

➤ **Article 14** launched its new sedition database "[A Decade of Darkness](#)" in February. It is the first empirical, investigative research into the use of sedition over a 12-year period, from 2009 to 2021. It lists 13,000 cases of sedition sourced through 1,300 legal documents, 800 media reports, 125 first information reports (FIRs) and more than 70 interviews with those accused of sedition.

**Article 14's** Mahima Jain was shortlisted for 'Thomson Foundation Young Journalist Award', supported by the UK's Foreign Press Association (FPA), for reporting on the women in India left behind with [no land rights](#) by migrant husbands.

Another story in **Article 14** on how Modi's crop-insurance scheme, with its complex fine print, rejected nearly 1 million claims as the pandemic devastated farms won the IIMCAA National Award for Agriculture reporting.

➤ **Imphal Free Press** staff reporter Babie Shirin received the WAD Gender Journalist Award 2020 for her work on crime against women and children in Manipur.

➤ **EastMojo** was chosen for the 'Google News Initiative Start-ups Lab' programme with 10 other digital startups from across India, for a 16-week hands-on learning programme developed to improve skills and knowledge.

In January, **EastMojo** became one of 5 recipients across the world to receive the Catalyst Fund, which recognises and supports emerging organisations. The Catalyst Fund is supported by the John P. and Anne Welsh McNulty Foundation and The Aspen Institute.

**EastMojo** introduced a weekly video series 'Decoded' in November 2021, which talks about all things Northeast. It also launched a weekly podcast, 'Northeast in a Nutshell' in January 2022.

➤ 'Writing with Fire', a feature documentary on '**Khabar Lahariya**' was one of the three nominations for Oscars 2022 in the Documentary Feature category.

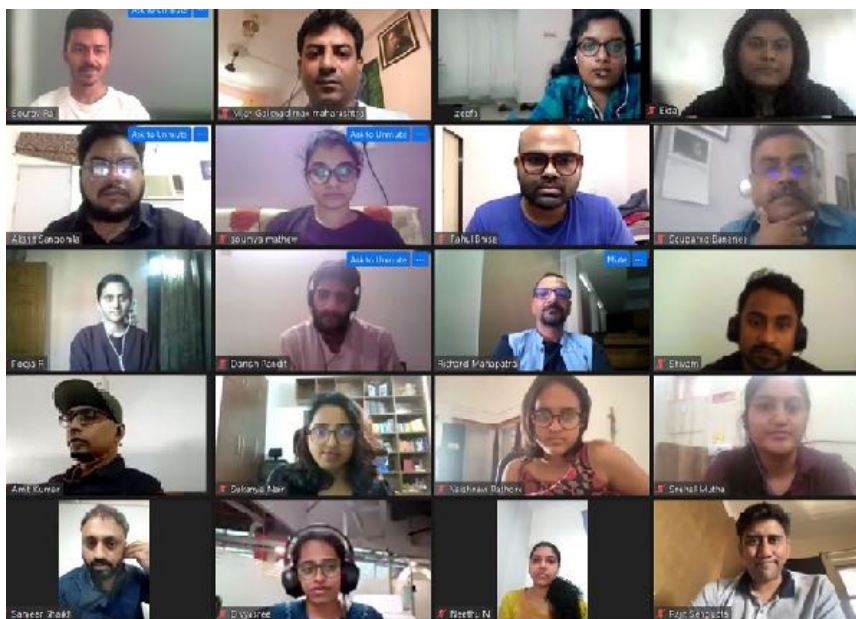
**Khabar Lahariya** also won the International Women's Media Foundation's [Courage in Journalism Award 2021](#).

➤ **Mojo Story** won the Gold at the World Association of News Publishers Digital Media Awards for South Asia for its ground reportage of the Covid pandemic.



# 'Greening the Pen': Workshop in association with Down To Earth

Combating threats to the environment and climate change are among the biggest challenges of our times, impinging on the very survival of the planet. These challenges are, therefore, the "biggest stories there are to report". It is in this context that IPSMF, in association with Down To Earth (DTE) – organised 'Greening the Pen' – an online workshop on environmental reporting on March 12, 2022, exclusively for the Foundation's grantees.



Participants during the IPSMF - DTE Workshop on Reporting the Environment, March 12, 2022

Every substantial story today, if we can "connect the dots", has an environmental and ecological aspect to it. The Covid pandemic, for instance, one of the most tragic and significant events in the last 100 years, seemingly a health story, has its origins in the zoonotic transmission of viruses, when nature's rules on cohabitation between humans and animals were broken which is at its basic, an ecology story.

