

# Huge Gender Gap in News Sources\*

Freedom Forum presents yet another report on study of the representation of women in major Nepali broadsheets for the months of July to September. News media are the most important sources of information to the general public. While advocacy for gender equality and women empowerment is always on rise, FF believes the media contents should also be inclusive in terms of gender to ensure equal voices and inclusive participation.

Against this backdrop, FF started monitoring media contents to collect evidence and quantitative results on the gender (male/female) participation in media contents and provide relevant recommendation so as to contribute towards inclusive Nepali media. FF realized critical analysis of its previous reports among concerned stakeholders; hence, it is hoped to be a tool for change to increase women participation in the news contents with respect to their presence in the media houses too.

The activity is carried out with the financial support of the Free Press Unlimited (FPU), a foundation based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, working on freedom of expression issues across the world. The evidence based report which is prepared following the tools and methodologies as provided by FPU. For it to happen, major nine national dailies from July to September were monitored so as to draw data on percentage of males and females in bylines and news sources.

In course of receiving comments and feedbacks through previous reports, FF approached to the ground reality that despite considerable number of women in media houses, their presence in the news contents is minimal in byline or source quotes. Nevertheless, it has been learnt from the interactions that media houses are quite aware about gender and social inclusion in their news rooms as well as stories.

The report brings into light the quantitative facts and makes comparative study.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To extract data as number of male/females bylines and number of male/ female news sources in the news contents of main news pages.
- To conduct a comparative analysis on percentage representations of male and female in Nepali media contents.
- To briefly analyze the nature of news stories as for perpetuating or challenging stereotypes against men or women.
- To find out whether less represented women cover news related to politics/ government or social/ legal issues the most in news contents.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study does not cover all the beats such as op-eds, entertainment, economics, and technology of the national dailies.
- The study only picks 8 main news stories from each newspaper once in a week as representative ones.
- The study also does not include pictures, advertisements and international news on the specified pages.
- The report is based only on the contents scanned according to the methodologies.

## KEY POINTS

- Male bylines (53.94%.) outnumbered **female (5.84%)**, while unknown (40.22%)
- Nagarik daily scored the highest (101) male bylines among others, while Annapurna Post daily contained 17 female bylines (highest of all).
- Among total 1,076 news monitored, 79.75% contained men, **10.38%** women and 9.88% secondary sources.
- Among total females, Annapurna Post and Kantipur contributed to the maximum reporters (26.98%) and quoted sources (20.08%) respectively.
- 53.06% news titles fall under Politics and Government followed by 27.32% social and legal news.
- **42.85% females reported on politics and government** issues whereas, only 27% of females reported on social and legal issues on the main news pages.
- Among total, 11.25% news stories warranted further analysis thus, challenging stereotype and highlighting (in) equality.

### *Glimpses from the previous report (April-June 2016):*

- *Male bylines (53%) outnumbered female (6%), while unknown 41%.*
- *Annapurna Post scored the highest (99) male bylines whereas, Kantipur contained the highest 15 bylines amongst others.*
- *80% news contents contained men, 9% women and 11% secondary sources.*
- *Kantipur contributed to both the maximum female byline reporters (23%) and sources (16%)*
- *60% news fall under Politics and Government followed by 20% Social and legal news*
- *51% females reported on Politics and Government issues whereas, 25% reported on social and legal issues on the main news pages.*
- *Among total, 7.12% news storied warranted further analysis.*

## METHODOLOGY

As done in the previous study and analyses, the contents are picked from the same nine national dailies: Kantipur, Nagarik, Annapurna Post, Gorkhapatra and Naya Patrika of Nepali language and The Kathmandu Post, The Rising Nepal, The Himalayan Times, and Republica in English language. These broadsheets were selected on the basis of their wide circulation, strong public reach and content diversity.

Eight news stories from main pages (1, 2, 3, 4 or 6) of each newspaper were randomly selected and scanned once in a week (different days in different weeks); however, stories with named bylines were given first priority. The variables were recorded into a coding sheet provided by FPU. Figures derived in the coding sheet were then entered into Microsoft Excel and processed for presentation and tabulation.

