

Uncovering Cruelty: The Investigative Landscape in India

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Executive Summary

This report maps the investigative landscape for animal protection in India. It is based on consultations with 19 investigators and animal advocates conducted from April to September 2025, supplemented by comparative desk research. Sentient, originally an investigations group, now focuses on strengthening investigator capacity and infrastructure. India was selected as the first country in Asia because of its scale of animal agriculture, documented gaps of on-ground practices, feasible opportunities for facility access, active NGO partners, and strong media interest. Our Global CEO is based in India, which improves execution and stakeholder engagement.

Context

India's farmed animal sectors include dairy, poultry, aquaculture, pigs, goats and sheep, camels, and ducks. Most sectors are under-documented despite high volumes and recurring welfare violations.

Findings

- **Operational risks:** Investigators face unsafe conditions, physical intimidation, and a lack of protective systems, particularly in rural and informal settings.
- **Strategic disconnects:** Footage often remains unused because it is not converted into campaign, media, or legal materials, leaving major farming sectors invisible to the public.
- **Infrastructure gaps:** There is no shared equipment pool, few trained investigators, and minimal access to legal or mental health support.
- **Weak professional identity:** Investigations are not viewed as a career path, leading to attrition and loss of expertise.

Priorities

- **Immediate and ongoing:** integrate investigations directly with campaigns, media, and advocacy outputs to ensure that collected evidence drives visible change each year.
- **Next 24 months:** establish training and fellowship programs to professionalize investigators; create a shared equipment bank to improve quality and lower entry costs; and provide structured legal and mental health support.
- **Next 3 to 5 years:** expand region-specific programs, build trusted investigator networks, strengthen NGO partnerships, and develop evidence to impact pipeline to achieve systemic reform.

Conclusion

With these investments, investigations can consistently generate actionable evidence and drive nationwide reform in farmed animal protection. Without them, investigative capacity will remain fragmented and its influence limited.

1. Background

1.1. Introduction

Animal protection investigations have long played a pivotal role in exposing hidden cruelty, shaping public opinion, and driving both corporate and policy change. Across the world, they have revealed the realities of factory farming, inspired major campaigns, and provided advocates with credible evidence against powerful industries. For instance, in 2024, Humane Society International and Finnish group Oikeutta Eläimille (Justice for Animals) released undercover images showing foxes confined in small, barren cages, some with visible injuries, at Finnish fur farms, fueling calls for an EU-wide fur ban (Keaten, 2024). In 2025, media coverage reported that advocacy by the White Coat Waste Project preceded a decision by the United States Navy to end dog and cat experiments (Times of India, 2025).

In India, investigations have been equally significant. Animal Equality's 2023 exposé of slaughterhouses linked to the dairy industry in Maharashtra and Kerala showed animals milked one last time before being killed in full view of others, sparking public outrage (Animal Equality Investigation, 2024). In 2024, further undercover work across pig farms and slaughter sites in Maharashtra, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, and Jharkhand revealed systemic illegality, including pigs being bound, bagged, and slaughtered outside regulated facilities (Animal Equality Investigation, 2025). Beyond farmed animals, PETA India's 2025 exposé of Palamur Biosciences uncovered inhumane experiments on dogs and monkeys, triggering a police probe and Supreme Court intervention against the laboratory (PETA, 2025). In 2024, investigative reporting also uncovered fraudulent animal shelters near Delhi that were exploiting both animals and volunteers, leading to the rescue of more than 50 animals from one such facility (Times of India, 2025).

Today, investigations continue to stand as one of the most effective tools for uncovering abuse and injustice (Nilsson, 2024). Investigations can catalyze corporate reform and policy change when evidence is packaged for media, litigation, and campaigns.

