



5th
Issue
NewsLetter

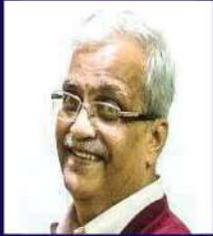

Servas
INDIA
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Jan.
2026

PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING THROUGH TRAVEL AND HOSTING



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My dear
Servas India family
members,

It is with an immense pleasure that I present this News Letter – the 3rd one during my tenure.

To begin with I express my sincere thanks and gratitude to Servas, for offering me this excellent Role, and Platform to communicate with you all as a News Letter Editor. The role offered me a chance to deploy my experience as an Ex-journalist and hone my Editorial skills by addition of new dimensions to it.

I am also grateful to Servas for giving me the extra ordinary opportunity to have International Exposure twice, by selecting me to attend the CSW 68 & CSW 69 at UN, H.Q. in New York. It is an exceptionally enlightening & immersive experience and a platform which offers a chance to meet and listen to stalwarts from all over the world. I sincerely wish that everyone gets a chance to attend it once. I also request you all to routinely visit the Servas International web site and remain informed about the online virtual events and the activities undertaken at international level. Some of you may be aware that, Servas Women, an entity within Servas is actively participating in activities related to Gender equality, Women

*From the
Editor's desk..*

Amruta Karkare

News letter Editor
Servas Foundation India

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Empowerment, Global Peace etc. Servas International has also an Environment Team. I would appeal that all members, more particularly the youth should associate themselves with the groups and network for such vital causes for sustainable development.

I have tried my best to incorporate all contributions to the News letter in this edition.

I hope you like and find this collage of beautiful write-ups, a bouquet of photo-memories, and a collection of experiences during travel which is indeed a book of life. I request, encourage and exhort all members, particularly the youth, to share more and more of their experiences. What better way could be there to stay Networked with the world to develop understanding beyond geographical and political boundaries? To my mind it is also a way of aligning the thoughts, and actions with the Values & Objectives of which in turn contributes to the cause of peace Within and Without. Let us work Hand in hand to foster culture of Peace and dignity for all.

Once again Thanks and All the best to all! Keep writing.. Stay connected.. and be the Ambassadors of peace

Email : amruta.karkare@gmail.com



Think Globally.. Act Locally



Prakash Vyavahare
President, Servas India

PRESIDENT'S MUSINGS

My dear

Servas India fellow members,

I am very happy to share my thoughts and experiences with you through this newsletter.

It is noteworthy that our India is one of the countries with the highest GDP growth rate during 2024-25. It is estimated that soon India would be the fourth nation having highest GDP, surpassing many developed countries, This has become possible because of Indians who are supporting "Vocal for Local".

The important topic of the day is climate change. Servas has started work on it by creating a separate Environment committee. I would like to appeal all members to contribute and help the committee to save the world from this disaster of climate change. It is no longer a topic of academic research but has become an urgent need for corrective actions by each one of us. If we do not observe, analyse and rectify our habits to adopt new-normals of environmentally friendly practices our next generations would suffer most.

Servas members believe in "Global peace and harmony" between people, societies and nations by increasing mutual understanding through personal contact during hosting and travelling. Travelling helps a person to have a broader perspective in all dimensions of life by interacting with people and understanding their culture. Therefore, personal interactions are more effective than counting kilometers of

travelling. Learning is said to happen when the thinking, responses or behaviour of a person changes with the variety of experiences. This reminds me of a Bengali Poem of Rabindranath Tagore which summarizes as "I travelled the whole world but did not listen to the chirping of the bird in my garden". The bird is a metaphor for the local people around us who help and influence our life every day.

We also understand that everyone has unique talent which is different from others and our views also have some biases as theirs. The earlier we learn from such interactions with strangers, and learn from our mistakes, the more useful we become to society. In my opinion, this is the crux of Servas.

All of us have different priorities, purpose, perspective and motivation for joining Servas. However, attending Servas India AGM annually and regularly is one of the most effective ways of remaining associated with Servas. Interactions during AGM with a large number of members helps in mutual learning by listening to the experiences of others since we can not travel to all places and meet all people separately. With this note I wish all of you prosperous, Happy, Healthy and fulfilling New Year and all the success to new Executive committee of Servas India. Looking forward to be in constant touch with you all.

"Take care, stay healthy and happy".



NOTE OF THANKS BY N.S.

My dear
Servas India fellow
members,

It gives me great pleasure to share a few thoughts with you through this newsletter. First of all, I sincerely thank the Servas Indore team for successfully organizing the AGM 2025 in the beautiful city of Indore. It was a well-planned and meaningful gathering that strengthened our bonds and shared vision.

During this year, I visited several places to meet our Servas members, including Pune, Delhi, Agra, Surat and Goa. I also attended cultural events such as the Kite Festival in Surat, Human Pyramids (Dahi Handi) in Mumbai, and the Ganesh Festival in Pune. These visits helped me connect with local communities, identify potential volunteers, and encourage more hosts for Servas India.

At the same time, efforts are ongoing to connect with members in Vishakhapatnam, Bangalore, Chittorgarh, Mangalore and Jammu to involve them more actively in the mainstream Servas activities and leadership roles.

Simultaneously, we are fulfilling all Servas International procedures and compliance requirements,



Nitin Wankhede
National secretary,
Servas India

including pending formalities. After developing our website and transitioning to the V2 portal, our Host Coordinator Rupali Memane is doing an excellent job.

Dy. Secretary Anjana is maintaining effective communication with members, and our Treasurer Pradip Korde is managing accounts and government submissions in a timely and professional manner. Our newsletter continues to be a strong communication bridge among members, and Amruta Karkare Madam gives her valuable time and dedication to make it informative and vibrant. I sincerely thank my entire Executive Committee for their constant support throughout my tenure and also Mr. Hiren Goradia, past N S Abhayji Shah, and past President Avinash Shirode are always there to help whenever we need guidance.

These experiences have been deeply enriching and will always remain close to my heart. They have strengthened my commitment to the Servas values of friendship, cultural exchange and global understanding.

I look forward to meeting many of you at our AGM 2026 in Nashik. Till then, take care, stay healthy and stay happy.



