



Journalist Fellowship Paper

Reaching rural India: A practical guide for digital video creators

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Introduction

India is in the midst of a digital video revolution that is reshaping how people in rural areas access, create, and engage with news.

By 2026, India will have over [a billion internet users](#), and this growth isn't centred in Delhi, Mumbai, or Chennai.¹ Currently, [488 million rural Indians](#) have access to the internet – more than half of all users in the country.² With [affordable smartphones](#), voice search in Indic languages, and some of the cheapest data prices in the world, millions of first-time users are consuming news, entertainment, and information on their own terms, in their own languages.³

In rural areas, where nearly [65%](#) of India's population lives, digital media is fast becoming the primary way people engage with the world.⁴ Yet old habits persist. Coverage still too often comes from urban centres, told through the lens of [upper-caste](#), upper-class, male-dominated newsrooms.⁵ The result? Stories that miss the mark, and journalism that fails to include – or worse, reinforces exclusion.

If we replicate the blind spots of legacy media in these new formats, we will lose the trust of the very audiences we claim to serve. Digital tools can be a force for inclusion, but only if we use them that way.

¹ George, V., 2025. India will have 1bn internet users by this fiscal year: Jyotiraditya Scindia. The Hindu. [online] 22 June. Available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-will-have-1bn-internet-users-by-this-fiscal-year-jyotiraditya-scindia/article69637704.ece> [Accessed 23 June 2025].

² Kantar & Jamai (2024). Internet in India 2024, p. 4. Kantar & Internet and Mobile Association of India. Available at: https://www.iamai.in/sites/default/files/research/Kantar_%20IAMAI%20report_2024_.pdf [Accessed 6 Mar. 2025].

³ Waghmare, A., 2024. Access to phones and the internet. Data For India. [online] Published 29 February; updated 28 March 2025. Available at: <https://www.dataforindia.com/comm-tech/#lftntref14> [Accessed 23 June 2025].

⁴ The Economic Survey of India 2022-23, 2024. Press Information Bureau's release. Available at: <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1894901> [Accessed 19 December 2024].

⁵ Oxfam India & Newslaundry. (2022). Who tells our stories matters: Representation of marginalized caste groups in Indian media. Oxfam India & Newslaundry. Available at: <https://www.oxfamindia.org/knowledgehub/workingpaper/who-tells-our-stories-matters-representation-marginalised-caste-groups-indian-newsrooms> [Accessed 8 Mar. 2025].

Why does this matter to me?

I was born and raised in a small village in Maharashtra in the 1990s. We rarely saw a newspaper. Our connection to the wider world came from a shared radio, delivering cricket commentary, capital news bulletins, and Bollywood tunes. When 24/7 cable news finally arrived, it was always about somewhere else – never us.

Today, the people in my village watch daily news videos on their phones. They search in their own languages, using voice commands made possible by Google and others. They're ready to watch, but are we ready to deliver?

The numbers tell one story: as of March 2024, [95%](#) of Indian villages had mobile internet access with at least 4G.⁶ By the end of 2026, India is expected to reach over a billion internet users, most of them rural.⁷ Studies show that interest in online news is [26% higher in rural India](#) than in cities.^{8, 9} Rural Indians are also spending more on non-food items — making them an increasingly attractive market for advertisers.¹⁰

But the real story is about impact. When you grow up without regular access to news, you don't take it for granted. You measure it by what it changes – what it

⁶ Press Information Bureau, India, 2024. Press Release. Available at:

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2040566> [Accessed 19 December 2024]

⁷ The Hindu, 2025. India will have 1 billion Internet users by this fiscal: Jyotiraditya Scindia. [online] 21 June. Available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-will-have-1bn-internet-users-by-this-fiscal-year-jyotiraditya-scindia/article69637704.ece> [Accessed 22 June 2025].

⁸ Outlook Business, 2023. Rural India more interested in digital news consumption than urban India, says Kantar-Google report. [online] Available at: <https://www.outlookbusiness.com/news/rural-india-more-interested-in-digital-news-consumption-than-urban-india-says-kantar-google-report-news-283734> [Accessed 14 Jan. 2025].

⁹ The Economic Times, 2025. India's internet user base to surpass 900 million by 2025, driven by rural growth: Report. [online] Available at: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-news/indias-internet-user-base-to-surpass-900-million-by-2025-driven-by-rural-growth-report/articleshow/117304976.cms> [Accessed 20 Jan. 2025].

¹⁰ Reuters. (2024). India household spending on non-food items rises as urban-rural gap narrows. Reuters. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/india/india-household-spending-non-food-items-rises-urban-rural-gap-narrows-2024-12-27> [Accessed 1 Mar. 2025].

solves, reveals, or makes possible. Rural audiences want stories that matter. They want to see themselves reflected accurately, fairly, and without pity.

That's why digital video storytelling holds such promise. It defies the legacy of [corporatisation](#).¹¹ It can be low-cost. It can be fast. And most importantly, it can be local. This project is rooted in that belief.

But to understand what impactful digital video news reporting might look like today, we must first understand what language, lens, and format legacy news outlets have used to tell rural stories in the past.

During my time at the Reuters Institute, I interviewed 15 professionals working in rural video journalism: reporters, editors, freelancers, social media producers, and founders. I reviewed research, analysed content, and reflected on my own journey – from a boy in a village with a radio to a video journalist at BBC News Marathi.

What follows is a practical guide for anyone creating digital video in and about rural India:

- Six essential steps for telling better stories.
- Strategies for discovery, planning, fieldwork, editing, publishing, and audience engagement.
- Insights into the new ecosystem of rural content — and how to be part of it.

This is not just a technical how-to. It's a call to rethink how rural stories are told, who gets to tell them, and what power those stories can hold.

My goal is to support small newsrooms, early-career journalists, freelancers, social-media influencers, and media students creating in local languages — helping them navigate the obstacles and seize the opportunities of this moment.

¹¹ Varadarajan, S. (2016) 'The corporatisation of the Indian media has had a negative impact on the quality of journalism over the last two decades' – Siddharth Varadarajan. South Asia@LSE, 22 April. Available at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2016/04/22/the-corporatisation-of-the-indian-media-has-had-a-negative-impact-on-the-quality-of-journalism-over-the-last-two-decades-siddharth-varadarajan> (Accessed: 8 March 2025).

Chapter 1: Legacy media's rural coverage shortcomings

Before we unpack *why* rural communities have felt underrepresented by Indian news outlets, let's first look at *how* they have been represented in the past.