Despite this proven impact, investigators globally face persistent and systemic barriers. The Most Boring Survey 2024, which collected responses from 47 active and former investigators worldwide, highlighted pressing concerns within the field. Out of 46 respondents, 13 (28 percent) said they had considered leaving investigative work. Emotional and financial struggles stood out as key reasons, with 36 respondents (83 percent) reporting at least some level of emotional distress and 29 (63 percent) describing financial insecurity that made it difficult to view investigations as a sustainable long-term career. The absence of professional training also surfaced as a significant challenge, with respondents identifying professional guidance, alongside financial assistance, as the most urgently needed forms of support (Reporters for Animals International, 2025). These findings confirm a broader truth: while investigative work is essential to advancing animal protection, without institutional backing and durable infrastructure, it remains fragile, inconsistent, and at risk of collapse.

Recognizing such need, we at [Sentient](#), a nonprofit originally established to investigate animal cruelty, have shifted our focus towards strengthening the ecosystem of investigators worldwide. Our current goal is to make investigations a viable and sustainable pathway by providing training, support systems and a community for animal protection investigators. After several years of experience internationally, we decided to replicate our success and focus our efforts in Asia.

In late 2024, we began exploring the investigative landscape in Asia. We chose to begin with a single country as a pilot, allowing us to test our approach and evaluate its potential to influence the wider Asian region in the future. After in-depth online research, we identified India as a particularly strong candidate for this pilot. Insights from the India pilot will guide our strategy and inform possible expansion to other countries across South and Southeast Asia.

1.2. Why India? Why Now?

India has one of the largest populations of farmed animals in the world, yet its investigative ecosystem remains underdeveloped, fragmented, and unsupported. Independent investigators frequently operate without adequate equipment, legal safeguards, or financial security, leaving them highly exposed to burnout and personal risk. As a result, systemic cruelty across multiple sectors often goes unchallenged, undermining the foundations of effective advocacy.

Further research underscores the vast scale of suffering, spanning cattle, poultry, pigs, and other animals (India Animal Fund, 2025). A fuller overview of numbers and sector details is provided in Section 3.1. These statistics are compounded by the widespread presence of unregulated illegal farming and slaughter practices. Estimates suggest there may be tens of thousands of illegal slaughterhouses in India compared to a few thousand licensed facilities, though official data are limited (PETA, n.d.). In addition, cattle smuggling remains a major issue: each year, nearly 2 million cattle worth close to ₹10,000 crore are illegally transported, particularly across the Bangladesh border (Times of India, 2023).

Legal protections offer little relief. The Animal Protection Index assigns India poor ratings for animal welfare legislation, particularly for farmed and wild animals (World Animal Protection, 2020). Existing laws permit harmful practices such as dehorning and nose-roping, while enforcement of transport and slaughter regulations remains sporadic, allowing widespread violations to continue unchecked.

Despite these challenges, India holds significant potential for change. Factors such as strong vegetarian traditions, growing media attention and public concern for animal protection lead to promising conditions. The Voiceless Animal Cruelty Index notes that India slaughters only two land-based animals per person per year, compared to a global average of 10.1, and keeps fewer than one farmed animal per person compared to the global average of 4.1. Diets are relatively plant-focused, with 80 percent of animal

protein coming from dairy and just 11.7 percent from meat (Voiceless, 2020). These patterns suggest that while billions of animals endure exploitation, the country's structural dependence on animal agriculture is lower than in many parts of the world.

The intersection of vast scale, weak legislation, and untapped potential makes India a decisive frontier for investigative work. Without dedicated investment, systemic abuses will remain invisible. With focused support, however, investigations can provide the credible evidence necessary to drive campaigns, influence policy, and ultimately safeguard billions of animals across the country.

2. Methodology

2.1. Scope and Focus

This report acknowledges the widespread suffering faced by animals in India, including farmed animals, companion animals, such as: dogs and cats, and working animals, such as: equines, camels, and elephants. Sentient fully supports efforts to prevent cruelty across all these categories.