Sustaining Peace through Regional Unity



“RCAP” Meeting Highlights

Attending the Regional Committee in Asia Pacific (RCAP) meeting on the 25th and 26th April, 2025 at Siam University was a valuable and enriching experience for me that provided me with the opportunity to engage with experts, scholars, and practitioners from different fields. Two more Servas International members Ratchada Arpornsilp, Peace Secretary Thailand and Yuri Pratam Widiyana, Indonesia also attended this meeting.

This annual gathering, organized by the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO), brought together civil society organizations (CSOs), NGOs, and regional leaders to discuss progress on the

Dr Hamsavahini Singh

SI Coordinator to the UN & Peace Secretary Servas India

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and strengthen multilateral collaboration in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Regional Committee in Asia-Pacific (RCAP) of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO) was established to enhance the engagement of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Asia-Pacific region with United Nations systems. While the exact year of RCAP's formation is not publicly cited, it gained prominence in the early 2010s, aligning with CoNGO's broader strategy to decentralize operations and empower regional civil society leadership.

The 2025 RCAP focused on the theme “Advancing sustainable, Inclusive, Science- and Evidence-Based Solutions for the Sustainable Development Goals.” The 2025 session emphasized the importance of inclusive, evidence-based approaches to achieving the SDGs amidst global challenges and was centred on empowering Asia-Pacific NGOs and CSOs to showcase their on-the-ground work related to five key SDGs:

- SDG 3 (Good Health & Well-Being)
- SDG 5 (Gender Equality)



Servas Delegates Ratchada Arpornsilp, Peace Secretary Thailand and Yuri Pratam Widiyana, Indonesia and Hamsavahini Singh Peace Secretary, India & SI Coordinator to the UN with delegate from Honkong



- SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth)
- SDG 14 (Life below Water)
- SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)

Representatives from Servas International, CACCI (Confederation of Asia Pacific Chamber of Commers and Industry), Soka Gakkai International , The Pan-Pacific South East Asian Women’s Association, Taiwan Sport Forward Association, STUF (Share, Trust, Unity, and Family), United Fund Asia Pacific Centre, Asia Pacific Green Alliance Initiative, Taiwan Creative Economy Association, International Federation of Business and Professional Women and Siam University, Bangkok, Thailand participated in the two days events.

One of the most impactful takeaways for me by attending the RCAP meeting at Siam University was the realization of how vital regional collaboration is in preserving cultural heritage. Seeing experts from various countries come together to share knowledge and solutions emphasized the importance of collective responsibility in safeguarding our shared history. I was particularly inspired by how traditional knowledge



Hamsavahini Singh, Peace Secretary Servas India and SI Coordinator to the UN with CoNGO President Mr Liberato Bautista.

and modern technology can be integrated to create Sustainable Preservation Strategies.

I would like to conclude that this experience deepened my commitment to contributing meaningfully to the work in my own community and also broadened my understanding preservation efforts in the Asia-Pacific region. It also allowed me to network with professionals and gain exposure to diverse perspectives and innovative practices in shaping our shared future.



Representatives of NGO’s in RCAP meeting at Siam University, Bangkok.



CSW69 : A Great Learning Experience

Attending CSW69 – An unforgettable experience at an Apex platform where global leaders and activists come together for the furtherance of the human rights of women and girls.

UN REPORT BY AMRUTA KARKARE

We consider both of us extremely fortunate and blessed, to have been able to attend, the CSW 69 at UN New York. It was the maiden opportunity for Shirish, though it was my consecutive second time participation. Probably it is a rare & unique opportunity for any couple to attend such a great conference together.

CSW 69 started with a grand official commemoration of the International Women's Day function, arranged by UN-WOMEN at the General Assembly Hall. We could get to hear very inspiring speeches of stalwarts Antonio Gutierrez (Secretary General), Phileon Yang (President of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly), UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous, Patricia Licuanan (Chair, CSW on women empowerment), and eminent personalities like Jaha Dukureh (Gambia) Roya Mehbooba (Afghanistan) Aly Raisman (U.S. gymnast



Olympic medals winner), Ingrid Silva (Brazilian Ballet dancer), Samira Rushwan (Egypt). It was heartening to hear the 10 year old student Ishani Desai, who delivered a "Message to the World" on behalf of girls everywhere. There were also performances of very inspiring songs. The celebration was indeed a clarion call for Equal rights, Equal opportunities, Equal power.

As we all know, the CSW participation offers multiple opportunities for obtaining, updating and knowing result oriented ways of aiming towards achieving strategic objectives and actions. By attending it one gets an insight into the perspectives of people from all parts



Key-note Address : Antonio Guterres (Secretary General, UN)

of the world. Every related aspect pertaining to Human Rights of women like Women and Poverty, Education and Training of women, Women and Health, Violence against women, Women and armed conflict, Women and the economy, Women in power and decision



making, Women and the environment, the Girl Child etc. are discussed during so many Main, Parallel and side events conducted during CSW.

The main theme of the CSW69 was review of “Beijing Declaration and platform for Action” adopted in 1995 and the identified 12 critical areas of concern for priority action to achieve the advancement and empowerment of women. During CSW69, the progress in each of the 12 critical areas of concern was reviewed -a blueprint for women’s rights and empowerment as well gender equality. CSW69 also came up with further actions and initiatives to acceleration of its implementation.

Each and every event of CSW69 was very informative and thought provoking. New dimensions were added to the concepts of the attendees of the events. We decided to distribute attendance in different events amongst two of us so that we can make most of it by discussing it later. It was indeed an amazing insight into the problem identifying & solving approach of leaders at global level.

