

PRESS RELEASE

Video Volunteers Launches IndiaUnheard - Community News Service Creates an alternate newswire at grassroots level

Delhi & Goa, May 3rd, 2010: As the world celebrates World Press Freedom Day, Video Volunteers, the organization committed to empower community voices all over the world, launches **IndiaUnheard, the first program of our new Community News Service** – a nation-wide community-based news agency dedicated to help the country's most marginalized communities tell their own news.

States Stalin K, the Founding Director of Video Volunteers. "In recent years, we have witnessed a huge surge in the potential global audience for community media, as well as the number of video watchers on web. However, compared to that, the growth in the number of issues and stories in the mainstream media has remained almost static. As a result, today there is a growing demand for community produced content in the media. There are debates on what is real news and questions on the visibility of marginalized communities and grassroots issues like education, poverty, health care and development in the media. We are launching IndiaUnheard in the context of this scenario, with the aim to strengthen the connection between valuable community produced content and mainstream media outlets".

IndiaUnheard is comprised of a network of more than thirty Community Correspondents (CCs) representing 24 states of India, cutting across age, sex, language, caste and religion. Their locations include little known places such as Karauli of Rajasthan and Dang tribal district of Gujarat in the West to Madhupur, Jharkhand and Tamenglong district of Manipur in the East, Chamoli – the last district of the Himalayas and Solan of Himachal Pradesh in the North to Chennai in the South. Each of these Correspondents has personally experienced poverty, neglect and violence while their communities also have, for decades, faced corruption and discrimination. Trained in all manner of documentation, storytelling and video journalism, every month they will report on a variety of key issues which will have a unique perspective and will keep pulse on the real issues effecting real people.

Besides access to stories unheard before from communities invisible to much of India and the rest of the world, IndiaUnheard has another unique character. The program will use social media, new technology and leverage the benefits of online distribution to reach both national and international audiences. The content produced by Community Correspondents will be featured in the program's signature online web series 'IndiaUnheard'. The audience will watch videos arranged by correspondent, topic, and state. Reporters looking for interesting stories to cover in their region can search content by region or contact Video Volunteers to share the story on a larger scale. "Our new program will be delivered to the audience where they are, whether that be YouTube, Facebook, even direct to email, and enable organic audience growth. By providing the audience with direct access to interact with our correspondents, we'll break the traditional wall between newsmaker and news viewer," says Brian Conley, Program Director, IndiaUnheard.

According to Stalin K, through IndiaUnheard Video Volunteers aims to build a platform from which those who were once silenced can speak out. "Press Freedom doesn't only mean freedom to a few media outlets. To us, it means freedom to any community to tell its own story freely, the way it wants to say it. With IndiaUnheard, poor communities can tell their stories, influence policies, highlight gross injustices and stand up for themselves. Our ultimate aim is to expand this program to the point where there is one community correspondent for each of India's 626 districts, thus enabling each poor community to get out its issues to the mainstream media," he sums up.

For more information, please contact:

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Note to the editor: Video Volunteers welcomes partnership proposals from media organizations like yours. Our Community Correspondents, spread across 24 states of India, can gather data and provide both textual and visual content based on issues/communities or locations that you require.