Data were processed for comparing male versus female presence in news byline and sources, topic-wise distribution, stories showing gender (in) equality. Similarly, number of females reporting on political and social issues was also recorded.

## RESULTS

### 1. Journalists (Who are talking in the media)

During the study period, neither of the dailies showed zero bylines but some of the dailies news contents failed to show increase in the female bylines.

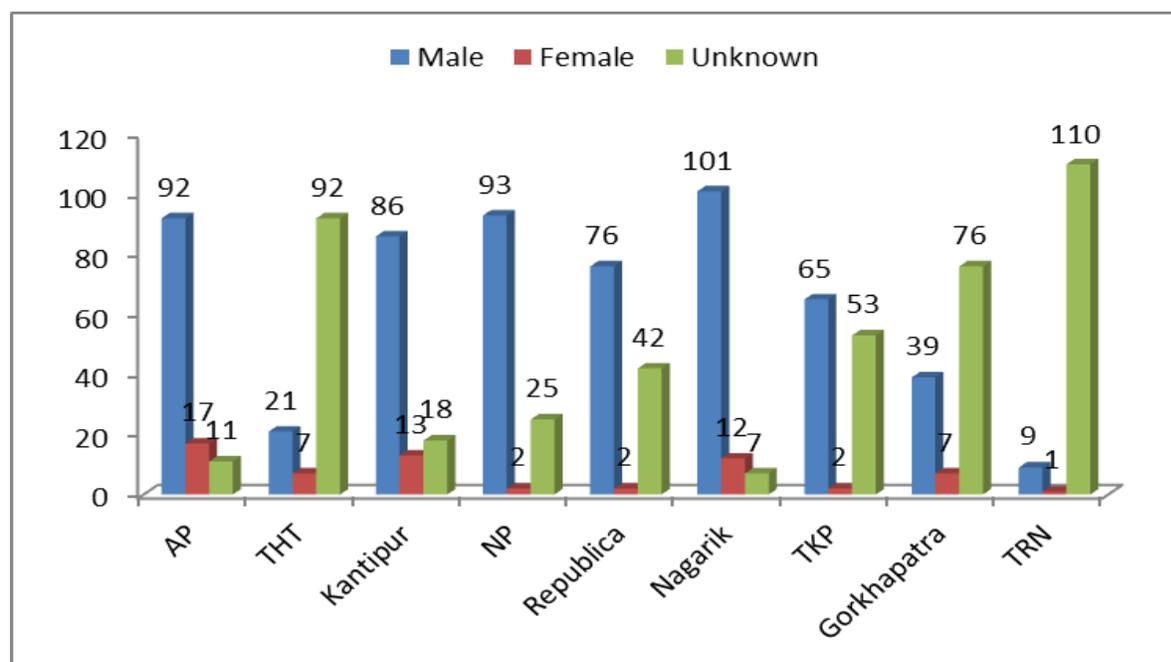
Among the broadsheets monitored, this time too, The Rising Nepal, a State-run media, contributed to the category of least known bylines followed by The Himalayan Times and Gorkhapatra.

Among the total 1,079 bylines monitored, Nagarik constituted maximum (101) male bylines, whereas Annapurna Post contributed to maximum (17) female bylines. Similarly, TRN contains maximum unknown bylines (110).

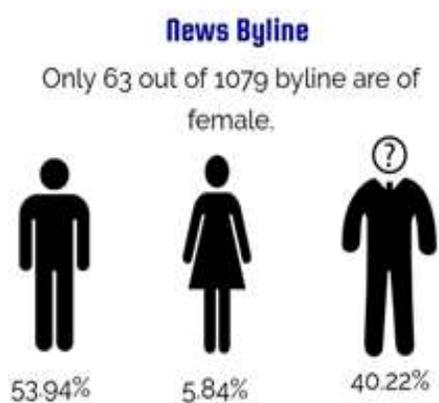
*Among monitored dailies, 9 headline news with female bylines were published on the Kantipur, The Kathmandu Post, Nagarik and Republica.*

Those news stories with unknown bylines were- Himalayan News Service, Rastriya Samachar Samiti (RSS), Kantipur Reporter, Naya Patrika, Nagarik Reporter, Staff Reporter, Post Report, Gorkhapatra Reporter, etc. in the bylines.

