

Enabling journalistic excellence in public interest

Through grants, investments and direct interventions IPSMF seeks to create an eco-system that fosters excellence in public-interest journalism, enriches public debate and policy, influences mainstream media and creates a narrative that empowers individuals and communities to exercise their democratic franchise in a responsible and knowledgeable manner. We envisage that our long-term goal will translate into three outcomes:

- Create high-quality public-interest content
- Ensure the widest and deepest distribution of content
- Create support services to enable content creation and distribution

The interventions required to achieve these outcomes are:

INVEST

- In creating more digital-media brand names
- In digital-media ventures that spotlight public-interest issues
- In efforts that disrupt and challenge the mainstream-media narrative

CATALYSE

- The wide distribution of public-interest content, particularly through the mainstream media
- The curation of digital content with a conscience

GROW

India's editorial leadership on public-interest issues by supporting the work of journalists in the digital or mainstream media, through fellowships, awards or direct support

ORGANISE

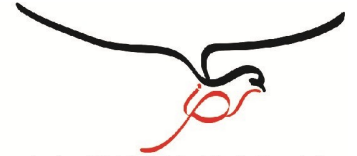
Support functions that allow journalists to work to their best capacities, specifically

- Legal
- Training
- Research
- Technology

INFLUENCE

India's emerging digital-media consumer to participate in the democratic process by ensuring transparency in issues of

- Governance
- Media
- Socio-economic change



Independent and Public Spirited Media Foundation

IPSMF news

Issue No. 001

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A diverse set of Grantees

We are happy to bring to you this first issue of the IPSMF quarterly newsletter. We trust this serves to provide an insight into the activities of the Foundation.

**THE REPORT
CARD FOR
2016-17**

Till date, IPSMF has funded 12 entities with *IndiaSpend* being the first Grantee in June 2016. We have in our portfolio a very diverse and exciting group of media start-ups that focus on a range of issues — political and general news, data journalism, business news, legal information and community / citizen journalism.

Each of the chosen grantees have to pass the scrutiny of and meet the exacting standards of our Trustees after going through an exhaustive appraisal and due diligence by the operating team. The Foundation's grants are a

tribute to the many Indian journalists who have ventured into establishing independent media. Topics like education, health, infrastructure, environment, human rights etc, are usually ignored by mainstream media. Hence, the perseverance and risk-taking abilities of such start-ups in the online space, where a rewarding

business model is yet to be established, is indeed commendable.

From backing *CGNet Swara* which has developed an effective citizen journalism model in media dark areas of Chattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh to supporting *The Gaon Connection* which seeks to give voice to rural children through its Swayam Project, the Foundation's grants encompass a range of innovative journalism entities that have been launched in India in recent years.

Timeline of Grants



Total Commitment – Rs 12.28 Crore

Total Board Meetings: 12

2016: Feb 25, Mar 3 & 4, Mar 18, Mar 29, June 23 & 24, August 24, Oct 26, Nov 21 & 22; 2017: Jan 17



DONORS FOR 2016-17	
Aamir Khan	Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives
Cyrus Guzder	Kiran Mazumdar -Shaw
Lal Family Foundation	Manipal Education and Medical Group
Nataraja Trust	Piramal Foundation
Pirojsha Godrej Foundation	Quality Investment Pvt Ltd
Rohini Nilekani	Rohinton and Anu Aga Family Trust
Tejaskiran Pharmachem Ind Pvt Ltd	Unimed Technologies Ltd
Vidti Investment Pvt Ltd	

BOARD OF TRUSTEES	
Ashish Dhawan:	PE Investor; Co-founder Ashoka University; Founder - Centre Square Foundation
C B Bhawe:	Former chairman of SEBI; Chairperson - Indian Institute for Human Settlements
Ramachandra Guha:	Historian and Writer; Administrator - BCCI
T N Ninan:	Columnist and former editor, Chairman - Business Standard Pvt Ltd

Focusing on regional media

Gaon Connection, a rural Hindi news network, has been one of our flagship interventions in regional language media. Our latest grant is to *The Wire (Hindi)*, which has picked up over 3 lakh unique visitors in just two months. The Trustees' support and encourage non-English media Grantees is being vindicated.

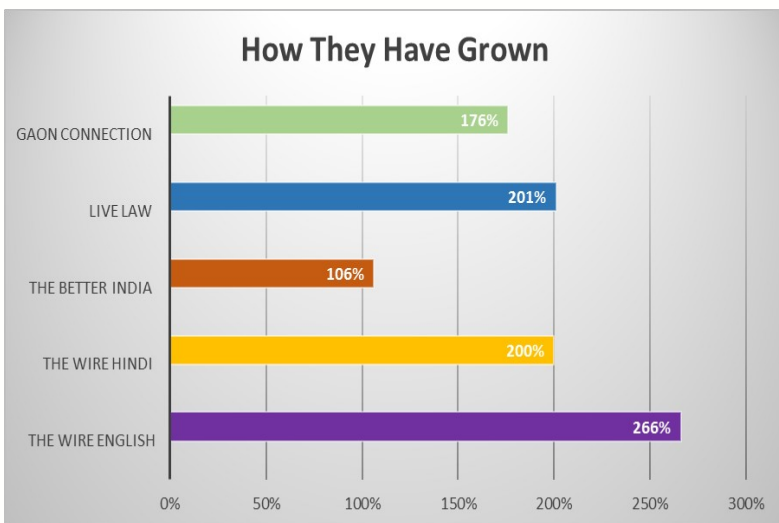


The operating team continues to explore the regional language media. Currently, legacy media sites dominate almost every language. Except for OneIndia.com, which offers news in regional languages and has investment from Dailyhunt, other stand-alone 'digital native' plays are yet to make their mark.

