

Beyond Likes: How Grassroots Leaders are Defining the Future of Digital Advocacy

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Acknowledgments

In addition to the invaluable contributions from the wider Video Volunteers team, deepest thanks are extended to the Community Content Creators, whose insights and personal stories have enriched this report with authenticity and lived experience.

This report is not merely an exercise in data collection; it reflects a collaborative process—co-created alongside the communities themselves. The aim is to ensure that their voices are respectfully represented and central to the narrative. It is hoped that this report honours their experiences and meaningfully contributes to the broader dialogue on social justice and community-driven change.

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Introduction



In 2012, deep within the heart of Morena District, Jyoti lived disconnected from the digital world, unfamiliar with social media and apprehensive about its power. Facebook, at the time, felt like an intimidating space—something to be approached cautiously, limited to interactions with people she already knew, driven by a fear of the unknown. Yet, what began as anxiety soon transformed into empowerment. Today, Jyoti stands as a digital changemaker, using the very platforms that once overwhelmed her to reach thousands with a single post. Her journey from hesitant user to influential community voice highlights the profound impact of digital literacy, sparking grassroots movements that ripple across India.

Jyoti's story is not an isolated case. Across the country, 116 other Community Content Creators (CCs) have experienced a similar metamorphosis. These individuals, who once grappled with the basics of social media, now wield their smartphones as powerful instruments for social change. Their newfound digital prowess has not only amplified their voices but has also significantly boosted the digital presence of Video Volunteers, the NGO dedicated to empowering them.

As an organisation, [Video Volunteers](#) has always been committed to elevate community voices through the power of media. By fostering a network of CCs, it has produced over 18,000 videos on a broad spectrum of local issues. These videos, shared on platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, have catalysed

change, with 30% of the issues addressed seeing tangible resolutions once government officials were alerted.

Through the rich data amassed over a year, this report evaluates the progress and impact of the VV's efforts to enhance the social media presence and grassroots outreach of Community Content Creators (CCs). The report spans from May/June 2023 to April 2024, providing a comprehensive analysis of 117 CCs who participated in initial in-person training focused on using digital platforms to share community stories and drive local change.

The scope of this report is extensive, including data from three key assessment points: a baseline assessment conducted in May/June 2023, a midline assessment in September/October 2023, and an endline analysis in April 2024. This longitudinal approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the CCs' growth trajectory and the impact of various interventions over time.

The report aims to assess VV's social media reach and impact across platforms, examining total grassroots audience reach and its growth over time. Key questions include: What percentage of initially low-performing CCs have become adequately active? Have VV achieved 100% success in strengthening weak CCs? How has the increase in CCs' social media activity affected VV's organisational pages? Additionally, the report will analyse the extent to which CCs focus on sharing VV content and how this contributes to their success, explore the impact of the trainings and mentorship on CCs' audience growth and goal achievement, and aim to understand different types of social media creators within the network and what strategies work best for each.

Lastly, the report will provide insights into the kinds of content being shared by active citizens in rural India, enriching the understanding of the rural media ecosystem. It will examine whether sharing VV content has contributed significantly to CCs' success by comparing the growth statistics of those who regularly share VV content against those who don't. This analysis will help assess the viability of creating a movement around sharing social change content.

Overview of the study

The project began with an in-person training session for 117 CCs in May/June 2023, establishing a baseline for their social media and grassroots outreach capabilities. Following this, a midline assessment was conducted in September/October 2023 to gauge initial progress and identify areas where CCs required additional support.

In August 2023, VV implemented several key initiatives to address challenges and provide support to the CCs. These initiatives included:

1. Creating a comprehensive tracker to monitor CCs' social media growth and account details.
2. Maintaining detailed records of baseline, midline, and endline data for analysis.
3. Analysing CCs' social media activity to understand their sharing preferences.
4. Developing profiles of 10 successful CCs to showcase effective strategies.
5. Conducting 6 customised training sessions, 3 cross-learning sessions, and 14 weekly one-to-one Zoom call sessions from October to April.
6. Performing 180 one-to-one calls with CCs to address various social media-related queries and challenges.
7. Implementing motivational strategies such as giving shoutouts to high-performing CCs and sharing weekly social media tips.
8. Creating and sharing video tutorials on various aspects of social media management and grassroots distribution.

By combining the diverse data sources and interventions, it not only highlights the successes and challenges faced by these CCs but also underscores the broader implications of digital literacy and community media in fostering impact at the local level.

How the study was done



The study employed a comprehensive, year-long approach to track and analyse the social media growth of Community Content Creators (CCs). **This methodology was designed to capture both quantitative metrics and qualitative insights, providing an understanding not just of the numbers but also the stories behind the digital growth of grassroots voices.**

The process began with a baseline assessment in May/June 2023, where CCs were asked to self-report their follower numbers across various social media platforms. This initial step provided a clear starting point and allowed for an understanding of the diverse range of digital presence within the network. Alongside this quantitative data, CCs were tasked with creating individual Grassroots Plans for social media engagement. These plans served as roadmaps for their digital journey and offered insights into their goals and strategies.

By September 2023, at the midpoint of the study, a more structured evaluation process was implemented. A detailed questionnaire was developed for VV's mentors, focusing on key areas such as training feedback, plan implementation, challenges faced by CCs, and the support they needed. This midline evaluation was conducted through mentor calls, with data collected via Google Forms. This approach gathered rich, qualitative data that provided context to the numbers and helped illuminate the human element behind digital growth.