**Fig 1.1 Number of byline reporters from the news monitored of 9 national dailies**



Interestingly, data of female bylines in Kantipur and Annapurna Post have been found to be exceeding one after another in different reports. This time, the report presents highest female bylines from Annapurna Post followed by Kantipur. **Again, one of the major highlight of the study is that THT which was known to have zero female bylines in the first report now contains 7 female bylines. It is indeed a change- effect of the report- realized during the study in this media.** Even though overall data shows clear disparity; in Nepal's context these can be measured as satisfactory results because individually media depicts increasing trend towards gender equality.



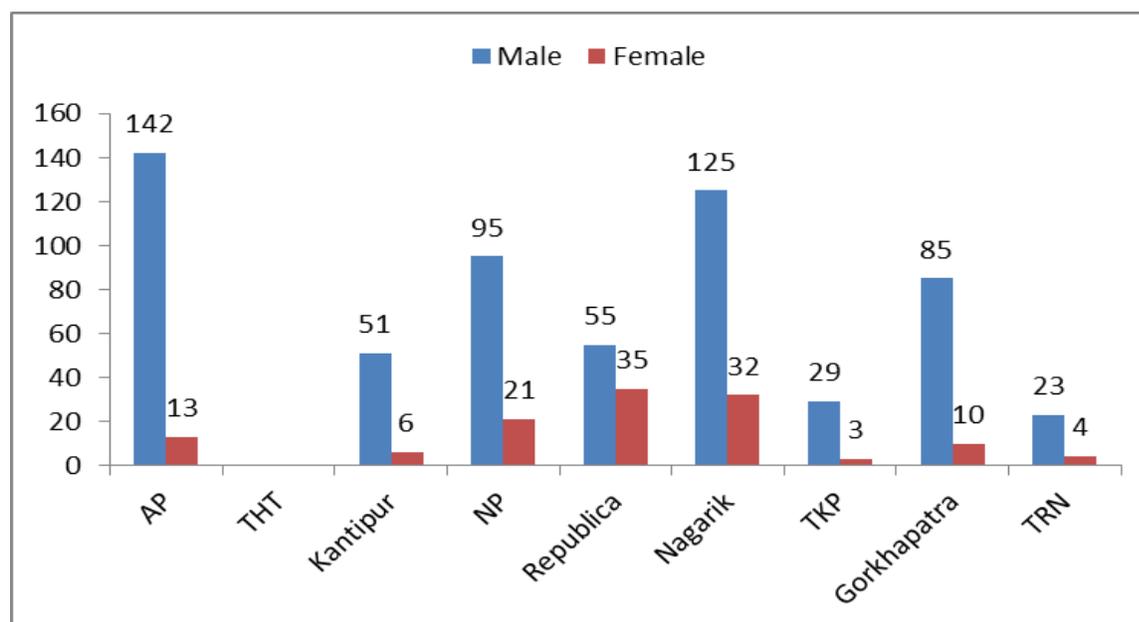
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Amongst all, male bylines outnumbered female (5.84%) and unknown (40.22%) by 53.94%.

### Reality check

FF also studied actual number of male and female reporters associated with monitored print media so as to draw comparative data. Actual data revealed maximum number of female reporters associated with Republica. On further query, Associate Editor at Republica informed that Republica's supplement issues like My City, The WEEK, etc are solely handled by female reporters but those reporting for the main news pages are still less.

**Fig 1.2. Number of male and female news reporters/ stringers affiliated to 9 media houses**



Again, data reveals 53% of the total news contents monitored come from politics and government. Hence, number of bylines depends upon number of political beat reporting male and female journalists.

