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FIRST UNIVERSITY IN SOUTH ASIA INVESTS IN YOUTH VOLUNTEERING

Meet the fully funded UN Volunteers with the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology

By **UN VOLUNTEERS**

JUNE 11TH, 2025

As the first university in South Asia to turn its commitment to sustainable development into action, the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) has partnered with United Nations Volunteers (UNV) to include youth often left behind. In 2024, twelve Indian nationals were fully funded for UN University Volunteer assignments. Let's take stock of what inclusive progress looks like—and why it matters in India where young people comprise over 27 percent of the total population.

UN Volunteers took on assignments with eight UN partners and pushed boundaries of what youth can achieve.

> ""At KIIT, we believe in the power of volunteerism to transform not just individuals, but entire communities. The collaboration with UNV reflects our commitment to nurturing leaders who are guided by compassion, equity, and a deep sense of responsibility."

— *Professor Achyuta Samanta, Founder of KIIT University and Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences*

WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE LEAD, THE IMPACT LASTS—NOT JUST FOR TODAY, BUT FOR GENERATIONS.

YOUTH SPARK SOLUTIONS

The UN Volunteers with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) include Economic Opportunities Associate **Pragyan Rath,** who supports young professionals to enter the workforce through the government's PM Internship Scheme. She designs internship pipelines and crafts human-interest stories that spotlight youth-led initiatives. **Sudipto Ghosh**, Support Officer for Special Projects, uses digital tools like CRM software and the Youth Hub app to broaden access to career development resources. His work helps young people gain the skills, networks, and tools needed to pursue professional opportunities. While **Mandakani Mishra** works with Passport to Earning—UNICEF's global learning-to-earnings solution in the areas of financial literacy and digital productivity, supporting young learners in job-ready skills.

CODE GREEN WITH AI

Chaman Kumar is a Remote Sensing and Artificial Intelligence Associate with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). At its Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT), he uses artificial intelligence to forecast urban heat waves and has developed a gamified carbon footprint analyzer that delivers personalized sustainability tips to students, making climate education interactive. He also employs remote sensing, gathered through satellite or drone images, to collect measurements of Earth's surface. With data-driven tools, Chaman supports communities in identifying and preparing for climate-related risks before they occur.

STORYTELLING TO STRATEGY

Another UN Volunteer with ESCAP, **Ujjwal Mishra**, Communications Support Associate with APCTT, uses design and digital storytelling to spotlight climate and technology. At the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), **Debabrata Kumar**, Communications Assistant, supports digital messages for outreach and helped shape the 2024 Impact Report. Meanwhile, at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), **Shatarupa Mishra**, Project Associate, champions press freedom, community radio, and media literacy. Her AI-powered storytelling promotes ethical media and a more informed public.

> **"TOGETHER, KIIT AND UNV ARE BUILDING A FUTURE WHERE NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND."**

Professor Achyuta Samanta, Founder of KIIT University and Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences

FOREST RIGHTS TO FARM FIELDS

The UN Volunteers with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) include **Stiti Pragnya Paddy**, Research Assistant, who works towards including Adivasi communities as part of India's Voluntary National Review (VNR) 2025. She supports the Forest Rights Act and inclusive governance, turning research into representation, particularly the indigenous perspectives, into national advocacy. While **Simran Yashita**, Documentation Associate, leads focus group conversations on making women farmers in Odisha aware and adapt to climate change. Her assignment ensures local wisdom is brought into national policy on climate-resilient farming practices.

UN Volunteer with UNDP, Simran Yashita, speaks to farmers in Puri district about climate-smart communities

FARMING SMARTER

Sai Susrut Das is with the World Food Programme (WFP). He is a Programme Associate bridging tech and agriculture. In India's farming economy, he's introducing precision farming—using data dashboards and automation to help farmers manage crops more efficiently and strengthen food security.

From Left to Right: Pragyan Rath (UNICEF); Sudipto Ghosh (UNICEF); Bhupendra Majhi (UNV); Stiti Pragnya Padhy, UNDP; Mandakani Mishra (UNICEF); Sai Susrut Das (WFP); Ishita Paul (UNRCO); Shatarupa Mishra (UNESCO); Debabrata Kumar (UNODC).

VISIBILITY STARTS WITH DATA

For **Ishita Paul**, Research Assistant with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO), inclusion means evidence, not empty words. She analyzes data on the socio-economic vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities and supports the UN's India office in shaping policies that are inclusive and informed. Her mantra: the more vulnerable, the more visibility.

UN Volunteers with UNICEF, Mandakani Mishra (photo above) works on Passport to Earning project while Sudipto Ghosh (photo left) works on a youth hub project highlighting digital platforms; (photo right) Professor Achyuta Samanta with UN Volunteers at KIIT.

INCLUSION MEANS EVERYONE

Bhupendra Majhi grew up in a tribal community and knows how distant a United Nations career can seem. Career information for Indigenous youth is difficult to access. As Programme Assistant with UNV India's field unit, he promotes UN opportunities to attract talent from all backgrounds. The goal: a workforce that reflects the diversity of the world it serves.

> THIS PARTNERSHIP IS SETTING THE BAR. IT'S SHOWING UNIVERSITIES ACROSS THE REGION HOW TO TAKE REAL ACTION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

This pioneering initiative completes its first cohort in June 2025, and momentum builds for the next one. A new wave of fully funded UN Volunteers with KIIT is set to launch their assignments by the end of 2025—bringing fresh energy, new ideas, and a strong commitment to sustainable development through volunteering.

FOOTNOTES

The photos in this feature include Fully Funded UN Volunteers with KIIT in India

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The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is the United Nations organization that contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide.

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