For the purpose of this report, however, our consultations and analysis focus primarily on farmed animals, where the scale of suffering is vast and the potential for investigations to inform campaigns, corporate reforms, and policy change is greatest.

This strategic focus does not exclude other categories. The investigative infrastructure outlined later in the report is equally valuable for documenting cruelty involving companion and working animals. Over time, the systems developed for farmed animal investigations can be extended and adapted to strengthen accountability and protection across all contexts of animal use in India.

2.2. Approach

The following report is based primarily on qualitative consultations held between April and September 2025 with 19 investigators, animal advocates, and animal advocacy organizations across India. To ensure safety and confidentiality, all conversations were anonymized given the sensitive and high-risk nature of investigative work. Participants were selected for their direct involvement in investigations and advocacy, with additional contacts identified through referrals from initial interviewees.

To broaden the analysis, insights from global surveys and comparative perspectives were also incorporated, helping to situate India's challenges within an international context. While the findings do not aim to be exhaustive, they provide a clear directional understanding of the landscape.

The report presents an overview of the investigative landscape in India. It outlines the current status of farmed animals, challenges investigators face, highlights opportunities for growth, and emphasizes the urgent need for structured support systems. It seeks to lay a strong foundation for Sentient's strategy-setting and to guide further engagement with key stakeholders. More specifically, it aims to:

- Map the current state of investigative work and the systemic challenges it faces in India.
- Identify opportunities to strengthen investigations as a professional and strategic field in the country.
- Provide a foundation for shaping Sentient's strategy in India from 2026 onwards.
- Demonstrate to funders why investing in investigative infrastructure in India is critical for advancing animal advocacy.

3. Findings

3.1. Farmed Animals in India

Our preliminary insights shared earlier were confirmed by our findings. India has more than 535 million livestock and more than 850 million poultry as per the 2019 Livestock Census (Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, 2019).

Indeed, India's farmed animal sector is vast, diverse, and deeply entrenched in cultural, economic, and dietary practices. It spans dairy cattle and buffalo, poultry, aquaculture, goats and sheep, pigs, camels, ducks, and equines. Each sector involves immense numbers of animals and systemic cruelties, yet most remain under-documented and poorly regulated. The following sections outline conditions across key species and highlight how investigations can generate evidence to drive campaigns, influence policy, and advance animal protection in India.

3.1.1. Dairy Cattle and Buffalo

India is home to more than 300 million cattle and buffalo, making it the largest producer of milk in the world (Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, 2019). Dairy animals endure systemic cruelties including tethering for long periods, repeated breeding cycles, separation of calves from their mothers, and frequent transport over long distances without proper care. This combination of scale and political sensitivity makes dairy a central sector for documentation, though it carries additional risks.

3.1.2. Poultry (Broiler Chickens and Layer Hens)

India has more than 850 million poultry (Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, 2019). Broilers are commonly raised in overcrowded sheds with limited ventilation before sale into wet markets, where they are slaughtered in view of other animals. Broiler chickens are typically slaughtered at just over a month of age. Reported

practices include live defeathering, inadequate bleeding, and slaughter without stunning in many settings. Layer hens are typically confined in barren battery cages, where they face feather pecking, bone weakness, and high mortality rates. Despite being one of the largest farmed animal sectors, poultry has received limited investigative attention, leaving most of its conditions undocumented. At the same time, cage-free campaigns are gaining traction in India, with advocacy organizations pressing companies like Sodexo, Marriott, Costa Coffee, and Grupo Bimbo to meet 2025 commitments. Progress is uneven, yet model farms and producer cooperatives signal change. Investigations documenting poultry conditions can provide essential evidence to strengthen corporate accountability, ensure deadlines are met, and expose gaps between industry pledges and on-the-ground realities.

