

INDIA ANNUAL REPORT

2021



MERCY FOR
ANIMALS

Key Figures 2021

Key KPIs	AOP goals	Results in 2021
Collaborations with celebrities and influencers	5-7	7
Impressions across all our social media channels		6.7 million
Collaborations with public health and animal welfare organizations	2	2
Policies influenced to promote plant-based foods	1	1
Relationships established with influential parliamentarians and governors		5
Partnerships with alternative meat or dairy companies formed through online contests		6
Fellows trained on animal protection laws as part of the Ahimsa Fellowship program		21





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Message from the Managing Director

The second wave of COVID-19 in India created a situation the likes of which few of us have ever witnessed. Almost no one was unaffected, but everyone supported one another and helped mitigate the widespread pain and suffering. At Mercy For Animals India, we too had colleagues, friends, and family affected. We believe nothing is more important than the health and safety of our loved ones, and only when they are protected can we make progress in our mission to construct a kinder food system. To this end, in addition to the leaves we provided, we gave our employees and contractors a paid week off to focus on their physical and mental health and be with their loved ones.

But even with limited resources and the challenges we all faced globally, Mercy For Animals India did some groundbreaking work for animals in 2021. We focused on multisectoral collaboration. We worked with Bollywood celebrities and influencers, policymakers, government officials, like-minded organizations, a public health institute, and restaurants and chefs to promote compassion for animals and plant-based eating. We set up best financial practices and systems to ensure greater transparency and accountability in collaboration with our international teams and a compliance firm in India.

The operations and finance teams showed resilience and patience while dealing with statutory and government

agencies to establish the foundation for Mercy For Animals India. Despite an unfavorable environment for NGOs, especially those with foreign affiliations, we managed to set up Mercy For Animals India's first international bank account, which will become active as soon as we secure a license to obtain foreign funding, a goal for 2022. And we finally found and set up an office in India's capital city, New Delhi, with capacity for 15 to 17 people.

The annual report highlights major achievements and progress of Mercy For Animals India in 2021 and some of our plans for 2022.

I hope you enjoy the report!

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nikunj'.

Nikunj Sharma
Chief Executive Officer, Mercy For Animals India
Foundation

Challenges and Opportunities

The current environment in India is not favorable for NGOs, especially those that are foreign funded or affiliated with a foreign nonprofit. The government recently revoked the Foreign Contribution Registration Act (FCRA) licenses (which are a must for receiving foreign funding) of 6,000 of the country's 22,000 NGOs, including world-renowned organizations, such as Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity and Oxfam. The FCRA licenses of Greenpeace and Amnesty International have also been revoked in recent years. Hence, it was crucial for us to project ourselves as an organization that works with the government rather than against it. Just when Mercy For Animals India was ready to apply for an FCRA license, a series of amendments the government made in 2021 further delayed our filing plans. Additionally, India has not recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic. With restrictions in place and no state governments operating at full capacity, making progress on anything government related is difficult.

But in 2021 we explored several great opportunities to collaborate with statutory bodies like the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), public health groups, like-minded organizations, restaurants, chefs, and celebrities to highlight and promote work for animals in India.

The important foundations and partnerships we built in 2021 will support our expansion in 2022, and we see huge opportunities for success through public engagement and government affairs campaigns. The coming year will also be critical as we start work in corporate engagement and organizing. Although we faced challenges in 2021 regarding restricted funding owing to delays in obtaining an FCRA license, we aim to apply for it early in 2022 and be financially independent by the end of the year.

Milestones



In 2020 Mercy For Animals India, as one of its first projects, urged FSSAI to establish a label to identify vegan foods in India. In a major breakthrough, FSSAI issued the draft Food Safety and Standards (Vegan Foods) Regulations, 2021. Once formally adopted, these regulations will require all vegan products to have a distinct logo. What's even more encouraging is that in a consumer survey in India, 96 percent of respondents supported the proposed regulations, 97 percent felt this type of labeling would make identifying vegan foods easier for consumers, 95 percent said it would make trying vegan products easier, and 93 percent said they would be more willing to try vegan products after this label was added.

Mercy For Animals India received great support from major celebrities and influencers, with regular mentions on many celebrities' Instagram pages. Bollywood heartthrob and proud animal lover [John Abraham](#) appeared in a Mercy For Animals India ad encouraging people to be kind to animals, just in time for our fifth anniversary. The ad's tagline reads, "[In a world where you can be anything, be nice.](#)" We partnered with five celebrities and influencers and one restaurant to create videos promoting plant-based eating. We estimate earned media from celebrity posts in India in 2021 to be worth US\$250,000. This shows the strength of our brand and its promise in bringing important supporters onboard to amplify our message and drive future campaigns.

Despite continual changes in FCRA laws and difficulties NGOs face with the government, Mercy For Animals India Foundation has completed all major compliance work, including setting up a bank account according to FCRA. We have been fully compliant with various legal provisions required by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

Amid the pandemic and India's persistent lockdown, we set up our first project office in India's capital at a significantly discounted rate. The office is in the center of New Delhi, close to all business districts. The space is 1,800 square feet and can accommodate 15–17 people.



