



News & Recognitions

↘ **ThePrint** was awarded the prestigious International Press Institute (IPI) India Award for Excellence in Journalism, 2022, for its coverage of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Its correspondent Jyoti Yadav won a Laadli award for the story - 'She was 8 months pregnant and was 'forced' into UP Poll duty that killed 135 teachers'. The story investigated the hardships of women forced to undertake poll duty in UP.

↘ **Feminism in India's (FII)** founder Japleen Pasricha was selected for the Level Up Virtual Accelerator programme for Women by '91 Springboard' and 'Google for Startups'.

FII won 7 Laadli Media and Advertising Awards for Gender Sensitivity 2022. This was the fifth time that FII won this award.

↘ National Foundation for India partnered with **Max Maharashtra** to offer fellowships to 15 independent journalists reporting in Marathi.

Max Maharashtra will editorially supervise and exclusively publish the Marathi stories.

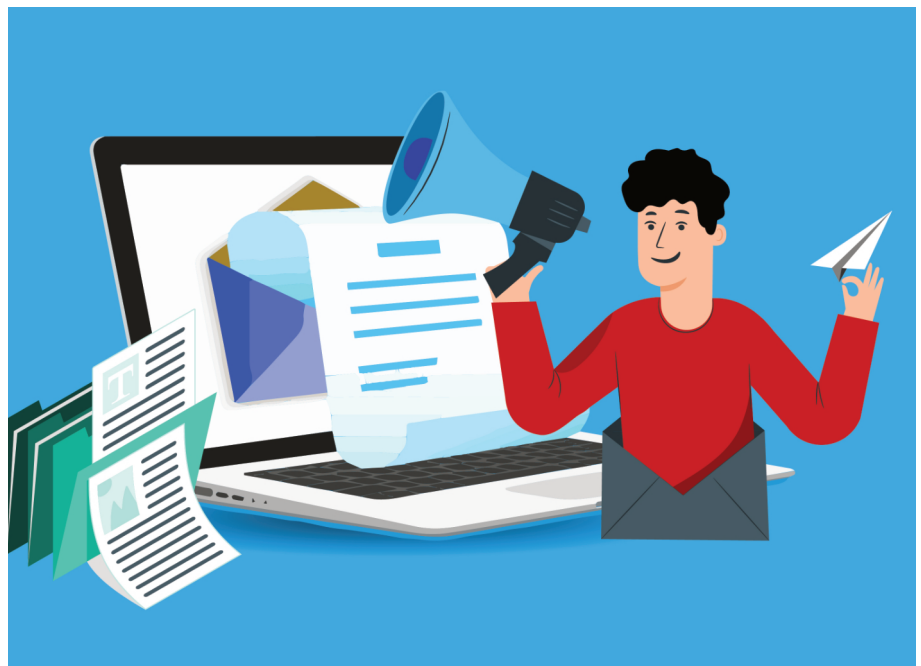
↘ **Mojo Story's** Change.org petition against the release of convicts in the Bilkis Bano case crossed 35,000 signatures, with hundreds of citizens sending their self-recorded videos, voicing their opinion and urging the judiciary to take suo moto cognisance and send the rapists back to jail.

↘ **Suno India** contributor Suryatapa Mukherjee won a Laadli Media award for her story 'Queer Kashmiris are building community amidst conflict'. Its reporter Menaka Rao also won an award for her story 'A change in abortion law puts women at the mercy of doctors again'.

↘ **TrueCopy Think's** principal correspondent Shafeeq Thamarassery received the R. Rajaram media fellowship 2022 given by Prajanya Trust for a proposed study on the discrimination faced by gender minorities.

Building audience loyalty through newsletters

More and more grantees are using this tool



Newsletters, as a tool of dissemination, have had a chequered history. They went into decline due to the sheer numbers that led readers to ignore or delete them.