To this context, female reporters from the media included in the study said most of the political meetings and discussions take place at evening/night which is the major hindrance for them. Also, the reporting environment is not much favorable to women, one of the male reporters informed.

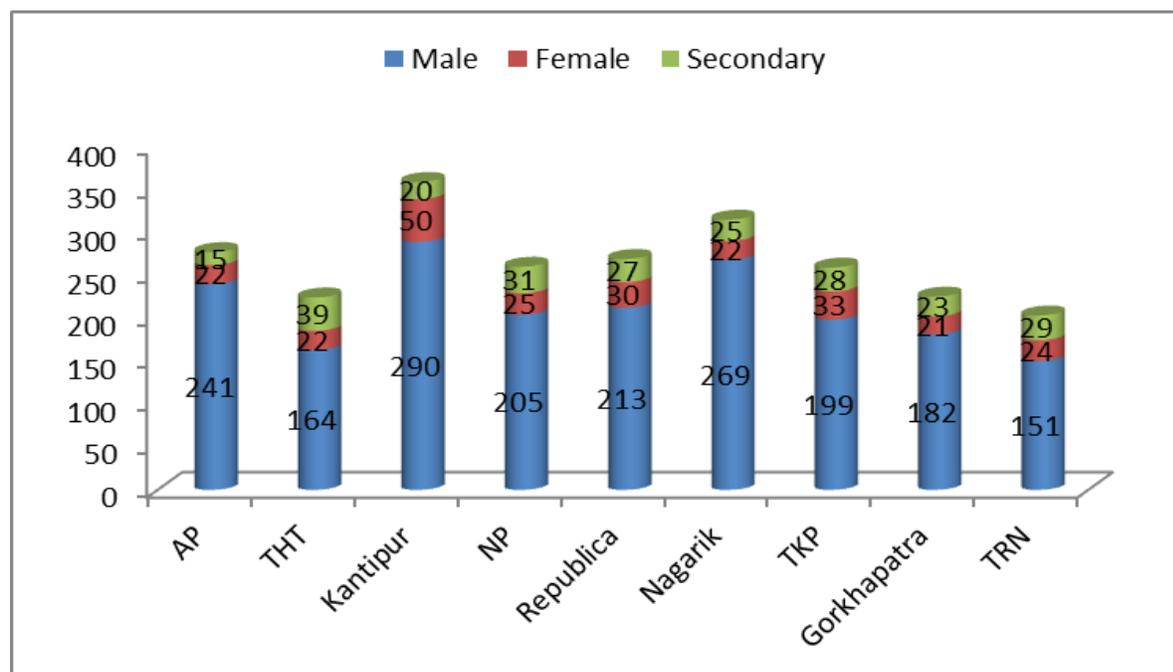
Similarly, realization at recruitment level is also minimal according to an editor of Naya Patrika. He further said, "Only after discussing with FF on the reports we realized women's presence in our media. Now, we are keen on increasing female workspace in our media house."

## **2. Sources (Who are talking in the stories)**

According to data, main news of the Nepali media have been dominated by male news sources resulting in 79.75% male sources, while 10.38% and 9.88% female and secondary sources respectively.

Among total 2,400 sources quoted in the news monitored, Kantipur daily's news contents contained maximum male (290) and female (50) sources, while THT quoted maximum secondary sources (39). **Compared to the last report, total number of women as news sources shows increasing trend. It is also the change realized.**

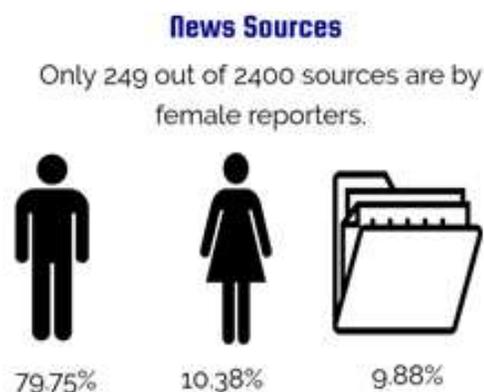
**Fig 1.3. Number of news sources quoted in the news contents of monitored news from 9 broadsheets**



Secondary sources refer to data, reports, proposals, statements, amendment bills, court bills, orders, press releases, manifesto, etc.