A few of the Malayalam and Kannada start-ups appear promising. The Tamil market is highly polarized and politically charged. In Telugu Marathi and Gujarati, we have not yet spotted any efforts that merit our attention, but we shall keep looking.

Meeting the challenge of sustainability

The Foundation's grants are designed to boost the sustainability of entities that it supports. Every grant to an entity operates on the Foundation's defined set of sustainability benchmarks - a grantee cannot expect funding beyond a 3-year period with annualized grants being made on a diminishing scale over the period. The Grantee is encouraged to seek and develop new revenue streams that will compensate the diminished flow from the Foundation. We believe that sustainability will continue to be a major challenge and that grantees need to focus their efforts on this front. Though Grantees like *The Better India* have advertising as a revenue stream, recovery of advertising dues can be difficult. *IndiaSpend* has successfully monetized its data driven stories by building a syndication service. The Ken is making a pioneering effort at enrolling subscriptions, with a substantial portion of content sitting behind a paywall. The Wire attracts significant micro-contributions from online donors. Going by The Wire's experience, people are willing to pay for good journalism. Many of the Grantees are beginning to realize that to survive they need to ask audiences to contribute.



Grants accelerate growth

The total unique user base of all Grantees has exceeded the 10 million mark with all, except one, experiencing dramatic growth after receiving grants from the Foundation.

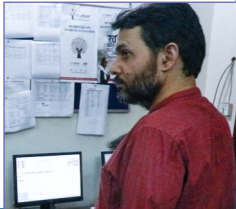
The Wire (English) has grown its user base by 266%. Gaon Connection has grown its unique user base by 176% in less than a year. The Better India has grown its unique user base by 106%. The Wire (Hindi) has more than tripled its unique user base in two months since its launch in Feb 2017. Live Law has grown its unique user base by 201% after receiving a grant from the IPSMF.

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MEET THE IPSMF GRANTEES

We are constantly exploring alternate, honest means of revenue as we pursue our ambitious journey of giving a voice to rural India. We have received great confidence and an important initial push from the financial assistance from the IPSMF.



- Neelesh Misra
Gaon Connection



We have found in IPSMF a supporter that is not only enlightened and shares our values, but is also run professionally. Thanks to them, we have the beginnings of a vibrant new media ecosystem.


- Siddharth Vardarajan / The Wire

We follow a model of in-depth journalism on issues that matter and the public distribution of this content because of the support of institutions like IPSMF. We look forward to engaging and learning from IPSMF's growing network of independent media organisations.

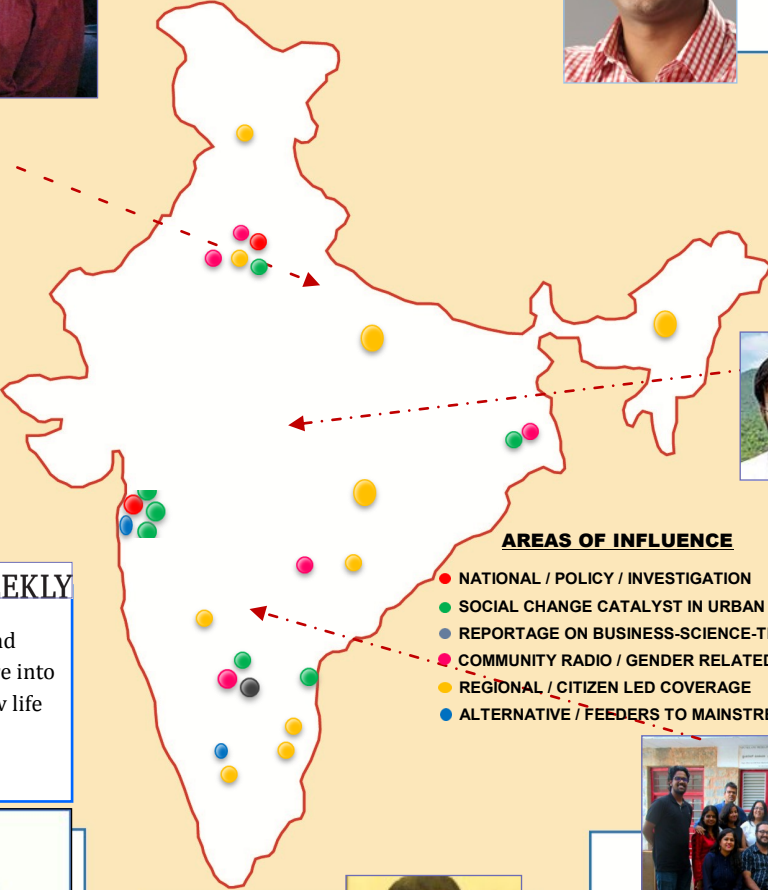


- Govindraj Ethiraj
IndiaSpend

The IPSMF grant is like that little crevice that a rock climber needs during a tough climb. And a tough climb it is to practice independent journalism today. The Foundation support will provide us resources to delay, or reject, near-term rewards for enduring success.