However, they have in the recent past made a significant comeback. So much so that more than fifty per cent of the Foundation's grantees use it to communicate and engage with their readers. Some of the grantees - **Article 14, MediaNama, ThePrint, HW News**, etc., - even use the medium as a monetisation tool. The newsletters of

these entities help cement their loyal reader base, leading them to their exclusives regularly.

What do these newsletters do?
The newsletters allow them to send the best stories and coverage of the week directly to readers - a notification and nudge that helps focus the reader's attention.

Arti Ghargi, Associate Editor at **HW News**, notes how critical it was for them to start newsletters. It has helped them take their best stories to their audience,

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stories that the reader may have missed in the normal course. “For **HW News**, it has been a critical tool to build a community,” she says.

Supreme Court Observer (SC Observer) uses its newsletter as an effective tool wherein it curates its top stories of the week and uses interesting hooks to invite the reader to engage with it more deeply through a concise and informative desk brief. “We use an engaging story-telling style of writing to humanise the Court and its actors,” says Gauri Kashyap, SC Observer’s Associate Editor.

For **The India Forum**, which reaches out to 2,500 subscribers every week, the newsletter was a channel to promote its brand identity, other than exposing the readers to their stories. “We promoted free registration and restricted the dissemination to once a week since we did not want to overload our readers with information,” says Rammanohar Reddy, the founder of **The India Forum**.

Main Media, which covers the Seemanchal region of Bihar caters to an audience whose video consumption is higher than text. It believes that its audience has a very limited attention span. “With weekly Hindi newsletters, we want to remind our audience every Sunday, what important story they might have missed. This reminder also helps them to realise the importance of independent media and the need for the audience to support such initiatives by buying memberships or donate,” Tanzil Asif, the founder of Main Media explains.

The Probe, which is just over a year into the market, started with its weekly newsletters in its early days, which it uses to send a gist of all the important stories of the week. According to Prema Sridevi, the founder of The Probe, “Newsletters should be a reflection of our voice and what we stand for and not just be about our stories. Through our newsletters, we are planning to engage more with our audience and build our community.”

Raghu Ravi, the Head of Subscription at **Swarajya**, says that from day one, their focus was to make the newsletter one of their flagship products and it has played a key role in taking Swarajya to more

people. But he adds, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to bringing new people to discover Swarajya. “It is an ever-evolving effort, involving tweaking publishing methods plus making the newsletter attractive,” he avers.

Japleen Pasricha, Founder of **Feminism in India (FII)**, says newsletters help FII connect with an audience, which is not on social media, and who prefer a personalised connection. She adds that they are a great way to forge deeper engagement with the reader and to measure their audiences’ interests and demographics. For FII, their newsletters have been able to penetrate and sustain a global audience, some of whom they have been able to convert into paid members.

In the recent past, what has been a clear plus was the rise of newsletter platforms like Substack, Revue, SendinBlue and MailChimp, which played a significant role in making newsletters accessible and easy to consume. And, the digital media can not have afforded to board this bus late.

A bigger volume of newsletters from the entities like The Citizen, Khabar Lahariya, Feminism in India, The News Minute, Swarajya, Supreme Court Observer, The India Forum, The Probe and Live History India, among others, remain free to read. Nevertheless, what all of these newsletters seek is space in the reader’s Inbox.

Others who still do not take recourse to newsletters are either regional or hyperlocal media entities who do not have the bandwidth to make the newsletters at the frequency that is required. Or, they do not have an audience which can be weaned away from consuming content through videos or social media.

TrueCopy Think from Kerala, which is right now not in the business of newsletters says the newsletter culture is not in practice in Kerala. “The readers or audience of any kind of media, consume the content directly from the source,” Manila C Mohan, co-founder of TrueCopy Think notes.

However, it is clear that the ‘newsletter’ is steadily driving the dissemination, monetisation and branding of the IPSMF grantees.●

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↘ **Democratic Charkha’s (DC) district coordinator Fahim Khan** was awarded जनता की आवाज for his story on the rights of artisans in Bihar.

