

Flood takes toll on Nepali media: A Report -2017*

Background

Nepal is a geographically diverse country. The geographical diversity is both the boon and bane. Nepal suffers worst during the monsoon due to landslide and subsequent floods triggered by heavy rainfall. The hilly area suffers landslide while southern plains witness the floods and inundation.

Following the heavy rainfall, Nepal's southern plains (entire Province No 2 and three districts of Province No 1) witnessed huge flood where thousands of people were affected. Nepal faced huge rainfall since June 1, 2017, which badly affected the two Provinces.

As entire activities of people were affected in the disaster, media could not escape the tragedy. Various FM/ radio, television, and print media and online media were closed and halted for some time- days and weeks- thereby depriving people of their right to freedom of expression and information.

As media's issues and journalists' safety are among the top concerns of Freedom Forum, it gathered data on the loss relating to the media sector in the disaster.



FF, in its study of media in disaster, recorded a death- Umesh Nepal, distributor of Kantipur Publications from Province No 1 who was swept away by the flood while returning to home after visiting a relative. Umesh's body was recovered next morning. Similarly, huge amount of media property was lost due to the floods and inundation.

In Province No 1, fifteen print media suffered damage in its equipments, while 31 FM Radios and 18 equipment used by media persons.

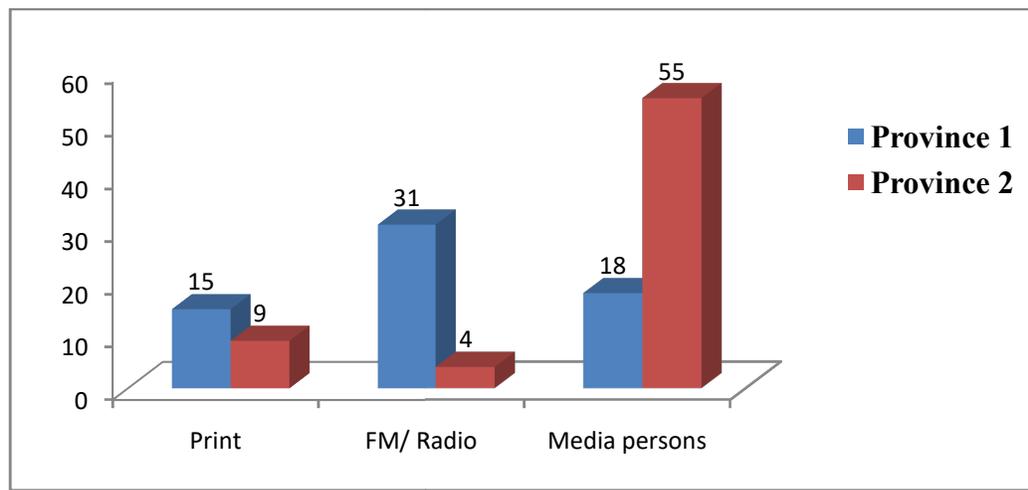
Similarly, in Province No 2, nine print media suffered damage, while four FM Radio, and 55 media persons (their equipment as camera, computers). This situation resulted in the obstruction to exercising press freedom and FoE and information.

The media persons who were directly affected by the flood itself are in large number in Province No 2.

Objective

The objective of this report is to find the data on the loss of lives and properties relating to media and analyze its effect in Nepali media, so as to inform wider stakeholders.

Damage/ destruction details



1. Province 1: Morang, Sunsari and Jhapa districts of the Province were affected a lot by the flood and inundation. Media organizations suffered huge loss. The inundation disrupted the electricity supply, resulting in closure of print media and FM stations for some days.

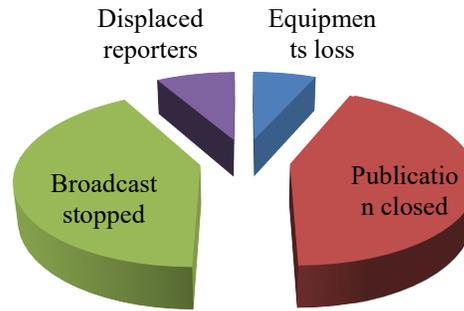
- In Morang, local dailies publication halted for two days because of inundated press, power cut and disconnected telephone and internet services. It affected the disturbance in

distribution of published paper due to difficulty to travel and closure of radio stations service for few days.