It is [well documented](#) that rural coverage has a distinct pattern of crisis-driven stories following catastrophic news events: negative social narratives about crime, disasters, poverty, and pestilence tend to dominate legacy media's agenda.¹²

We can all remember stories of hooch tragedies, landslides, floods, droughts, man-animal conflicts, and Maoist attacks. But when was the last time you saw a detailed report in a legacy news outlet about a rural poet, painter, or artist? Or the first day of school in a village, a day in the life of a woman farmer, or innovative rural entrepreneurship? Stories of solutions and collaboration exist, and are of interest and use to rural communities, but not to the urban editors assigning column inches who favour sensationalism over [substantive analysis](#).¹³

As a result, urban audiences seldom grasp the true nature of the development challenges these communities face. There is one notable exception: during the months leading up to elections, when campaigning intensifies, rural issues receive a rare moment of nuanced attention. But once the ballots are cast, most journalists forget the roads that lead to villages.

The language and lens of existing rural reporting needs urgent surgery. We must do more to reflect the complexities of caste, gender, religion, power structures and the other socioeconomic cleavages of rural set-up.

Let's look at the historical relationship between rural India and the three-mainstream media: newspapers, radio, and television.

¹² Murthy, C. S. H. N., June 2015. "Issues of Rural Development in Mainstream Journalism: Exploring New Strategies for Media Intervention." doi: 10.5958/0976-2442.2015.00003.8.

¹³ Newslaundry, 2021. Reclaiming the narrative: What farmer protests and Trolley Times tell us about the media's systemic failure. Available at: <https://www.newslaundry.com/2021/01/15/reclaiming-the-narrative-what-farmer-protests-and-trolley-times-tell-us-about-the-medias-systemic-failure> [Accessed 12 Jan. 2025].

Newspapers

Newspaper distribution and readership in Indian villages has been stilted since the first copies rolled off a hot press, and rural news production also remains low.¹⁴ While efforts to expand regional-language editions initially boosted readership, there was a sharp decline in circulation during the pandemic that has continued to affect readership.^{15, 16}

While improvements have been made in reach, there are still challenges around providing in-depth and informed coverage. It is difficult to find a full-time rural correspondent in most Indian newsrooms, and regular editorials dedicated to rural development are largely absent from opinion pages.¹⁷ As a result, rural India has remained largely out of sight and out of mind in media discourse.

In defence of the printed press, the villagers I grew up with rarely bought the newspaper due to a combination of low literacy rates and economic stress. When a paper produced in the city has further to travel, the cost of distribution is hard to justify for such low returns. Furthermore, according to these media houses, producing in-depth ground reports from rural India is a costly affair.

Radio

Radios were once quite popular in rural India.¹⁸ They were used for listening to All India Radio news, Bollywood melodies, cricket commentary, and phone-in programmes on health, education, farming, and so on.

There is a long tradition of community radio in India, which played an important role in amplifying marginalised voices, particularly those of rural populations, indigenous communities, women, and youth.

¹⁴ Mudgal, V., 2011. Rural coverage in the Hindi and English dailies. *Economic and Political Weekly*, pp.92-97.

¹⁵ Statista. (2018) Readership share of daily newspapers across rural India in 2014 and 2017. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/921423/india-daily-newspaper-readership-share-in-rural-areas/> (Accessed: 21 February 2025).

¹⁶ Ninan, S. 2021. Covid-19 Accelerates the Transformation of India's Newspaper Industry. *The India Forum*. Available at: <https://www.theindiaforum.in/article/covid-hastens-transformation-india-s-newspapers-advertising-collapses-and-digitisation-picks> (Accessed 21 February 2025).

¹⁷ See footnote 12

¹⁸ Sen, B., 2014. A new kind of radio: FM broadcasting in India. *Media, Culture & Society*, 36(8), pp.1084-1099.

Crucially, community radio stations operate in regional dialects and reach audiences often under-served by other legacy media. Community radio plays an important role in social development and, in disaster-prone areas, they provide early warnings and emergency updates. They also help coordinate relief efforts.

Despite all of that enormous potential, community radio in India is not allowed to make or broadcast their own news or current affairs. Government policy – citing national security and public order concerns – restrict radio news production to government-owned stations like All India Radio.

Television

Television first arrived in India in late 1959 with a single public service broadcaster, Doordarshan. The early impact of TV on rural India was limited by several factors:

- For the first 15 years, broadcasting was limited to seven Indian cities because of a lack of terrestrial broadcasting infrastructure.¹⁹
- Additionally, rural areas, including my village, faced inconsistent electricity supply and, in later years, cable connectivity – making uninterrupted television viewing difficult.
- Many rural households could not afford televisions or cable subscriptions, although some villages – like my own – solved this by hosting large group viewings of popular entertainment shows or important news programmes.
- Initially, most programmes were in English or Hindi. Over time, regional-language news channels increased.

In October 2003, India launched Direct-to-Home (DTH) television services via satellite. This helped to increase the TV viewership in rural regions.²⁰ But topics of interest and relevance to rural communities – such as healthcare, education, electricity and water supply, unemployment, gender violence, farming distress, and caste atrocities – were seldom prioritised in TV news coverage.²¹

¹⁹ Times of India (2012) 'Until 1975, only 7 Indian cities were covered by TV'. The Times of India, 11 November. Available at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/until-1975-only-7-indian-cities-were-covered-by-tv/articleshow/17188036.cms> (Accessed: 20 February 2025).

²⁰ Times of India, 2015. More DTH dishes sprouting across rural India than antennas. Times of India. Available at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/more-dth-dishes-sprouting-across-rural-india-than-antennas/articleshow/47195697.cms> [Accessed 20 February 2025].

²¹ Centre for Media Studies (CMS), 2014. Whose Story Is It? Available at: <https://ruralindiaonline.org/en/articles/whose-story-is-it> [Accessed 15 January 2025].

TV media faced challenges meeting these audience needs – primarily, financial constraints. Government regulation capped subscription fees, forcing channels to rely heavily on advertising. (The caps were [removed](#) in July 2024.²²)

A lack of rural viewership data until 2015 compounded this issue. The Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) only began tracking rural viewership in 2015 – and found a substantial audience share – but this data was unavailable for years. Experts say it [contributed](#) to the underrepresentation of rural issues on news TV channels because advertising (hence programming) targeted data-ready urban interests before 2015.²³

It's not legacy news; it's corporate news

P. Sainath, former Rural Affairs Editor of *The Hindu* newspaper and the founder of the People's Archive of Rural India (PARI), believes the [significant underrepresentation](#) of rural issues and communities in mainstream media has been driven by the corporatisation and concentration of media ownership in India.²⁴

“A lot of what we call journalism is just stenography for the powerful,” he said in the documentary about farmer suicides, *Nero's Guests*. He argues that legacy media in India should be referred to as “corporate media”.