DC’S Begusarai coordinator was awarded the Begusarai ‘Reporter of the Year’ for his continuous impact-driven content.

↘ **The Citizen’s** journalist Shreya Bansal won the Jury Appreciation Citation at the Laadli Media Awards 2022 for her story ‘Indian athletes feel sexualised at every point from training to the Olympics’.

↘ In September 2022, **SC observer** started a **YouTube** channel and began posting daily video updates on the Supreme Court.

↘ **Sadhana** marked the 75th year of its existence in August 2022. To mark the occasion Sadhana published the 75th anniversary issue of Sadhana Weekly with the theme ‘Freedom has not Arrived at Our Door’.

New Grantees

Keraleeyam Masika
(www.keraleeyammasika.com)

Keraleeyam Masika started its journey 24 years ago with in-depth, and ground reported stories, on the intersection of ecology, social justice and people’s movements. It started as a Civil Society Collective and published the magazine from 1998 till March 2020, and transitioned to digital in August 2021.

Janchowk
(www.janchowk.com)

Founded by Mahendranath Mishra, a senior journalist, **Janchowk** reports on the issues of deprivation and discrimination against citizens. It focuses on the issues in the five states of Uttar Pradesh (especially Poorvanchal), Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand.





GRANTEE IMPACT

Following **IFP's** reporting on the adverse impact on the existence of Nongin, Manipur's state bird, the Manipur government said that it is working to develop 567 square km of dense forest of Razai Khullen in Ukhrul district as a 'Community Reserve'.



This **story** by **ThePrint**, which highlighted the poor financial conditions of the victims of the Mundka fire accident, was picked up by the labour unions to demand early disposal of compensation from the government.



Max Maharashtra reported from Ghondpanda village in the Palghar district of the state where 33 tribal families were struggling to earn a livelihood without an identity. Following the coverage, the district administration set up a camp in the village and provided official IDs to the members of these families.

Following **Main Bhi Bharat's** documentary on the Chadar Bodoni, an ancient form of Santhal puppetry, which is now on the verge of extinction as only a few of the families in Jharkhand and West Bengal know how to make puppets for this folk-art performance, the government officials and the team of Ranchi Doordarshan reached out to them.

Janjwar was among the first to cover the instances of police misbehaviour with women in Hailang, Uttarakhand,

which led to the incident becoming a big movement. After the publication of this report, the video led to a discourse on police misbehaviour and the impact of the construction of a dam on the livelihood of the residents.



Mojo Story's exclusive and relentless coverage of the release of Bilkis Bano's rapists and killers of her family set the agenda for the national media. Its stories created the momentum and made it to every debate on national TV channels. The story had a significant public impact with people across India joining their campaign #LetsRaiseHell.



The Probe's reporting reversed the injustice meted out to a 52-year-old resident of Wathoor village in Budgam district of Kashmir, who had lost his entire land to the government for the Srinagar Semi Ring Road project. He has now been compensated by the Kashmir administration.



The News Minute reported from Nilgiris on the non-electrification of seven tribal villages in the area, which eventually led to the villages being connected to the electricity grid.



Live History India's report on the story of Bandel, a prosperous port town near Kolkata helped raise awareness about the heritage in this small town, which led to the local



residents writing to LHI appreciating the story.

EastMojo's series of stories on the Assam labourers, who remained missing for over a fortnight from Arunachal Pradesh, persuaded Gaurav Gogoi, MP from Assam, to write to defence minister Rajnath Singh to deploy the Indian Army in the search and rescue operations of the 19 labourers.



After the decision by the then Chief Justice U U Lalit to hear 25 pending, 5-judge bench cases, on key constitutional issues, the **SC Observer** was the first to provide a detailed list of the 25 cases. The article was heavily relied upon and circulated in the legal fraternity.



