



Live Law became the world's leading law portal in terms of traffic. In the month of April, 2019, the portal achieved its highest traffic ever – 2.6 mn unique visitors.



The Caravan wins big

Staff Writer Sagar, won the prestigious Red Ink Award under the "Politics (Print)" category.

- Nileena M S, a reporting fellow with the magazine, has won the prestigious ACJ Award for Investigative Journalism in print/online category for the year 2018.
- The Caravan also won The Abby Award under the category of Best launch of a new title of newspaper/magazine/digital publication in 2018.



Down To Earth's Sr. reporter, Ishan Kukreti, was awarded the prestigious Prem Bhatia award for 'Outstanding Environmental Reporting of the Year'.



The Wire's Arfa Khanum Sherwani and Faiyaz Ahmad Wajeeh bagged the prestigious Red Ink Awards.

Sherwani won in 'Politics (TV)' category for her interview with Sri Sri Ravi Shankar of The Art of Living foundation. Wajeeh was awarded in the 'Arts (TV)' category for his video on a bookstore that brought together Urdu's literary greats. Kabir Agarwal, Jahnvi Sen and Ishita Mishra of The Wire also received special mentions for their stories.



The 23-episodes old **The Suno India Show** (<https://bit.ly/2LF8Fs8>) is now inching towards the 10,000 downloads mark on Apple iTunes and has

also made it to the top-three news shows on the podcast app Castbox.



The recently-launched **Alt News** app has achieved the highest possible rating of 5.0 on the Google Play store. The app allows you to look-up images and videos against the database already fact-checked, for instant results. For the content that has not yet been fact-checked, the user will be notified as soon as it has been verified.



Satyagrah's Android news app is now the highest-rated Hindi-news app (its rating is 4.87 out of 5) on the Google Play Store.

Grantee Journalists at RTI Workshop -

organised by IPSMF in association with CHRI



IPSMF grantee-participants in discussion during the 'RTI application-drafting group exercise' at the Workshop.

The Right to Information Amendment Bill passed by the Parliament has stoked fears of undermining the independence of the RTI watchdog. However, the RTI legislation would still be a critical tool for Indian media to access information that leads to more transparent governance through fact-based and researched journalism. Even prior to the current controversy the Foundation in partnership with CHRI had planned a workshop for our grantees on the best possible ways to leverage RTI. This Workshop was held on 27th July in New Delhi to primarily cover Delhi-based grantees.

Need for skilling

Any Act, however enabling, is not a force by itself. It is for the media to master the skills of the RTI regime to calibrate and configure its inquiries in such a manner that it elicits the required information.

This needs training and honing of

skills for leveraging the maximum that the RTI offers.

The training anchored by RTI Specialist Venkatesh Nayak was attended by 24 journalists belonging to 10 grantees organisations - Khabar Lahariya, Max Maharashtra, Media Vigil, Janjwar, Suno India, Satyagrah, Down To Earth, The Caravan, The Print and The Wire.

Hands-on training - The one-day workshop helped grantee journalists to gain a deep insight on the various aspects of using the RTI as an effective tool in investigative reporting.

Key highlights of the Workshop:

1. Do's and don'ts of filing RTI queries:

Venkatesh Nayak dilated on the do's and don'ts of filing a RTI application and focused on the potential of RTI for

**The Workshop went into questions of:**

- The mandatory information that the government has to publish and disseminate.
- The 'public authorities' and bodies from whom information can be accessed.
- The type and scope of information that can be asked for.
- The 'most suitable' format and template for the application that will ensure the 'most optimum' response.
- The procedure and benchmarks followed by public authorities in processing the application.
- The process of appeal to the Appellate Authority, the Information Commissions, filing of direct complaints, etc. if the application is rejected.

pursing issues of public interest critical to good governance and probity in government institutions. He gave out 'tips and tricks', which could well make the difference between a query being responded to or being rejected. For instance, it is a good practice to avoid addressing an officer to whom the application is addressed, by name and just stick to the designation – because, if the officer is transferred in the meantime, the query will be returned to the sender without a response.