“You don't even have a beat called 'Rural'. [...] They have to die in sufficiently large numbers to make news.”

The corporatisation of media, he says, has led to a focus on profit maximisation – and the return on investment in the costly coverage of distant villages pushes representation to the sidelines with [devastating consequences](#).²⁵

22 Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). (2024). TRAI issues amendments to regulatory framework for broadcasting and cable services. Available at:

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2031606> (Accessed February 28, 2025).

23 The Economic Times, 2017. Rural India not in the dark when it comes to watching TV. [online] Available at: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/rural-india-not-in-the-dark-when-it-comes-to-watching-tv/articleshow/57289872.cms> [Accessed 15 January 2025].

24 Sainath, P. (2011). Palagummi Sainath on Indian Media. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWBkthgyrIY> [Accessed 1 March 2025].

25 Shah, A. and Aneez, Z. (2018) 'Unsettling the Coverage: A study of the Indian media's reportage on farmer protests reveals a distorted picture of the agrarian crisis', *The Caravan*. Available at: <https://caravanmagazine.in/perspectives/indian-media-unsettling-coverage-2017-farmer-protests> (Accessed: 26 February 2025).

Chapter 2: Whose stories are we telling?

The rural coverage shortcomings discussed in the previous section raise a broader question: whose voices are being heard, and whose perspectives shape our understanding of the world? In a democracy, this is the question we must ask with every news story – and not just those about rural India.

When peaceful protesters defending their rights far from power corridors struggle to secure coverage, it weakens not just their cause but democracy itself. Skewed representation can have serious consequences for [policymaking](#), public perception, and election verdicts.²⁶

When communication has historically reinforced existing power structures, we must ask ourselves: whose stories are we telling, and from whose lens are we telling them? If you want to create content that is useful and relevant to rural audiences you need to think about more than amplifying the voices of the oppressed – you need to think about *shifting power dynamics*.

Father of the Indian Constitution Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, the social reformer and advocate for farmers' rights, both emphasised the importance of self-representation for historically oppressed communities.

“Formal and informal communication in India has long reflected selective inclusion and exclusion, a carefully constructed mechanism of participation and silencing,” said [Radheshyam Jadhav](#), senior deputy editor at English-language newspaper *The Hindu BusinessLine*, where he covers rural issues extensively.

“Formal and informal communication channels serve not merely as conduits of information but as instruments of power, reinforcing hierarchies ingrained in caste, creed, gender, and class.”

According to Jadhav, these structures are not incidental; they are embedded in the very fabric of societal values, moral codes, and ethical norms, shaping and sustaining the rhythms of dominance and subjugation. In such a paradigm, India's

26 Besley, T., & Burgess, R. (2002). The Political Economy of Government Responsiveness: Theory and Evidence from India. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 117(4), 1415–1451.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4132482>

rural and tribal communities exist in a space of sporadic visibility – acknowledged only when they serve the interests of the dominant discourse.

This project argues that the digital revolution, despite its limitations and controls, brings a rupture to that entrenched structure. It offers the possibility – *not the guarantee* – of an alternative communicative order where narratives are not filtered through the lens of dominant institutions.

While the new potential for marginalised voices to narrate their realities in a digital age is immense, access to technology alone does not equate to emancipation. Without the technical skills and a redefining of our own storytelling and production values, the old paradigms will extend to digital video too.

“To truly engage with marginalised communities through media production is to transcend conventional paradigms of representation. It demands an ethical, inclusive, and transformative approach in media production,” Jadhav told me.

“Authentic storytelling is not an act of extraction but of *co-creation*, rooted in deep engagement with the social and economic realities of those whose voices have long been subdued.

“Trust must precede the lens, and understanding must precede the narrative. This is not a task of giving voice to the voiceless, for they have always possessed voices; rather, it is the dismantling of structures that have long refused to listen.”

A focus on ethical storytelling means we must shift from narratives of victimization to those of empowerment, from distant observation to intimate participation. Our storytelling must embrace the cadence of local languages and cultural forms, allowing stories to emerge not as commodities but as lived experiences.

Only *then* can media production move beyond its traditional role as an enforcer of dominant ideologies and become a medium of liberation.

Who gets it right?

It is important to say that several digital platforms *are* offering good rural-specific video content. These include [Video Volunteers](#), [People's Archive of Rural India](#), [Khabar Lahariya](#), [Shades of Rural India](#), [News Potli](#), [Gaon Connection](#), [101 Reporters](#), [Newsreel Asia](#), [Ground Report](#), [Village Square](#), and [BBC News Marathi](#) among others. Apart from rural media start-ups, there are a significant number of influencers creating rural content. There's no need for a government license or a huge budget to launch content and reach an audience. The next chapters will explain how.

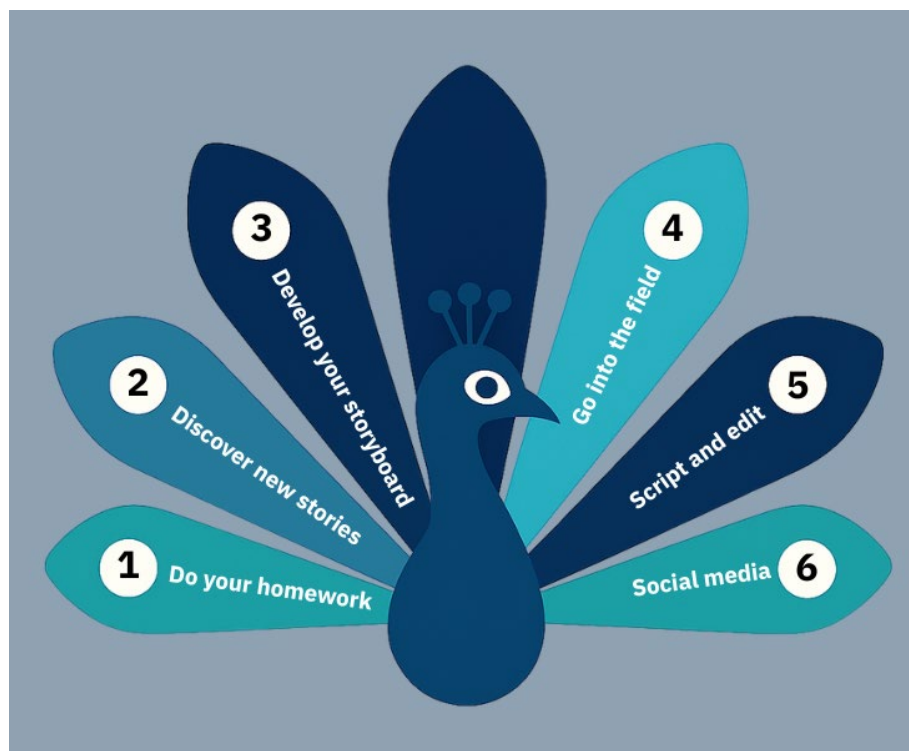
Chapter 3: The six-step checklist to effective digital video storytelling

Since 2017, working at BBC News Marathi's video desk, I've seen how digital video storytelling offers a new and accessible medium for rural news creation and consumption.