- Seema Singh
The Ken



With IPSMF support we have now created Bultoo (Bluetooth) radio which is helping us test a model of self-sustainable community media. Only if the community that it is built for also financially supports the initiative, can media remain independent.




- Shubhrangshu Choudhary

Economic & Political WEEKLY


Thanks to IPSMF, the Economic and Political Weekly is going to venture into the exciting project of giving a new life to its website.

The IPSFM has been instrumental in capacity building and adding strategic inputs. It has helped us grow our reach manifold as we continue to build a highly credible and trustworthy brand.



- Dhimant / The Better India

With the support of IPSMF, LiveLaw has achieved substantial growth in reach and has become the most credible legal news portal for all sections of the judicial community.



- M.A.Rashid / LiveLaw



With significant funding from IPSMF, we have been able to commission journalism which would otherwise be impossible due to financial constraints. We can now do sustained ground reporting, patient research and meticulous editing without any economic pressure.

- The News Minute Team



STORY FETCHES NATIONAL AWARD FOR NAGA WOMAN

When *The Better India* wrote [the story of Zuboni Humtsoe](#) of Nagaland and PML, the organization she founded, little did anyone know that the report would fetch Zuboni the country's highest honour for women. She was nominated for the Nari Shakti Puraskar for 2016.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I think that it would turn out to be a serious career path.....

It's been the most difficult but also the most rewarding and amazing experience," Zuboni recently said in an interview.

PML provides sustenance to local women by making a range of goods using left-over fabrics. But their signature product remains the Nungshiba dolls (seen in picture alongside). Nungshiba in Manipuri means love.

UP CM visits hospital to meet acid attack victim

Rajoli (name changed) had been raped thrice and attacked with acid an equal number of times. As if that was not enough, the attackers forced acid down her throat inside a train.

Regional media Grantee *Gaon Connection* [had reported on this case](#) which brought Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Adityanath Yogi to the Trauma Centre to meet Rajoli and provide her with assistance of Rs one lakh.

Electricity restored in the Kaitha village of Madhya Pradesh's Rewa district after citizen journalist Shivanand Dwivedi's [report on CGnet Swara](#)

Live Law first to report court order on slaughter house crackdown

Live Law was first of the block to report the Allahabad High Court's judgement in a case filed by a petty meat shop owner against the backdrop of the Uttar Pradesh government's move to shut down illegal slaughter houses and meat shops. [Live Law's report](#) was extensively followed up in legacy media as well as standalone digital native media, including some of IPSMF's Grantees. Some of the follow-up reports acknowledged *Live Law*.

Report on women judges gets shared extensively

The glass ceiling in Indian judiciary, the old boys' club, seems to be cracking at last, if not broken yet. With the appointment of Justice Indira Banerjee as the chief justice of Madras High Court, four major high courts got women chief justices for the first time in the history of Indian judiciary. Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta high courts are already being led by women chief justices. [This exclusive report](#) by *Live Law* was shared by more than 1600 people, including minister Maneka Gandhi who tweeted about this.

IndiaSpend calls it right in UP

[This pre-poll analysis](#) of elections to the Uttar Pradesh assembly by *IndiaSpend* was the first to predict a victory for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). This story was published when the discourse in the media was about the Samajwadi Party family theatrics. In 2014, the BJP won 81% of Uttar Pradesh's assembly segments, a quarter of those with a majority of 50% or more -- a result unprecedented in nearly four decades. It would have required one of the greatest electoral debacles in Indian history for the BJP to lose, said the report.

The Wire questions UGC's publication rule for PhDs

A number of predatory journals thrive in India, fed by many universities requiring students to publish a paper to get a PhD. The University Grants Commission (UGC) published a list of over 38,000 'preferred journals' in January this year. Only papers published in journals in this list could be considered for certain forms of evaluation. But even a [preliminary analysis by The Wire](#) in the same month found that the preferred journals list contained the names of some predatory titles. The list also doesn't include journals printed in regional languages but includes those in French and Spanish.



Showcasing the power of in-depth reporting

The Ken is the latest entrant to the group of IPSMF Grantees. It has used long format writing to provide comprehensive information on topics spanning business, healthcare and technology. While it may be too early to gauge the impact of such stories, the story on healthcare reportedly evoked a reaction from the union health ministry. However, the ministry shied away from going public with its response.

You can read the story here.

[Check-in, check-out: India's fast-moving health bureaucracy](#)