2. RTI as a tool for investigative reporting:

Ritika Chopra of the Indian Express gave a presentation on how she used RTI as a tool for investigative reporting, samples of which she presented to the grant-

ee-participants. For instance, she pointed to her story of how through information obtained from an RTI application, she scooped the story of the PMO writing directly to the EC on the need for nationwide, simultaneous, elections. (<https://bit.ly/2ymRbrC>)

3. 'RTI application-drafting group exercise':

This was one of the highlights of the Workshop. Participants were divided into groups and drafted detailed RTI queries following all the laid down procedures on a prescribed template.

The queries on RTI from participants ranged from the role of the EC during the recent Lok Sabha polls, especially on the selective application of the Code of Conduct; the controversy with Nepal after the demonetization exercise; the issue of minimum wages in Delhi, among others.

Based on the queries prepared by the participating groups, a lively panel discussion was held which was presided over by Mr Wajahat Habibullah, India's first Chief Information Commissioner, Prof. Sridhar Acharyalu, former Central Information Commissioner and Sanjoy Hazarika, Director of CHRI.

4. Clearly delineate public interest:

Mr Habibullah emphasised that the government system needs to be goaded into a "culture of giving replies". The RTI Act, he said, was an "important tool" for journalists to access information and can hold "a mirror to India as a nation and strengthen it". He stressed that the applications should clearly delineate the "public interest" in the revealing of the information asked for. This would considerably increase the chances of the queries being responded to.

5. Elicit information that readers need**to know. Not what the government wants to put out:**

Prof Acharyalu said that RTI bolsters the investigative power of the media as the queries elicit information that "you (the journalist) want and not what the government wants to put out". This by its very nature keeps the government on its toes and is a "fantastic tool for journalists" for evidence-based reporting.

A learning experience

The overwhelming feedback received from participants was that the workshop was extremely useful and helped them to understand the finer points of the RTI Act and its nuances; and more importantly the things to keep in mind to elicit the expected information. Participants concluded that the RTI system was an important tool in the hands of the media which by its very nature was designed to improve accountability and governance. They saw great benefits in the opportunity provided for skilling and training, to use and leverage this tool of democracy to the hilt.

6. Seek information from all other 'publicly available resources before filing RTI:

Prof Acharyalu also said that it was a good practice while filing RTI applications to ask for the "complete files" and inspection on an issue. It was also a good practice, he said, to first hunt for the information asked for from all other openly available sources like parliamentary questions, reports of the ministries, etc., as it would enable the applications to be productive. ■

TIMELINE OF GRANTS

BOARD MEETINGS	New Grants	Grant renewals
FY 2019-20: 1 Meeting	India Development Review	CGNet Swara, EPW, Live Law and ThePrint.
FY 2018-19: 4 Meetings	Azhimukham, East Mojo, Imphal Free Press, Janjwar, Max Maharashtra, Media Vigil, Saptahik Sadhana, Sikkim Chronicle, Suno India, The Bastion, The Lede and ThePrint (Hindi and Science).	Dool News, IndiaSpend, Swarajya, The Better India, The News Minute and Think Pragati.
FY 2017-18: 8 Meetings	Alt News, Dool News, Down To Earth, Khabar Lahariya, Samachara, Satyagrah, Swarajya, The Caravan, The Wire (Urdu & Marathi), Think Pragati and The Print.	The Better India, The Ken, The News Minute and The Wire (English)
FY 2016-17: 7 Meetings	Economic and Political Weekly, Gaon Connection, Live Law, The Better India, The Ken, The News Minute, The Wire (Hindi) and WTD News.	
FY 2015-16: 5 Meetings	CGNet Swara, IndiaSpend and The Wire (English).	
Total Commitment – INR 50 Cr		

GRANTEE IMPACT

IPSMF grantees drive coverage on the environment

The World Environment Day that was marked recently, brought home to us that we live in a world of climate change, water scarcity and pollution. Climate change is disrupting people's lives and inevitably the most impacted are those at the bottom of the pyramid. These challenges call for the equivalent of the 'moon shot' – optimum use of technology, resources and the upping of leadership on the environment in a 'mission mode'. In this effort, the media has a critical role to play – to relentlessly focus on the issues, highlight the best practices and successes, and point to the gaps. The Foundation's grantees, we are glad to report, have in their coverage, striven to be ahead of the curve. We bring you select highlights.