It is imperative that journalists, who usually write the first draft on

the environment must be trained and oriented on the skills and knowledge to find, and report the stories on the environment with authority and credibility.

### The Workshop

The Workshop which was attended by 35 journalists from 23 grantees was divided into five sessions in an interactive classroom mode.

### i) Reporting on the Environment

The first session which was 'An introduction to reporting on the

*Contd. on Page 2*

**Contd. from Page 1**

environment' was helmed by **Richard Mahapatra, Managing Editor, DTE**, who highlighted that it was impossible not to find an environmental angle to almost any story today. The trick was "joining the dots" between the event/issue and its environmental causations and consequences.

Most deviations from a reasonably long-term norm, form the basis for a story and one has to go beyond the headlines. Events (storms, cyclones, floods) are no more the real stories. The causations behind it, more often than not, are the stories.

This is especially so in a country like India, which has among the highest causalities as a result of the deteriorating environment. Participants learnt that some parts of India have not had a single normal month for more than three decades now, and the stories on the ecology, and climate refugees, are hidden in plain sight. If reporters look for it, the environmental angle surely stands out.

The session stressed the three key elements that reporters covering the environment should be conscious of; i) look for linkages between the local story and its global consequences, as changes in one part have an impact globally, ii) be aware of the chronology which led to the event and, iii) as much as possible humanise and tell stories through human characters.

When 60 per cent of the population in India depends on environmental assets such as agriculture and forest produce, most stories will have an environmental aspect. It is for the reporter to join the dots.

Meanwhile, data journalism and visualisation are emerging as the new way to tell a story effectively.

**ii) Sourcing environmental information**

The second session, presented by **Kiran Pandey, Programme Director at the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)**, expanded on the theme of access to credible and trusted data. Writing and reporting on the environment needs access to the most credible and trusted information, data from regular sources, that show trends and are unadulterated and easy to access. For instance, websites like [www.ourworldindata.org](http://www.ourworldindata.org) or the Central Pollution Control Board ([cpcb.nic.in](http://cpcb.nic.in)). The government websites can also be a rich source of information.

For a regular reporter on the environment, it also entails creating and maintaining a personal list of resources – 'a data diary'. Reporting on the environment needs "evidence-based information" and the stories with numbers have a higher recall value and credibility.

*(A collation of the most important and credible resources on the environment prepared by the DTE team was mailed out to the participants at the end of the workshop.)*

**iii) Storytelling with data**

The third session, 'Storytelling with data', was anchored by **Rajit Sengupta, Sr Assistant Editor, DTE**. It focussed on offering practical tips on how to structure a story and pick trends from a given set of data. The most critical part of data is to catch and plot the trend.

The stories can be of three types: i) the outlier story – a story in which data indicates extremes, ii) the trend story – where a trend has been broken or shows distinct patterns and, iii) the correlation story – where two or more variables change together.

The challenge in the use of data was to not get overwhelmed but to cull out the central idea of the story from the numbers and then use the figures to contextualise, buttress and expand on the story.

A 'classroom mode' exercise was conducted in which the participants constructed a story plan on 'Are India's groundwater resources safe?' The factors considered for deriving a story framework included - identifying the ingredients of information and the sources, prioritising information and creating the structure and flow.

Creating a resource of links and data sources and going regularly to these sites, almost daily helps to catch any changes, trends and turning points almost intuitively.

**iv) Visualising data for reporting**

The fourth session, also by Sengupta, on 'Visualising data for reporting' – went into the use of tools to visualise and present data through interactive graphics. It is just not enough to research and cull out a story, it is equally important to present it in a manner that is easily understood.

A live demo was conducted using Google Spreadsheet for importing data from a website and also using free-software data visualisation tools like '[Datawrapper](#)'. This would help

**NEW GRANTEES****MEDIANAMA**<https://www.medianama.com/>

**MediaNama** is an independent news site driven by the mission to ensure that the Internet and the digital ecosystem in India remain open, fair, competitive and global. It seeks to understand, explain and anticipate the consequences of technology policy in India through reporting, consultation papers and events.

Founded by Nikhil Pahwa, a key commentator and analyst on stories and debates around Indian digital media, censorship, internet and mobile regulation, MediaNama has forged community relationships in technology policy across regulators, businesses, citizen advocacy groups, think tanks and research organisations.

<https://democraticcharkha.in/>

**Democratic Charkha** is a video-led hyperlocal entity launched in 2020 by Amir Abbas, Waheed Azam, Khalid Jamshed and Anupriya Singh, a group of young and passionate journalists from the minority and transgender communities. It covers the districts of Patna, Begusarai and Sheikhpura in Bihar.

