

## Awards & Recognitions

➤ **The Wire's** founding editor, Siddharth Varadarajan was conferred the Freedom of Speech Award presented by the German public news outlet Deutsche



Welle for showing "outstanding commitment to human rights and freedom of expression in the media". The Wire's Arfa Khanum Sherwani and independent journalist Rohini Mohan jointly won the prestigious Chameli Devi Jain Award for Outstanding Women Mediaperson, 2019.

➤ In April 2020, **Feminism in India's** website was selected by the United States Library of Congress for inclusion in the historic collection of Internet materials related to The Women's and Gender Studies Web Archive.



➤ **Azhimukham, Dool News, Suno India, Satyagrah and EastMojo** have been selected for Google's Journalism Emergency Relief Fund, created to support small-scale newsrooms affected by the COVID-19 crisis.



➤ International Press Institute featured the work of **Khabar Lahariya** to highlight the challenges of being a grassroots community-based reporter in India during a pandemic.



➤ **Vaishnavi Rathore, The Bastion's** Environment Associate, was selected for the One Earth Fellowship, which is aimed at providing solution-driven journalism for environmental issues.



➤ **ThePrint** doubled its page views and unique views to 35.5mn and 19mn, respectively. Its YouTube subscribers jumped to over 980k, Instagram to 328k, Facebook to 883k and Twitter to 338k followers.



➤ **'TNM Connect'**, a project targeted at engaging TNM's international readers has been selected for funding in the Asia Pacific (APAC) round of the Google Innovation Challenge, a part of the Google News Initiative.



## Grantee newsrooms: Focus on the lockdown's impact on Women

The COVID-19 pandemic, and the nationwide lockdown, has extracted a huge human cost. However, it has impacted the genders differently. The consequences have been more unequal and unfair to women. The UN warned in a recent report that the pandemic threatens to roll back the gains made in the past decades at the workplace and in the homes for women. It is, therefore, not surprising that the IPSMF grantees have sensitively and rigorously reported and captured the challenges that the women of India face during the pandemic.

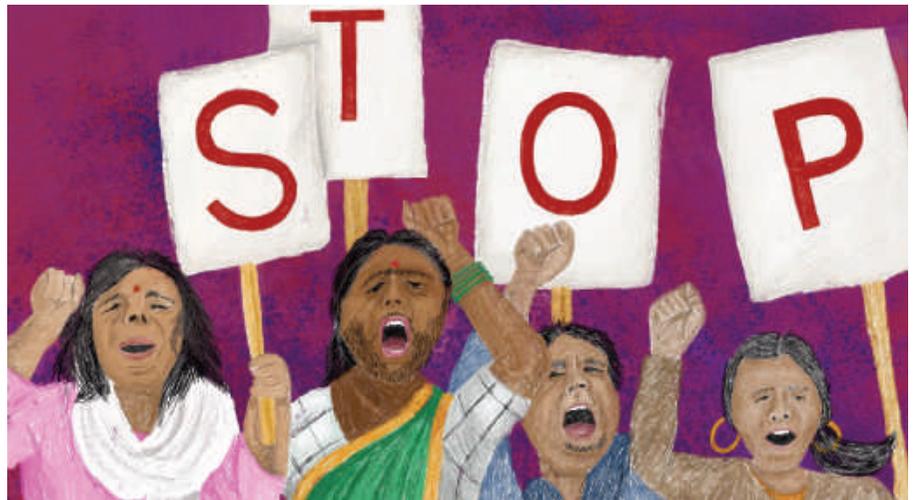


Image courtesy: **Feminism In India**

### The 'Shadow Pandemic'

The National Commission for Women has recently reported a two-fold increase in gender-based-violence distress calls on their helpline during the lockdown. This alarming increase, **Feminism in India (FII)** points out, is because the home, a 'safe place', transforms into a place of 'no escape' for women under the pressures of the lockdown. On top of this is added the all too rampant patriarchy and the "gendered division of domestic work".

The reported cases of the increase in domestic violence, the **EPW** asserts, is just the tip of the iceberg - as those from the marginalised families, for instance, the Dalits, do not even have access to the helplines.

Reporting on the increase in domestic violence in Tamil Nadu, **The Lede** speaks to the police and psychiatrists to understand how they are helping to address the issue.

### Women as labour

**EPW** highlights the various issues plaguing women farmers across 14 districts in Vidarbha, Maharashtra - cultivators, wage labourers, landless employed in poultry farming and fisheries. They are excluded from the PDS and cash transfers due to the non-operative Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) and inaccessibility to bank services - on top of the domestic abuse. They also suggest reimagining MGNREGA to include single women farmers, amongst others.

