Data Communication and Reporting

Using data to tell stories
By IndiaSpend Team
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What We Do

❖ Health/sanitation/nutrition
❖ Education
❖ Employment
❖ Climate change & environment
❖ Public finances
❖ Justice, police and prisons systems
❖ Agriculture
❖ Disadvantaged communities
Our Objectives

❖ To get research and data out of laboratories and academic papers and into public consciousness by converting them into easy language

❖ To merge or otherwise validate this data with grassroots reportage to create easily accessible stories with wide public appeal

❖ To spread these stories through digital means, including social media, and make them widely available—to the media and consumers
To generate original data, find the people they represent and fill gaps in national information where they might exist.

To use collaborations to maximise effect, reach and depth: Harvard University, Khabar Lahariya, Video Volunteers, Global Strategic Communications Council, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Population Foundation of India, Family Planning Association of India, Council on Energy, Environment & Water.
What we will cover today

- Why should you use data for advocacy, communications, outreach?
- How can data be communicated forcefully and in an accessible manner?
- What are the major errors in data communication?
- What are the latest ways of visualising data?
Why Use Data?

❖ Complete, accurate information is the backbone of all advocacy, outreach and marketing efforts

❖ Data bolsters your case with the public, the government, with funders
Data in Stories

- Providing examples and stories is an important aspect of advocacy and outreach. When these stories are supported with facts from data sources, the stories have more impact. Data helps decision makers understand how issues affect the community and provides a larger context for individual experience. When used correctly, data lends your voice credibility.
‘Govt Failing To Provide Care, Services To Young Adults From Childcare Homes’

Swagata Yadav | November 14, 2019
The first large report on young people leaving childcare homes on turning 18 has found many of them unable to find work due to poor educational qualifications, lack of proper documents and precarious housing arrangements.

The state is required by law to hand-hold such young adults in their journey from institutions to the “real” world, especially as they have little or no family support. However, state support is either missing or far from adequate, the study from five states and based on interviews with more than 400 “care-leavers”, says.

About 370,000 children were lodged in 9,589 childcare institutes across the country, as per a September 2018 government committee report.
In Odisha’s Residential Schools For Tribal Girls, Education Comes At A Cost

Sarita Santoshini  |  November 21, 2019
Rayagada, Malkangiri (Odisha): Sitting on a rock under the shade of a tree, friends Momita Batra and Karma Mandali giggled as they recalled their first day in school. They were about five years old when they had started to overhear older boys in the village who attended school, including their brothers, speak about the benefits of education. They had asked to be sent to school, but their parents had firmly refused.

The only school in the vicinity had been a residential one, several kilometres away. “We packed some clothes and escaped one day,” Batra said, laughing. “The school’s cook was from our village. She admitted us and later informed our parents.” The girls, now 14 and only a few months away from appearing for their secondary school board examination, have since visited Podeiguda, their remote village in the hilly terrains of southern Odisha, only during vacations. The hostel has been their home.

Podeiguda in Malkangiri district is home to the Bondas, recognised as one of 13 particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTG) in Odisha. Many parents here no longer deny their daughters a school education (female literacy in the community was 22%, according to the 2011 Census).

About 160 km away, a mother grieves the death of her daughter, also about 14 years old, who was found dead in the government-run residential school she attended in Sikhapali. “It was a girls’ school, an ashram school. We thought it would be safe, that is why we sent her there,” she said, wiping away tears with her sari pallu. The family are of Bengali origin and have been living in Odisha for generations.

According to the local police in Malkangiri, the young girl is alleged to have taken her life after having been sexually assaulted by the headmaster, who was arrested but is now out on bail. The parents, however, are adamant that she was murdered, but say there is nothing they can do to get to the truth or receive justice.
For decades, residential schools have been Odisha government’s answer to the challenge of taking school education to remote tribal hamlets, where the girls are especially deprived of educational opportunities and compelled to shoulder the responsibility of running the household. It is also meant to keep youngsters from falling into Maoist company.