However, overall data on women sources is considerably low.

Increase in the participation of women in the news stories can be linked to the recently elected female representatives at local levels in the country.



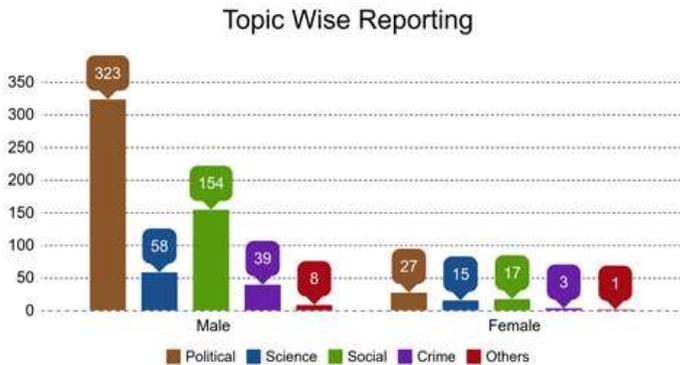
### Reality Check

Recently held report dissemination and Interface meeting yielded different voices from the concerned stakeholders. One of the female reporters described, "Main factor is again maximum political news on the contents monitored where most of the spokespersons of political parties and ministries (including ministry of women) are male."

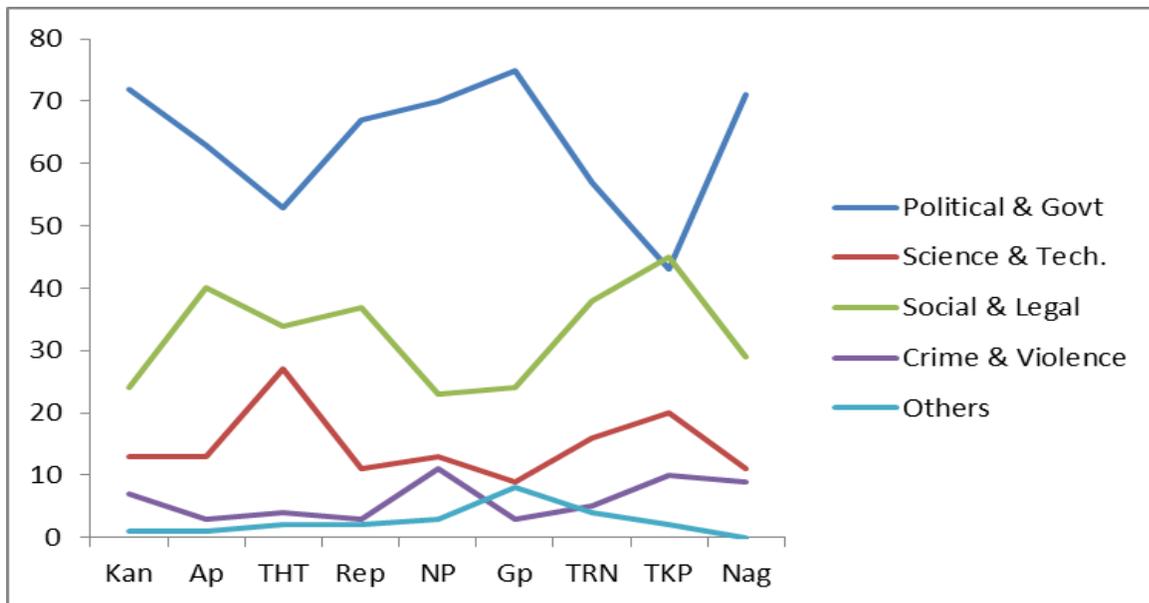
Another reporter reiterated, "Sometimes, female sources themselves are confused about the news and thus, tell us to ask their male counterparts. Thus, even if we try to incorporate female voices, reliable voice is still lacking."