3.1.3. Aquaculture

India is the second largest aquaculture producer, the third largest fish producer, and the largest producer of shrimp in the world, with billions of aquatic animals raised each year. The sector includes finfish such as carp, catla, rohu, and tilapia, as well as crustaceans like shrimp and prawns. India is also one of the world's top shrimp exporters, particularly for white-leg shrimp and black tiger shrimp (Press Information Bureau, 2024). Industry and international welfare literature describe practices such as eyestalk ablation in shrimp breeding and slaughter methods that include asphyxiation, live descaling, and chilling in ice slurry (Shrimp Welfare Project, 2025). These practices raise serious welfare concerns and warrant systematic documentation in India. Despite its scale and rapid growth, aquaculture remains almost entirely undocumented in India, representing a neglected yet critical frontier for investigations.

3.1.4. Goats and Sheep

India's goat population exceeds 148 million, with another 75 million sheep raised for meat, milk, and wool (Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, 2019). These animals are frequently traded through informal wet markets where slaughter is

carried out with little or no regulation. Overcrowded transport, lack of food and water, and rough handling during sales are common. In some areas, goats and sheep are slaughtered publicly during festivals or rituals, raising both cultural sensitivities and opportunities for reform. These contexts are especially risky because festival or ritual slaughter attracts large crowds and heightened sensitivities, requiring careful handling by investigators.

3.1.5. Pigs

Pigs are farmed on a smaller scale (more than nine million) compared to poultry and cattle (Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, 2019), but they remain a significant source of food in northeastern and eastern India. Most pig farms are smallholder operations with limited oversight. Slaughter is often conducted in informal backyard or market settings where pigs may be killed without stunning, sometimes using blunt force. Although smaller in number, pigs represent a sector where investigative evidence could illuminate neglected cruelty in regions with little existing documentation.

3.1.6. Camels

Camels are farmed and used for milk, meat, and transport, particularly in states such as Rajasthan and Gujarat. They are often subjected to poor handling, inadequate feeding, and long-distance transport under inhumane conditions. In some areas, camels are illegally traded for slaughter, creating both welfare concerns and opportunities for investigative work. Because camel use is tied to cultural identity and local livelihoods, documenting cruelty in this sector carries heightened risks of backlash and requires careful handling.

3.1.7. Ducks

Ducks are farmed in states such as Kerala, Assam, and West Bengal, where they are raised for both eggs and meat. According to the 20th Livestock Census, India's duck population is about 33.5 million, making up around 4 percent of the total poultry population (Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, 2019). Investigators have found that ducks are often kept in unsanitary conditions and slaughtered in informal markets without any welfare protections. Although they are an important part of regional diets, ducks remain largely absent from investigative work, making this sector a priority for future attention. In addition to eggs and meat, ducks are also used for feathers and down in products such as luxury pillows, coats, and bedding. Consultations indicate that some of these products, often sold in five-star hotels and premium retail outlets, may involve live plucking, a practice that causes severe suffering. Ducks are also force-fed for foie gras production in other countries, underscoring another area of cruelty that has received little scrutiny. The extent of India's involvement in such supply chains remains unclear and requires further investigation.

3.2. Farmed Animals in India: Cross-Cutting Issues

Investigators in India reported challenges that cut across species and sectors. These can be grouped into two categories: operational risks faced in the field and strategic gaps that limit the impact of their work.

3.2.1. Operational Risks

Across species, investigators face consistent dangers and barriers. Wet markets and illegal slaughterhouses are hotspots of cruelty, where animals are overcrowded, roughly handled, and killed without regulation, creating unsafe and unpredictable environments for those documenting conditions. Transport practices also pose widespread problems, with cattle, goats, and poultry routinely packed into overloaded trucks and forced on long journeys without food, water, or rest, leading to high levels of suffering and

mortality. These settings often involve complicity by transporters and local authorities, exposing investigators to retaliation when they attempt to collect evidence. Violence and intimidation remain ever-present risks, ranging from physical assault to confiscation of equipment, and in some cases threats against family members. Women investigators, in particular, encounter higher barriers in rural and conservative regions, which should inform safety protocols, team composition, and route planning. These enforcement and safety realities are discussed further in Section 3.3.3 on the Legal Landscape.