The final endline assessment conducted in March 2024 was the most comprehensive, with a detailed tracker filled out by mentors

to capture a wide range of data points. Social media metrics across Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube were updated, providing a clear picture of growth over the year. VV also documented the specific support provided to each CC and their current focus areas, allowing to correlate support with outcomes. Additionally, content sharing behaviours were tracked, which gave perspective about how CCs were engaging with and distributing VV's content.

Throughout this process, several key metrics were consistently kept at the forefront of the analysis. Total grassroots social media reach per platform was closely monitored to understand VV's collective digital footprint. Special attention was paid to the percentage of CCs who transitioned from low to high performance, as this metric spoke directly to the effectiveness of VV's training and support systems. It was also assessed whether VV achieved 100% improvement for initially weak performers.

The impact of CC growth on VV's main social media presence was examined, as well as the extent to which CCs prioritised sharing VV content versus their personal content. Furthermore, insights into the various types of social media creators within the network were gathered, acknowledging that different strategies may be more effective depending on personality types or levels of technological comfort.

Lastly, valuable lessons were gained from the challenges faced by CCs and VV's team, providing actionable insights for future strategies in amplifying grassroots voices in the digital sphere.

Overcoming Hurdles

In September/October 2023, a midline survey was conducted among 117 CCs to examine the challenges they faced on various platforms and their understanding of grassroots distribution.

Challenges faced by CCs

One of the primary hurdles identified was a **lack of clarity surrounding the concept of "Grassroots Distribution" and individual growth plans**. Approximately 25% of CCs struggled to fully grasp these concepts, highlighting the need for more targeted education and support. To address this, mentors and VV's Social Media Specialist, [Saloni](#), took a hands-on approach. She motivated and guided CCs to follow the plan to increase grassroots presence.

While the majority of CCs embraced regular social media engagement, a small portion (4%) faced **challenges in maintaining consistent posting schedules**. To overcome this, CCs were encouraged to adopt content scheduling techniques and dedicate a specific time each day to social media activities, aligning with their Grassroots Distribution Plans.

Training attendance emerged as another area of concern, with 7% of CCs missing crucial grassroots workshops. To ensure no one was left behind, makeup and refresher training sessions were organised. These targeted workshops ensured that all CCs had access to the same knowledge base, maintaining a level playing field across the network.

A small number of CCs, 5 in total (4%), showed a **lack of interest or inactivity**. To address this, efforts were made to encourage these CCs to reconsider the benefits of digital engagement. For those open to re-engaging, Saloni offered one-on-one sessions to help build their interest and motivation.

Time constraints, though reported by only 2% of CCs, represented a common challenge in today's fast-paced world. To help CCs balance their social media responsibilities with other commitments, time-saving techniques such as batch content creation and scheduling tools were introduced. These strategies allowed CCs to maintain an active online presence without overwhelming their daily schedules.

Interestingly, a significant portion of CCs (32%) expressed a desire for comprehensive re-training across all social media platforms.

This enthusiasm for learning demonstrated their commitment to improving their digital skills. In response, an extensive Online Training Calendar was developed, offering a series of workshops covering various aspects of social media management and content creation.

It is worth noting that 25% of CCs reported requiring minimal support, indicating that they had successfully integrated regular posting into their routines without facing significant issues. This group's success served as an inspiration and a benchmark for others in the network.

Support provided by Mentors

The role of mentors in supporting CCs' social media efforts cannot be overstated. According to Manish, one of the mentors, "Every video produced by CCs is shared on social media, and reminders were given to ensure this was done."

An endline survey of mentors revealed varied levels of support provided to CCs for social media in the past 2-3 months. Out of 9 mentors, 3 reported not providing any social media support to CCs. The support provided by other mentors included **motivating CCs to share VV content and their videos on social media during monthly Zoom calls, providing individual calls for regular posting, adding friends to social media groups, training on posting via Zoom calls, encouraging posting in action groups, monitoring social media activity, sharing tips, and providing hands-on feedback to improve social media reach.**

Mentors were also asked to identify important issues that CCs have been working on that could make interesting campaigns for social media. The mentors suggested a wide variety of topics, including infrastructure issues, government schemes, education-related problems, health concerns, environmental issues, women's issues, agricultural challenges, tribal and minority concerns, livelihood issues, and social problems like child marriage and trafficking.

Overall, the mentors provided a good starting point for identifying potential social media content for building campaigns, but proper strategic planning would be needed to maximise the impact of these videos on social platforms

The Success Formula: What drives CCs' Growth



The year-long study, spanning from the baseline assessment to the endline evaluation identified key factors that have significantly boosted the digital presence of CCs. These insights were carefully gathered and analysed by Saloni, who compared the most successful CCs with those who were less successful and provided a comprehensive view of what makes a grassroots voice truly resonate on social media.

1. Authenticity matters:

At the heart of CC's success lies an unwavering commitment to authenticity. In an era where polished content often dominates social media feeds, they have carved out a unique space by sharing raw, real-life stories directly from their communities. This approach has fostered a deep sense of trust and relatability with their audience. By speaking from a first-person perspective on issues that directly affect their neighbours and fellow community members, CCs have transformed from mere content creators to trusted voices of their localities. This genuine connection has proven to be a powerful catalyst for engagement and growth.

