

CONCEPT NOTE FOR THE 5th INTERNATIONAL SDG CONFERENCE
TO BE HELD AT CHITRAKOOT ON 6th & 7th OCTOBER 2025.

Deendayal Research Institute (DRI), founded by Bharat Ratna Rashtrarishi Nanaji Deshmukh in 1968, is an independent “think-and-do tank” devoted to rural upliftment and empowerment of all!

Since the idea of linking Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya’s Integral Humanism and Bharat Ratna Rashtrarishi Nanaji Deshmukh’s rural empowerment interventions to the Sustainable Development Goals first occurred to us in 2015, shortly after they were declared, co-incidentally on Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya’s Centenary Birthday, the idea of creating a ‘Davos’ for SDGs in Chittrakoot has progressed more than we expected in such a short span.

With the support, co-operation, help and inputs from like-minded individuals and organisations, we have been able to provide grassroot organisations and individuals working to translate SDGs into reality the access to a platform where their views, concerns and solutions can reach a wider audience, with Governmental Agencies, multinational Agencies and fellow non-governmental organisations for experience sharing.

In 2022, the first conference looked at the SDG framework as a whole and launched a knowledge platform, www.sdginterventions.org to showcase validated interventions to achieve the SDGs. In 2023, the World SDG Forum (WSF) was also launched. The ‘Chittrakoot Declaration that is the preamble for action under this initiative was also adopted. The 2nd, 3rd and 4th Conferences examined SDGs 1 & 3, 2 & 4 and 5 & 7 respectively, in the spirit of ‘Gramodaya se Sarvodaya’ (From Rural Upliftment to Upliftment of All); and now from ‘Sarvodaya to Abhyudaya’ (From upliftment for All to the Rise of All).

The 5th International SDG Conference will cover SDGs 6 & 8 – water & sanitation and sustainable growth and employment - respectively.

Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) aims to “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all” by 2030. This goal is particularly significant for India, home to over 18% of the world’s population but only 4% of its renewable water resources. The country faces acute challenges related to water scarcity, pollution, access to safe drinking water, and equitable sanitation-issues exacerbated by rapid urbanization, population growth, and water stress caused by climate change.

Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya at the Calicut session of the Jan Sangh in 1967 stated, “We shall make Mother India *Sujala, Suphala* (overflowing with water and laden with fruits) in the real sense of these words ... with faith in ultimate victory, let us dedicate ourselves to this task.”

India has, in recent years, made remarkable progress notably through flagship initiatives such as the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), which declared the nation open-defecation-free in 2019,

and the Jal Jeevan Mission, which aims to provide piped water to every rural household by 2024. Despite progress under these initiatives, challenges remain in sustaining these gains, addressing water quality, managing wastewater, and ensuring that no one is left behind, especially marginalized and vulnerable communities.

Key themes that are to be explored in the Conference include:

1. Universal Access and Equity: Strategies to reach the last mile in rural and urban settings, with special attention to women, children, and marginalized groups.
2. Water Quality and Pollution Control: Addressing untreated sewage, industrial effluents, and agricultural runoff; strengthening monitoring and regulatory frameworks.
3. Sustainable Water Resource Management: Promoting water-use efficiency, rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, and climate-resilient practices.
4. Behavioural Change and Community Engagement: Lessons from Swachh Bharat and Jal Jeevan Missions- with a focus on changing people's mindsets and reinforcing community participation including in Operations & Maintenance of works already undertaken.
5. Institutional Coordination and Governance: Strengthening the roles of Panchayati Raj Institutions, Urban Local Bodies, and inter-ministerial collaboration.
6. Innovation and Technology: Leveraging digital platforms, data analytics, and lower cost technologies for water and sanitation solutions.

Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8) aims to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.” This goal is central to India's development trajectory, given its large and youthful population, rapid urbanization, and ambition to become a global economic powerhouse. India has demonstrated robust economic growth, averaging around 7.5% per annum, with aspirations to reach 9-10% growth. However, challenges persist in translating this growth into quality employment, reducing informal work, and ensuring equitable opportunities across regions and communities. The aspiration is towards growth that is pro-poor, pro-women, pro-nature and pro-jobs.

Government initiatives such as Make in India, Startup India, Skill India, and Digital India have prioritized employment generation, innovation, and entrepreneurship. These efforts are complemented by reforms to improve the ease of doing business, enhance labour market formalization, and promote economic inclusion through digital tools. Despite these strides, India faces persistent issues like high informal employment, gender disparities, precarious work conditions, and limited social safety nets, particularly for marginalized and vulnerable populations.

Key themes include:

1. Inclusive Economic Growth: Policies and practices to ensure growth benefits all, with a focus on lagging regions and marginalized groups.

2. **Employment Generation and Formalization:** Pathways to create productive, decent jobs and transition workers from informal to formal employment. This would include examining traditional pathways that looked at 'production by the masses' instead of 'mass production', that was the basis of cottage industries and the backbone of India's economic strength before the destruction of the Panchayats.
3. **Skill Development and Education:** Aligning education and training with labour market needs, leveraging Skill India and related initiatives.
4. **Entrepreneurship and MSME Support:** Empowering micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises as engines of job creation and innovation.
5. **Labor Rights and Workplace Safety:** Strengthening legal frameworks and enforcement to protect workers, including migrants and women.
6. **Digital Inclusion and Financial Access:** Harnessing Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) under the India Stack for job & skills matching, digital payments, and financial inclusion.

This conference hopes to serve as a critical platform for reflecting on India's achievements and charting the way forward on the SDGs. By fostering dialogue, sharing evidence, and building partnerships, through the World SDG Forum, the event aims to catalyse collective action towards a more sustainable development trajectory beyond 2030.