3.2.2. Strategic Gaps

Even when cruelty is successfully documented, systemic gaps prevent evidence from achieving its potential. Species such as ducks, pigs, camels, and equines are rarely investigated despite clear welfare concerns, leaving large sectors invisible to the public and excluded from advocacy. Where evidence is collected, weak packaging means that powerful footage often remains in raw form, never converted into legal briefs, campaign reports, or media-ready outputs that can drive reform. Dissemination is also fragmented: independent investigators struggle to connect their material to NGOs, while many NGOs lack pathways to commission or integrate investigations into campaigns. As a result, significant amounts of evidence remain unpublished or unused, blunting its value for systemic change.

These cross-cutting issues demonstrate that cruelty in India is systemic rather than confined to one industry. Addressing both operational risks and strategic gaps is essential to ensure that investigations move from fragile, isolated efforts to a professional field that captures cruelty and converts it into meaningful reform.

3.3. The Investigative Landscape in India

3.3.1. Current State of Investigations

Consultations with investigators and advocates reveal that India's investigative community is small, fragmented, and underdeveloped. Most work is carried out by individuals working independently or on short-term assignments. Only a few organizations directly employ investigators, and even they often rely on freelancers for footage. Participants consistently reported that investigations are not widely viewed as a profession. Many investigators treat the role as part-time or temporary because of financial insecurity and the absence of career pathways. As a result, continuity is rare and long-term capacity is weak.

Access to facilities remains possible but increasingly difficult. Investigators explained that dairies and farms could once be entered by posing as students, journalists, or academics. While this strategy still works in some situations, workers have become more cautious, and suspicion is rising.

Despite constraints, credible evidence continues to attract media and public interest. As detailed in Section 3.2.2, the main bottleneck is converting raw footage into outputs for campaigns, media, and litigation.

Our findings further indicate these more particular challenges:

- **Equipment.** Investigators lack access to reliable hidden cameras and audio devices. Many resort to improvised or outdated tools, often purchased with their own limited resources. The absence of a centralized equipment bank reduces quality, consistency, and the ability to sustain long-term investigative projects.
- **Human Resources.** Few individuals are trained or willing to take on investigative roles. One organization reported that an open call yielded only 30 applicants over six months, highlighting the difficulty of recruitment. The lack of financial stability means high turnover, while women face additional barriers related to safety, cultural restrictions, and limited institutional support.

- **Support Systems.** Investigators work without legal safety nets. Authorities often side with industries or are themselves complicit in violations such as illegal slaughter. Reporting abuses can expose investigators to retaliation, and there is no structured access to lawyers familiar with investigative risks. Mental health challenges, including stress, anxiety, and burnout, are widespread but seldom addressed. Investigators frequently described a sense of isolation in the absence of any formal peer community.
- **Structural and Strategic Barriers.** Collaboration among local organizations remains limited, as the few investigative entities that exist rarely coordinate with one another. Several NGOs focus on running campaigns rather than generating original evidence. As a result, investigations are often disconnected from advocacy, which limits their impact. Donors tend to fund visible campaigns rather than back-end infrastructure, making it difficult to secure resources for this foundational work.

3.3.2. Opportunities

Despite these gaps, stakeholders identified several opportunities to strengthen investigations in India:

- **Professionalization of Investigators.** Create dedicated training and fellowship initiatives aimed at cultivating a professional community of investigators. By equipping individuals with the necessary skills and connecting them with NGOs and advocacy efforts, investigations can evolve from irregular activism into an established profession.
- **Equipment Bank.** Establish a shared repository of investigative tools, including hidden cameras, to make equipment more accessible, lower entry costs for new investigators, improve the quality of captured footage, and support sustainable investigative work.
- **Support Systems.** Provide structured access to legal counsel to minimize risks, integrate mental health services with psychologists experienced in activist

trauma, and establish a safe, online peer-to-peer network to reduce isolation and foster resilience.