TrueCopy Think documented the saga of a lone man's fight for relief for about a hundred families, who have been devastated by the ill effects of Endosulfan, which they handled for spraying years ago in the cashew plantation in Kerala's Mannarkkad. The report led to the Human Rights Commission ordering the removal of the Endosulfan stored in the plantation within two months.



Jaago Bihar - a show by **Main Media** on creating awareness among the public regarding welfare schemes featured an episode on 'Fasal Sahayata Yojana' - a scheme supporting agriculture. After the show, around 10 such meetings for awareness were organized in Pothia in Kishanganj.

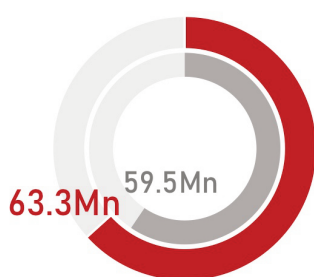


IPSMF Grantee Audience Reach

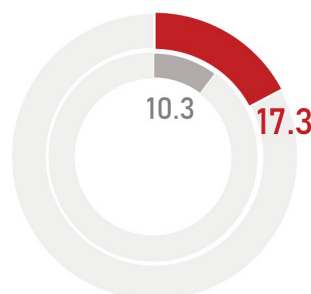
Y-o-Y Oct 2021 vs Oct 2022

Hindi & other language entities - Growth at faster pace !

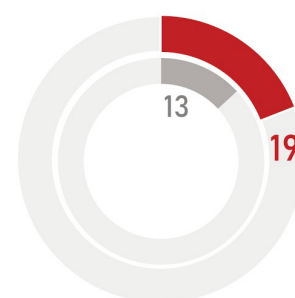
■ Oct 2022 ■ Oct 2021



English 6% ↑



Hindi 68% ↑



Languages 44% ↑

Data for 43 entities that are supported by IPSMF till date.



Busting misinformation Grantees take the lead

Fake news, misinformation and disinformation are the scourge of our times. It not only distorts and sines public discourse but, in many instances, incites disharmony, hate and bigotry. If fake news is to be arrested and eroded, the media has a huge responsibility of building sceptical citizens who ‘trust but verify’ or increasingly ‘verify and then trust’.

The very ‘basic responsibility’ of a fact-check, to build credibility and trust, and gain reader traction, has now become a clear differentiator for any media entity. It is imperative for entities to invest in credible news-sourcing, fact-checking and reporting.

Fact-checking has now taken centre stage – from being a part of the routine editorial process – every newsroom’s credo – to a specialised skill that requires both technology and judgement.

There is potential that fact-checked and trusted news will chase out fake news - like good money in the economy chases out bad money. The latest database compiled by the Reporters’ Lab at Duke University, shows that fact-checkers in Asia have grown to more than 82 from about 35 six years ago.

IPSMF has paid particular attention to support entities that are singularly dedicated to spotting and red-flagging disinformation. So also, some of the general news grantees have created specialized teams to fight disinformation and made it part of their journalism. They have assisted journalists to debunk

misinformation and prevent it from getting amplified, thus stopping them from contributing to the misinformation system.

Alt News, one of the Foundation’s early grantees, was a nebulous effort until it was supported to emerge as a full-fledged journalism entity which pioneered and set the standards for fact-checking. It has with its consistency and rigour helped to encourage an ecosystem which injected scepticism and fact-checking into the system.

Another grantee **India Spend**’s fact-checking effort through **BoomLive** also contributed significantly. They led the way for a number of sites, even general news sites, to begin their own efforts to integrate fact-checking as a significant part of their offerings.

While **Alt News** and **BoomLive** led the way in fact-checking, **YouTurn** has specialised in red-flagging and calling out fake news from Tamil Nadu. Other than **Alt News** and **YouTurn**, grantees like **Max Maharashtra**, **The News Minute**, **ThePrint** and **The Wire** have regular and established fact-checking sections.