My work at BBC News Marathi involves identifying video story ideas, pitching to the editor, and then developing a storyboard for approved ideas before heading to the field. I shoot my reports using an iPhone and edit entirely on Final Cut Pro.

After undergoing editorial checks, I am then involved in publishing the final video report on digital platforms. I check audience metrics too, because the journey of a digital video doesn't end with publication; analysing audience engagement data can yield important insights.

I am fortunate that the BBC's newsroom has allowed me to work across this entire spectrum. That personal experience, coupled with expert interviews and analysis of existing content, has helped me shape a six-step checklist for effective digital video storytelling for rural India's issues.



A peacock doesn't whisper: Six steps to rural storytelling that cuts through the noise

Step one: Do your homework

Before anything, we must begin by doing the work that was described in Chapter 2. This involves defining the audience you want to reach, understanding their needs, and ensuring you are aware of their agency and your unconscious biases.

Identify the audience

Are you taking the usual firehose approach to storytelling – blasting content in every direction in the hope of reaching the widest possible audience – or do you truly understand the age, language, culture, interests, and challenges of the specific community you aim to serve? [Prashant Pawar](#) is a veteran journalist with over two decades of experience in Marathi language media. Since 2021, he has been running [BaiManus](#), an acclaimed Marathi digital news platform based in Maharashtra, India.

“In the first couple of years, BaiManus covered a wide range of issues, but we struggled to gain significant attention or viewership,” he said. “Later, we began analysing our audience data, identifying engagement patterns, and understanding which stories resonated most. This insight helped us strategically reallocate resources and refine our content approach.”

Pawar advocates for understanding our audience’s taste in terms of their belonging, community, and personal stories. “We should focus more on ‘new digital news consumers’ – those who now access news due to cheap internet, affordable smartphones, and YouTube in local languages. These changes in India have made on-demand news consumption possible. They are helping [BaiManus] expand our audience, too.”

American journalism professor [Jeff Jarvis](#) has been exploring the idea of a “journalism of belonging”: an approach that emphasises fostering a sense of community and connection in news media. Jarvis described the principles of a more personalised and community-driven approach to journalism during a seminar at the Reuters Institute, saying:

- Our journalism should acknowledge people’s unique identities and communities,
- treat audiences as individuals rather than a homogeneous group,
- reflect the lived experiences of individuals and their communities to foster a deeper connection,
- and encourage diverse voices and meaningful conversations.

In other words: instead of trying to reach everyone with the same content, our stories should focus on specific audiences who care deeply about topics. When people feel [fairly represented](#), they are more likely to rely on your news reports.²⁷

Using a similar approach, we produced a video report at [BBC News India](#) and [BBC News Marathi](#) on how Dalit families in Maharashtra have cultivated food traditions despite poverty and discrimination. Rather than a rote story on deprivation and caste-based food access, which is also important, we shifted the lens to highlight how these communities had adapted.

Drawing from Dalit writer Shahu Patole's book, *Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada*, we explored the survival and resilience embedded in their food practices. Instead of just emphasizing economic hardships, we showcased how Dalit communities created nutritious meals with limited resources, using millets like *jowar* and *bajra*, and reclaiming foods like beef and wild greens.

This approach emphasised their agency, creativity, and cultural identity, and it resonated with both the Dalit community and people interested in cuisine.

What is demand-driven storytelling?

Alan Soon and Rishad Patel are the co-founders of Splice Media, a Singapore-based consultancy focused on building sustainable media businesses. Once you know who your audience is, Soon and Patel advocate for understanding their demands, with a focus on addressing their specific needs and creating value for them.

Actively engage with audiences to understand their needs. Ask people what they want. Listen to them. Act on the feedback. Repeat. The audience-centric approach involves a constant process of listening to users, acting on feedback, and refining offerings. "A smart shopkeeper doesn't stock her shelves randomly," Soon explained. "She thinks carefully about what her customers want and need. First, she studies the local market. She understands consumer demands. Then, she selects products accordingly. If she doesn't follow this approach, she may lose customers and face financial loss. Journalists should do the same when creating audience-centred stories. They must understand what rural audiences need. They should

²⁷ Jarvis, J., 2024. A journalism of belief and belonging. [online] BuzzMachine. Available at: <https://buzzmachine.com/2024/01/03/a-journalism-of-belief-and-belonging> [Accessed 22 February 2025].

identify the issues that matter most. They must also address the questions people are struggling with.”

Soon also advocates for [using AI](#) to better understand the demand side of journalism. AI presents a great opportunity to better understand why people want certain things and what they expect from us.²⁸

Awareness of audience agency and unconscious bias

Once you’ve identified your rural audience segment and begun listening to their needs, the next part of this homework is to consider both their agency and your own unconscious bias.

Award-winning journalist Prajakta Dhulap, who oversees ground reports for BBC News Marathi, emphasises the significance of understanding audience agency in journalism. This approach, she said, enables reporters to:

- gain insights into rural India’s complex social, economic, gender, caste, and cultural dynamics,
- reflect the true picture of rural communities, especially those who may be unaware of their agency,
- provide context to stories that goes beyond surface-level reporting.

Let’s say you want to cover government hospitals’ poor conditions in rural areas. You’ll find that only a particular type of person visits these hospitals – out of helplessness and economic hardship. To report on them and the larger public health fiasco, we should explore where these patients come from, what resources they have, and the power structures at play – such as caste, gender, social capital, power dynamics and cultural factors.

This approach reveals otherwise unseen contributing factors to the situation rather than merely focusing on the surface issues that persist despite government efforts. Government data and paperwork may suggest a different truth that does not accurately reflect the reality faced by vulnerable people.

²⁸ Vinogradova, I. (2024) Ilona Vinogradova's interview with Alan Soon, Co-founder of Singapore-based Splice Media [YouTube video]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQUiolruzs> (Accessed: 9 March 2025).

In today's digital landscape, audiences are no longer passive recipients of news. Social media platforms have given people the power to interpret, respond to, and challenge the narratives they encounter. If we recognise this agency, and factor it into how we report, we can invite richer, more authentic forms of engagement.