- **Strategic Integration.** Link investigations directly with advocacy campaigns, litigation, and media strategies. Focus efforts within selected geographic regions to maximize impact rather than dispersing resources. Build partnerships with NGOs already engaged in investigations, such as FIAPO, PETA India, and Mercy For Animals India, and gradually expand collaboration across the sector.
- **Public Engagement and Education.** Invest in creative tools, such as educational apps and animated content, that bring slaughter practices to public attention in accessible ways. By grounding these tools in investigative findings, we can open broader conversations about animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and public health, reaching audiences beyond traditional advocacy.

Together, these opportunities highlight that with targeted investment, investigations in India can evolve into a professional and sustainable field. They also provide the basis for Sentient's phased strategy in the years ahead.

3.3.3. Legal Landscape for Investigations in India¹

Investigations in India take place against a backdrop of shifting laws, inconsistent enforcement, and significant personal risk. Understanding how recent legal reforms intersect with practical realities is crucial for assessing both the opportunities and dangers investigators face. Our data and key findings can be organized into the following categories:

- **Trespass and Entry.** Since July 2024, the Indian Penal Code of 1860 has been repealed and replaced by the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS; Ministry of Law and Justice, 2023a), which now governs criminal offences, including trespass.

¹ These insights are initial understandings of the law based on consultations with animal advocates and a brief conversation with two lawyers in India. A more detailed and authoritative picture will require onboarding experienced Indian animal law professionals onto Sentient's advisory structures. This section will therefore be expanded once formal consultations with Indian lawyers are undertaken.

Under Section 329 of the BNS, criminal trespass is defined as entering another's property with the intent to commit an offence, or to intimidate, insult, or annoy the person in possession. Legal specialists identify this provision as the most relevant to investigators entering farms.

In practice, farm owners and workers sometimes threaten investigators with police complaints, but successful convictions are rare, since intent must be clearly demonstrated. These risks may be further minimized when the purpose of entry is framed in non-criminal terms, for instance, when investigators present themselves as students, journalists, or researchers. Nonetheless, the lack of explicit legal exemptions creates ongoing uncertainty, particularly in cases involving repeated investigations or high-profile exposures, which may prompt stricter enforcement.

Beyond legal exposure, investigators face direct personal dangers including intimidation and assault, as outlined in Section 3.2.1. Although property owners are not legally permitted to use force, reports document instances of intimidation, physical assault, and confiscation of equipment by farm owners or workers. Such threats are especially pronounced in rural or conservative areas, where outsiders are often met with suspicion. Even in situations where criminal prosecution is unlikely, the persistent risk of violence remains a powerful deterrent.

- **Admissibility of Evidence.** The Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA; Ministry of Law and Justice, 2023b) replaced the Indian Evidence Act, 1872. Under the BSA, evidence obtained unlawfully is not automatically excluded from court proceedings. Judges retain discretion to admit such evidence, but may give it less weight or credibility, especially when obtained through trespass or covert methods. Materials from an anonymous source may be regarded as even less credible. This creates uncertainty over the value of unauthorized footage in litigation. Nevertheless, such material remains powerful in advocacy campaigns and media work, which is why many NGOs rely on public-facing strategies rather than court proceedings when using investigative evidence. If legal action is still being considered, investigations should be planned with caution and

responsibility, taking into account local and national laws while balancing objectives against potential risks.

- **Poor Enforcement.** India retains several animal protection statutes, most notably the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 (Parliament of India, 1960), alongside rules governing transport, slaughter, and markets. Yet enforcement remains weak and selective. Investigators routinely document blatant violations. These include overcrowded trucks, inhumane slaughter, and illegal wet markets. Yet abuses often go unpunished. Although authorized inspections are possible in regulated settings, such as slaughterhouse monitoring committees with animal welfare representatives, reports indicate that enforcement is inconsistent. Consultations reveal that local officials may at times overlook unlicensed operations for monetary benefits, which complicates efforts to seek protection and accountability. Such circumstances significantly increase legal and personal risks, turning any engagement with authorities into a precarious undertaking. Overall, this gap between law and practice undermines the protective value of existing regulations.