Down To Earth released its annual e-book "State of India's Environment: In Figures, 2019". It was released on World Environment Day (June 5) as a part of their data journalism efforts. The data from the book was quoted by more than 100 news reports, both in English and regional language newspapers and magazines. Magazines like Time and Newsweek also backlinked their stories to the data.

India Spend published a data-driven 6-part series on drought highlighting issues such as drought-induced migration, irregular rainfall patterns and



– Tanzania, Guatemala and India (<https://bit.ly/2OhWIL7>).

Suno India's recent "Climate Emergency", a show dedicated to climate change coverage, traced the origin of the **water crisis** faced by Chennai and the inaction of the state government. (<https://bit.ly/2JodaVA>). The show's focus on newly-developed suburbs exposed how the impact of rampant construction, encroachment and neglect of traditional water conservation techniques, can leave residents reeling in desperate times.

Think Pragati's Pavan Srinath hosted researcher Lingaraj Jayaprakash on an episode of the Pragati Podcast detailing academic efforts to highlight **vanishing commons**, or natural resources common to society. (<https://bit.ly/2MIVNX4>). The show focused on American economist Elinor Ostrom's work on how communities come together informally to preserve commons without the need for regulation or state action.

The Better India detailed the revival of Bengaluru's **Kyalasanahalli lake** in a mere 45 days by former techie Anand Malligavada as part of 'The Lake Revivers Collective'. (<https://bit.ly/2NTHqvw>)

ineffective government schemes. (<http://bit.ly/2NLFKEt>)

The Lede was one of the first publications to focus on the water crisis in Chennai and the stories were picked up by the mainstream media. (<https://bit.ly/2JPgwAV>)

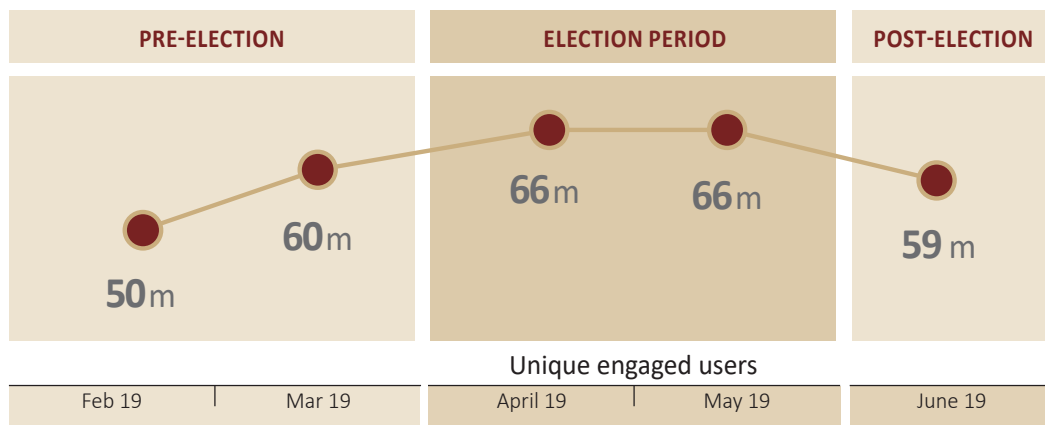
The Lede was also part of a path-breaking international collaboration, as part of the **Green Blood** project (<https://bit.ly/2SBU8Ot>), where 40 journalists from 15 media organisations across 15 countries worked together for 8 months to investigate and expose how reporting on mining has led to **risk to journalists** in three countries

The News Minute's (TNM's) coverage focused on **water shortages** plaguing homes and even hospitals in the South with well-produced videos and deep ground reportage. (<http://bit.ly/2JoseCo>). TNM's coverage centred around the strain placed on **urban women** and their responsibility to ensure that families have adequate water. (<http://bit.ly/2OtElTc>) The website also threw light on how hospitals and their patients in the drought-prone district of Dharmapuri were coping amid pressing water shortage. (<http://bit.ly/2Yl2e3n>)

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Traffic peaks during 2019 General Elections

32%
surge in
traffic of
IPSMF
grantee sites



After touching a peak 66 M during April & May 2019, the total Reach dropped by 10% to 59 M

Our New Grantee**India Development Review (IDR)**www.idronline.org

IDR, launched in March 2017, covers the development sector

in India with its focussed reporting on the media-dark regions from the ground. IDR has an all-women leadership team with skills across development, media, journalism and start-ups. IDR's focus is on the verticals of agriculture, environment, education, health, human rights, livelihood, water and sanitation. IDR also plays a role in the capacity-building of entities in the development sector by leveraging ideas, best practices and processes. This is done through insights gained from the ground and focussing on what is working and what is not in the social and development sectors.