But audience agency is only one side of the equation. The other is self-awareness.

Abhijeet Kamble, editor of BBC News Marathi, told me India's legacy media leadership has long been dominated by urban, upper-caste males. That lack of diversity, he said, directly influences the stories that get told – and the ones that don't.

To counter this, Kamble believes individual journalists must take responsibility for self-reflection, but newsroom leaders have a role too. They can:

- encourage journalists to acknowledge their biases,
- understand how those biases affect story selection, interviews, and reporting,
- offer regular workshops on representation and bias,
- seek diverse perspectives and voices in the field, and
- actively recruit talent from different backgrounds to broaden collective insight.

Over the past seven years, I've learned that building this kind of awareness – of both your audience and yourself – is not a one-time deal. It's an ongoing process of exploration, learning, and unlearning. But when done well, it transforms how we see the communities we report on, and moves us away from merely capturing isolated events towards stories that resonate.

Step two: Discover new stories

Once you begin regularly doing the homework described above, you'll start viewing rural issues through a different lens and uncover a broader range of untold stories.

In India, rural reporting is largely dominated by agriculture-related stories. It's an important sector, but we often lose sight of other critical issues in the process. Make it your aim to discover diverse topics from the countryside.

As of 2021, approximately 65% of India's population resides in rural areas.²⁹ These millions of people are not a monolith; they are individuals with a wide range of languages, cuisines, cultures, festivals, folk songs, and folk art. These communities are also hotbeds of local-level innovations.

Rural India is probably best known for farming crises exacerbated by climate change, high rates of gender violence, and being the deadliest society as far as caste violence is concerned. Corruption is prevalent in the everyday lives of people in rural areas.

But there are various ways to uncover stories on the above issues with a human angle. After consulting with several media professionals, here is a list of avenues to begin exploring.

Read local newspapers

Reporters at local newspapers in vernacular languages are the first brokers of news from district and block levels. We should consider their reports our "daily briefings".

Parth MN is an award-winning independent journalist based in Mumbai. Since 2014, he has been covering rural India for multiple publications, including the People's Archive of Rural India. He highly recommends this approach.

"I regularly read local-language newspapers to discover underreported stories," he said. "Often, local publications cover important issues but are constrained by word limits. [...] Many of these stories have the potential to be expanded into in-depth ground reports. I keep a close watch on what local journalists are reporting, identifying stories that deserve a broader and more detailed narrative."

²⁹ Press Information Bureau (PIB), 2023. Economic Survey highlights thrust on rural development. [press release] 31 January 2023. Available at:

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1894901> [Accessed 27 February 2025].

I follow a similar approach and regularly read local newspapers. In December 2023, I came across a story in the Marathi language newspaper *Agrowon*, about the hardships faced by small landholding farmers in Maharashtra. Due to adverse weather conditions, many were being forced to leave their farms and work as labourers in the cities.

Unpredictable climate patterns – excessive rainfall, hailstorms, persistent rains, and pest infestations – had significantly reduced crop yields over the past two years. This had severely impacted both farmers and agricultural labourers, compelling many from Vidarbha, Marathwada, and other regions to migrate to Pune and Mumbai in search of work.

As the drought worsened, I knew many more would be struggling to find a wage at labour hubs in Maharashtra's metro cities. This led to a detailed [video report](#) on their living conditions and violations of labour rights.

Listen, listen, listen

Journalists must be willing to engage in person-to-person conversations to build meaningful relationships with rural communities. Sankriti Talwar is an independent journalist covering rural issues in northern India. “When I’m in the field, I keep my ears to the ground, like a fly on the wall. I stay present, attentive, ask relevant questions, and simply listen. At the same time, I respect their boundaries.”

Small nuggets of information may yield interesting avenues for investigation, she said. “For example, in a village in Punjab, I was interacting with a labour union member. He told me that the livelihoods of an estimated 1.5 million farm workers in the state are at risk. The main reason was the increasing adoption of mechanised rice seeding. I noted it down and began my research, which eventually led to a detailed piece for *The Migration Story*.”

Immerse yourself in the rural community. Get out of your office (or home office) and talk to people. The more we listen to people, the more exclusive stories we uncover. It also helps us avoid the pitfalls of parachute journalism.

Remember that the rural world has multiple stakeholders: both women and men farmers, farm labourers, artisans, craftsman, young people, NGOs, government officials and so on. Regular follow-ups with these communities serve two key purposes: they help you build trusted networks and foster long-term credibility with your news subjects.

Neetu Singh is an award-winning independent journalist from Uttar Pradesh, India. She contributes to BBC News Hindi. Singh is also the founder of Shades of Rural India. This digital platform focuses on gender-based violence in rural India.

“If you regularly interact with rural people, it will strengthen your connections, provide grounded intelligence, and grant access to exclusive stories,” she confirmed. “After working in media for more than 13 years, people are now recognising my work and actively reaching out to me to share their problems and unique stories, which I consider an achievement.”

Social media's smart use

Monitoring conversations across key platforms used by your audience can uncover compelling rural story ideas that can be pursued in the real world. The upside: if it's already trending online, that's a strong indicator of demand.

Shrikant Bangale, my colleague at BBC News Marathi, also covers rural issues. He uses this method to discover stories. “In January 2021, I was following a Facebook post about an election agenda that was trending for quite some time. It was a post from a young candidate who was contesting village council elections. I found his number through my sources. And, on the day of the election, the moment I got to know that he had won, I wrote a text piece and recorded an online video interview. Both articles went viral. My [interview](#) with him got 1.3 million views.”

Since 2021, Shrikant has been single-handedly running BBC Marathi's series focused on the needs of rural communities. In Marathi, it is called “गावाकडची गोष्ट”, which translates to “Tales from rural life”. “I choose my episodes based on their relevance to farmers and rural people,” he explained. “I use social media and interact with people to find out which topics interest them the most. I aim to simplify complex issues that affect rural communities, such as government resolutions on land, agriculture, agri-produce markets, welfare schemes, and more. I believe rural people watch my videos because they find them useful in their day-to-day lives.”

Arvind Shukla is an independent journalist and founder of News Potli, a digital platform that tells the stories of farmers, women, and tribal people. He also uses social media strategically. “I usually use social media for two types of requests,” he said. “First, to seek leads or information on specific issues. Second, to announce my travel plans to rural areas. I invite suggestions on local issues or interesting people to meet. Some time ago, before travelling to Assam, I posted on X, and six people reached out with their inputs.”

WhatsApp is also quite useful for tapping into the collective wisdom of the community. There are many groups of farmers who share small snippets of the issues they are facing. With informed consent (by disclosing that you are a journalist), you may ask them to add your number.