The events that we found aligning with our interests and the issues closure to our heart were, “Building Back Better Gender responsive and inclusive recovery in Ukraine”, that focused on implementing Gender-responsive strategies for recovery, in post-conflict reconstruction, particularly because women bear the weight of the war, the financial distress and suffer most;



A session on “Technology and Women’s empowerment from a Global South perspective” that highlighted leveraging digital tools to overcome structural



inequalities while addressing digital violence, access gaps, promoting sustainable / inclusive growth for women in developing regions;

“Women with disabilities: Vocational Rehabilitation and leadership training for advocacy” with core focus on ensuring “No one is left behind”;

A pivotal event titled “Education for Economic Empowerment- Afghan women’s Pathway to Resilience” that addressed the urgent crisis of gender apartheid in Afghanistan, focusing on restoring education and economic opportunities;

A presentation “ Scaling up innovation for reducing & redistributing women & girls unpaid care work in Rural Tanzania.”, that briefed about key initiatives for reducing and redistributing care work by Infrastructure & Technology, Shifting Gender norms, Economic empowerment;

“Structural Transformation & regional Leadership for women’s Human Rights, with focus on Localizing Beijing +30 to move from “Women’s development” to “Women-led development” by reinforcing the need for immediate, coordinated action across all levels of government;

An event on “Remedy for Textile and Garment Women workers through Binding Agreements” - About challenging the established global supply chains – A



systemic violation of human rights;

An event on “Understanding gender-based violence in critical mineral mining”- informing why the global boom in critical mineral and metal mining calls for an urgent need to increase investment in tackling the sector’s complex social and human rights impacts, including the risk of gender- based violence;

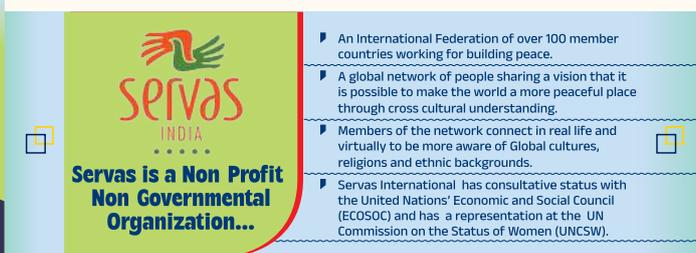
An event on “Unheard Echoes” – About the struggle, resilience of Malayaga Tamil Sri-Lankan Women workers on tea plantations, merely 4% of population, and their fight for rights and against discrimination;

Besides above, the presentations by NGOs from India like Bharatiya Stree Shakti of Maharashtra, working in creating a gender equal environment by empowering women and sensitizing men;

An event by Akshayshakti Welfare Association, with Motto - Help, Heal, Educate, and Empower enabling and engaged in helping with programs for destitute people through hunger eradication, healthcare assistance, educational support and skill development were also very impressive.



I would humbly mention here that it was to my great satisfaction and pleasure, that I could make a small but a significant contribution by way of an active team member for designing a Book mark, (photo hereunder) for distribution amongst



participating NGOs / delegates at CSW69. It carried a QR code –a link to Serves website, on front and the time table of the Parallel Events, on reverse. The idea was very much appreciated as a good gesture to create awareness about Serves as the 1000 Book marks were distributed, which invoked lot of interest and helped in creating awareness about Servas.

All the parallel events enlisted on the book mark were very interesting and a great success. The bonding and the sense of belongingness that developed amongst the Servas representatives -Young and seniors, during the CSW was very strong. Sharing of the experiences of events attended, having Lunch dinners together, visit to the Central Park, Watching the Academy Award winner documentary, “To Kill A Tiger”, The “Let us Talk about peace” meet etc. were unforgettable experiences for all of us.

I know, I cannot elaborate enough as to how CSW is an extraordinarily big platform to have an unparalleled exposure and opportunities. One gets to learn from to Global leaders in the field, panel discussions, and various presentations during events, seeing documentaries, and listening to ideas, experiences, and outcome of activities and experiments of social work done by the activist’s world over.

Our sincere thanks to Paige Lacombe and her Servas Women team, for all the initiatives, Planning and the untiring efforts taken for the successful participation in CSW69. We

are grateful to Servas, for the opportunity to be part of it. We would encourage everyone to endeavor to attend it at least once.



A Collective Stand for Peace



Being part of the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons : A personal account

I had the privilege of participating in the Third Meeting of States Parties (MSP3) to the Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons (TPNW) at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 3rd to 7th March, 2025. Representing Servas International, along with 5 more Servas delegates Anne Frisch and Allison McCaine (the US), Kent Macaulay (Canada) and David Menham and Angelika Hoffmann (Austria) also joined a diverse coalition of civil society organizations, activists, survivors, and government delegates committed to advancing the goals of nuclear disarmament and the full implementation of the TPNW.

Origin of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)

The TPNW originated from long-standing global efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons due to their catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences. The treaty gained momentum through the Humanitarian Initiative, launched around 2010 by non-nuclear-armed states and civil society. It emphasized the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons and the lack of adequate international response mechanisms. Key Drivers were the Civil society organizations, such as the International Campaign to Abolish

Dr Hamsavahini Singh

SI Coordinator to the UN & Peace Secretary Servas India

Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and the support from countries in the Global South. TPNW was adopted on 7th July, 2017 and entered into force from 22nd January, 2021. The main purpose was comprehensive ban on nuclear weapons including use, threat of use, development, testing, production, acquisition, possession, transfer and stationing. The key goal was to establish a legally binding international agreement to prohibit and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons, in contrast to the more status-quo-oriented Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The Need for the TPNW

The TPNW represents a historic and necessary shift in the global effort to eliminate nuclear weapons. Despite decades of international discourse around non-proliferation and arms control, over 12,241 nuclear weapons remain in existence today and the Major players (U.S. & Russia) hold nearly 90% of them. Many of these NW are on high alert and capable of inflicting unimaginable humanitarian and environmental devastation. The threat of use—whether intentional, accidental, or



through miscalculation—continues to pose an existential danger to all humanity Unlike previous treaties, the TPNW is grounded in the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. It centres the voices of survivors (Hibakusha and affected communities), recognizes the disproportionate impact on marginalized populations—including Indigenous peoples and women—and seeks to provide a legally binding pathway toward disarmament and justice.

As of May 2025, the TPNW has:

1. 70+ State Parties (countries that have ratified or acceded to the treaty)
2. 90+ Signatories (countries that have signed but not yet ratified)

In a world increasingly torn apart by war the TPNW stands as a powerful symbol of hope, peace, and collective sanity. We live in an age where nuclear threats are no longer distant memories of the Cold War. From tensions in Eastern Europe to conflicts in Asia and the Middle East, the risk of nuclear escalation is alarmingly real. Powerful nations continue to expand and modernize their arsenals, normalizing the presence of weapons capable of wiping out humanity. This is why the TPNW is more relevant than ever. It is the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively ban nuclear



SI delegates of TPNW with Radha Radhakrishna, SI President.

weapons, making their use, threat, and illegal possession under International Law, but it goes beyond legality. The TPNW is rooted in humanitarian values. It acknowledges the suffering of Hibakusha—survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—and reinforces that no country, no leader, has the right to possess the power to destroy the planet. Critics argue that deterrence maintains peace. Yet, deterrence is fragile and based on fear, not trust. The more nuclear weapons there are, the higher the chances of accidental or unauthorized use. The TPNW shifts the global conversation from fear-based security to cooperative disarmament and moral responsibility. In today's war-torn world, the TPNW is not just necessary—it is urgent. It is our collective call to say: enough is enough. The future must be built on peace, not on the threat of annihilation.