By 2016-17, 550,000 girls from tribal communities were living in state-run residential schools. These hostels, however, have also reported a number of deaths and cases of sexual abuse. In Mayurbhanj in 2017, 100 girls had walked 15 km to lodge complaints of misbehaviour with the collector. In Kandhamal district in July 2019, the pregnancy of a minor had come to light. In Angul district just a few days ago, 250 girl students vacated their hostels for lack of food and hygiene.

Beginning with a 10-day trip in December 2018 across five schools and seven villages in Malkangiri and Rayagada districts, this reporter has investigated the conditions at Odisha’s residential schools, particularly for girls.

Visiting, speaking to and following up with numerous students, parents, school staff and NGO representatives over a period of months, we found that despite the attention that tribal girls’ education receives from the government and the investments purportedly made, residential schools are poorly run and ripe for abuse.

The first-generation students’ experience in an alien and often unsympathetic environment is not conducive for personal growth. Students are constantly reminded that they should be grateful for the free education and lodging, and not complain when facilities and services fall short--which, we found, they frequently do.

Girls are especially vulnerable and have few means to share grievances without fear, much less seek redressal or justice. Experts were of the opinion that by providing substandard quality of life and education, residential schools are further perpetuating class and caste divides and discrimination, and are not the answer to Odisha’s education challenges.
Using Data Correctly

Use data correctly, or it could hurt your cause.

Some Do’s:

❖ Always cite the source of your data so your audience or readers can access it themselves.
❖ Never make a claim that the data does not support. Interpreting data correctly is of utmost importance.
❖ Do not censor.

...Cont.
❖ Make sure your data are from a trustworthy organization. Always go back to the primary source to confirm the data.

❖ Even if the data you want to use comes from a trustworthy source, decide for yourself if it makes sense. If the data seems wrong or confusing or too good/bad to be true, contact the source and ask for more information.

❖ If you use data from an untrustworthy source, it can make your audience discount, or not listen to or trust, what you have to say.
Common Mistakes

- Cherry-picking
- Dredging: correlation v. causation
- Sampling bias: whether sample is representative, large enough
- Recency bias: because something has happened, doesn’t mean it will happen again
- Observer effect
- McNamara effect: over-reliance on data at the cost of other factors

Read more at: https://www.geckoboard.com/learn/data-literacy/statistical-fallacies/
Invert the Pyramid

Academic Study

Supporting Details

Conclusions

Journalistic Story

Key Findings

Context & Background

Supporting Details

Background
How to Write a Good Story

❖ Know your audience
❖ Have a compelling narrative, beginning with a strong hook
❖ Provide context and background
❖ Structure it right
❖ Remove jargon
❖ Keep it succinct
❖ Make it thorough
Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), among the four Indian states with the highest prevalence of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), recorded tobacco sales worth Rs 5,530 crore over seven years to 2017-18, according to state sales tax data exclusively accessed by IndiaSpend. This is the equivalent of the funds needed to construct four state-of-the-art hospitals along the lines of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Jammu.
COPD, typified by coughing, wheezing and breathlessness, is the second most frequent killer disease in India, responsible for the death of almost 1 million Indians in 2017, IndiaSpend reported in March 2018, citing the Global Burden of Disease study by the University of Washington, US. Caused by the inflammation of the lung’s airways, it destroys the air sacs that extract oxygen and expel carbon dioxide.

Air pollution and smoking have been established as the primary reasons for COPD in India, according to a 2018 study published in The Lancet.

J&K witnesses widespread burning of biomass fuel for cooking and heating, as well as widespread smoking, which together cause a 16-18% prevalence rate for COPD in the state, while the national avg is 5-7%, said Sundeep Salvi, director of the Pune-based Chest Research Foundation in this interview to IndiaSpend on March 3, 2019.
Who is Your Audience?

What does the audience know about the topic? Is it meant for decision makers, general interested parties, or others? The visualization needs to be framed around the level of information the audience already has, correct and incorrect:

- **Novice**: first exposure to the subject, but doesn’t want oversimplification
- **Generalist**: aware of the topic, but looking for an overview understanding and major themes
- **Managerial**: in-depth, actionable understanding of intricacies and interrelationships with access to detail
- **Expert**: more exploration and discovery and less storytelling with great detail
- **Executive**: only has time to glean the significance and conclusions of weighted probabilities

Source: Harvard Business Review
If you do not grab the reader’s attention immediately, tell her why she should care about what you’re saying, answer the question “So what?”, you are likely to have lost her.

