

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Activism in Goa to get boost through community video

Camp This Week To Showcase Fast-Growing Social Media

Nigel Britto | TNN

Baga: What happens when the poorest one billion people in the world have their own media industry? That's the question which drives Video Volunteers, an organization that stands on the notion that people have the right to speak, rather than to be spoken for. During the last three years, they have trained hundreds of people in some of India's most rural districts to record and broadcast their problems and solutions. And as Gujarat, AP and Rajasthan have seen, the results are fantastic.

The good news is, this fast-growing movement is set to debut in Goa this week. In what's being touted as the biggest gathering of its kind in the country, 130 witnesses and producers of community video will converge at a resort in Candolim to see the developments community video has made in the country.

"This camp is our way of showcasing this movement," says Stalin K, director of the organization in India. Since 2006, the organization founded by Jessica Mayberry in New York, has made giant strides in advancing this revolution. "Every village in the world has human rights violations. Everybody has a cellphone. It's just a question of putting two and two together to realizing



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that we have a very powerful tool of communication right in our hands," she says.

The concept of neighbourhood watch or citizens on patrol is not new. Communities have been uniting for years to patrol their neighbourhood at night against crime. Now, imagine a scenario when a community gets together to fight social evil. And instead of sticks, they have video recorders.

It is this change that will be on display in Candolim. The camp will feature several persons whose lives have been changed by the community video revolution. People who were once rickshaw drivers, vegetable vendors and diamond polishers but are now citizen journalists will come together to train and share skills like video blogging, silent film creation and the evolving art of digi-activism.

The camp will include workshops as well as panel discussions featuring prominent activists, academics and NGOs from Goa and beyond.

And the organization is looking to replicate in Goa the successes they have tasted around India. In many remote villages around India, they have set up community video units, a unit in which eight members of the community are trained in the art of film-making. They then regularly produce movies which are screened via widescreen projectors in surrounding villages, after which inhabitants discuss and debate mutual problems. The response has been phenomenal. In fact, the pace of the movement's growth can be seen from the fact that NGOs have invested more than \$3,80,000 to support the creation of more community video units.

In Goa, too, the organization aims to showcase the plight of the tribals in the eastern strip, which is largely dominated by mining companies, who are left out of the spotlight. "Tribals are often taken for a ride," Stalin says, while pointing out that the fact compounding the already existing problem of comparatively low literacy. "Community video can help these people. Because video transcends literacy," he adds.