Artist Karipbek Kuyukov, Kazakhstan at TPNW, 2025

An artist born near Semipalatinsk, Karipbek recounted the chronic suffering in his community: 456 explosions done by Soviet Union from 1949 to 1989 that rattled families, children with deformed limbs and growing orphanages. He echoed heartbreaking stories: "Shepherds would brag about surviving a vast explosion... later they would taste iron ... their teeth would fall, as well as their hair..."



Walking Miles, Spreading Smiles - A MISSION POSSIBLE



Servas family member from Pune, India Vishwmitra Yogesh has chosen for "Mission Peace Spreading Smiles", a yatra of 25,000 plus kms on foot through 25 plus countries over 8 to 10 years.

This PADYATRA will start from New Delhi, India, proceed to London to United Kingdom and back to New Delhi. Previously he had successfully completed Peace Pilgrimage in many countries (Shrilanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh) with Japanese Buddhist Monk Rev. Ikeda Kanshin, also visited South Africa, UAE, Armenia, Iran, USA and Canada to motivate people for Peace Building. Yogeshji had done padyatra through 23 states of India, his home country. Now, his proposed yatra will be lead by Terapanthi young and dynamic Jain Guru Hon. Dr. Munishree Abhijit kumar (40) Hon. Munishree Jagrit kumar(32) both are disciples of Hon. Acharya shri, Maheshramanji, VishwaMitra

Vishwamitra Yogesh

Yogesh (68) and his brother like colleague Jalandharnath Channole (50) – A Gandhian Follower from Sevagram Gandhi Ashram. All are joining this Mission Peace Padyatra for all through the 10 years starting around June 2026.

Jain Munij always follow the rules and regulations of Hindu Calender so they don't walk in Chaturmas and peak winters, for this mission they all will walk around 6 months in a year.

Vishwamitra Yogesh seeking kind blessings for his proposed unique and ideal Padyatra for the well-being of humanity and spreading peace message all over the world. We as a Servas family wish him and all Hon. Gurus success for their Peace Mission.



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True Spirit of Servas !!



Most memorable experience...

We visited Norway, Sweden, Mallorca (Spain), Netherlands and Brussels (Belgium) for a 17 days trip from March 25 – April 10, 2025. Due to the Shorter day timings in Norway and Sweden it was difficult proposition for us to connect with the local Servas members of these two beautiful nations. But we could connect in advance with two members each in Mallorca and The Netherlands. Whereas we had an in person meeting with the members in Mallorca for dinner/coffee, we were hosted by two wonderful couples in The Netherlands.

During our five day visit to the beautiful Island of Mallorca, we spent an evening with Esperanca & Sebastia and their two lovely children, a young family residing in this small village of Lloseta, situated almost bang in the center of Mallorca. We chatted away the entire evening, first sitting

Hiren Goradia

in their dining room cum kitchen (where Esperanca was cooking a yummy vegetarian dinner for us) and later during a nice walk through the village with Sebastia. We learnt so much about their background, life, family, culture and aspirations during our visit and in turn shared a lot about ours as well – the true spirit of Servas!!

Maria Farrendis is an ex-crew of Ryan Air, now working in the Travel field in the charming city of Palma. She had taken the afternoon off to meet up with us at this beautiful two centuries old coffee shop right in the middle of Old Town Palma!! She then showed us around the old town and the beautiful heritage buildings on a nice





walking tour whilst we chatted away the entire time!!

On landing in Amsterdam, we took the train directly to Vleuten, a small village near Utrecht, where Elsa came and picked us up at the station. Elsa and Eduard are a lovely couple who hosted us at their beautiful home and we had a wonderful couple of days stay there, spending time with them during meals as well as during a walk around their village. In fact, they ferried us to and from the train station every single time in their car!! We explored the cities of Amsterdam and Utrecht with useful guidance and inputs from them. A very heart warming experience indeed!

From Elsa and Eduard's home we took the train to The Hague, and to the home of another equally wonderful couple, Marion and Frank. Although both of them were working during the

days they hosted us, they ensured we were very well looked after. We spent time during meals and had lengthy discussion on all possible topics....in fact, we celebrated Frank's birthday whilst we were there!! They guided us with useful inputs during the course of our trips to The Keukenhof Tulip Gardens as well as Brussels.

What a trip it was!! A lifetime of memories....but the icing on the cake was the hosting experience ...THANKS TO SERVAS AND IT'S MEMBERS!!!



Best Video Award



Ms. Aditya Divya Singh

Servas Member from Manipal, Karnataka

Youth Corner

Fantastic Servas Experience

The Exco and members of Servas India congratulate Ms. Aditya Divya Singh, Servas member from Manipal, Karnataka on winning the video competition “My fantastic Servas Experience” by Servas International! In the video, Aditya Divya showcased her Servas journey of nearly three decades, starting at the young age of eight. Her creative vision, powerful storytelling, and dedication to building a more compassionate and understanding world was felicitated through the award.

The competition was open to all Servas members, and consisted of two categories: Best Story and Best Video. The winners were selected by a panel of judges,



composed of experienced arts and creation specialists, SI Exco members and the youth team.

As the prize winner Aditya Divya will get free entry to SICOGA 2025 in Dijon,

France from 3rd October to 9th October, 2025. We wish her continued success in her journey as a changemaker!



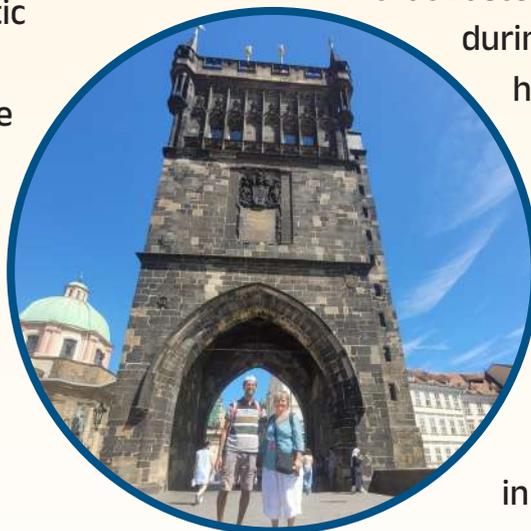
Village boy To International Traveller



Most memorable experience...