With a strong network of reporters plus stringers, Democratic Charkha focuses on the ground reported and impact-driven coverage of real and systemic issues plaguing Bihar, with an emphasis on the transgender and vulnerable communities.

participants create clear, aesthetically appealing visuals from the data, for their stories.

**Contd. on Page 6**





# Online Hyperlocal Journalism: Gaining Ground

The all-pervasiveness of the digital medium has lowered entry barriers for journalists, who wish to venture out on their own. News gathering, production and dissemination costs for the online medium are a fraction of what it costs for *print* and *television* media ventures.



Kavita Devi, Editor, Khabar Lahariya, reporting from the ground. Photo Credit: Khabar Lahariya

The mobile phone with in-built camera, availability of low-cost editing software and the almost no-cost facility of dissemination (through YouTube and other social media platforms) has dramatically altered the scenario for news gathering and the distribution of news.

This has meant, among other things, a steady expansion of online hyperlocal journalism – reporting on communities within tight geographical areas at the very mofussil level. It fills a gap in the coverage of issues and areas that have been under-served in the past by legacy media, as the returns in terms of readership or revenues did not justify the costs.

This space is now increasingly being explored by independent digital news organisations who report local issues from the very epicentre of the hinterland. Not only do they fill a gap but they also serve a larger purpose. Almost suddenly, issues on the ground are perforce being reported on and pursued even by the national media.

The rampant inadequacies in the state's delivery of services – a primary

health centre with no doctors and medicines amid the pandemic, the non-delivery of rations at the local PDS shop, the dilapidated state of roads and bridges in the local area, the inadequacy of mid-day meal schemes at the local school – all these have begun to be captured and reported.

This local reporting has also generated a local response loop, in which the local administration and local representatives are pressurised and persuaded to act and redress issues before they blow up in their faces.

This hyperlocal coverage also generates a cult and loyal following at the local level, as the changes, however routine it may seem from afar, are transformative and life-easing for the local communities.

A prime example of this is many of the Foundation's own grantees.

**Khabar Lahariya (KL)**, reporting on the local issues in Bundelkhand, now has more than half a million subscribers on its YouTube channel. It covers local issues like water shortage, the non-implementation of government schemes, the joblessness in the villages

*Contd. on Page 4*

## Grantee News & Recognition

➤ Japleen Pasricha, Founder, **Feminism in India (FII)**, was invited to speak on media and women entrepreneurs by Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, UK, in November 2021.

FII won 8 awards at The Regional Laadli Media Awards 2021 for various campaigns, videos and articles by both the English and Hindi teams.

FII launched a new podcast on '[women and work and why it matters](#)' in collaboration with International Center for Research on Women.

FII staff writer Sudipta Das won the 2021 SCARF Media Award for excellence in reporting on [mental health](#) in January 2022.

➤ Padma Priya, Co-founder, **Suno India** was selected for Goldman Sachs' 10000 Women Entrepreneurship Program at the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore.

**Suno India** also won the Express Awards for Women Entrepreneurs from Financial Express-FICCI FLO under the "Media and Entertainment Rising Segment".

➤ Journalists Priyanka Pulla and Mahtab Alam won the Mumbai Press Club's RedInk Awards 2021 for articles published by **The Wire**. Dheeraj Mishra and Seemi

Pasha won the Ramnath Goenka Award for articles and videos published in **The Wire** 'Government and Politics' category.

➤ **The News Minute's** Anna Isaac was awarded the first prize by the Press Institute of India and International Committee of the Red Cross (PII-ICRC), in November 2021. She won the award for her article on the "moral distress" faced by health workers during the second wave of Covid pandemic in India.

➤ Google News Initiative (GNI) Start-ups Lab selected **The Probe** as part of their cohort of 10 news start-ups in India.

YouTube selected Prema Sridevi, founder of **The Probe**, as one of the five independent journalists from India, that YouTube is partnering with as part of their worldwide creator program for independent journalists.

➤ **The Bastion** launched its Editorial Fellowship. This is an eight-month fellowship between the months of February and September 2022 for women.





Democratic Charkha's Editor, Amir Abbas reporting from Patna.

Photo Credit: Democratic Charkha

**Contd. from Page 3**

and the towns, the poor state of public infrastructure and corruption, amongst others. Their stories have had a significant impact on the ground.