2. Make videos people love:

CCs have shown remarkable growth in their content creation skills, thanks in part to VV's comprehensive training programs. They've learned to craft watchable, engaging videos that capture the essence of their stories while maintaining audience interest. This journey has involved experimenting with various angles and formats, ensuring that each piece of content offers a unique perspective. The dedication to thorough research and field visits has resulted in well-informed, compelling narratives that keep viewers coming back for more.

3. Consistency is more important than Perfection:

In the fast-paced world of social media, consistency has emerged as a crucial factor in CCs' success. Those who have seen the most significant growth are the ones who have committed to regular posting schedules. This consistency goes beyond mere frequency; it's about showing unwavering dedication to addressing community issues over time. By persistently shining a light on local concerns and following through on stories, CCs have built loyal audiences who rely on them for information and advocacy.

4. Strategise Social Media and Self-promotion:

The most successful CCs have demonstrated a nuanced understanding of social media dynamics. They've learned to leverage various platforms strategically, recognizing that each has its unique strengths and audience preferences. From crafting compelling headlines that grab attention to utilising hashtags effectively, these digital-savvy CCs have mastered the art of increasing their content's visibility. Moreover, they've expanded their reach by promoting content through personal networks, WhatsApp groups, Telegram and even face-to-face interactions, creating a seamless blend of online and offline engagement.

5. Connect, Engage and Interact with your Audience:

The true power of social media lies in its ability to foster two-way communication, and top-performing CCs have harnessed this potential brilliantly. They've gone beyond merely broadcasting content to actively engaging with their audience. By promptly responding to comments, addressing messages, and incorporating feedback, these CCs have cultivated a strong sense of community around their digital presence. This approach has not only boosted their follower counts but has also created a more engaged and invested audience.

6. Focus on what really matters locally:

Perhaps the most impactful factor in CCs' growth has been their unwavering focus on addressing genuine community needs. By tackling grassroots issues that resonate deeply with local audiences, CCs have positioned themselves as indispensable sources of information and advocacy. What sets them apart is their commitment to not just highlighting problems but actively working towards solutions. This problem-solving approach has empowered communities, providing a platform for voices that might otherwise go unheard.

7. Be the change you want to see:

Many of CCs have become local changemakers, challenging traditional norms and inspiring others in the process. By breaking gender stereotypes, pursuing personal growth, and showcasing the power of individual action, these digital ambassadors have become role models within their communities. Their stories of perseverance and success have motivated others, especially youth, to believe in the possibility of positive change through digital media.

Case Studies: Success Stories

To illustrate these success factors in action, VV compiled detailed [case studies](#) of several standout CCs, including [Jyoti Kadam](#), [Kashif Akhtar](#), [Mohd Gulzar](#), [Tawheeda Nissar](#), [Renu Puri](#), and [Papiya Ghosh](#). Deeper exploration into some of these journeys provide in-depth insights into how these individuals have applied the principles outlined above to achieve remarkable growth in their digital presence and impact.

Mohd Gulzar

Gulzar's journey from adversity to becoming a successful community content creator in the Godda district of Jharkhand exemplifies the transformative power of digital skills training and social media. Despite facing significant challenges early in life, including a devastating flood that forced him to relocate to Mumbai at a young age, he found his true calling during the COVID-19 pandemic through his association with Video Volunteers (VV).



Participating in VV's [Buland Bol](#) training program equipped Gulzar with essential skills in digital video making and social media management. This newfound expertise inspired him to launch "Public Record Media," a Facebook page dedicated to addressing community issues and raising awareness about government policies. By implementing strategies learned from VV—such as effective storytelling, regular posting, and cross-platform engagement—Gulzar was able to grow his following from 3,000 in April 2023 to over 12,000 in a year, primarily attracting audiences from Bihar and Jharkhand. By the time of his interview, he had generated a revenue of \$63 from his page, a small amount but a great start. He has aspirations of reaching 1 million followers in the future.

A key factor in Gulzar's success has been his multi-platform approach, utilising Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube for different purposes. He strategically engaged his audience through compelling headlines, the strategic use of hashtags, and prompt

responses to comments. By focusing on diverse, non-political content and promoting local talent, he has built a unified and engaged audience.

Reflecting on his journey, Gulzar shared,

"I am committed to consistently sharing content related to community issues. VV has provided me with a strong sense of connection with my community, reinforcing the idea that authentic storytelling can bridge gaps and create meaningful change."

Tawheeda Nisaar

Tawheeda, hailing from Magam village in Jammu and Kashmir's Budgam district, embodies the power of grassroots journalism in driving community change. As the first girl in her village to pursue higher education, she overcame numerous challenges to follow her passion for journalism. Despite earning a double postgraduate degree and gaining experience with local media channels, she found herself frustrated by the limitations of traditional reporting, which often fell short of making a tangible impact on the issues she covered.



Determined to find a platform where she could not only report on community issues but also actively contribute to their resolution, Tawheeda joined Video Volunteers (VV) in 2022 through their *Buland Bol* program. This opportunity proved transformative, reshaping her approach to journalism by enabling her to create content that both highlighted community problems and facilitated solutions. Through her work with VV, she became a catalyst for change in her community.

Her impactful storytelling and problem-solving approach have not only significantly increased her social media following across various platforms but have also positioned her as a role model for girls in her village. Tawheeda's journey has inspired many young women to pursue their dreams and higher education, showing them that they too can make a difference.

