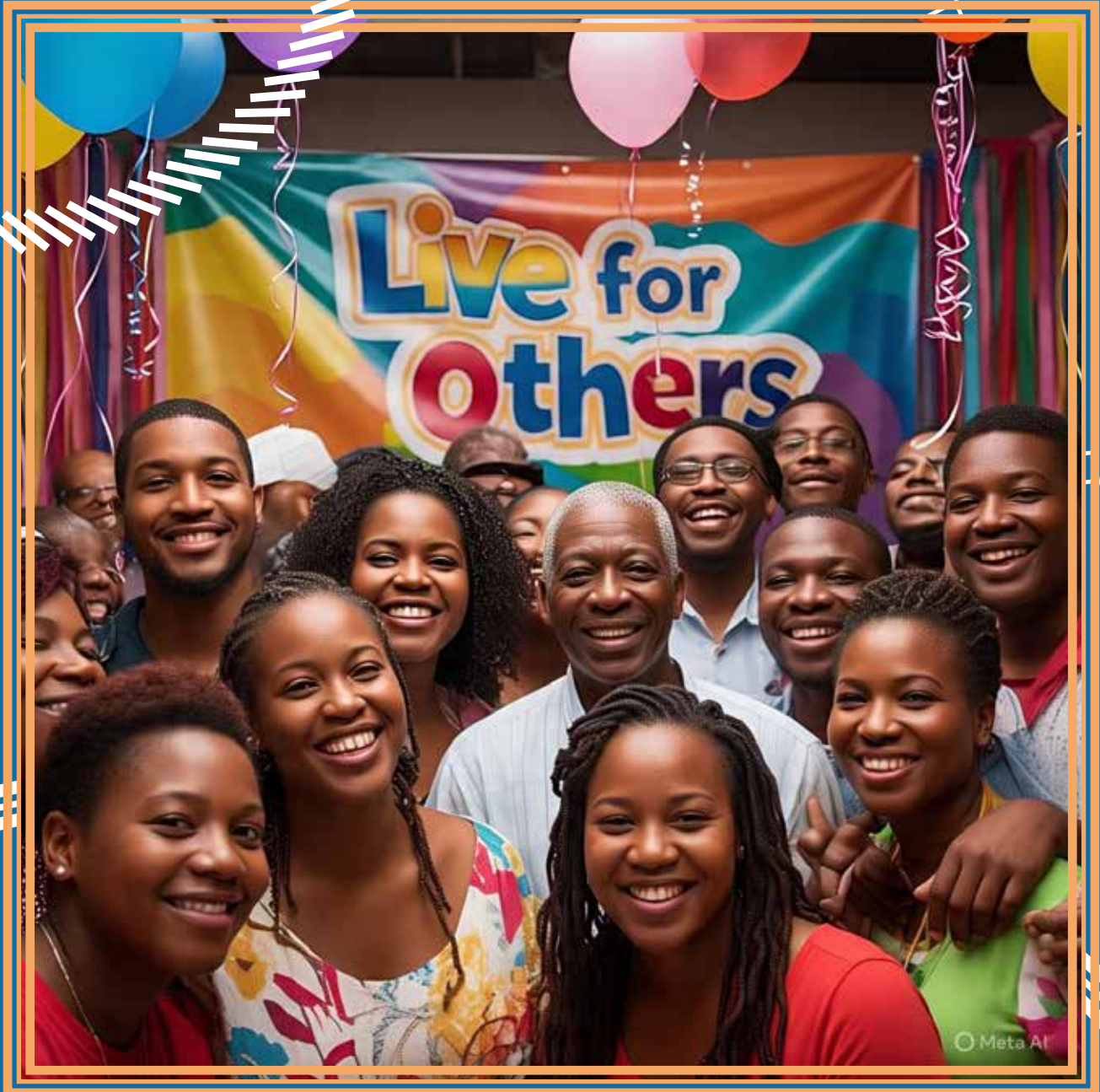
Philanthropy and Impactful Giving: Exploring the impact of philanthropic efforts, featuring interviews with philanthropists and discussions on effective giving strategies.

NGO Leadership and Management: Articles on leadership skills, management practices, and organizational development within the NGO sector, providing insights for NGO professionals and leaders

These sections offer a comprehensive view of the multifaceted work being done in the realm of humanitarianism, development, and social impact.

Submit your stories for upcoming edition & for queries, suggestion, feedback

editor@thengoworld.com



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