

Sentient India Strategy 2026-2030

1. Background and Context

Investigations have long been one of the most powerful tools for exposing animal cruelty and driving reform. When credible evidence reaches the public, media, courts, corporations, and policymakers, it can shift narratives, trigger accountability, and lead to lasting change. In India, however, the potential of investigations remains largely unrealised.

India is home to one of the largest populations of farmed animals in the world, spanning dairy cattle and buffalo, poultry, aquaculture, goats, sheep, pigs, camels, ducks, and other species. Despite the scale of animal agriculture and widespread welfare violations, most sectors remain under documented. Investigations do occur, but they are fragmented, risky, and inconsistent.

Research conducted by Sentient in 2025, including consultations with nineteen investigators and animal advocates across India, revealed a fragile investigative ecosystem. Investigators often work alone, without access to reliable equipment, legal guidance, or mental health support. Investigative work is rarely treated as a profession, leading to high attrition and loss of experience. Crucially, much of the evidence that is collected never reaches campaigns, media outlets, or legal pathways in a meaningful way.

As a result, India's animal protection movement faces a broken evidence-to-impact pipeline. Footage remains unused, cruelty goes undocumented, advocacy lacks credibility, and opportunities for systemic reform are lost. Without intentional investment in investigative infrastructure, these gaps will persist.

Sentient India was created to address this structural problem, not by focusing only on individual investigations, but by building a professional, safe, and connected investigative ecosystem that can reliably generate evidence and translate it into impact.

2. The Core Problem: A Broken Evidence to Impact Pipeline

The central challenge facing animal protection investigations in India is not access alone, but conversion, which is the failure to move from evidence collection to sustained impact.

Key barriers identified through research include:

- Lack of trained investigators. Very few individuals have access to structured training or mentoring, limiting both quality and scale.
- Equipment shortages. Investigators rely on outdated or personally funded tools, reducing footage quality and increasing risk.
- Weak support systems. There is little access to legal advice, safety planning, or mental health support, leading to burnout and exposure.
- No professional pathways. Investigative work is not recognised as a viable career, causing attrition and instability.
- Poor linkage to advocacy. Evidence is rarely packaged for media, campaigns, or legal use, leaving cruelty invisible.
- Low collaboration. Investigators and organisations often operate in silos, weakening collective impact.

These failures reinforce each other. Investigators burn out or leave. Organisations struggle to access credible evidence. Campaigns rely on outdated or second hand material. Over time, the movement loses one of its most powerful tools for change.

3. Sentient India's Approach and Theory of Change

Sentient India's work is grounded in a clear [theory of change](#). If investigators are trained, protected, equipped, and connected to advocacy pathways, then evidence will reliably drive legal action, corporate accountability, policy reform, and public awareness.

Rather than focusing solely on producing investigations, Sentient India acts as an anchor organisation that both conducts strategic investigations and strengthens the wider investigative ecosystem.

Repairing the Pipeline

Sentient India addresses each point of failure in the evidence-to-impact pipeline through five core interventions.

- **Professional investigations:** Hiring and training investigators to conduct high-quality, ethical, and strategically planned investigations.
- **National equipment bank:** Providing shared access to reliable investigative tools, improving quality and lowering barriers to entry.
- **Legal support and awareness:** Offering legal guidance, safety protocols, and rapid support to reduce risk and uncertainty.
- **Mental health and wellbeing support:** Ensuring investigators have access to psychological support to reduce burnout and trauma.
- **Collaboration and ecosystem building:** Connecting investigators, organisations, journalists, and legal actors to ensure evidence is used effectively.

Two Investigation Pathways

Investigations flow through two complementary streams:

1. Demand driven investigations respond to requests from Indian animal organisations that need credible evidence for campaigns, media, or legal action.
2. Supply driven movement priority investigations are led by Sentient in sectors where cruelty is widespread but under documented.

This dual model ensures that evidence reflects both advocacy needs and national movement priorities.

4. Programs and Activities 2026 to 2030

Sentient India's strategy is delivered through four integrated program areas.

4.1 Investigator Workforce Development

Sentient India will build a professional pipeline of investigators through recruitment of full time investigators, a structured training program, annual national masterclasses, ongoing mentoring, introductory volunteer pathways, and region sensitive safety planning.

This program directly addresses the shortage of trained investigators and establishes investigations as a viable career path.

4.2 Direct Investigations, Evidence Production, and Campaigning

Sentient India will conduct and publish a consistent and growing number of investigations each year across major and neglected sectors, including dairy, poultry, aquaculture, pigs, ducks, camels, goats, and wet markets.

Key elements include strategic sector selection, safety and legal planning, packaging evidence into media kits and advocacy briefs, coordination with organisations and journalists, and direct campaigning on selected priority investigations.

This program ensures that evidence does not remain unused, but actively fuels advocacy and public engagement.

4.3 Investigator Support Systems

To ensure sustainability and safety, Sentient India will establish dedicated legal expertise for guidance and crisis response, legal awareness materials tailored to investigative realities in India, access to mental health professionals, regular wellbeing check ins, a national equipment bank, and clear operational protocols.

These systems reduce burnout, improve quality, and allow investigators to remain in the field long term.

4.4 Ecosystem Building and Collaboration

Sentient India will strengthen the broader investigative field through an annual investigator conference, regular webinars and learning sessions, knowledge documents and research outputs, structured partnerships with national organisations, and trust-based networks among investigators and advocates.

This program ensures that investigative capacity grows beyond a single organisation and becomes a shared movement asset.

5. Risks, Mitigation, and Resource Needs

5.1 Key Risks

- Legal and safety risks, including intimidation, detention, or equipment confiscation.
- Emotional burnout due to exposure to cruelty and isolation.
- Operational uncertainty related to field conditions or equipment failure.
- Funding volatility during early years.

5.2 Mitigation Measures

- Strong legal guidance and safety protocols.
- Integrated mental health support.
- Shared equipment and operational planning.
- Multi year fundraising and gradual development of revenue streams.

5.3 Budget Snapshot

Sentient India's confirmed 2026 annual budget is approximately \$207,000. This covers investigator salaries and training, investigations and campaigning, legal and mental health support systems, the national equipment bank, ecosystem building activities, and core operations. Projected budgets for subsequent years reflect gradual scaling while maintaining financial discipline.

A link to the separate public facing budget sheet for 2026 is [here](#) and for 2027-2030 [here](#).

6. Conclusion

Sentient India's 2026 to 2030 program responds to one of the most significant structural gaps in India's animal protection movement, which is the absence of a safe, professional, and reliable investigative ecosystem.

By repairing the evidence-to-impact pipeline, strengthening investigators, and ensuring that evidence consistently fuels advocacy, Sentient India aims to transform investigations from fragile, isolated efforts into a durable driver of change. Over five years, this approach will improve the quality and use of evidence, strengthen campaigns and policy work, and contribute to meaningful reductions in animal suffering at scale.