In a graphic example of the increased burden that women face, **Khabar Lahariya** speaks to women in Banda, Uttar Pradesh, whose days begin at 4 in the morning - cleaning, washing, cooking for the family - then tending to the fields and then back to the grinding cycle, day-in and day-out. Fatigued and mentally exhausted they have no one to turn to and nowhere to go.

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# Grantees weather COVID-19 Cost cuts, new revenue streams, safety measures

As the COVID-19 pandemic spread, it brought business activity to a standstill. The resulting economic downturn has led to a cut in spending on ads, hastening a trend that has gathered pace for years.

While mainstream media outlets have cut a large number of jobs, made steep pay cuts and in some cases, even shut operations, IPSMF has helped the grantees weather the tough environment for the news industry so they can emerge stronger.

Grantees have made smart cost cuts, aggressively pursued new sources of revenue and have kept their coverage going without compromising on staff safety through deliberated business continuity plans.

## Business continuity

All the grantees have tried, tested and adopted several business continuity plans during the lockdown phase to avoid closure of operations.

Most of the grantees had advised their employees to work from home even before the official nation-wide lockdown was announced. Outstation staff were allowed to reach their home towns before the official lockdown and necessary arrangements were made for safe travel.

Although some grantees reported



disturbances in workflow as their staff were working from remote areas during the first phase of lockdown, most have successfully moved to a completely virtual workplace.

Grantees increasingly used applications like Google Meet, Zoom and Slack among others, along with project management tools to efficiently handle the virtual workplaces.

## Costs

While some grantees have had to freeze new hiring, others have had to make hard changes

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This impacts the girl child too. **IndiaSpend** reports on how the pandemic is impacting adolescent girls from Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. The lockdown has hurt adolescent girls even more than other members of the family. This includes getting served smaller portions of food, being pulled out of school, being forced into child labour, facing sexual abuse or early marriages, amongst others.

## Women as Corona Warriors

All this, when women have been at the forefront of the fight against the COVID-19. As doctors, as frontline medical staff, as caregivers—and as ASHA workers. Their role as ASHA workers is the one that is especially critical in community containment of the Coronavirus. As **The Wire** reports, they are the interface between the local community and the public healthcare structure, and they are usually the first responders in a crisis.

However, when it comes to their own safety, as **Suno India** explains, they are given the short shrift, with no access to protective gear, without the stability of tenure and no insurance for their families in case of

a mishap). These inequities, and fears, **FII** says, is pushing them out of the system at a time when they are needed the most.

In their role in hospitals – as nurses, for instance – women have excelled and gone beyond their call of duty. As **Max Maharashtra** explains with a ground-reported story of the experience of a nurse in a government hospital in Mumbai.

Or, the inspiring story of Chetna Vishwakarma, a pregnant nurse who continues to render her services in a hospital in Chindwara, Madhya Pradesh in a COVID ward, unmindful of her safety, that **Janjwar** reports.

**Suno India** reports on how nurses, who are mostly women, are being asked to work long, hard hours, denied adequate PPE and are being discriminated against when they test positive for COVID-19.

As corona warriors, as labour, as the pivots of their families, the women of India have been heroes of the fight against the Coronavirus, but tragically are equally its victims. If we are to recover from COVID-19 we have to do what the UN asserts we must: “Put women and girls at the centre of efforts to recover from COVID-19”. ●

## Grantee Impact

► After **The Ken's** story on how favouritism, lack of due diligence by the government, and slow procurement were



hurting India's ventilator procurement, the Delhi government made changes in the tender process.

Even as a program to boost lending to MSMEs was being worked out by the government, banks, fintech companies and think-tank iSpirt tried to come up with an app, Sahay, to ease lending. **The Ken's** story exposed the conflict of interest of everyone involved in the process. And, the app's launch was cancelled.

► After **The Lede** broke the story of how the ICMR botched the procurement of Rapid Anti-body Test Kits and allowed dubious players to enter the supply chain,



other mainstream media publications followed up on the coverage.

► Residents of various villages in Mirzapur district, UP - daily wage labourers working as woodcutters and stone crushers - were left without access to food and essential supplies during the lockdown. After **Janjwar's** report, the administration took note and arranged for supply of free rations and food to these villages.



► Around 300-350 Maldhari (a nomadic community) families from Gujarat were stranded in Chhattisgarh due to the lockdown. **DTE** reported on how these families were being harassed by the



villagers who viewed them as corona carriers. The coverage resulted in the Chief Minister's office administration intervening and rescuing them.

