



Trainees in an offline session on Storyboard development at Khabar Lahariya's local office in Banda, Uttar Pradesh

Five-week Rural Mobile Journalism Course Conducted for Women in Lalitpur, Uttar Pradesh

There exist barriers that are steep for rural women to climb to annihilate the existing digital divide. While access remains a major hurdle, the lack of digital literacy adds to the problem. Through the Technology & Rural Advancement for Women Empowerment through Annihilating Gender Digital Divide (TARA WE ADD) Project, supported by Reliance Foundation, we encourage women to gain access to not only digital technology through mobile phones, but also knowledge, further leading to empowerment.

During our mid-line assessment of the project, while conducting field visits, we came across women who wanted to be able to do more with a smartphone for their community development. We found that these women struggle to find the source of their oppression. Patriarchy is considered a given fact rather than a social construct. This thought paradigm needed to be challenged. This led us brainstorm on the ways the feminist lens can be nurtured, while women delve into community development and begin questioning these constructs.

Post research, we found an apt course for these women, i.e., R Mo Jo – Rural Mobile Journalism – which is run by Chambal Academy, a training body of Khabar Lahariya. Khabar Lahariya is the country's only women-run rural digital news agency. Development Alternatives and Khabar Lahariya entered into a partnership to bring digital gig opportunities to women in Lalitpur, Uttar Pradesh. Through R Mo Jo course, we provide an opportunity to women to enter the field of journalism from their homes using smartphones. Smartphones enable them to gain access to the course curriculum and a host of curated content aimed towards developing skills for grassroots journalism.

It was a 5-week online course, for which 10 women were shortlisted from the pool of 800+ digitally literate women trained under our TARA WE ADD project. These women were selected on the basis of their interest in community work and aspirations to bring the developmental issues to the forefront using social media. As part of the course, these women learnt how to use smartphones to understand the intricacies of the art of storytelling from a feminist lens and to create a whole narrative around an issue at hand.



Figure 1: Layout of the whole process of collaboration with Khabar Lahariya

During the first three weeks of the training, the women understood the essentials of news, news from a feminist lens and oppression, how to capture news, storytelling, covering an event from all of its angles, talking to perpetrators, victims, and other stakeholders, and how to raise an issue with the concerned authorities. In the fourth week, the trainees were taken to Banda, Uttar Pradesh, to put their learnings to test and develop a sound understanding of the processes involved in the making of a ‘news’ for activism and advocacy. The trainees learned together and went through the process of developing a storyboard, executing it, taking photographs and videos, and finally scripting the whole news. For the final assignment, the trainees worked on a local issue ranging from land ownership to domestic violence to climate change and presented it from multiple perspectives, providing visibility to the issue and instituting a change.

The 5-week course has now come to an end with final assignment submissions. Moving forward, trainees with the most ‘critical’ outlook will be offered an on-site internship leading to jobs/gigs.



Ahaliya Rajput, rural mobile journalism trainee, expressing her views on her journey of the course, in conversation with Khabar Lahariya’s ground reporter



Trainees learning how to take shots using their smartphones for news coverage in Banda, Uttar Pradesh