She says,

"Empowering voices, sparking change, and making a difference - that's the essence of my journey with VV."

Jyoti Kadam

Jyoti's journey with Video Volunteers (VV) since 2012 illustrates the transformative power of digital literacy and perseverance in social media activism. Initially unfamiliar with Facebook, Jyoti's perspective shifted dramatically following VV's social media training during the 2020-2021 COVID-19 lockdown.



This training equipped Jyoti with the skills to leverage social media for addressing societal issues and expanding her reach. Despite facing criticism and inappropriate comments in her village, particularly as a woman content creator, Jyoti persevered. Her Facebook profile evolved into a page, growing from 1000 followers to 5,909 followers.

Key strategies in Jyoti's success include- Consistent posting, Active engagement with followers, diverse content, cross-platform sharing, trying different content formats and adapting her work based on the response from the audience.

Her journey highlights the importance of resilience and she says,

"To all women content creators, I advise you not to focus on negative voices. Initially, these voices may try to discourage you, but as they realise they can't silence you, they will stop their criticism."

Renu Puri

Renu, from Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, was inspired by her father's service in the Indian Defence Force to help others. After her marriage, she took teacher's training and nursing courses, gaining valuable experience in schools and hospitals. Yet, she felt something was still missing. While working with NGOs on human rights and women's causes, she yearned to create a larger, more sustainable impact.



In 2022, she joined Video Volunteers' (VV) *Buland Bol* program, which proved transformative. VV's training equipped her with video storytelling skills and, crucially, strategies to leverage social media for community change.

Implementing VV's social media tactics, her Facebook following surged from 102 in October 2023 to over 3,900 within months. Her strategy included posting daily, mixing personal and community content, and analysing what worked best. Using engaging visuals, going live frequently, joining local groups, and cross-promoting on other apps also helped a lot.

While some community posts did well, Renu's casual personal videos got the most engagement.

"I didn't expect those unfiltered personal videos to be so popular, but people connected with the authenticity. I am not only helping people to make their life better, but I am also building a community where I encourage people to be active citizens."

A Deep Dive into Grassroots Content Creation



This section of the report delves into the diverse types of content shared by CCs and explores the various creator personas that have emerged within the network.

The Content Kaleidoscope: What India Shares Online

An effort was made to further understand the type of content shared by the CCs, and the analysis reveals a fascinating picture of India's digital engagement.

VV's Social Media Specialist, Saloni spent two weeks reviewing the Facebook profiles of CCs (and not their YouTube channel or Instagram) and tagging the content they had shared. During this process, she conducted spot checks on each profile for approximately 20 minutes, spending time on the profiles of 70 CCs out of 117, noting the type of content being shared to understand content preferences and identify the most frequently used tags. In addition, she wanted to see which types of the organisation's content were being shared by the CCs and how often.

Types of Content Shared by CCs

Tag Name	Count
Business/Professional Updates	1
Content on Local Culture	4
Content On Rural Life	2
Current Affairs	2
Entertainment Content	2

Environmental Issues	0
Events	12
Hateful Content	0
Humour/Satire Posts	0
Inspirational Figures	1
Misinformation	0
Motivational/Patriotic Content	9
News (National/State/District)	17
News reporting	3
NON-VV ACTIVISM	30
Other VV content	23
Own VV Videos	40
Personal Content (Photos, videos, Travel pics)	32
Pets and Animals	1
Political Content	7
Religious Content	3
Reshare of Other CCs Personal Content	0
Reshare of Other CCs Work	0
Travel and Tourism	0

"Count" refers to the number of CCs who have shared content categorised under each specific tag. For eg. A count of 1 means that only CC has shared content categorised under that specific tag. A total of 24 tags were assigned to the content shared by the CCs.

At the forefront of this digital revolution are the **CCs' own Video Volunteers productions, with 40 of them regularly sharing their self-produced videos**. This enthusiasm for showcasing their work demonstrates a growing confidence in their storytelling abilities and a deep commitment to amplifying local voices.

Equally compelling is the **significant number of CCs (30) who share content related to non-VV activities**. This trend underscores the broader impact of the program, nurturing a spirit of advocacy that extends beyond VV's immediate projects. It's a testament to the empowerment of these individuals as change-makers in their communities.

Personal content, including photos, videos, and travel experiences, features prominently in the sharing habits of 32 CCs. This personal touch humanises their online presence, fostering a deeper connection with their audience. It's not just about the

issues; it's about the people behind the stories, their lives, and their journeys.

The role of CCs as information disseminators is evident in the high number (17) who regularly share national, state, and district news. This practice positions them as valuable sources of information in their communities, bridging the often-wide gap between rural areas and the broader news landscape.

Notably, CCs show a strong inclination towards **positive and community-oriented content**. Many share motivational and patriotic posts, while others focus on local events and cultural content. This positive skew in content sharing paints a picture of rural content creators who are not just reporting on challenges but actively working to inspire and unite their communities.

Importantly, the analysis reveals a complete absence of misinformation, hate speech, or divisive content among our CCs' posts. This responsible approach to content creation establishes the network as a trustworthy and constructive voice in the often tumultuous world of social media.

Types of Creators:



As VV delved deeper into the social media behaviours of the CCs, the analysis uncovered a diverse spectrum of creator types, each with unique characteristics and content preferences. This

understanding is crucial for tailoring VV's support and maximising the impact of each CC's digital presence.

