

Workshop Urges Media to Move Beyond Stereotypes in Disability

Ahead of International Purple Fest 2025

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The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Government of India), the Office of the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Goa, the United Nations in India, and UN Women with Rising Flame, hosted a high-impact media sensitization workshop on inclusive and intersectional disability reporting on 22 September 2025 at “We the Peoples Hall, United Nations House, New Delhi”. Organised in the run-up to the International Purple Fest 2025, India’s largest celebration of disability to be held in Goa from 9–12 October 2025, the workshop brought together journalists, editors, and media professionals to collectively reimagining how disability is represented in public discourse.

Addressing the workshop, **Shri Subhash Phal Desai, Minister for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Government of Goa**, emphasized that the International Purple Fest is more than an event — it is a movement to bring visibility, dignity, and pride to the lives of persons with disabilities. He urge the media to join this global movement led by the Government of Goa and embrace diversity and inclusion in every narrative.

Shri Rajesh Aggarwal, Secretary, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Government of India, remarked through a message, “The International Purple Fest Goa 2025 is not just a celebration, but a movement to transform mindsets and systems. By bringing together global experts, innovators, policymakers, and communities, the Fest will showcase how Inclusive Thinking and Universal Design can reshape our societies. New research, pioneering technologies, and creative ideas unveiled here will open doors to empowerment, independence, and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. As joint partners with the Government of Goa and the United Nations, we are proud to make India a hub of inclusive innovation, reaffirming our commitment to a future where no one is left behind.”

Echoing this spirit, Ms. Richa Shanker, Deputy Director General, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, noted that “This festival is about changing the narrative — and indeed, that is the need of the hour. We must collectively shift the discourse towards empowerment and inclusion. The International Purple Fest is not just an event, but a movement we are proud to be part of, and we call upon everyone to join this journey.”

Mr Shombi Sharp shared the immense power of media to shape perceptions and drive social change. He said, “As we look forward to the International Purple Fest, Goa this moment is an opportunity to help ensure that stories about persons with disabilities appropriately reflect rights, dignity and inclusion. The United Nations is proud to stand with partners in reimagining journalism that leaves no one behind and furthers India’s inclusion leadership journey.” Mr Sharp also emphasised that there is a need to shift mindsets and narratives from charity to rights-based, from silence to active voice, from the margins to actually core, mainstream social and economic development in every way.

Shri Taha Haaziq, Secretary, Office of the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Goa spoke about the variety of ways in which Purple Fest is organised across the four days. Such as Purple Think Tank, Purple Conventions, Purple experience zones. He said: "We strongly believe at International Purple Fest Goa, that there's a very fun side of any human being. And why should a person with disability be left behind or out of this fun? That is why the Purple Fest also explores our creativity, our talents and so on."

Nidhi Goyal, Founder of Rising Flame, stressed the need to move beyond portraying persons with disabilities as heroes or objects of pity and to amplify disabled voices through nuanced, human-centered stories.

The media sensitization workshop featured interactive sessions with senior journalists, disability rights leaders, and communication professionals, focusing on challenging stereotypes, promoting gender-sensitive and intersectional storytelling, and ensuring rights-based reporting on disability. In a session led by UN Women, panelists highlighted communication as a tool for social inclusion. The workshop concluded with a call to action for the media to shape accurate, inclusive, and empowering narratives of persons with disabilities ahead of the International Purple Fest 2025 and beyond.

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