For instance, [Khabar Lahariya's report](#) on the Kol Adivasis who had been residing in Lauri village for over five decades without a home to call their own. The local land mafia had thwarted all their efforts to get permanent housing. After KL reported their plight, an official investigation was carried out and eventually, the process of allocating permanent housing began.

Reporting in Marathi on the hinterlands of Maharashtra is another grantee **Max Maharashtra**. With a network of reporters in under-served areas of the State, it has been reporting on the lives of the most vulnerable from the local areas.

The impact of their [reportage on the poor state of healthcare facilities](#) at the only government health centre catering to 32 villages in Patan Taluka of Satara district of Maharashtra is a case in point. The Centre did not have a doctor or medical staff and largely remained shut. This report led to the administration appointing a doctor to the health centre. For the first time in a decade that a doctor was assigned to this centre!

Two other grantees **Democratic Charkha (DC)** and **ॐ Media**, on their part cover separate regional districts of Bihar. DC covers three districts of Bihar – Patna, Begusarai and Sheikhpura from the ground, while ॐ Media covers the Seemanchal-Kosi region of Bihar - the districts of Purnea, Katihar, Kishanganj and Araria that are close to the borders of West Bengal; Nepal and Bangladesh.

Both the entities have been successful in exposing the inadequacies and inefficiency of the governance in the districts.

With a team of young founders and editors, **DC** is an inclusive organisation with representation from the minority and transgender communities. DC rigorously reports on gaps in governance, non-delivery of public goods, gender discrimination, abysmal infrastructure, government apathy and corruption. The hyperlocal reporting and consistent follow up have helped drive real impact on the ground. Its dissemination of coverage through social media and networking apps like WhatsApp has helped them expand its reach and traction.

When DC reported this [story](#) on the Centre's claim of 100% electrification as not true in Bihar, with many villages

in the Begusarai region living without power, its report on the Sarabkoti village was taken up by the local BDO and the village was electrified in four months benefiting 1,200 citizens.

**ॐ Media** rigorously focuses on the coverage of important issues spanning farming, rights, delivery of public services, corruption, hate crimes, and people's movements, amongst others. Its focused local coverage has pushed the administration to act and has also gained substantial momentum on YouTube with over 4 lakh subscribers.

During the first lockdown, ॐ Media reported on the [plight of 52 migrant labourers](#) from Bihar who covered a journey of over 600 kms on foot from Assam to Kishanganj, facing hunger and thirst. They had to cover another 250 kms to reach Samastipur. Following the coverage, the local people stepped in to help the migrants with food and shelter.

All these examples are a testimony to the hyperlocal media, an idea that has arrived and increasingly gaining traction. It is also heartening to find other regional media in *print* and *television* following up on issues that are first highlighted by the hyperlocal online news media. ●



**GRANTEE** **IMPACT**

▶ **Kashmir Observer** [reported](#)



that the untimely snowfall in Kashmir ruined the Valley's apple crop despite early warnings of inclement weather. The departure of migrant workers from Kashmir after the targeted killings of migrant civilians exacerbated the problem. The story helped mobilise an official response; and the calamity hit apple growers were subsequently given aid by the government.

▶ **Article 14's** [story](#) 'As BJP Talks



Up Law Against Conversions, Attacks Against Christians Rise In Karnataka', the product of three months of reporting in four Karnataka districts, appeared just before the state passed an anti-conversion law and provided vital perspective to what was happening on the ground as the story broke nationally. The story was later picked up by other media.

▶ Following [reports](#) published by



**Imphal Free Press** about travelers flouting COVID rules and rise in the use of fake RT-PCR negative certificates, Manipur's Health Services Director Dr K Rajo issued a direction to all district magistrates to take action against such violations in the state.

▶ **EastMojo** ground [reported](#)



from Dhalpur village in the Darrang district of Assam, on the horrific aftermath of the eviction drive to reclaim government land from "encroachers". The drive led to the killing of three people and injured 14 others. The grantee also did a follow-up story on how scores of children in this area have been denied education after the government closed schools and Anganwadis in the same area. The story got national attention and was picked by other media.

▶ **TrueCopy Think** did a reality



check on the 'Gotra Jeevika' project, which was launched by the state government to equip and prepare Adivasi young men and women for jobs in different sectors. The [report](#) helped to bring attention back to the project again from various corners of society.

▶ The consistent [reporting](#) by



**Max Maharashtra** on the struggles of differently-abled students due to closure of residential schools across the state during the pandemic led to the Disability Welfare Commissioner issuing a circular regarding the commencement of residential schools for them.