**DTE** reported on how farmers were being paid lower than the Minimum Support Price for their wheat in the wheat purchasing centres in Pilibhit and Puranpur areas of Uttar Pradesh. The story led to the suspension of the erring officials. The farmers also cited the DTE story in their representation to the Union and state governments.

► **Dool News** reported that a few students from an orphanage run by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in Pathanamthitta



district of Kerala were roughed up for not participating in the institution's activities. After the story was reported, legal proceedings were initiated against the organisation.



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as they reorient their growth strategies.

For instance, **Asiaville** slashed senior executive's pay and shed some of its non-editorial staff in marketing, operations and sales roles given the deteriorating market conditions.

**Swarajya**, **EPW**, **Saptahik Sadhana** and **The Caravan**, temporarily stopped publishing their print editions, due to the unavailability of printing facilities and logistics for distribution. They also adopted a graded framework of pay cuts.

While **The Caravan** is looking to make minor pay cuts, **EPW** rationalised its salaries. **Swarajya**, protected its staff, with the leadership taking steep cuts in their remuneration. They also converted a significant portion of their print subscribers to digital.

**Revenue**

Although cost cuts can help grantees in the short term, growing revenue sustainably is the only way that newsrooms can survive. Traditionally, this has meant advertisements and sponsorship deals, which clients are now backing out of, given the tough market conditions. Even social media revenues, which should have been a bright spot due to increased news consumption, have dived due to lower ad rates. Some of the grantees are aggressively campaigning for digital subscriptions and online donations to enhance revenues.

**Swarajya** has opened up a Patreon page under its "Swarajya Guardian Project" to raise USD 30,000 a month from readers in the Indian diaspora.

**The Bastion** has been able to use its position as a credible source of news on

education to strike a content creation deal with an edtech company.

**The News Minute** started a paid membership offering to leverage the trust that it has built among its readers through rigorous reporting on news events from **South India**. It is also looking to launch **TNM Connect**, a special membership offering targeted at Indian expats around the world.

A few of the grantees are also working on content monetising through OTTs and network partnerships.

**Health & Safety**

The pandemic has posed a huge risk to journalists and media houses the world over as they pursue COVID-19 related stories. However, none of the grantees have stepped back on their coverage of the pandemic and stories around the impact on society, national resources and economy.

For on-ground reporters and staff who chose to work from the office, all the safety precautions were taken before allowing them to work. Face masks, face shields, hand gloves and sanitizers were provided to these employees for field reporting. These employees were also trained in safety practices and social distancing. Some of the grantees also arranged for regular health check-ups for their employees.

Reporters faced several obstacles during the lockdown such as reduced transport options, intermittent supply of fuel, non-reliable telephone and internet, etc. Despite these challenges, the grantees' willingness to report impactful stories has been strong and exemplary. ●

**Media Under Threat**

Overwhelmed by the pandemic, both states and the central government have been draconian in responding to critical reportage from the media, filing cases and arrests to silence news outlets and journalists.



**P V Dinesh**  
I LiveLaw

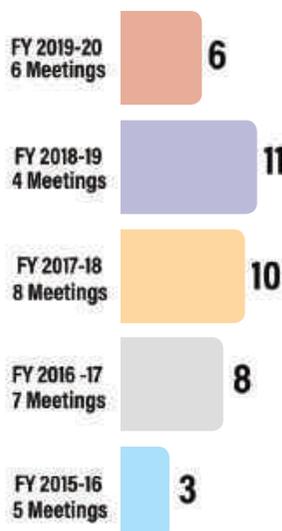
In a report titled "India: Media's Crackdown During COVID-19 Lockdown", Rights and Risks Analysis Group, a Delhi-based independent think-tank, said that 55 journalists faced arrest, registration of FIRs, summons or show causes notices, threats for their reportage on the COVID-19 lockdown.

One of the Foundation's grantees was part of that list. In March, **The Wire** reported a story critical of the UP government's permission for a religious gathering, despite being advised against it. An FIR was filed, naming **The Wire** and its founding editor Siddharth Varadarajan for "creating or promoting enmity, hatred or ill-will between classes" and "disobedience to order duly promulgated by a public servant".

On another note pertaining to the independence of media, the Bar Council of India (BCI) passed a resolution against **Live Law** taking umbrage at a critical piece on BCI Chairperson, Manan Kumar Mishra. The article criticised Mishra for his decisions as a chairperson of the Council and for using the office for political purposes.

**Board Meetings**

**New Grants**



**38**  
Grantees  
**₹ 64 Cr**  
Grant commitment

**Grantees across India**





# Coverage of custodial killings in Tamil Nadu Grantees add context. Score over mainstream media

It has been a long lament that the mainstream media does not have the attention span to cover important events beyond the immediate vicinity of their geographies and are prone to report on critical developments as mere ‘events’. This is where independent media has stepped in.