Partnerships and Collaborations

The George Institute for Global Health

Mercy For Animals India signed a memorandum of understanding with the renowned public health group to advance "One Health" research in India. The Center for One Health Research will aim to strengthen research and policies around zoonoses in India.



Ahimsa Trust

We partnered with Ahimsa Trust in the ongoing [Ahimsa Fellowship](#) program, designed to create a network of leaders in animal advocacy across India to help secure and implement policies that protect animals. Nikunj is mentoring and training 21 fellows on policy, animal protection laws, public engagement, and advocacy initiatives.

Leading Plant-Based Food Companies

We organized contests with several plant-based brands, including Wakao Foods, Bombay Cheese Company, Piperleaf, Blue Tribe Foods, and GoodDot. These contests introduced people to a wide array of animal-free foods and inspired them to make kinder food choices.



Celebrities and Influencers

Star power is invaluable in spreading our message and promoting compassion for animals. The celebrities and influencers Mercy For Animals India has collaborated with collectively have over 10 million followers on social media. We partnered with Bollywood superstar John Abraham on the Be Nice to Animals campaign, launched on Mercy For Animals

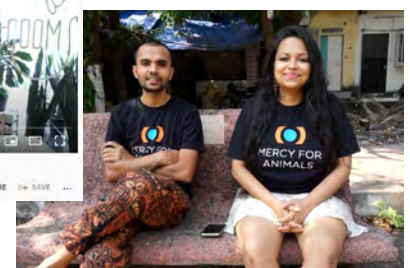
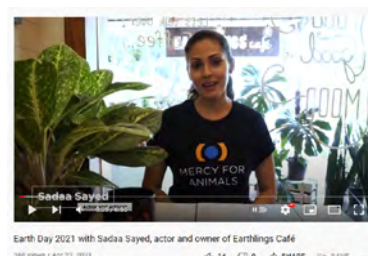
India's fifth anniversary. Over 30 media outlets, including major national wire agencies, covered the campaign. Vegan tennis player Vishwajeet Sangle joined us on World Athletics Day to promote staying fit with a plant-based lifestyle.



Parliament member and People for Animals founder Maneka Gandhi collaborated with Mercy For Animals India on a gripping video about the country's dairy industry. In the video, Gandhi tells the harrowing story of Asha, a newborn calf, and relates many abuses animals in the industry commonly suffer, such as starving male calves to death, forcibly impregnating cows, injecting them with oxytocin (an illegal substance), and keeping animals in filthy conditions.

Restaurants and Chefs

Mercy For Animals India created videos with the founders of Earthlings Cafe and Ubuntu Eat, two vegan restaurants in Mumbai. As part of our Conscious Eating program, we covered Roadhouse Cafe in Delhi and The Pizza Bakery in Bangalore, two companies that introduced separate plant-based menus for their customers.



The Team

Mercy For Animals India started 2022 with a team of three full-time employees, including the CEO, a social media coordinator, and an administrative assistant.



In addition, we rely on consultants to support finance and public engagement work.



Our small but dedicated team has helped establish a strong foundation for Mercy For Animals India.



Closing Statement from the Managing Director

Mercy For Animals India has big plans for 2022, starting with expanding by hiring team members in all departments by the second quarter. With support from influencers and other important partners, we will continue building our brand and reputation as a go-to organization regarding farmed animals in the country. We plan to establish and build our presence in all states and union territories (COVID permitting) as we focus on youth outreach and organizing work. We will aim to find new ways of raising awareness, including through guerilla, digital, and traditional marketing.

Another major focus area will be DEI. Without addressing inequality, growth cannot be sustainable. Inclusion and empowerment will continue to be focus points for our operations, with special attention given to gender equality. We are confident that in 2022, we will make Mercy For Animals India a highly relevant, responsive, and results-focused organization.

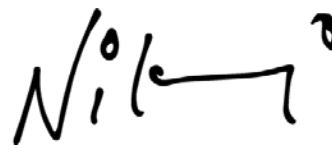
In short, by the end of 2022, here is what progress at Mercy For Animals India will look like:

- A full team of six to eight staff members have all departments functioning.
- Receiving our FCRA license has enabled us to achieve financial stability.

- We have built a network of at least 5,000 volunteers in 28 states and union territories.
- Effective collaborations with policymakers and others have influenced public policy and driven commercial practices that promote animal welfare and reduce suffering.
- All our departments are actively working on new collaborations and initiatives in corporate outreach, public engagement, government affairs, and organizing.
- Brand recognition and public trust in Mercy For Animals have increased.
- We have resources in place and an operations plan to move forward with investigations in India.

For more details, please see our [AOP 2022 document](#) for India.

Best regards,



Nikunj Sharma
CEO, Mercy For Animals India Foundation