I found a story from a farmers' WhatsApp group about the rising threat of the Cucumber Mosaic Virus to Maharashtra's tomato farming. I am a member of several such WhatsApp groups, which I have kept archived. I skim through the content whenever I find time in my weekly schedule. By archiving the groups, I avoid being overwhelmed by hundreds of messages and can go through them at my convenience.

Travel without assignment

I come from a village, so there are naturally occasions when I travel to rural areas without assignment. While there, I participate in community activities and events to gain deeper insights into local customs, traditions, and challenges. Teatime with community leaders can offer insights into worldviews you won't find in reports.

During my visits, I look for individuals involved in grassroots initiatives, or those solving local problems in innovative ways, and try to spend a day with them. I also meet local reporters or stringers over lunch or a cup of tea. They provide valuable local context, leads, and, most importantly, insights into local political dynamics.

I have learnt that spending time with NGOs and social activists without an assignment is vital. It helps me to map the patterns of issues related to rural development, education, or healthcare. These insights are almost never yielded when interviewing them solely for a story.

Journalist Neetu Singh is also from a village in India's Uttar Pradesh. She told me succinctly in Hindi, “ऐसा कभी नहीं हो सकता कि आप गाँव घूमने जाएँ और कोई स्टोरी हाथ न लगे.” (It's impossible to visit a village and not find a story.)

Found a story? Sharpen your pitch with AI

Sannuta Raghu, head of Scroll.in's AI Lab for News and Journalism, created the [SoJo Pitch Starter Kit](#). This AI platform is designed to help journalists and storytellers craft compelling story pitches. (Remember to always cross-check the facts, names, and statistics before submitting your pitch.)

Step three: Develop your storyboard

So you've found a story idea with a strong angle backed by thorough research. Now it's time to create a storyboard – the cornerstone of a good ground report. A well-structured storyboard helps you visualise the story and the questions you plan to ask before the actual filming begins.

On digital platforms, character-led stories receive more traction. So it's a good idea to highlight larger issues through a case study. Whether you're producing a report on the impact of climate change, the latest import/export policy, or a textbook shortage, a whole gamut of information can be made compelling when told from the affected person's perspective.

Your subject needn't be human: you could also tell the story from the perspective of an animal, a plant, an environmental phenomenon, technology, an artefact, or another inanimate object. The choice depends entirely on the story you want to tell.

Digital journalist [Harshita Rathore](#), currently with Newsreel Asia, also believes in the importance of creating storyboards with a clear narrative arc before heading out to the field.

“The storyboard for a case study-type digital video report should follow a fundamental narrative structure. It should break the story down into three core parts: characterisation, a clear explanation of the central issue, and a resolution. Storyboarding helps provide a roadmap for the video, ensuring that each part of the story is effectively communicated and visually engaging.”

This approach also helps us plan smooth transitions by deciding in advance which shots will ensure a seamless flow from case study to expert to broader context. It keeps our storytelling purposeful, detailed, and impactful.

While preparing your storyboard, don't forget the work you did in Step One: which of my audience's needs am I addressing through this story? Aim to address at least

one. I find former BBC journalist Dmitry Shishkin’s [User Needs Model](#) particularly helpful in storyboarding.³⁰

User Needs Model

Basic need	User need	Question wording
Knowledge	Keep me engaged	“News that keeps me engaged with issues in society”
	Update me	“News that keeps me up to date with what’s going on”
Understanding	Educate me	“News that helps me learn more about topics and events”
	Give me perspective	“News that offers different perspectives on topical issues”
Feeling	Divert me	“News that is entertaining”
	Inspire me	“News that makes me feel better about the world”
Doing	Connect me	“News that makes me feel connected to others in society”
	Help me	“News that provides practical information and advice for day-to-day life”

Dmitry Shishkin’s User Needs Model outlines eight motivations behind why people consume news. Map your story to at least one of these needs.

In the field, your storyboard should serve as a reference template. Given the dynamic nature of fieldwork, we must maintain flexibility and adapt the storyboard as necessary in practice.

AI platforms to visualise storyboard

There are AI-powered online storyboarding tools that allow you to animate your storyboards, giving a more dynamic feel to your sequences. Try:

- LTX Studio: <https://ltx.studio/>
- Boords: <https://boords.com/>

³⁰ Reuters Institute (2024) More than just facts: How news audiences think about user needs. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2024/more-just-facts-how-news-audiences-think-about-user-needs> (Accessed: 9 March 2025).

Step four: Go into the field

With a well-structured storyboard, your fieldwork is half-done. But heed the warning of journalist Arvind Shukla about the challenges that await you there:

“पहली बात तो यह है कि फील्ड में जाने के लिए आपके पास हिम्मत होनी चाहिए. वहाँ की धूल-मिट्टी सहने के लिए तैयार रहना चाहिए. गाँव में जाने पर आपको कई तरह की चुनौतियों का सामना करना पड़ता है. कभी कड़ी धूप होगी, तो कभी चुभने वाली ठंड. कई जगहों पर तो आपको टॉयलेट भी नहीं मिलेंगे.”

In English, this means:

“First and foremost, you need the courage to go into the field. You must be prepared to endure dust and dirt. When you visit a village, you will face various challenges – sometimes extreme heat, sometimes severe cold, and in some places, a lack of toilets.”

Being ready for these challenges requires thorough research, preparation, and practical planning. Try to identify and connect with your case studies through intermediaries such as social activists, NGO workers, and local journalists, or by directly building a network within the community. This has the added benefit of establishing familiarity and trust with the rural community before you arrive.

If you’re working on a story about a community whose language is unfamiliar to you, you may need to rely heavily on your fixer. In such cases, clear communication and strong rapport with your fixer are essential. The strength of the bond you establish with your fixer will directly impact the outcome of your story. Approach your relationship with them as a collaboration, rather than merely extracting information.

Where possible, conduct pre-interviews with the people you want to film for your report. Do this well in advance of fieldwork and engage in detailed conversations to build comfort.

Prepare your kit: ensure you have all necessary equipment — including extra batteries and power banks — so you don’t lose time on avoidable delays. Most reporters now carry a basic mojo (mobile journalism) kit: smartphone, tripod or selfie stick, lapel or wireless mic. If your budget allows, a gimbal can help create smoother, more cinematic shots.

Time management

Plan for ample time on location. [Sharad Badhe](#), senior video journalist at BBC News Marathi, advises arriving the evening before a shoot. When meeting your participants, he suggests starting with this question: “How much time do you have?” This helps set expectations and shape your shooting schedule.

