



Digital Storytelling Workshop



6th to 11th September 2021 by SANGRAM,
Point of View and NNSW as part of the
VAMP Institute series 2021



A Learning Experience for members of
Samvedana Sangathan

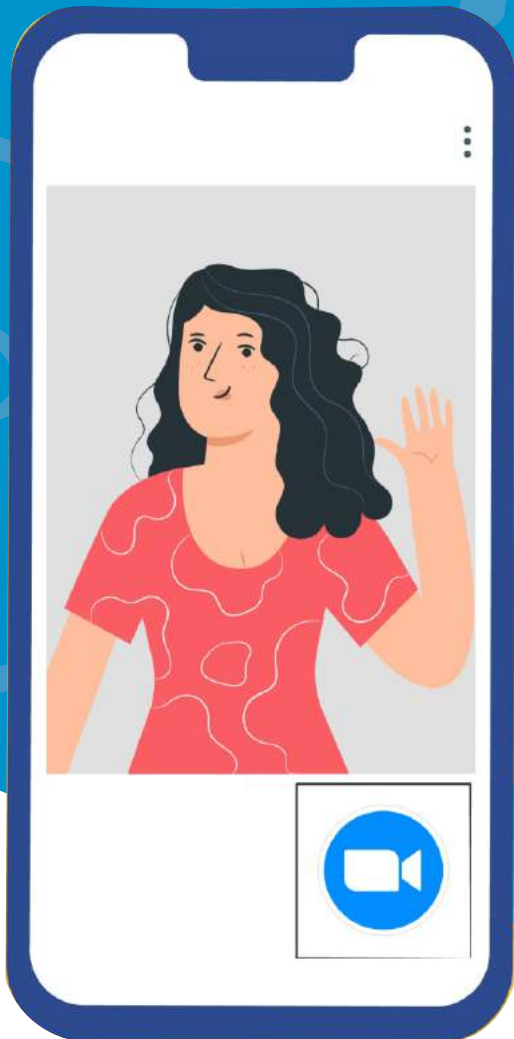


Organised by SANGRAM and Point of View as part of the VAMP series 2021. A workshop on Digital Story Telling was hosted by Point of View and National Network of Sex Workers for the community members of Jwala Shakti Samuh (Jharkhand) and Samvedana Sangathan (Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan – Kutch, Gujarat).



The participating members from Kutch were

Bhavna Dinesh Nimawat	(Community Member)
Kaushalya Amrutlal Uperia	(Community Member)
Vanita Joshi	(Community Member)
Poonam Balindra Sharma	(CBO Staff/Community Member)
Chetan Manubhai Gajjar	(CBO Staff/Community Member)
Aneesh Mohan	(CBO Staff/Supporter)



The workshop was held online on the consecutive dates between 6th- 11th September, 2021 through Zoom Application for Hosting Virtual Meetings.



Background

Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan

KMVS is a 32-year-old organisation that seeks to empower women such that they are capable and confident decision-making partners in village, community and regional development initiatives. KMVS is based on the idea of collective empowerment that is capable of independently addressing gender inequities and engendering a sustainable, socio-economic transformation in the region. Its central philosophy and guiding premise are that empowerment is a process that women themselves must direct and promote in order to best affect change. From this approach, women are not merely the beneficiaries of development or empowerment, but are the designers and implementers of the interventions themselves.

KMVS has grown from a single collective of rural women, to become a network of 7 grass-root women's organizations with a presence across Kutch, and an active membership of more than 20,000 women. Presently KMVS hosts five programmes viz. **Sushasini** (Elected Women Representatives, Panchayats); **Yuva Vani** (Youth, Educational Institutions, Adolescent girls); **Social-legal Aid and Hello Sakhi Helpline** (Paralegal Volunteers, Survivors, Judicial Systems); **Caste-based Communities** (Jatt and Devipujak Community); **Urban Intervention** (Slum-dwelling women, Sex Workers, Urban infrastructure officers).





Samvedana Sangathan

Samvedana is collective of Female Sex Workers based in Kutch that informally aggregated in 2018. Through constant mobilisation and organisation by the community members and Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan (, a collective was formed to support the existence of sex workers, understand and address their questions, fight for advocacy for woman's autonomy over her body, for sex work and sex worker's rights, and support the children of sex workers. It is run by female sex workers and is presently being nurtured as a collective by KMVS. Samvedana aspires to generate empathy and sensitivity in the society towards sex workers. Simultaneously, the collective functions to provide entitlements and rights of its members granted to them as citizens. The CBO has cultivated leaders that cater to FSWs spread across the vastness of Kutch.