At one end of the spectrum are the **"Beginner Creators,"** individuals who are just starting their journey in the digital realm. These CCs often require more hands-on support and encouragement as they find their footing in the world of content creation.

Driven by the desire for recognition and follower growth, the **"Aspiring Internet Famous Creators"** are highly motivated to build their personal brand. They tend to be active across multiple platforms, adapting their content to suit each one.

On the other side, **"Shy or Reserved Creators"** are individuals who may be hesitant to share personal stories or appear on camera, preferring behind-the-scenes roles. They might benefit from strategies that allow them to engage audiences without putting themselves in the spotlight, such as anonymous accounts or focusing on their area of expertise rather than personal content.

The **"Tech-averse creators"** are less comfortable with technology and social media, and face challenges in navigating platform features and content creation tools. They may prefer simpler, text-based content or focus on a single platform they find easier to use.

Contrasting with the tech-averse are the **"Digital Natives,"** tech-savvy individuals who navigate multiple platforms with ease and are quick to adopt new trends. These CCs often serve as informal mentors within the network, helping to disseminate digital skills among their peers.

A particularly inspiring category is the **"Digital Changemakers."** These are CCs who have fully embraced the power of social media as a tool for activism and social change. Their content is often focused on specific causes, and they've developed a knack for mobilising online support for real-world action.

Some of the CCs belong to the **"Experts"** category, as they possess specialised knowledge in a particular field or industry, and focus on delivering high-quality, informative content.

VV also identified **"Cultural Promoters"** within the network. These CCs are passionate about preserving and showcasing local traditions, art forms, and heritage. Their content provides a valuable window into the rich cultural diversity of India, often attracting followers from beyond their immediate communities.

Another notable group is the **"Information Distributors."** These CCs have positioned themselves as go-to sources for news and updates on government schemes, local events, and political developments. Their role in keeping their neighbourhood informed is invaluable, especially in areas where access to mainstream media might be limited.

Some of the CCs fall into the category of **"Motivational and Positive Content Creators."** Their feeds are filled with uplifting messages, success stories, and inspirational content. In a digital landscape often dominated by negativity, these CCs provide a refreshing and much-needed positive influence.

The emergence of **"Lifestyle Influencers"** among the CCs has also been observed. These individuals share content about their personal lifestyles, including fashion choices, health practices, and local travel experiences.

One of the interesting categories of creators are **"Entertainment creators"**. They are focused on sharing entertaining and humorous content, memes, and viral videos.

Understanding this diverse creator spectrum has profound implications for VV's work. It allows tailoring of the training programs, provides targeted support, and develops strategies that leverage the unique strengths of each creator type. Moreover, this diversity ensures that the network can reach and engage with a wide range of audiences, maximising VV's impact across different demographics and interest groups.

Measuring the Impact of Community Voices on Social Media



This section of the report delves into the quantitative analysis of this digital growth, highlighting the impressive strides made by the Community Content Creators and the challenges VV continues to address.

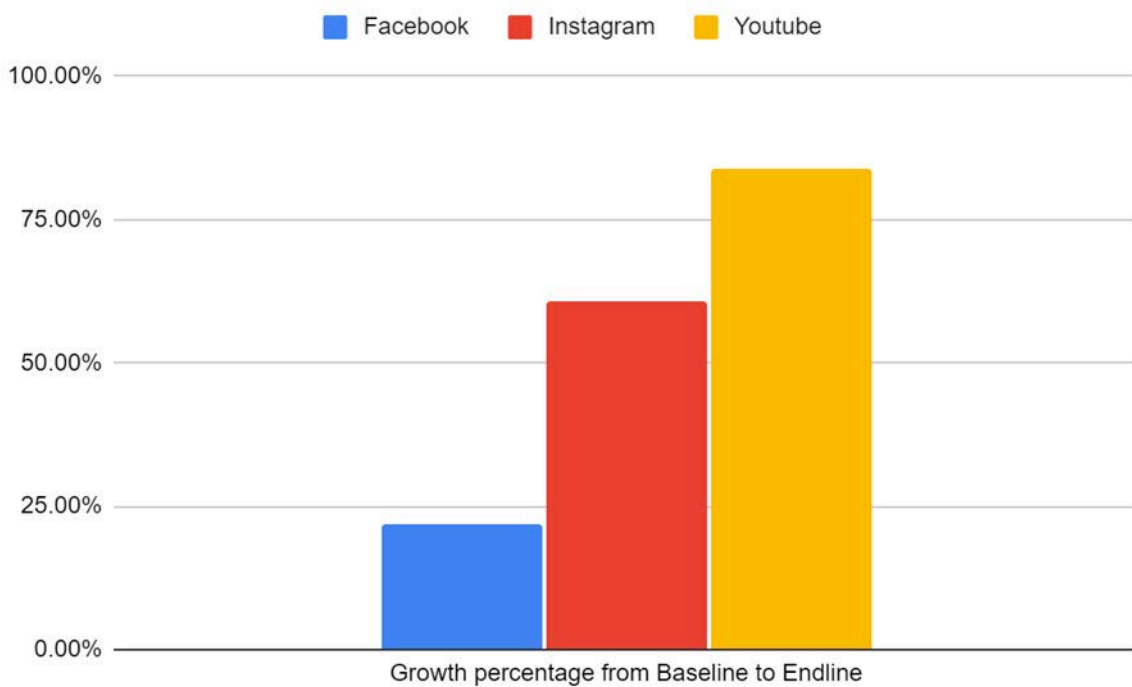
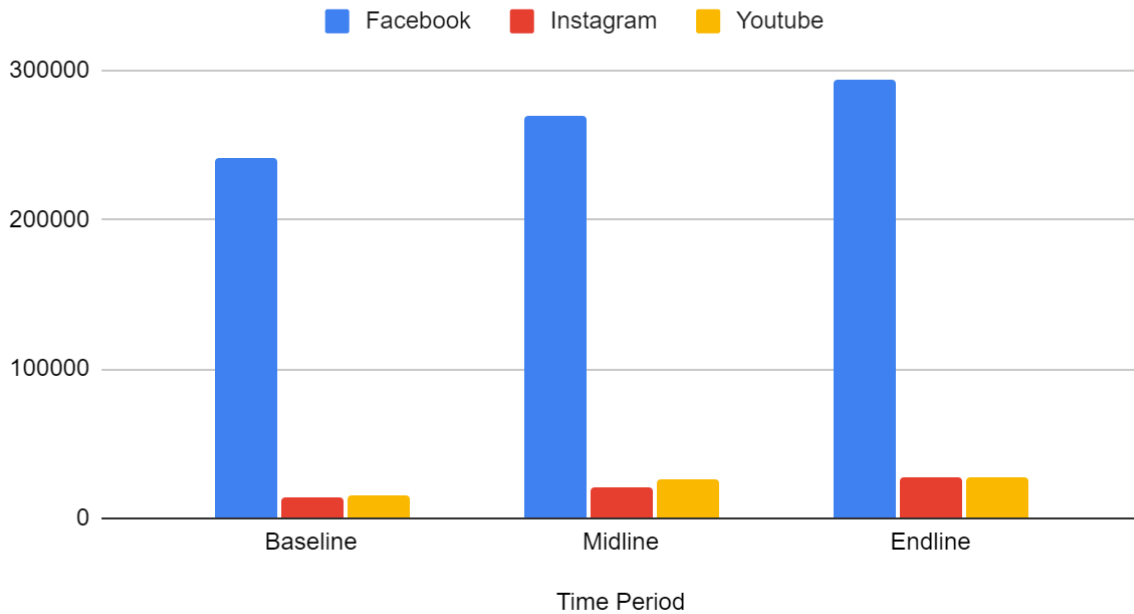
More Digital Engagement