- Biratnagar-based Kantipur Publications' distributor Umesh Nepal was swept away by flood; his body was found later next day.
- Annapurna Post's East In charge Kumar Luitel, Karobar's reporter Min Kumar Nabodit and reporter Prem Dewan suffered loss after their houses were submerged in the flood.

- In Sunsari, Annapurna Post's press in Itahari was water logged.

- Reporter Dipendra Yadav's house collapsed and a bike numbered 25 Pa 4785 was damaged. Publication of an issue of a weekly paper was also halted.

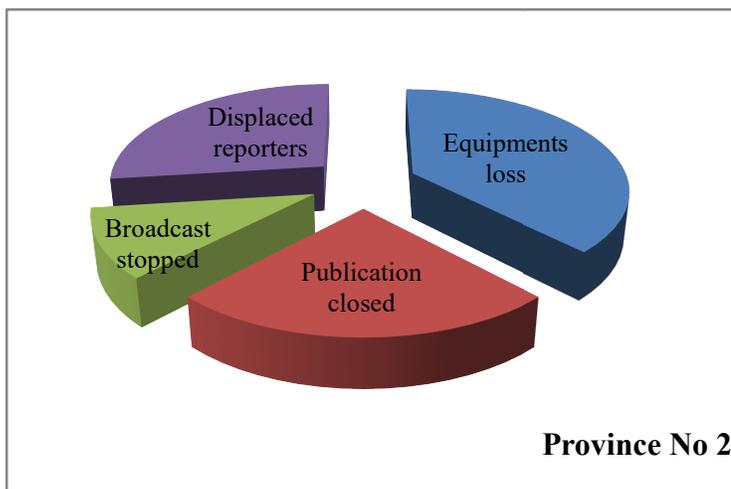


Province No. 1

- Almost 17 FM stations aired from the district were closed for 3 days.
- Most of the daily and weekly media were also closed from four to seven days.
- Damage of Popular FM's equipment and battery caused obstruction for 24 hours.
- Inaruwa-based Pratikshan daily's publication stopped for a week and five bundles of papers were damaged.
- Barnamala daily Inaruwa's Rajendra Pokharel had to be displaced for two days and his camera was damaged. Five bundles of paper were destroyed and due to power cut and newspaper publication stopped for a week. However, it's online continued news update with the help of backup power supply.
- In Jhapa, Purbanchal daily's office and press was damaged by flood and inundation.
- Most of the FM radio programs were affected due to disconnected telephone, internet and electricity service.

2. Province 2: In the province, equipment such as generator, camera, inverter's battery, desktop computers, laptops, printers and other infrastructures were damaged because of inundation.

- Federation of Nepali Journalists' office at Rautahat branch suffered from loss of around 7 *lakh*.
- Total loss in the 14 media houses including dailies, weeklies and online portals accounted to NRs. 37,10,000/-
- Similarly, total loss of equipments used by reporters/ media persons accounted to NRs. 80,86,500/-
- A total of 10 reporters' houses were damaged.
- Maximum damage was caused to Kohinoor FM's office Rs. 6,50,000/-



- Media houses like Crime Express, Soch Express, Khabar Bishesh, Crime Care and Rajdevi suffered massive loss above one *lakh*.
- Four FM stations namely: Kohinoor, Rajdevi, Sanskriti and Rautahat remained closed for 4 days.
- A total of 55 media persons faced damage to their personal as well as official properties worth above Rs 50,000.

Conclusion

The above data shows Nepali media is unsafe from natural disasters as well. Time has come for the stakeholders concerned to mull how media can be kept safe during the floods and inundations especially in southern plains of the country. Safety of media equipment is equally important as to the journalists to ensure smooth functioning of media houses. Once the stakeholders come up with concrete steps after rigorous discussion, media houses will be able to take safety measures to avoid damage and destruction during the disaster.

