

Technology for a better future

Innovative technology can be a key tool in the process of dealing with and raising awareness on different social problems. The United Nations work closely with cultural industries and governments across the world in order to support initiatives relying on innovative technology.

One such example is the support of an innovative mobile phone service, Naubat Baja, which aims to prevent child marriage in Rajasthan (India)¹. Unfortunately, although child marriage is banned in many Indian states, including Rajasthan, it remains a widespread practice. In India, according to the National Family Health Survey (2019-21), underage marriage accounted for 23.3 per cent of marriages.

Launched on *International Women's Day in 2019*², Naubat Baja relies largely on the strength of mobile phones, which have penetrated the remotest corners of India. The initiative banks on the fact that the cell phone is youth's favourite mode of communication, particularly in areas where people have little access to television, cable, or the internet.

The aim of the Naubat Baja program is not only to contribute to the eradication of the practice of child marriage, but also to empower girls in other ways. Girls phone the Naubat Baja number and receive a call back, which contains a 15-minute recording of free entertainment, peppered with Hindi film songs, short stories and audio dramas themed around social issues narrated through comedy or satire. There is news about job opportunities, general knowledge facts and information about government welfare schemes aimed at the youth. Messages on themes such as child marriage, domestic violence, adolescent girls' health, menstrual hygiene, financial awareness, COVID-19 protocols and precautions are conveyed through the dramas. The regularly updated program, overseen by UNFPA representatives, is produced in studios with the help of a content team of researchers and presented by professional audio content makers.

United Nations also implement innovative ways to get ordinary people involved in the climate fight³. For instance, the UNDP has launched the *Mission 1.5 mobile game*⁴.

1 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1114752>

2 <https://www.un.org/en/observances/womens-day>

3 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/05/1119292>

4 <https://www.mission1point5.org/game>

Mission 1.5 mobile game is a mobile game which allows people to learn about the climate crisis and at the same time communicate to governments about solutions that could be put in place to tackle it – all while they’re exploring virtual universes.

Thanks to an inter-agency effort and a partnership with a gaming company, UNDP’s game – which challenges users to make the right decisions to keep the world on the path to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees –went online at the beginning of 2020.

The mobile game in question goes beyond educating the users on climate solutions in 17 languages. The game asks them to cast a vote about which strategies, in their opinion, would be more successful to tackle the crisis.

These answers have become the source for what is now known as the *People’s climate vote*⁵, the largest survey of public opinion on climate change ever conducted. That information has now been shared and discussed by parliamentarians all over the world and during major international meetings, such as the recent G20 summit and the latest UN Climate Conference, COP26. The results were even included in the latest series of reports issued by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which are very influential for intergovernmental negotiations.

The United Nations continuously enhance ideas aiming to build a better future with innovation and creativity. Within this context, the *World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)*⁶, awarded the ideas of three young innovators on the occasion of World Intellectual Property Day⁷. Created in 2000, World IP Day aimed to increase the general understanding of intellectual property. Since then, it has offered a unique opportunity each year to join with others around the globe to consider how IP contributes to the flourishing of music and the arts and driving the technological innovation that helps shape the world. This year’s winners are from Syria, Ghana and China. Twenty-five-year-old Hekma Jabouli from Syria won the first prize with her short film showing a home-made smart device designed to help her sister regain mobility after shrapnel injured her spinal cord. Twenty-seven-year-old John Wobil from Ghana took second place for his video about a new rice thresher, while digital designers Li Binglu and Cai Quinge, Chinese nationals living in Japan, came in third

5 <https://www.undp.org/publications/peoples-climate-vote>

6 <https://www.wipo.int/portal/en/index.html>

7 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/04/1116952>

with their story about creating new pictograms or emojis to forge connections among remote workers.

This competition is an example of the United Nations' engagement to the promotion of innovation and creativity – particularly among youngsters – for a better future. As the WIPO Director General, Daren Tangsaid, declared “younger people are already working on solutions to shared issues, supported by IP [intellectual property] rights like trademarks, patents, designs, copyright, and others that help people earn a living from their work”.