

IN DATA WE TRUST

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What gets measured, gets managed,” said the late management guru Peter Drucker. *Down To Earth* has been doing this for 25 years. We do not just report on environment and development but also quantify the challenge so that our readers are empowered to bring in the change. Making sense of the huge amount of data that our editorial team is bombarded with everyday has been our challenge. It has been a practice for us to quantify everything for everybody. Thus, data-driven journalism is all about us, and gives us that unique position in the clutter of Indian media.

If that has been our day-to-day job, why do we start an annual State of India’s Environment report told through only data?

In the universe of information, humans have already made an evolutionary leap forward. At a time when the current overflow of information through the virtual platforms was absent, we journalists behaved just like our ancestors: hunter and gatherers. Our work at that time was to tell the story with basic data procured from multiple sources in time consuming and torturous ways. And our readers were forgiving, and even accommodative given the general drought of data in the country.

But, we are now in a time when data is overflowing; information is available from so many sources and so fast that sometimes we end up not making any sense of the happenings. So, processing data and information is the new way to communicate.

The State of India’s Environment 2016: In Figures precisely does this. You read our fortnightly magazine, our annual reports including the *State of India’s Environment* and *State of Health* besides many other publications. They also process information and huge amount of data to inform you in effective ways.

But this annual report uses data as the messenger. It communicates key developments around us in easy to digest and visually appealing ways to understand fast. It demystifies complex issues through data series.

More to it, this book makes data very personal for you while not losing out the larger issue. For example, how many of us walk or drive to office; how much distance

a rural woman walks to fetch water; or what is the status of our river water flow.

One way, the book makes that intimate connection between our personal life and the world outside in just a few sets of data.

Lots of editorial thinking has gone into the organisation of the book. Data is easy to communicate but the biggest challenge is to secure right data from the right sources. Our data scavengers have been on the job round the year to first, identify the relevant data and then to authenticate the sources. Then our editorial team look at those data from the perspective of news developments so that we pick the data that is most relevant to you. Once we finalise the selection of data to be featured, our infographics experts work on the science of design so that the raw data gets the appealing presentation that you see in this report. And this process continues for ever. It is just that in April of every year you will get it in an organised way, as the *The State of India’s Environment 2016: In Figures*.

The report has been organised into two broad sections: the key news of the year just gone by (April 2015-March 2016) in numbers and the next section is the state of key aspects related to environment. While the first section works as the digest for the last year and gives you the perspectives of developments in number, the second section is your data library for ever on key environmental aspects of the country. By buying the report every year, you are creating your own library of data that is comparable and can be used for research and referral.

Down To Earth has always been the most credible instrument of public journalism. Without your help, we simply wouldn’t have survived for 25 years. The book gives you an opportunity to partner with us. If you come across a report that has significant data content; if you know of an institution that stores data or even any kind of alerts on availability of data can further enrich this book. We promise you to acknowledge you in our next report. Write to me at richard@cseindia.org if you have any suggestions or want to partner with us in this new initiative on data-driven journalism. ■