▶ **Alt News** [reported](#) how its



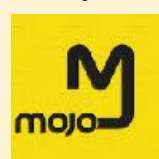
rigorous pursuit of accounts on Facebook and YouTube, which foment hate speech and instigate violence against communities, has led to the de-platforming of these dubious instigators.

▶ This [story](#) delved into the issue



of gender disparities in the education system, and IITs in particular, and analysed how at every step of the educational journey, female students are losing out due to gender stereotypes and biases. **The Bastion's** 3-part series on the leaky pipelines of IITs has generated discussions around the topic.

▶ **Mojo Story** [investigated](#) the



high number of still-births in the Darbhanga district in Bihar - the state with one of the highest number of cases in India – and found what measures were being taken to tackle the issue.

▶ Following **Khabar Lahariya's**



[reporting](#) on the dilapidated state of the Ghazipur Road in the Ashapur area of Varanasi, the road was repaired and given a facelift bringing relief to thousands of commuters.

▶ **The News Minute's** [coverage](#)



of how the Hyderabad police checked citizens' phones and WhatsApp chats for keywords like Ganja, drugs, etc., led to the wide criticism of the police who faced a backlash as such surveillance was seen as an infringement of privacy. The story also led to a legal notice being sent to the Hyderabad Commissioner of Police by an independent privacy researcher, with the assistance of the Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF) asking the police to stop this unlawful surveillance activity.

▶ As the political heat was rising



in Uttar Pradesh just prior to the elections, there were calls for the "reclaiming" of the Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi in Mathura, which abuts the Shahi Eidgah. **Live History India's** [report](#) delved into the past and pointed out that the issue has been long "settled" in a '1968 Agreement'.

▶ **Janjwar** had [reported](#) on a



ration scam in Garhwa district of Jharkhand where 33 tribal families were deprived of their rations as the local administration had declared them dead. Following Its coverage, the administration sprung into action and created ration cards for 31 families who will now have access to provisions.

▶ **The Probe's** ground [reports](#)



[from Ghaziabad](#) in Uttar Pradesh revealed the hard truth that in spite of the claims of having eradicated open defecation, many women still have no choice but to continue the practice.





Contd. from Page 2

**v) Why climate change reporting is critical – stories from India**

**Akshit Sangomla, Senior Reporter, DTE**, highlighted why the issues of the environment and climate change are touted as the “biggest stories in the world” and why reporting on the environment has become urgent, critical and life-saving.

The years 2016 and 2020, it was pointed out, were the warmest ever recorded, and July 2021 was the warmest month ever recorded. This was because of the increase in CO2 emissions, a gas that is very difficult to get rid of. The earth has already warmed up by 1.09 degree Celsius since pre-industrial times and is on its way to rising by 1.5 degrees by 2040. If global warming is allowed to continue unabated, the earth’s temperatures is slated to rise by 5.7 degrees Celsius - way beyond the point of no return.

Other than extreme climate events, which have become more frequent, scientists have defined nine tipping points – the changes in the larger systems like the Arctic Sea ice, the Antarctic, West Antarctic ice sheets, Amazon rain, Boreal forests, etc.

Once these tipping points are crossed, they will become irreversible. The Arctic region is the “climate capital of the world” and even small changes there have an impact on climate globally. It is now warming four times faster than the rest of the world.

He explained what happened at the recently held COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland, which witnessed some positive developments but not enough to reverse climate change. A lot of countries came out with ‘net-zero’ commitments which was set by India for the year 2070. Even with all the pledges at COP26 – the planet is still set to warm by 2.4 degree Celsius by 2100 – an untenable situation.

The year 2021 was a year of extremes for India with extreme rainfall in South India, a string of cloud bursts in Uttarakhand, erratic monsoons and “weird” cyclones.

Examples of the stories that DTE had done which illustrated in graphic detail the all too palpable impact of climate change in the Northeast of India, were shared with participants.

If participants were to cover local events, for instance, in the Northeast, it is critical for a reporter to do her/his homework - study already published data and information, then visit the site

**Workshop Feedback**

“Learnt about maintaining a data diary, using software tools to visualise the data, and learning to discern the environment and climate change angle in a story. Extremely well-conducted Workshop.

**Shreya Adhikari | India Development Review**

“The Workshop helped me to understand the global impact of local stories, the need for data, and going beyond the obvious when it comes to reporting on the environment.

**Amit Kumar | EastMojo**

“The Workshop helped me in realising the importance of finding reliable sources for reporting on the environment.

**Divyasree K V | TrueCopy Think**

for a first-hand understanding; and humanise the story by talking to the affected communities.●