The study, spanning from April 2023 to May 2024, reveals a compelling narrative of digital empowerment. The total grassroots social media reach of 117 CCs who attended the initial training has seen substantial growth across all platforms. [Facebook](#), VV's most widely used platform, saw an increase from **240,745 followers to 293,573, marking a robust 22% growth**. [Instagram](#), while starting from a smaller base, demonstrated explosive growth, increasing from **14,519 to 23,362 followers – an impressive 61% surge**. [YouTube](#), VV's platform for long-form video content, showcased the most dramatic growth, with subscriber numbers growing from **15,271 to 28,068, an extraordinary 84% increase**.

Grassroots Social Media Reach (May 2023 to May 2024)

These figures not only represent numerical growth but also signify a broader narrative of digital inclusion. Many CCs who were novices to social media at the start of this journey, have become influential voices in their communities, bridging the digital divide and bringing rural stories to a global audience.

Facebook , Instagram and Youtube



While all 117 CCs were active on Facebook from the outset, a significant uptake in Instagram and YouTube usage was seen over the year.

Instagram, in particular, saw a complete adoption, with all 117 CCs embracing the platform by the end of the study period, up from 93 at the baseline. This shift reflects a growing understanding of the

power of visual storytelling and the platform's popularity among younger audiences.

YouTube adoption doubled over the year, from 46 CCs to 95. This increase is particularly noteworthy given the higher technical barriers to entry for video content creation. It demonstrates not only growing digital skills among the CCs but also their commitment to in-depth storytelling and community journalism.