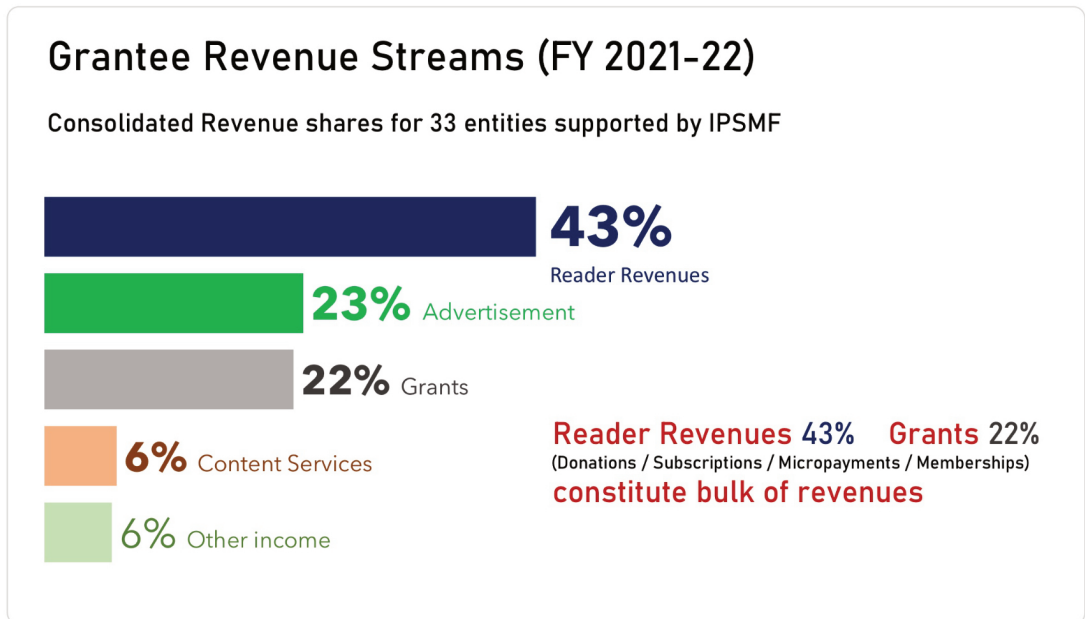
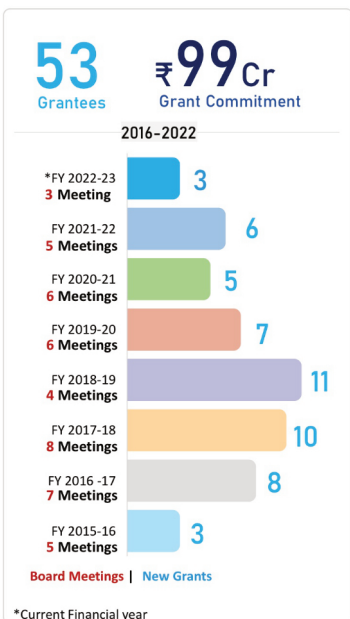
In an attempt to contribute to the fight

against fake news, IPSMF in partnership with **Alt News**, conducted a two-day virtual workshop on fact-checking, last June, for its grantees. The workshop, which saw the participation of close to 45 journalists from various digital media organisations across India was led by **Pratik Sinha**, and **Jignesh Patel**, a writer and researcher at **Alt News**.

The workshop was conducted to assist journalists to debunk misinformation and prevent it from getting amplified. The participants got hands-on training during the workshop on various aspects of identifying and managing misinformation. It also highlighted the tools they can use to verify the information or the images through different exercises.

Besides this, the workshop also covered topics like how users can stay safe while online from outside parties’ attempts to access data, as well as protect their privacy from those they have not consented to share information.

Rigorous fact-checking is now an integral part of journalism, which media organisations can ignore at their own peril, as recent events have shown.●



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