My parents (Sunita and Abhay) have been a members of Servas family since 1992, when my father first discovered about Servas during his first visit to Europe. The values of Servas align very well with us as a family and we have hosted guests from all over the world in our little village in India – as children, growing up in a village and having this international exposure was such a great thing for me and my younger brother Anuj.

During my recent travels to Europe, I had the good fortune of meeting and staying with some wonderful Servas people. I initially went to Europe to attend the Global HEARTH Summit (on invitation from The Wellbeing Project) in Ljubljana, the capital city of Slovenia. Around 1000 change-makers had gathered from around the world to promote holistic wellbeing in every field, at every level – including peace activists, artists, healers, educators, organizational leaders. In some way, it felt like a Servas Global Gathering – with similar values of diversity, inclusion, cultural exchange and peace.



Vipul Shah
vipulshaha@gmail.com



My first Servas day-host was Mr. Boris who came to meet me during my conference on his bicycle! He was very busy attending to his 92-year old mother who was in the hospital at the time. Despite that, he kindly spared a couple of hours in the afternoon to treat me to a lovely local restaurant along the river. Mr. Boris is one of the only two Servas members in the entire country of Slovenia! He shared a bit of his life journey and the changes that Eastern Europe has gone through during his lifetime. I presented him with a 'Gandhi Peace Hat' He was also keen to hear about J. Krishnamurti (Renowned Indian Spiritual Philosopher and Speaker) and his teachings on 'Truth is a Pathless Land'. After my conference in Slovenia, I took a long train



journey to Vienna, Austria – which was a very scenic ride. I was welcomed by a lovely family – Irena and Steven and their two kids – Luca and Rosie. It is only when I met them in-person that I found out that they are actually an American family living in Vienna for the past few years – so I had a bit of an Austro-American experience staying with them! We went on long bicycle rides, went swimming in the Danube River, learned to do some strength-training from Steven and shared some Yoga with them. Being with the kids was quite fun, we played card games and harvested some fresh cherries from their generous neighbor's backyard.

After spending a couple of days with this wonderful family, I shifted to David and Zsuzsanna's place on the outskirts of Vienna. I particularly enjoyed my deep conversations with David – who has been a peace educator and very actively involved with Servas since over 4 decades! He showed me around Vienna on a bicycle ride and we also visited their 'community supported agriculture' piece of farmland where they grow fresh, organic vegetables. It was also interesting to learn a little bit about the Baha religion from David and exchange insights from Buddhist, Jain and Hindu tradition.

I also briefly met

another lovely Servas day-host named Sabine in Vienna – who was very keen to meet me in the midst of both our busy schedules. We still managed to meet each other for a couple of hours at her apartment over a middle-eastern lunch that she had kindly cooked for me.

And finally, in Prague, Czech Republic – I caught up with a French Servas member named Patricia only for about an hour. We walked around the beautiful city, the Jewish quarters and had a friendly chat over an orange juice before parting ways.

While my travels in Europe continued in Spain, Sweden and Netherlands (with personal friends), I continued to share about Servas wherever I went. I was amazed at how widespread the Servas

network is and how it is to get around in Europe. Personally, I learned and felt really inspired by the European urban design, public policies and the civic ethic that makes life so much more safer, joyful and enables wellbeing!

How wonderful it is to feel not as strangers but as families, friends and homes that one can share an instant connect with, and engage in this rich cultural exchange – all thanks to Servas!



Servas Mini-Gathering in Kandy, Sri Lanka!



Most memorable experience...

Vipul Shaha from Servas India@mindful_being_india recently had the opportunity to travel to Sri Lanka for International Intensive Training in Nonviolent Communication (NVC) developed by Marshall Rosenberg.

He was kindly hosted by Ken and Visakha - who have been Servas members since the early 70s from their earlier decades living in Japan. They both are originally from the US and have been living in Sri Lanka for over 20 years. They run 'Buddhist Relief Mission' and do some incredible work around the world to support relief work for refugees - including the Rohingyas who are currently in Sri Lanka. (<https://www.brelief.org/>)

They also introduced Vipul to Sylvia and her family - she has been a Servas member (originally from Austria) - living in Sri Lanka.



Vipul Shaha from Servas India

It was a beautiful dinner evening with some of their local Sri Lankan friends joining them. The hospitality felt so warm and welcoming that Vipul decided to cancel his plans to go to the Sri Lankan beaches and instead chose to spend a couple of extra days with Ken and Visakha. It turned out to be the most meaningful and inspiring time for him - learning more about their lifelong service work and some deep conversations and practices centered around Buddhist philosophy. He hopes to return to Sri Lanka and volunteer with some of the community work they are involved with. All thanks to Servas International for making these connections possible!



Investing in Women : the path to accelerated progress



Highlights of the Commission on the Status of Women 69

Since 2022, I have been engaged with the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), contributing to its mission of promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls globally. As a delegate representing Servas International at the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69), I had the opportunity to participate in a global platform along with 19 other Servas International members from different parts of the world.

The CSW was established in 1946, completing 79 years in 2025. It was created by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women globally. It remains one of the key bodies in advancing women's rights and monitoring progress on international gender equality commitments. The 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69), held from March 10 to 21, 2025, at the UN Headquarters in New York, marked the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

This year's priority theme was: "Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with gender perspective."

CSW69 also provided a platform for reviewing progress toward international commitments like the Beijing Platform for

Dr Hamsavahini Singh

SI Coordinator to the UN &
Peace Secretary Servas India

Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially Sustainable Development Goal 5 (gender equality). A wide range of side events, ministerial round-tables, and high-level discussions helped amplify voices from grassroots movements and diverse communities around the world.

My engagement included attending several high-level plenary sessions and actively participating in a few of the side events hosted by UN bodies, member states, and civil society organizations. These side events provided insights into a wide array of critical issues, including :

- Economic empowerment of women in the Global South
- Gender-responsive budgeting and institutional reform
- The intersection of climate change and women's rights
- Youth-led advocacy for gender justice
- Eliminating gender-based violence and discrimination

I also contributed to discussions during side events by sharing the key work of Servas International and its origin as an international organization promoting peace. The interactive nature of these sessions





enabled cross-cultural exchange and fostered strategic collaborations with other NGOs and delegations. This experience has deepened my commitment to advancing inclusive policies and fostering meaningful change at both local and international levels.

