

PRESS RELEASE

Abhay Deol launches Video Volunteers' 'IndiaUnheard', Community News Service

Ahmedabad, March 27, 2010 – Film actor Abhay Deol, who is the ambassador of Video Volunteers, today, announced the launch of India Unheard, a Community News Service. Abhay also visited Dalit Shakti Kendra (DSK) in Nani Devti village under Sanand taluka where the training of IndiaUnheard's first batch of community correspondents is going on since March 15.

Speaking to the press on the occasion, Deol said, "Video Volunteers has been building a movement based on the idea that the underprivileged in India have a right to a voice and to express themselves creatively. India Unheard Community News Service is one step closer to realize that goal. India Unheard aims to create a network of rural/slum-based activists across India who can report on grassroots development and human rights issues within their communities. "

Slated to be operational from April, India Unheard has 31 activists representing some of the most marginalized communities from 24 Indian states. The activists, currently being trained as Community Correspondents, are committed to engagement in social issues. After undergoing intensive training where they learn all aspects of production and storytelling, correspondents will start reporting on grass root issues such as Caste and Identity, Conflicts, Corruption, Development, Displacement, Infrastructure, Gender, Health, RTI and so on. The stories will be told from a perspective that only a community member can capture – the perspective of one who has lived through these issues.

Stated Stalin K, the founder director of Video Volunteers, "We want to strengthen the connection between valuable community produced content and major television outlets. In the past, our community-produced content has been placed on several television outlets. However, one-off projects do not create sustainability. Therefore with India Unheard, we hope to create partnerships through which content can be distributed on a regular basis." According to Stalin, India Unheard will also greatly serve social movements as communities will be empowered with their own research, storytelling and news-gathering skills.

"The content produced by India Unheard will be featured an online channel which is a unique platform for news and personal stories generated entirely by the rural poor. People can watch videos by issue, and learn how to take action", said Brian Conley, Program Director, IndiaUnheard. Reporters looking for interesting stories to cover in their region can also search by region or contact the Community Correspondents to share the story on a larger scale. Community Correspondents will lead local SMS campaigns to keep local communities informed and encourage them to take action. The Correspondents will use Twitter, SMS, blogs, crowd funding and other social media techniques will to build a real connection between themselves and others passionate about grass root issues and looking to drive change.

“This is the age of digital revolution and India Unheard is going to use digital technology as an effective tool for community information and empowerment,” said Abhay

The press conference today was also addressed by some of the community correspondents who pointed out the current gap between the issues within their communities and the visibility of the same in the mainstream media. They explained how the gap can be bridged through India Unheard Community News Service. Earlier in the day Abhay and the community correspondents had a special session of interaction in DSK where they exchanged ideas on using videos as a tool to bring changes.

For more information, please contact:

1. Stella Paul, Communications Director, Video Volunteers
stella@videovolunteers.org Mobile: 91-9923959187
2. Mahima Kaul, Partnership Director, Video Volunteers
mahima@videovolunteers.org, Mobile: 91-

Notes to the Editor:

1. Video Volunteers (VV) is an organization dedicated to create an alternative media at the grass root level, has been creating a broad network of community video producers since 2003. VV already has over 100 people around the country as community video producers in its various Community Video Units who have been trained to tell their own stories in the form of compelling and critical video journalism. Many of them are former diamond polishers, rickshaw drivers, and farm laborers. <http://www.videovolunteers.org/>

2. India Unheard's community correspondents represent every region of India. They also have a representation of the entire society cutting across age, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, location and religion.

<http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/abhay-deol-to-launch-indiaunheard-community-news-service/00/54/389823/>