Workshop Design

Trainers – Lalita Iyer, Srikrupa “Krupa” Raghunathan, Hansa Thapliyal

Facilitators – Riddhi Mehta, Shantilal Kale

Supporters – Aneesh Mohan

Date	Day	Activity
6th Sep '21	1	Introduction; Ice Breakers; Prompt
7th Sep '21	2	Sharing Stories; First Line
8th Sep '21	3	Refining Stories; First Visualisation; Recording Audio
9th Sep '21	4	Imparting Visuals (By pictures and/or images)
10th Sep '21	5	Developing Stories; Editing
11th Sep '21	6	Sharing completed digital stories; Congratulatory Remarks

PREFACE

Samvedana Sangathan is a young CBO of female sex workers. Coming from marginalised sections, and with the double whammy of being sex workers, often the stories of community members remain unheard and untold, whether to the masses or even to oneself. The Digital Storytelling Workshop presented as an opportunity for the participating sex workers to share their stories in a format that was neither conceived previously nor as easily shareable.

For majority of the participants, it was also their first time attending a workshop on a virtual platform. Additionally, they also do not read or write in English. While the supporter remained present throughout the workshop, it was also their prerogative to make the participants as self-sufficiently capable as possible. Considering the aforementioned, the participants received a pre-workshop-training on attending virtual meetings, and navigating and translating on the web using voice commands without having to read or write in the internet-friendly English language. This helped the participants complete all pre-requisites and be able to fully enjoy and enthusiastically attend the workshop.



The Workshop Experience

For each participant, the workshop provided a window that helped them revisit distant but very significant memory from their past. A common emotion throughout the workshop was of being 'heard' and also so intently, in front of an unknown audience. With initial few troubles of an online-mode, the participants adapted quickly to the setting. Even for those who are used to virtual meetings, participating in a three-hour meeting can be taxing. Despite this, majority participants with a few breaks and little encouragements were able to breeze through it. They felt it was a big step in their growth as being able to connect to people in different parts of the country opens a door of opportunities to them.

Initially, when they were shown stories from previous workshop, they had not fathomed that perhaps by the end of it, it would be their stories playing on the meeting. As the end-result was still a mystery, they had to rely more on their self-discipline as opposed to motivation, to complete their daily-homework. Sometimes, an extra dose of motivation from the supporter and the trainers helped them.

The workshop unintentionally acted like a time machine which transported participants to an era where they felt that pain for the first time. Reiterations of their story as part of the workshop and also the final piece was virtually an experience of catharsis as it helped release an undescribed and forgotten part of their selves. A few participants described this as 'finding closure'. There was an initial sensing of apprehension (about the workshop itself, and their own capabilities) but culminated with confidence and pride.

As the participants hardly ever find a chance to interact with similar communities outside of their own group (in Kutch), meeting the JSS team in a semi-formal setting and finding them as partners in the journey was interesting to the participants.

It was also their first time using an online platform which has been received with positive feedback. There is a new sense of pride and mainly confidence for both completing the workshop and for getting over the technological bridge.



Voices from the Community

We had a six-day long journey to Jharkhand! I really liked the story of the Koyal and the story of the Ant (stories of participants from JSS). Honestly, I initially found it very difficult. After a long session on one day, we had to prepare for the next day. But I believe, a little bit of a push from Poonam and Aneesh, and my own self-motivation did the trick. My story looks very beautiful completed. I want to make more such stories every day. I will share them in my circle and with friends. I also wish I could introduce myself to all the trainers and participants and interact with them in-person, someday. Until then, there's always zoom.



Bhavna



I enjoyed the workshop. I had difficulty in connecting but I still want to learn this skill. I love retelling my stories but I believe this medium is different and unique. I am very proud of everyone looking at all the stories.

Kaushalya

I had a lot of fun. I could not join the first day but despite that, everyone helped me catch up. I was tensed if I could do this workshop or not. I loved all stories. I really thank everyone for this. I wish we and our Samvedana Sangathan gets more such opportunities.

Vanita



I was very emotional. I have been through a lot and to see my story being told in such a manner brought tears to my eyes. I also felt connected to all those who shared stories. I think pain is a very strong connector. I don't even read or write yet I could finish this workshop. I am so grateful and I am feeling very confident. I want to thank the trainers for being so sensitive and also being patient with us.



Poonam



As a supporter, I feel very responsible for my team. Watching them grow and be able to share their stories when often they get suppressed, was extremely heartwarming. I felt very included. My highlight of the workshop was its end where we all were tethered with reverberating threads of simple human emotion. It was also beautiful working with JSS team because it was an informal interaction and I feel we should definitely connect more often.

Aneesh

This was a very good interesting experience. We know our story but to be able to express it in such a manner was unprecedented. At some level, I also felt connected to them (participants from JSS) because I learnt their way of life and struggles. It was difficult to stay connected but I believe my enthusiasm made up for the poor network. I am feeling very enthusiastic about making more such stories or documentaries of others.

Chetan



Concluding Remarks

A digital story-telling workshop through courtesies of NNSW and POV, with members of Samvedana Sangathan provided a beautiful window for putting stories in a more presentable format, simultaneously, keeping up with the increasing pace of technology. The workshop has been received with extremely positive feedback and similar workshops in the future will help build capacities of the community further.