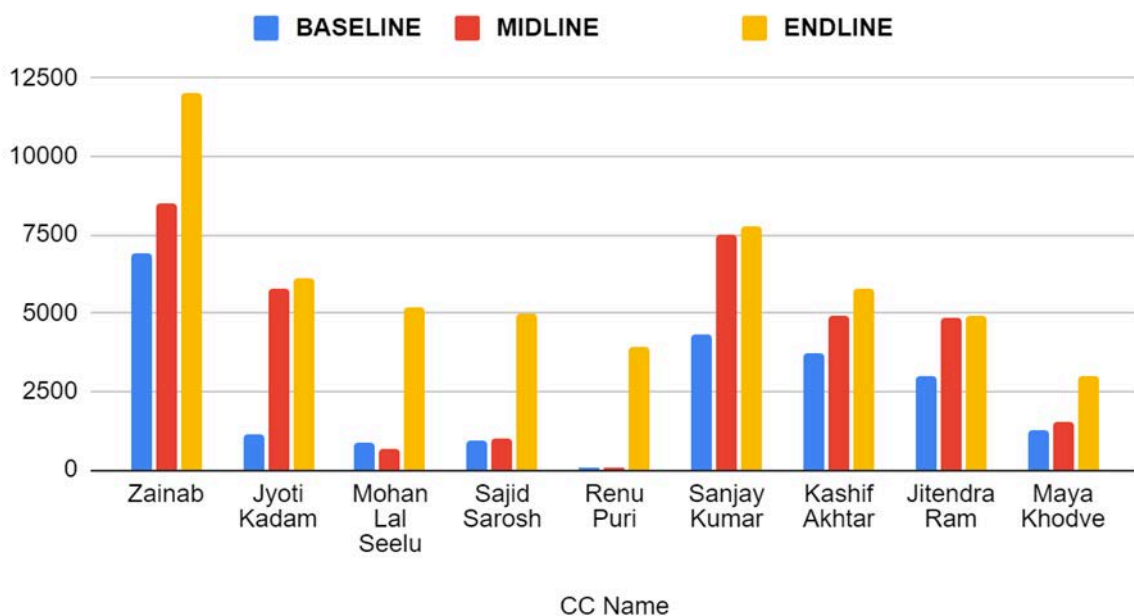
Top-performing CCs

While the overall growth is impressive, certain individuals within the network have shown extraordinary progress, becoming true digital champions.

On Facebook, Jyoti Kadam who faced a lot of criticism for being a woman content creator stood out with an increase from 1,149 to 6,100 followers – a staggering 431% annual growth. Another CC, Renu Puri, determined to create sustainable impact, started with just 45 followers on Facebook, and ended the year with 3,900, an unprecedented 8567% growth.

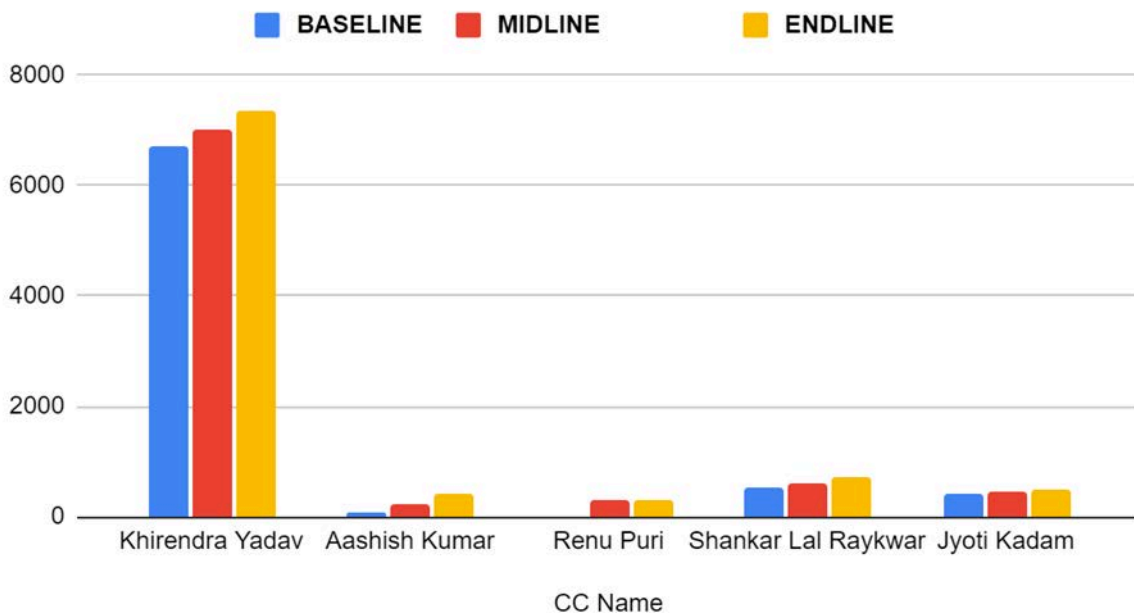
[In a world where cyber bullying against women is a common phenomenon](#), these two women emerge as the beacon of hope, empowerment and determination.

FACEBOOK GROWTH(TOP CCs)



On Instagram, Chetan Salve and Rubi Saha demonstrated the platform's potential for rapid growth. Chetan, an activist with 22 years in the [Narmada Bachao Andolan](#), saw his follower count rise from 9 to 560. Through social media, he shares stories of oppression and marginalisation, bringing attention to the fight for justice. Similarly, Rubi, who has been actively working against human trafficking in West Bengal and participating in awareness talks in the Tea Gardens, grew her follower count from 2 to 515. Representing growth rates of 6122% and 25650% respectively, these figures not only highlight individual success stories but also showcase the immense potential of Instagram for the CCs.

YOUTUBE GROWTH(TOP CCs)



YouTube, despite its higher entry barriers, also saw impressive individual growth. Renu Puri, continuing her stellar performance across platforms, grew her subscriber base from 5 to 295, a 5800% increase. Aashish channels his passion for filmmaking into compelling stories that resonate with his YouTube audience. He focuses on the challenges faced by 'schemes workers' in Delhi, shedding light on their struggles and hopes. His dedication has led to significant growth in his YouTube channel, which has expanded from 70 to 426 subscribers, bringing these vital stories to a wider audience.

Low-Performing CCs

While celebrating the successes, WV remains committed to addressing challenges within the network. The analysis identified a

group of low-performing CCs, defined as those with fewer than 300 followers on Facebook. While some improvement in this area was seen– with the number of low-performing CCs decreasing from 19 to 15 over the year – there's still work to be done.

These findings have prompted VV to reevaluate and enhance the support strategies. It is important to remember that not all CCs progress at the same rate, with some facing personal challenges, time constraints, or varying levels of interest in digital engagement.