A story without context is a string of facts and figures. It is your job to offer context/perspective.

Context/perspective should answer the so-what or why-should-I-care question.

Context must say why this story is important to the reader’s life.
Let’s consider the context

“In response to Kerala’s request for Rs 2,000 crore ($286 million) for the rehabilitation of those affected by recent floods, the Centre has released Rs 600 crore, 30% of what the state sought.”

Now, provide some context to those numbers:

- That’s less than the cost of one Rafale fighter jet, 36 of which India hopes to buy from France—Rs 670 crore.
- The amount being spent on the construction of an exhibition cum convention centre in New Delhi—Rs 700 crore.
- The amount spent on the purchase of two new VVIP planes for the President, Vice President and Prime Minister—Rs 4,470 crore ($640 million).
National Health Mission (NHM) funds unspent by states over five years to 2016 increased by 29%, according to a recent audit by the government’s auditor, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

Let’s add context. Why does this matter?

- The NHM, launched in 2005, is India’s largest health programme, aimed at providing universal access to healthcare. One of its primary missions is to improve maternal and child health, and control communicable and non-communicable diseases.

- India still accounts for 17% of maternal deaths globally; 61% of deaths in 2016 were from non-communicable diseases; communicable diseases, like leprosy and malaria, are widespread, and 55 million Indians slipped into poverty in 2011-12 because of health catastrophes they could not afford.
➢ 2.5 times the money spent by Maharashtra on its micro-irrigation scheme to prevent drought
➢ Money required to restore roughly 300 medieval forts in Maharashtra
➢ 5 times the budget for the state’s electricity generation projects
➢ 3.5 times the budget for infrastructure development across Maharashtra’s municipal councils and nagar panchayats

7x

The 2016-17 budget to build new rural roads and fix older ones in Maharashtra

₹3600 crore statue
Over 15 Years, India Slides On Key Marker Of Gender Parity

Charu Bahri  |  March 3, 2018
India was close to meeting the single stated target of the UN Millennium Development Goal on gender equality: Gender parity at all levels of education by 2015.

But between 2000 and 2015, the timeline for implementing the Millennium Development Goals, the country moved backward on a key informally tracked marker of gender equality that has since been made target of the more ambitious UN Sustainable Development Goals on gender equality--women’s participation in the economy. Social and cultural factors have ensured that Indian women still make for only 27.2% of its workforce.

On another marker--women’s representation in politics--a lack of affirmative action means that they hold only 11.8% of India's Parliament seats.
How to work with journalists

❖ Embargoed reports
❖ Advocacy collaborations
❖ Fellowship opportunities
❖ Research collaborations
Impact of Data-Driven Stories

- IndiaSpend’s January 2019 story on displacement of tribals due to development projects was cited by Member of Parliament Kirodi Lal Meena in the Rajya Sabha while asking a question, in July 2019, on such displacement in eight Indian states.

- IndiaSpend story on the drought in Andhra Pradesh led to a high-level meeting being called to discuss the drought situation and plan how to deal with the situation.
IndiaSpend analysed the Centre’s Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram, a national youth health programme, in this July 2019 story, focusing on child marriages in Uttar Pradesh. After this story was published, a conference of state health officials was organised, and special attention is being given to the issue of teen pregnancies. Officials issued a directive to start a special drive called the “right age of marriage” to raise awareness through adolescent-friendly clubs. Married adolescents will be especially identified and counselled on family planning methods.

The Reserve Bank of India used an Indiaspend article on farm loan waiver in their paper Farm Loan Waivers, Fiscal Deficit and Inflation published on Sept 11th, 2017. https://www.rbi.org.in/Scripts/MSM_Mintstreetmemos5.aspx
Looking forward to reading the stories you have to tell