While the CSW remains a vital platform for progress, gaps remain in translating commitments into action. Many side events emphasized the need for monitoring and accountability frameworks to track progress on gender equality goals. Additionally, ensuring inclusive representation—particularly of young women and grassroots leaders continues to be a challenge.

Strategies discussed during CSW69 deepened my understanding of the complexities of global gender advocacy and bolstered my commitment to championing women’s rights both locally and internationally. Here are few sessions that I found truly inspiring:

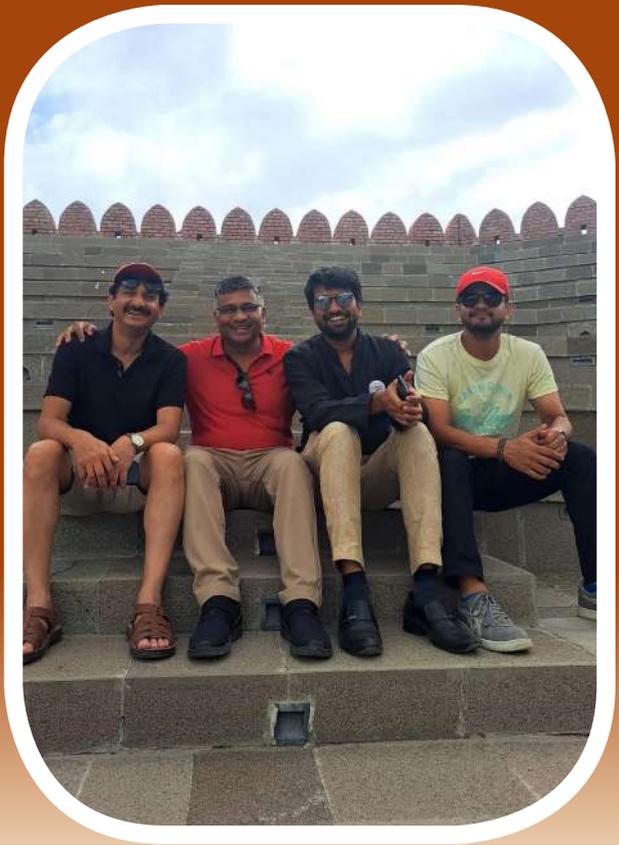
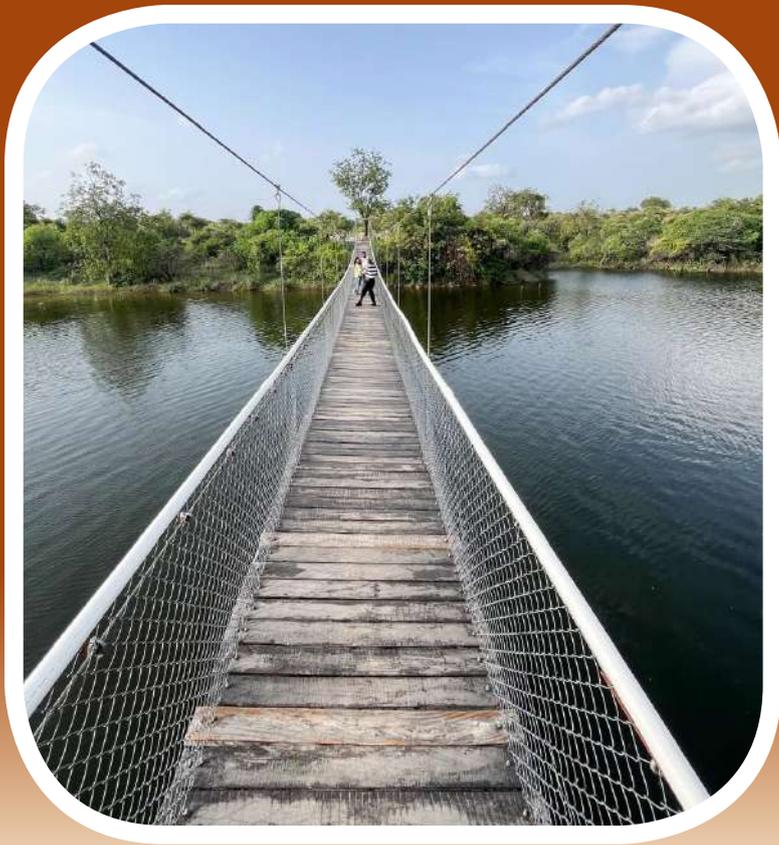
1. **POWER4Girls: invest in girls, transform the world.**
2. **Beijing+30: Reflections on the situation of Palestinian women and girls.**
3. **Town hall Meeting with the United Nations Secretary-General and Civil Society in the margins of the CSW69.**
4. **Technology and Women’s Empowerment: Global South Perspective and Practice.**
5. **From Numbers to Narratives: Unlocking the power of Gender Data through Data storytelling and Visualization**

My experience at CSW69 reaffirmed the importance of global solidarity and multi-stakeholder engagement in advancing the rights of women and girls. Through continued involvement in international advocacy and collaboration, Servas International aims to contribute meaningfully to shaping a just and gender-equal future. I leave the session inspired by the collective energy and determination of all those working to build a more equitable world.