Battling industrial pollution

Industrial expansion is vital for developing economies like India. However, lack of enforcement and unchecked expansion could damage sensitive environments. Grantees have helped throw light on the impact of industrial actions and emerging technologies on the environment.

Down To Earth reported a series of forward-looking news stories on the **impact of 5G** technology. The series focused on radiation fears, impact on rural areas and potential health concerns of the technology. (<http://bit.ly/2LMyzJA>).

The website, which has recently started its Hindi edition, came out with a string of stories based on ground reports and NGT orders about the state of three rivers in North India.

This includes the case of untreated industrial waste damaging the **Shivna** river in the Mandsaur district of Madhya Pradesh (<http://bit.ly/2LJ3oiY>), an overflowing sewage plant polluting the Ganges in **Prayagraj** where millions take a dip during the **Kumbh Mela** (<http://bit.ly/2JVpU6t>); and state of the Yamuna in UP, (<http://bit.ly/2Y1FfuG>).

IndiaSpend published a detailed ground report on the **Narmada Valley Project's failure** to provide water to farmers in Gujarat's rainfall-deficient Kutch region, even as industries in the region used more water than originally allocated to them. (<http://bit.ly/2S4ofhb>)

The Wire reported on the impact of the industrial corridor along Gujarat's coast on **local fishing communities**. The growth of pet

chemical, chemical and other industrial units in the region have affected marine life and fishing activities. (<http://bit.ly/32gLTm5>)

Impact on health

There is no escaping the cost of worsening environment on the citizen's health, wellness and quality of life. The Foundation's grantees have highlighted the impact of pollution and climate change on people's health.

CSE's study of **on-street democracy** done in May-end showed how a pedestrian only street in Delhi's crowded Karol Bagh area had much lower PM2.5 concentration compared to the adjacent Arya Samaj Road that was choked with heavy traffic. The blog published on Down To Earth was picked up and reported in major national dailies as it proved why urban renewal is needed for clean air and sustainability. (<http://bit.ly/32TgwYk>)

The News Minute covered illnesses emerging in urban India due to rising pollution and issues related to waste disposal (<http://bit.ly/32i5WK3>). The website also followed up with ground reports of families whose members were killed in green protests in Thoothukudi district in 2018. Locals protested the expansion of a copper plant in the region, alleging that its operations posed a health risk for residents. (<http://bit.ly/2NKrkEs>)

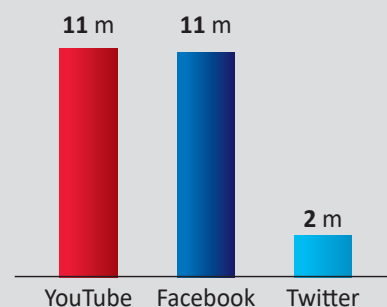
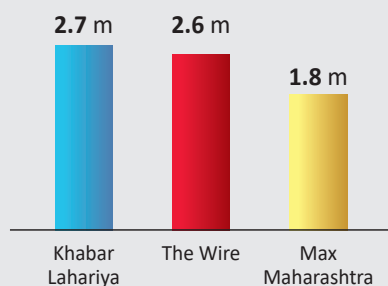
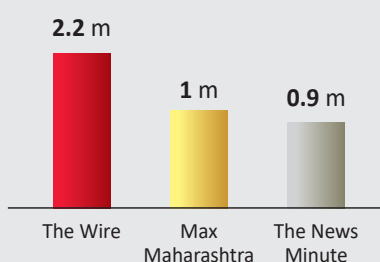
DataBaaz, India's first data & evidence-based video network, has a particular focus on deep-reporting on the environment, with a emphasis on issues of water. For instance, the story on the 'Economic cost of water scarcity in India'. (<https://bit.ly/2YsIRp7>) ■

Social Media Reach

IPSMF Grantees
Strong on Social Media

24 m

Unique Engaged Users

**Top 3 on YouTube****Top 3 on Facebook****Top 3 on Twitter**