The CC Effect on VV

VV's analysis reveals a heartening trend in how the CCs engage with and share its content. **Out of 143 active CCs surveyed, a substantial 70.63% shared their own VV videos within the last 30 days.** This high engagement rate demonstrates not only the CCs' pride in their work but also their understanding of the power of social media in amplifying local stories.

Interestingly, the sharing of content created by other CCs associated with VV itself was slightly lower, with 45.45% of CCs participating in this practice. While this figure is encouraging, it also highlights an opportunity for making a more collaborative content ecosystem within the network. By encouraging CCs to share each other's work, a more robust and interconnected digital community can be created, strengthening VV's collective voice even further.

Zooming in on the top-performing CCs evidently shows the impact of consistent content sharing. Among the top 10 CCs based on Facebook followers, 9 regularly share VV-related content. This correlation between high follower counts and consistent VV content sharing suggests a symbiotic relationship – CCs benefit from the engaging content provided by VV, while VV's reach expands through these influential community voices.

Take, for instance, Jyoti Kadam, whose Facebook following grew from 1,149 to 6,100 over the year, or Renu Puri, who started with just 45 followers and ended the year with 3,900. These success stories not only inspire other CCs but also demonstrate the potential of grassroots journalism in the digital age.

The growth of the CCs' social media presence has created a positive ripple effect on VVs' organisational accounts. While the impact varies across platforms, the overall trend is encouraging.

On Facebook, where the CCs saw an 8.74% growth from midline to endline, the organisational page experienced a modest but positive 1.85% increase in followers. While the organisation's growth is smaller, it's still positive, suggesting that CCs' increased activity may be helping to attract new followers to the main page.

The impact is even more pronounced on Instagram. CCs' dramatic 16.11% growth on this platform coincided with a 4.47% increase in followers for the organisational account. This notable increase likely benefited from the CCs' expanded reach and engagement on the platform, underlining the power of visual storytelling.

YouTube presents a more complex picture. While the CCs showed a robust 10.06% growth in subscribers, VV's YouTube channel saw a modest 0.81% increase. This suggests that while CCs are growing their individual audiences, there might be opportunities to better use this growth to drive more subscribers to the main channel.

The analysis also revealed a compelling interconnection between the number of training sessions attended by CCs and their social media growth. **CCs who participated in multiple training sessions generally saw more significant increases in their follower counts.** For instance, Renu Puri, who attended 10 training sessions, saw her Facebook following skyrocket by 3723.53% from the midline to endline assessment.

However, this mutuality is not universal. CCs like Arati Chik Barik, despite attending numerous training sessions, showed minimal growth, indicating that other factors also play crucial roles in social media success.

Recommendations

As VV looks ahead, it is crucial to build upon the successes of the grassroots social media initiatives by expanding the approach and refining the strategies. The following recommendations aim to deepen its impact and extend the benefits of VV's learnings to a broader circle of participants.

To ensure that the grassroots social media strategies have a wider impact, it is essential to involve participants from the *Buland Bol* program in VV's training and planning sessions, not just the CCs. By doing so, a larger pool of skilled campaigners can be cultivated who are equipped to create compelling campaigns that resonate with local audiences.

The creation of impactful campaigns hinges on understanding the preferences of the local audiences. It's vital that VV begins to gather insights directly from CCs on what their audiences want. This approach will help in modifying the content into something more relevant and engaging. Furthermore, building a sense of being heard among these audiences will be key to sustaining their engagement.

Mentors play a critical role in guiding CCs, and their involvement can be leveraged more effectively. For instance, when reviewing videos, mentors should link to the specific videos shared by CCs or slightly adjust the review form to capture richer insights. This process will ensure that every mentor visit to a CC's social media page is purposeful and contributes to a broader understanding of content performance.

Utilising the tags and types of content shared by CCs, VV can craft personalised grassroots strategies that align with each CC's unique style and audience. This customised approach will enable more precise content creation and distribution, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the campaigns.

To build a strong, supportive network Community Content Creators, VV will plan regular cross-learning sessions among CCs starting in July. These sessions will encourage the exchange of ideas, strategies, and experiences, fostering a collaborative learning environment that benefits everyone involved.

Conclusion

This report underscores the transformative power of grassroots social media when driven by empowered Community Content Creators (CCs). Through the dedicated efforts of CCs and the strategic support from Video Volunteers, there has been a tangible increase in both individual and organisational presence across various social media platforms. CCs have not only grown their follower bases on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube but have also become more effective in sharing content that resonates with their local communities. This success is a testament to the impact of ongoing training and support, which has equipped CCs with the skills and confidence needed to amplify their voices and the issues they represent.

However, this journey has not been without its challenges. One of the persistent issues has been the uneven participation and engagement levels among CCs. While some have flourished, others have struggled to maintain consistent activity or fully utilise the resources available to them. This disparity highlights the need for more tailored support and mentoring, ensuring that every CC, regardless of their starting point, can thrive in the digital landscape.

Another challenge has been fostering a culture of collaboration within the network. Encouraging CCs to reshare content from their peers is not only about boosting visibility but also about building a stronger, more interconnected community. This remains an area for growth, where strategic interventions and more structured cross-learning opportunities could make a significant difference.

Despite these challenges, the overall trajectory is one of hope and optimism. The voices of grassroots communities are being amplified more than ever before, and with the right strategies in place, they will continue to shape the narrative on social media and beyond. As a way forward, the hope is that these voices will not only be heard but will lead to meaningful change, driving social justice and empowering **communities to take charge of their own stories.**

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