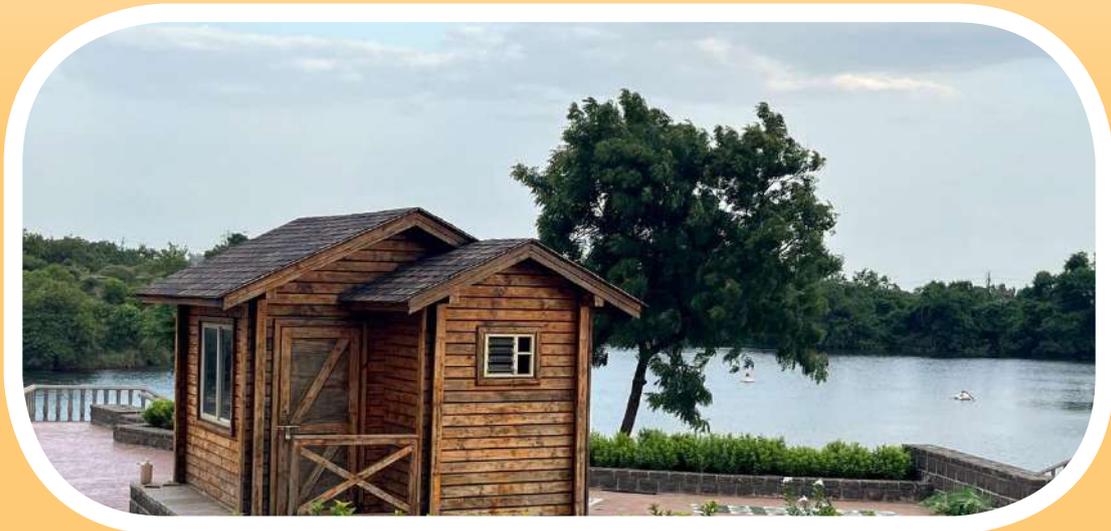
I wanted to extend my heartfelt thanks to Paige Lacombe for her incredible dedication and full involvement in CSW since last few years. Her commitment, energy, and passion were truly inspiring and played a significant role for SI delegates in making CSW69 impactful and meaningful. Her active participation, whether in discussions, planning, or execution, reflected not only her deep understanding of the issues at hand but also her unwavering commitment to advancing gender equality

Special thanks also go to Helga Smith, my Host in New York for two weeks from 3rd March to 11th March, 2025. It was a wonderful experience to be hosted by someone as remarkable as Helga. Her incredible journey across the globe is nothing short of inspiring — with only two countries left to visit, she has turned the world into her home. I truly appreciated her warm welcome, generosity, and the effort she put into making me feel at home. From the great conversations to the local tips and memorable experiences, every moment was special.





Servas India Members Get-Together at Baramati



Co-Hosting The Spirit Of Servas



A Day Hosting Experience with a French Guest in Pune

Recently, I enjoyed the day hosting experience, for the second time since becoming Servas India member. It was Day hosting for a French Guest Mme. Anne Pennober, a Social Worker from Bretagne (France).

After picking her up from home of Mrs. And Mr. Karkare's, who were hosting her, we started our day out from Parvati Darshan. The view from the hills made it easier to capture a panoramic view of Pune city. Next we visited P.L.Deshpande, Japanese Garden followed by visit to famous hostric and culturally significant site like Sarasbaug, Shri Ramkrishna Math and Okayama Garden Kasaba Ganpati and Lal Mahal, The we visited Pune's one of the main attractions Dagdusheth Halwai Ganpati Temple where we could get special entry for foreigners by

Shreyash S. Deshpande
Servas member, Pune

the administration. The temple authorities honoured Mme Anne by presenting a shawl and Prasad. She felt very happy to experience this Indian gesture. In afternoon after enjoying hot ginger tea we went to the Jangali Maharaj Temple and Pataleshwar Caves on JM road.

The Pune Visit tour ended by a delicious homemade food which included Maharashtrian delicacies like Palak Paratha, Coconut Chutney, Curd rice. Paneer rice was brought by one of my French language students.

Mme Anne really enjoyed the day and hopefully carries the nice, sweet memories of her Pune visit.

It was our pleasure that we got this best opportunity through Servas to host a French Guest and could contribute towards our Servas' Values and motto and also could create a nice image of our India. Of course to me the icing on the cake was an added advantage for me that I could interact with her in French and made her stay in Pune most comfortable.



Servas International elected to the CoNGO Board

Note of Congratulations

Source : SI News Bulletin

Servas International extends its warm congratulations to the Servas UN Team for their active participation in the General Assembly of CoNGO (Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations), held from 27–29 October 2025 in New York, USA.

We are proud to announce that SI has been elected to the CoNGO Board, along with 19 other NGOs, for a three-year term 2025-2028. This significant achievement enhances SI's presence within the global NGO community and strengthens its voice in the United Nations–related dialogues on peace, sustainability, and human rights. Special recognition is extended to Hamsavahini Singh, Servas International Coordinator to the United Nations, for her leadership and commitment. Hamsavahini participated virtually in the CoNGO General Assembly and has, over the past seven months, taken the initiative to guide and coordinate Servas International's successful bid for election to the CoNGO Board. Her earlier participation in the CoNGO Regional Committee (RCAP) meeting in Bangkok in April 2025 was instrumental in building relationships that led to this milestone.

We also acknowledge Rachel Elion,

Servas International's Main Representative to the UN in New York, who took part in person throughout the three-day CoNGO General Assembly, representing SI with dedication and professionalism.

As a new CoNGO Board member, Servas International now has a broader platform to advocate for peace, intercultural dialogue, and citizen diplomacy, while deepening collaboration with other NGOs and UN partners. This strengthened visibility will also help expand the Servas network, inspiring more individuals and families around the world to join as hosts and travelers in support of our shared mission of fostering peace through understanding.

Servas International looks forward to contributing actively to the work of CoNGO and to continuing its longstanding role as a voice for peace and global friendship within the United Nations system.

* ConGO is an international non-governmental organization founded in 1948 that relates to the United Nations through its General Consultative Status granted by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It has 525 member organizations from around the world and 106 associate members.



Servas' Written Statement to CSW69

19 January 2026

TO: The Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

To His Excellency the Secretary-General and the Global Community:

In light of the recent announcement regarding the United States' withdrawal from numerous international and United Nations entities, Servas International—an organization founded on the aftermath of global conflict to foster peace through mutual understanding—wishes to formally express its unwavering commitment to the principles of international cooperation and the United Nations Charter.

As an NGO holding ECOSOC consultative status, we view these announcements as an urgent call for renewed civic engagement. Peace is a proactive endeavor that requires the participation of all nations; the withdrawal of one member state, however influential, does not diminish the collective responsibility of the global community to pursue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We wish to state clearly that governmental withdrawal does not sever the enduring bonds between peoples. Servas International stands in full solidarity with civil society organizations, educators, peace builders, and local communities who continue to champion international cooperation, human rights, and global responsibility through their daily actions.