The custodial killings of Jayaraj and Bennix is one such incident where the grantees were able to fill in the gaps left by the mainstream media and file hard, ground-reported, stories.

Jayaraj and Bennix, a father and son duo, were arrested on June 19 by the police in Sathankulam town near Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu. After being beaten up and tortured in the police station, both men died in custody.

The Foundation’s grantees **The Lede** and **The News Minute**, played a stellar role in sensitively and fearlessly covering the incident through their ground-reportage.

The local and national mainstream media coverage of the incident revolved around the immediate details of the custodial killings without adequate focus on the underlying structural issues. **The Lede** filed a detailed, ground-reported story that highlighted entrenched sectarianism in the community and police administration.

**The Lede’s** report was able to draw out how the policemen involved in the case were motivated by casteism and that their actions were part of a pattern of police impunity. **The Lede** followed this up with interviews with current and retired senior police officers who were able to shed light on how the administration is working to fix



Image courtesy: **Feminism In India**

structural problems in policing.

**The News Minute’s** analysis of the CCTV footage of Jayaraj and Bennix’s arrests was key in exposing how the police had falsely claimed that the victim’s injuries occurred before their arrest. The grantee also managed to secure an exclusive interview with a female cop who gave witness to the police torture of Jeyaraj and Benicks while in custody.

The Foundation’s grantees also published incisive analyses on the legal and social aspects of the killings to help readers understand the shortcomings of different social and state institutions.

Legal news website **Live Law** was able to cite legal precedent to analyse the legal aspects of the case to point out failures in the lower judiciary. According to **Live Law’s** analysis, the magistrate handling the case clearly failed to uphold the personal liberty of the accused and overlooked important facts such as the lack of criminal antecedents and the fact that the duo were only accused of minor offences.

**Feminism in India** highlighted how popular culture and mainstream films have normalised police brutality by making heroes out of policemen who commit brutality in the name of extra judicial justice.

The grantee raised the issue of how sexual violence against men by law enforcement and security forces in Kashmir and the parts of the North-East under the AFSPA is used to establish dominance, a trait fundamental to toxic, conventional masculinity.

**Asiaville Tamil’s** vox pop captured reactions from a number of people who doubt that there would be any serious change in policing. Most of the citizens interviewed said that unless strict action was taken and drastic remedial measures instituted, there would be no change on the ground.

Subsequently, on June 30th, after many twists and turns, including the strong intervention of the Madras High Court, the CBI took over the case for investigation. ●

More Grantees Move Content Behind Paywalls Subscription Plans				
Grantee	Access to	Quarterly	Half yearly	One year
The Caravan	E-magazine content + Digital only content + Archives.	-	-	₹ 1,200
Swarajya	E-magazine content+ Digital content. Free access to 3 stories a week.	₹ 299	₹ 549	₹ 999
Down To Earth	E-magazine + Digital content.	-	-	₹ 400
Economic & Political Weekly	E-Magazine + Archival content (from Volume 1, 1966).	₹ 826	-	₹ 2,360 \$ 150
Live Law	Archives + Petition/ Judgement copies. 30 days content is free.	-	₹ 599	₹ 999
Khabar Lahariya	Access to the special series ‘Sound Fury & 4G’. Rest of content free access.	₹ 99	₹ 250	₹ 999
The Ken India Edition	India edition content + Archives from India edition.	₹ 2,065	-	₹ 3,245
South East Asia Edition	Southeast Asia content + Archives SE Asia edition.	₹ 3,540	-	₹ 8,496
The News Minute	Ad-free content + Special weekly newsletter + Digital community forum + Events and webinars. Website content free access.	-	₹ 649	₹ 999

## New Grantees

**Kashmir Observer** ([www.kashmirobserver.net](http://www.kashmirobserver.net))

Kashmir Observer is a 22-year-old publication which focuses on issues and events in Kashmir. Over the years, its editorial independence and balance has resulted in a loyal readership and has withstood the many challenges and tribulations that the media in Kashmir has faced. It was one of the first-movers in adopting digital, since 1998, and is now bolstering its online offering, with an expanded and deep-reported coverage of critical and real issues in Kashmir.

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**Imphal Free Press** ([www.ifp.co.in](http://www.ifp.co.in))

Imphal Free Press (IFP) is a leading publication in Manipur, since 1996. It covers the issues and events in Manipur, and the Northeast, with an independent and critical eye. IFP has a long legacy of fiercely independent and impactful journalism. It is now expanding its reach through the online medium focusing on newer and younger audiences.

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