

What is a Ground Up story?

[Ground Up](#) is a segment on [India Development Review](#) (IDR) that features anecdotal, easy-to-read stories providing hyperlocal insights from the grassroots. These stories should be brief, observation-led, and specific to a village, block, or district. And, where possible, should be accompanied by relevant photos from the ground.

[Here is more information to provide greater clarity on what we are looking for.](#)

Ground Up [stories](#) are typically **400–450 words long**; they shouldn't be more than 500 words. There are broadly five types of stories we publish.

1. Stories that dispel commonly held assumptions or offer unexpected/interesting insights

The assumption should be one commonly held by people working in, or somewhat knowledgeable about, the social sector. Avoid considering assumptions that the general public might have but the sector has already dispelled.

a. An example of a Ground Up story:

In West Bengal's Paschim Medinipur district, women from marginalised castes are feeling disempowered because, despite being in a setting meant to uplift women, their voices are stymied by the upper-caste SHG leaders.

Note: This story works because it challenges the narrative that SHGs are all-empowering and highlights casteism at an SHG in a hyperlocal setting.

b. A story that we won't accept:

Anganwadi centres are under-staffed, and the anganwadi worker is too burdened with paperwork to carry out her duties properly.

Note: This example would not work because the fact that anganwadi centres are not functioning at par is not new, nor is it (unfortunately) an unexpected insight. **However, a more nuanced narrative on the topic might work.** For example, we would carry a Ground Up about the language challenges of Tamil anganwadi workers at border district in Kerala where Malayalam is the lingua franca.

More examples: [Power for whom](#) | ["What will women do with land?"](#) | [Stoves and mosquitoes](#)

2. Stories that present an observation

You may not have spent a lot of time in a village/block/district but may still have an interesting observation to share from there. These might also include themes such as local practices or cultures that are relatively unknown. In such cases, it is important that the story offers a window into what you **saw**, not what you **thought** about what you saw. The focus should be on the community, and analysis should be avoided.

a. An example of a Ground Up story:

Due to climate change, in Karnataka, the Irula community's harvesting season and their primary festival now arrives at the same time.

Note: This is an observation from the ground that the author will substantiate with quotes or examples.

b. A story that we won't accept:

People in this village are addicted to their phones and have little time to invest in other activities.

Note: This is a generic, blanket statement about the community.

More examples: [A community library isn't enough](#) | [Religion or climate?](#) | ["Drought or famine, the Tharus will survive"](#)

3. Stories that capture perspectives of people from the community

Ground Up also features the insights and perspectives of community members themselves that provide a deeper understanding of what people from a particular community think.

a. An example of a Ground Up story:

As a farmer from the Musahar community in Sonbhadra, Uttar Pradesh, I will write about why organic farming doesn't work for us.

Note: This is a community member's perspective into why he and his people cannot adopt a technique that's being promoted for sustainable agriculture.

b. A story that we won't accept:

Since I started working with a nonprofit, I have changed the fortunes of my village by putting 500 children in school and recruiting 200 women in SHGs.

Note: In its current shape, it is an impact story which we won't carry. However, we might be interested in learning whether there were interesting communication strategies that you used to convince community members.

Examples: [The anticlock watch](#) | [I travelled from Mizoram to Assam to learn the Hindi language](#) | [A peepal tree of a marriageable age](#)

4. Stories that highlight unexpected insights from a nonprofit's work

Ground Ups also feature insights and learnings from nonprofit fieldworkers, surveyors, and other people who work closely with the communities. However, the focus should firmly be on the issues and should not be on promoting programmes run by organisations. These stories often benefit from insights from the community members themselves.

a. **An example of a Ground Up story:**

Here's why during our financial survey, women in Osmanabad, Maharashtra, refused to reveal their savings in gold.

Note: This promises to delve deeper into an issue that a surveyor encountered during their work with a community. We would ask them to tell us why the community was hesitant.

b. **A story that we won't accept:**

As we hired a woman from a remote village in Rajasthan, we helped her fight the cultural norms that were preventing her from owning vehicles in her village.

Note: This presents a saviour narrative that promotes the organisation's work.

Examples: [Why go for gold?](#) | [Why a village community in Madhya Pradesh wanted to build a well](#)

5. Stories that shed light on how the community is responding to a government policy/scheme

Several development programmes by governments or nonprofits run into implementation issues, many of which can be unpredictable and may cause the programme to produce unexpected results. These insights can be useful for future programme or policy design.

Examples: [Identity crisis](#) | [Where did the money go?](#) | [A balanced diet?](#)

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Send in your entries at groundup@idronline.org. For information on submission requirements, consent, editorial rights, etc., please visit our [website](#).