Servas International supports the following three pillars of action:

- Seeking constructive dialogue at individual as well as organizational levels. When official channels narrow, the pathways of citizen-led hospitality must be widened. We remain dedicated to ensuring that the global community continue to meet, share, and understand one another beyond political borders.
- Advocating for the preservation of the UN's specialized agencies. These entities provide the essential architecture for global health, human rights, and security. We call upon our fellow NGOs to join us in a unified front to support these institutions, advocating for reform through engagement rather than abandonment.
- Expanding global educational programs to address the gaps left by the withdrawal of official funding in sectors such as climate action and youth empowerment. We believe that global citizenship is a mindset that cannot be legislated away; it is cultivated through every shared meal and every cross-cultural dialogue.

In this spirit, we invite fellow NGOs, academic institutions, faith-based organizations, and grassroots networks worldwide to reaffirm their engagement with the multilateral system—through shared advocacy, collaborative programming, and sustained dialogue—so that the foundations of global cooperation are not weakened but renewed.

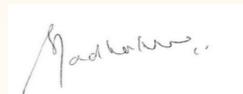
Servas International is an international Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) registered as a tax-exempt not-for-profit association in the Canton of Zurich, Switzerland. Servas International's registration number is CHE-205.260.035.

We urge the United Nations and its member states to remain steadfast. The challenges of our era—from the climate crisis to the preservation of human dignity—do not respect national boundaries. They require more cooperation, not less.

Servas International remains a dedicated partner to the United Nations. We will continue to work tirelessly to prove that the desire for a peaceful, interconnected world remains the dominant aspiration of humanity.

In Peace and Solidarity,

Sincerely,



Radha B Radhakrishna
President/Chief Executive Officer
On behalf of The Executive Committee,
Servas International (NGO in Consultative status with the United Nations)



(Courtesy : Servas International)



A Lifetime with : Servas



Journeys, Friendships, and a Family Beyond Borders

My association with Servas International spans more than three decades. Over these years, my entire family—my husband, my daughter, and even my 93-year-old mother-in-law—has gathered countless stories worth sharing. For my mother-in-law especially, Servas has been a window to the world. Meeting people from different countries, listening to their stories, interacting across cultures, and enjoying cuisines from around the globe has brought her immense joy. As the saying goes, if you cannot travel, let the travelers come to you—and they will take you on a journey full of learning and delight. Servas made that possible for her in the most beautiful way.

For me, this journey included the privilege of participating for the second

Dr. Hamsavahini Singh
Peace Secretary Servas India and
Coordinator SI UN Team

time in SICOGA (Servas International Conference and General Assembly)—first in Panchgani, India, in 2022, and then in Dijon, France, in 2025. Representing the Servas International UN Team, I delivered presentations alongside SI UN representatives from New York, Geneva, and Vienna. I also volunteered as a moderator during the General Assembly sessions. Working with Pramod Kumar ji from Delhi was a truly enriching experience; his guidance ensured the proceedings were smooth and meaningful.

Adding to my joy was the participation of my daughter, Aditya



Divya Singh, a Servas member from Manipal, Karnataka, who attended SICOGA 2025 as the winner of the Servas International Video Competition. Sharing this international platform with her made the experience even more special.

Our European journey began in Paris, where we were warmly hosted by Marité and Bernard in their charming 130-year-old home. From there, we traveled to Montierchaume to reconnect with longtime Servas friends Anne-Marie

and Francis Giraud. Reminiscing about our travels in 2000 and their visit to my university in 2001 was deeply heartwarming.

In Dijon, we spent an intense and rewarding week with 200 Servas members from 50 countries. The days were filled with meaningful discussions, reunions, and new friendships. The spirit of Servas—friendship, openness, and cultural exchange—was alive in every interaction.



SICOGA - Through my eyes



An Enriching experience

It gives me great pleasure to share a few moments of SICOGA 2025 at Dijon, France. It was my first experience attending SICOGA 2025 in Dijon, France, and it was truly enriching and memorable. Seeing members of Servas International from more than 50 countries come together in a spirit of friendship, dialogue and shared purpose was inspiring. The well-planned sessions and thoughtful preparations helped everyone participate meaningfully and connect deeply. It was not just a meeting, but a joyful global gathering that strengthened the true spirit of Servas, peace through understanding and personal connection.

Our team from India also contributed actively to the conference. Mr Pramod Kumar did an excellent job throughout the event. Hamsavahini and Budheb Chakravarti supported various responsibilities with dedication, while youth member Sayam Roy played a very active role in different sessions

Nitin Wankhede
National secretary, Servas India

and activities. I also sincerely thank our Servas India President Mr Prakash Vevhare from Indore, who participated online with great enthusiasm, actively engaged in discussions, and even attended sessions late into the night, earning appreciation from participants.

It was also a wonderful opportunity for me to make good friends from around the world and invite many of them to visit India. Spending the entire week together helped us understand each other closely and created strong personal bonds. I also gained deeper insight into the working style of Servas International by participating in various sessions and activities. This experience has inspired me with ideas for organizing future international gatherings, such as an Asia-Pacific meet in India.



Memories of Indore AGM

**Sarvas Foundation : 74th Annual General Meeting
10 To 12 January 2025 : Hotel Kanchan Tilak, Indore.**



International Events



Calendar 2026

March

07 March 2026

Servas Israel Annual Assembly
.....

March

07 To 20 March 2026

Participation of SI members at the UN CSW70
.....

May

16 To 21 May 2026

Servas Korea SIPR 2026 Bike Tour
.....

May

21 To 25 May 2026

Servas Germany International Youth Camp
.....

May

23 To 25 May 2026

Servas Switzerland Swiss Servas Meeting
.....

June

26 June To 02 July

Servas France SentierInsieme / Pathways Together 2026
.....

July

02 To 05 July 2026

Servas Poland » Kraków & Lesser Poland : Servas by bike in Poland
.....

July

04 To 14 July 2026

Servas Turkiye Peace School in Turkiye 2026
.....

Sept.

25 To 28 Sept. 2026

Servas Poland » Kraków and Lesser Poland : 33d Alpe-Adria Meeting
.....





Servas Women - A body within Servas International created to empower women and share their needs for basic human rights.

Servas firmly believes that there can be no lasting peace without economic and social equality.





5th Issue
Newsletter



The Servas India Newsletter
Produced By And For
Servas Community..

Thank You Servas Family Members
For Your Contributions..

Thanks to Yashraj Graphics, Pune (9822448830)
assiting in Designing this Newsletter