Sharad also recommends not starting the camera immediately upon arrival. Instead, introduce yourself, explain your story, and have a casual conversation first – show people that you care about their story, not just your footage.

Sanskriti Talwar also tries to reach the village the night before fieldwork, although she acknowledged this may not be possible for everyone. She believes good reportage on rural issues is not possible without building strong trust, relationships, and bonds with the community. For that, you must:

- spend enough time on location,
- eat with them,
- be as transparent as possible by explaining your process,
- remain aware of audience agency and your unconscious biases,
- take consent before quoting/filming,
- keep a low profile, do not draw attention to yourself with your clothing or appearance.

Clothing might seem like a minor detail, but it matters. Wearing modest, low-profile attire helps you blend in, avoid “othering,” and build trust.

Thanks to your storyboard, you already have a list of interview questions and planned shots. Begin with the A-roll (interview), then gather your B-roll (supporting visuals). You’ll likely need more B-roll than expected, so shoot generously.

Always double-check audio, camera angles, and lighting before filming begins.

Getting rural women to speak on camera requires sensitivity and care

Rural women’s voices are more marginalised than rural men’s. Creating a safe and comfortable space is essential for empowering them to share their stories. This starts with understanding their needs and adjusting the environment accordingly.

If a woman feels uncomfortable speaking while surrounded by men, consider changing the location or having family members present for support. This may involve filming in a private space, having a female crew member present, or simply allowing her time to speak at her own pace.

Not everyone is comfortable in front of a camera, and it's our responsibility as journalists to create an environment where people feel empowered to share their experiences. Open discussions can often help resolve concerns and make them feel more at ease.

If direct communication is not possible, you can approach the woman through an intermediary. Explain the importance and potential impact of her story.

For example, if you're covering the daily struggle of a woman who walks miles to fetch water, which harms her health, you may need to explain how she is uniquely positioned to convey the true experience. It's crucial to be honest about the potential impact of her story, without offering false hope.

A practical note: if you're interviewing daily wage earners and their participation costs them a day's work, appropriate compensation is both ethical and respectful.

Getting the shots

Use a tripod, selfie stick, or gimbal for steady, usable footage. Record each B-roll shot for at least 10 seconds so you have plenty to work with.

Capture a mix of close-up, mid, and wide-angle shots, and adapt your shooting to reflect what emerges during interviews.

Your interview may reveal that you need specific B-roll. For example, if a farmer says she drives a tractor to the farm every day, you may need to ask her to do the same just for filming purposes. Keep it as natural as possible, and avoid staged acts. Don't ask people to do things they don't usually do, like requesting a farmer to read a newspaper if it's not part of their routine.

And please don't forget still photographs. We often forget this while filming, but they are crucial for thumbnails and accompanying text stories.

If you're struggling with filming on your smartphone on your own, I recommend learning from tutorials available on YouTube. I've created a [playlist](#) of some tutorials you may find useful, and you're welcome to explore others in your preferred language.

If possible, attend an in-person video reporting workshop. You will see a dramatic improvement in the overall quality of your videos. Filming without proper training could undermine all your efforts.

Keep in contact with HQ

While doing fieldwork, it's essential to maintain communication with your colleagues in the newsroom. Clear communication helps ensure that your shoot follows editorial guidelines and can be a good sounding board. Discuss whether you have a balanced representation, and whether all sides of the story have been captured. It can be quite difficult to go back and record anything that was missed.

I have one caveat about maintaining communication with the newsroom: don't multitask and do it while the camera is rolling or you may regret hearing your voice over a beautiful shot during editing.

Lastly, to balance our stories, we sometimes need to speak with government officials, politicians, private companies, and other stakeholders. I recommend approaching them only *after* completing thorough fieldwork and research, for two reasons. First, they may attempt to withhold, deny, or misrepresent information. Second: Fieldwork is the solid preparation that will help you ask effective and well-informed follow-up questions.

Take care of your health and safety

Please take care of your health during fieldwork. “सर सलामत तो पगड़ी पचास” a Hindi proverb means that, ‘if you are safe, everything else can be managed or regained’. When travelling to rural areas, carry water, dry food, fruits, a glucose packet and first aid kit. Eat on time and drink enough water. I would suggest eating well before heading for a shoot. Please do not work on an empty stomach. It hampers your productivity. For enhanced safety, travel with a local person or fixer who speaks the local language. They can ensure your safety and are aware of the risks involved when covering sensitive stories.

Step five: Script and edit

As mentioned earlier, effective storyboarding makes for effective fieldwork. Similarly, a well-executed shoot simplifies the scripting and editing process.

The following workflow is designed for beginners, incorporating inputs from BBC's senior video editor Sharad Badhe, BBC Academy, and my own experience in scripting and editing. It is tailored specifically to ground reports.

These are not groundbreaking ideas: just simple, practical methods to help you edit videos in less time.

Pre-production

- Begin by creating a dedicated project folder on your computer and transfer all raw footage.
- Next, organise footage into subfolders such as interviews, B-roll sequences, and graphics (if any).
- Back up all material to an external drive to avoid data loss.

Editorial standards

- Verify all facts, figures, and statements at the start of the editing process to ensure accuracy.
- Ensure content adheres to ethical standards – for example, secure parental consent if you are using children's visuals.
- Be mindful of privacy risks. Do not name individuals, such as survivors of violence, if your reporting could cause harm or stigma.

Maintain consistency

- Check the video resolution, aspect ratio, and colour grading.
- Review the audio for clarity and adjust levels.
- Do these checks early to avoid inconsistencies later.

Draft timeline

- Review all footage carefully and identify the most impactful soundbites and visuals. Cut and drag them onto your draft timeline.
- Start by cutting the interviews (A-roll) and then work on the visuals (B-roll).

Scripting

- After reviewing the material and logging your footage, pause editing and draft your script.

- Write out the key soundbites — even if they’re not for subtitling. It helps the writing process flow.
- Ensure it follows the “Gold on the top” principle: place the most compelling content at the beginning. It should instantly capture the viewer’s attention, usually within the first few seconds.
- Follow the story arc principle, i.e. a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Use simple, direct language that is easy to understand.
- Give more space for the protagonist and use less voiceovers or narrative texts.
- Use a cloud-based tool like Google Docs or Microsoft Word so the script can be shared easily for editorial checks.

Audio elements

- Use natural sound (often referred to as “nat sound”) as much as possible. It adds texture and realism, enhancing the video’s immersive experience.
- Select music tracks that complement the story’s tone. Royalty-free music and sound effects are available on YouTube and other platforms.
- Badhe recommends prioritising ambient sound over music. The sound of a crowd, a farm, or a street often carries more emotional power than a music track.