Together, these factors illustrate the fragile balance investigators must navigate. While the law provides both boundaries and potential avenues for accountability, weak enforcement, official complicity, and the threat of violence often outweigh formal protections. As a result, investigative work relies as much on caution, strategy, and advocacy outside the courtroom as it does on the letter of the law.

3.3.3.1. Strategic Implications

The legal environment creates a grey zone in which investigative work is possible but precarious. The relative ease of entry offers opportunities to collect evidence, yet risks of retaliation and uncertain evidentiary weight limit how far such material can be used in court. Strengthening legal support is therefore critical with key needs including:

- Establishing pro-bono legal support networks to advise investigators before, during and after fieldwork.

- Providing rapid response legal aid to manage detentions, equipment confiscation, or police harassment.
- Developing legislative training modules that clarify what investigators should and shouldn't do in light of the BNS and BSA, and how to minimize exposure to unnecessary risks.

By addressing these legal vulnerabilities, Sentient and its partners can reduce risks, increase investigator resilience, and ensure that evidence collected in the field contributes effectively to both advocacy and systemic change.

4. Conclusions

4.1. Implications for India's Investigative Ecosystem

The following analysis interprets the descriptive findings and highlights their implications. Consultations confirm that India's investigative ecosystem is structurally fragile, facing challenges that cannot be solved through isolated interventions. A coherent and sustained strategy is therefore necessary if investigations are to serve as a foundation for animal advocacy in the country. The following four themes stand out:

- **Professional Identity and Infrastructure Gaps.** The absence of a professional identity remains the most significant barrier to sustaining investigative work. Investigators are rarely recognized as long-term professionals, leading to high turnover and underutilized footage. As noted earlier, they also face basic gaps in equipment, legal and mental health support, and financial stability. Unless professional pathways and core infrastructure are built, talented individuals will continue to exit the field.
- **Strategic Disconnects.** As Section 3.2.2 detailed, investigative footage often fails to translate into campaigns, media, or litigation. This disconnect weakens both advocacy outcomes and the motivation of investigators, underscoring the need for tighter integration.

- **Collaboration and Trust.** As noted in 3.3.1, local collaboration is minimal. Yet consultations revealed strong willingness among individuals to explore trust-based networks, beginning online and gradually expanding offline. This indicates that collaboration is possible if carefully facilitated.
- **India-Specific Risks and Opportunities.** India presents a paradox. Physical access to facilities is often easier than in Western contexts, yet risks from authorities, cultural conservatism, and industry pushback are significant. At the same time, rising public concern, growing media interest, and NGO openness create promising conditions for progress. Crucially, infrastructure solutions must be tailored to Indian realities rather than transplanted wholesale from the West.

These findings point directly to near term and medium to long term priorities for Sentient, outlined below.

4.2. Implications for Sentient

The next two years represent a crucial window for Sentient to establish core investigative infrastructure in India. Immediate priorities should include building professional pathways through training and fellowship programs, creating a shared equipment bank to improve investigative quality, and ensuring access to legal and mental health support so investigators can work safely and sustainably. These investments will address the most urgent barriers identified in consultations and prevent further loss of talent from the field.

Over the following three to five years, Sentient can expand its role by piloting region-specific initiatives that directly connect investigations with campaigns, media, and litigation. Developing strong partnerships with NGOs, fostering trust-based investigator networks, and concentrating efforts in high-impact geographic regions will ensure evidence leads to systemic change. By sequencing short-term infrastructure with long-term integration, Sentient can transform investigations from fragile, ad-hoc efforts into a durable backbone for India's animal advocacy movement.

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