Voice over

- Warm up your voice before recording. You may refer to [YouTube tutorials](#) for vocal exercises.
- Practice the script multiple times before recording.
- Speak slowly and clearly with proper pauses.
- Match your tone to the story’s emotion.
- Breathe deeply during voiceovers.
- Vary your pitch to avoid monotony.
- Use silences effectively.
- Use editing tools to enhance your voice quality, [Enhance Speech](#) by Adobe.

A note: I prefer using more voiceover than narrative text in rural coverage. Voice commentary is easier to follow, especially for semi-literate or illiterate audiences.

Visual editing

- Follow the narrative arc by introducing the main character(s) early on, then presenting the central issue, and concluding with its resolution.
- Choose visuals that best support the narrative, maintaining an engaging and logical flow.

- Use a mix of wide, medium, and close-up shots for visual interest. Incorporate relevant graphics where necessary.

Watch the rough cut several times

- It's so easy to get tunnel vision when you've been working on a project for a long time. Watch the entire piece with fresh eyes or have a colleague review it. Seek final approval from editors before publication.
- Or, if you are a one-person army, you may ask a family member or friend for a peer review. A second pair of eyes helps us catch mistakes or identify areas that need improvement.

For advanced editing skills

I've compiled a collection of advanced video editing tutorials from YouTube into [a playlist](#). I would recommend using YouTube tutorials to hone your editing skills.

Good video editing apps

On laptop

- Filmora Wondershare
- DaVinci Resolve
- Adobe Premiere Pro
- Final Cut Pro (On MacBook)
- Apple iMovie (On MacBook)

On smartphone (iOS/Android)

- Adobe Premiere Rush
- Kine Master
- VN Video Editor
- GoPro Quik
- LumaFusion

Step six: social media promotion

A popular Hindi song from the 1958 film *Madhumati* laments: "जंगल में मोर नाचा, किसी ने न देखा." ("The peacock danced in the forest. No one saw it.") Imagine you've completed Steps One to Five and produced an amazing video. Now how do you stop it from getting lost in the vast forest of online content?

Using social media effectively ensures your peacock dances in the village square, where it can be seen by all.



A peacock dances unseen in a quiet forest (left), and again in a lively village square (right), where it draws a crowd. Social media promotion ensures your story finds its audience.

Effective social media strategy is what brings your story to the village square. It's what ensures your work is noticed, shared, and acted on. To make sure your videos not only exist but thrive across platforms, focus on two things: how you present them, and what you learn from how they perform.

Below is a practical checklist to help you do both. While it's written with YouTube in mind, the principles apply across digital platforms.

Thumbnails

- According to the YouTube team, 90% of top-performing videos use custom thumbnails. Make sure yours is eye-catching and relevant.

- Use high-contrast colours and striking visuals to stand out. Distinct facial expressions often attract attention.
- You can apply the [rule of thirds](#) to create interesting images.
- Avoid clutter. Ensure the thumbnail is easy to interpret, even on small screens.
- Canva is an excellent tool for creating professional-looking thumbnails without needing design experience.

Title/headline

- Include keywords that clearly describe the content and are likely to be searched for by your audience.
- The YouTube team says the title must reflect the content of the video; misleading titles can cause viewers to lose interest and negatively affect the video's discoverability.
- Strike a balance between information and curiosity: make viewers want to click.

Video description

- Provide a concise summary of the video's content. While many might skip reading the description, it plays a crucial role in enhancing your video's visibility: a good description helps YouTube's algorithm recommend your content to the right audience, boosting its reach.
- Keep the description brief and to the point, avoiding long paragraphs.
- Ensure that each video has a distinct description to improve searchability and make it stand out from similar content.
- Select two or three keywords that best describe your video and highlight them in both the description and title.
- You can give links to your website, other social media pages, or any reference material that may be useful to your audience.

Tags

- Add hashtags in the description and tags in the metadata.
- Use appropriate tags that reflect key themes and phrases relevant to our video report.
- Avoid unnecessary tags and focus only on the most relevant keywords.
- The YouTube team says adding excessive tags to your video description is against their policies on spam, deceptive practices, and scams.

Video Analytics (for YouTube)

- Track views, likes, comments, and shares to understand how your audience interacts with your content.

- Gather insights from rural and underserved communities to assess the impact of your stories.
- Analyse when your audience is most active online and schedule your videos accordingly. Maintain a consistent posting schedule. This helps your audience anticipate new content at predictable times.
- Use insights from analytics to fine-tune your content, from the storytelling approach to the technical aspects. For example, is there a specific time people drop off your videos – is there something happening at that point that makes viewers scroll on?

In addition to leveraging analytics, you should actively engage with comments from your valuable users (not trolls) and foster their loyalty. Encourage them to share their ideas and feedback.

Where to pitch rural Indian stories

Are you an independent journalist, freelancer, or contributor looking for a platform to publish your report on rural India? I have compiled a list of digital media platforms where you can pitch story ideas related to rural India. For more details, [click here](#).

Please take note of the different genres of these platforms before pitching your idea.

Is a personal website advisable?

Independent journalist Urvashi Sarkar argues that journalists should invest in a personal website where they can showcase their work, as reports often disappear or remain scattered across publisher websites or YouTube channels.

This is especially crucial for freelancers, who lack a single platform to consolidate their published pieces across different outlets. It's a small investment worth considering.

You may seek the help of a designer to build your website, or you can use free personal website templates, such as those available on WordPress. Once you create a personal website, be sure to update it regularly.

Conclusion

Digital video is no longer an emerging trend in rural India; it has firmly taken root. Fuelled by rapid internet penetration, new freedoms to create and distribute stories, as well as AI-driven translation enhancements, this shift presents a critical opportunity for rural journalism.

To make the most of this opportunity to represent and reach new audiences, we must dismantle the entrenched media structures that historically functioned as instruments of exclusion.

“Power structures thrive on silence and conformity,” said American media theorist, Noam Chomsky. “The first step towards change is the courage to question, even when surrounded by complacency.”

This transformation must unfold on two levels. First, we critically examine whose stories are being told – and how. That means ethically exploring and authentically sharing the diverse and complex realities of rural life.

Second, we must promote digital video storytelling to a primary medium in the news ecosystem.

Digital video storytelling is not just about amplifying rural and marginalized voices; it is about shifting power dynamics, both in the newsroom and outside it.

This paper marks the beginning of what I hope will be a continuing deep dive into digital video storytelling and rural journalism. If you’ve read this project and want to give me feedback or collaborate, I would greatly appreciate your comments, feedback, or valuable additions. You may reach me at ganeshpol.pol@gmail.com

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