### 3. Topic-wise distribution of News stories

After coding the titles of the selected news stories as per the format provided by FPU, the titles assembled to differentiate their category. After tabulation, study team discovered 53% of 1,077 news titles fall under politics and government category. Among remaining categories, social and legal contained 27% followed by science and technology 12%, crime and violence 6% and celebrity, arts, media and sports only 1%.



**Fig. 1.4 Distribution of monitored news under different five news-topic categories**



During transition, numerous political and governmental activities become the priority news for citizens. So, it is not surprising to note maximum number of news under politics and government category. Similarly, legal cases such as impeachment motions, and reconstruction and other developmental activities added to the social and legal category. On the other hand, news on pollution, nature conservation, health discoveries and policies come under the topic science and technology category.

Gorkhapatra contained the highest value of news under politics and government followed by Kantipur, Nagarik and Naya Patrika, whereas TKP contained least of all. Similarly, THT contained maximum news on science and technology while, TKP covered social and legal news the most.

Upon the analysis on gender divide on the basis of topic of news stories, 323 males and 27 females reported on politics and government, whereas only 154 males and 17 females reported on social and legal issues followed by others. The data clearly explains election fever and political turmoil of the country during the study period.

#### 4. Stories warranting further analysis

This section contains the news stories which show gender inequality in terms of news sources and perpetuate or challenge gender stereotype.

Among 277 stories noted under this category, 119 were coded under **highlights (in) equality**, which contained more than 3 male sources but female source, while 17 news stories contained equal number of sources. Similarly, 23 stories were about women and only 14 challenged/perpetuated stereotype for men and women.

*Despite majority of political news, FF noted 6 women based news stories on the first pages of dailies Naya Patrika, Kantipur, The Kathmandu Post, Nagarik and Annapurna Post.*

Data shows Nagarik daily has maximum number of stories, which warrant further analysis as of inequality in sources. However, news on speech and diplomatic activities of Nepal's President, Speaker of Parliament, other stories of women unrelated to gender issues have not been enlisted under those categories.

***Table 1.1 Stories warranting further analysis among news monitored from all nine broadsheets***

	Stories about women	Highlight (in)equality	Challenge stereotype	Warrants further analysis
Nagarik	2	29	0	27
Kantipur	1	18	0	18
TKP	6	11	3	13
Rep	4	13	3	15
AP	2	12	0	12
NP	2	11	2	11
THT	2	11	2	11
TRN	3	4	3	4
GP	1	10	1	10

## 5. Brief analysis of the stories related to gender equality

The news stories typically about women, showing inequality, and women in challenging or submissive roles have been coded under this title. There is brief description why these stories have been coded under the title.

- a. *Women rights activist attacked for witchcraft (Naya Patrika, Birgunj, September 18)* : Rajkumari Upadhyay, also Chairwoman of Women Rights Forum was beaten by her neighbours in her room, accusing her of practicing witchcraft. She was even forced to admit that she was a witch. This story can be studied from both lenses-challenging and perpetuating stereotypes. It challenges the submissive nature of women, for the woman becomes rights activist and advocates for rights of women folks, but unfortunately, she becomes victims at the hands to those who want to perpetuate stereotype. The woman activist is ill-treated for being change agent. It is therefore revealed that the elements that keep women in submissive role are mightier than those challenging the traditional role in Nepali society.
- b. *Discrimination against dalits (Nagarik, Kathmandu, July 29)*: The news covers stories of females from minority group who have been raped/misbehaved/attacked/ manhandled by their husbands/other males. One of the stories says an 11 year old was raped and left pregnant, who, after locals' help, was married to the convict. But even after the marriage, she was continuously misbehaved by her husband. The story was published on the first page of the daily with female byline. The story also perpetuates stereotype for women, even though it describes series of violence upon women in Nepal.
- c. *Woman displaced after delivering girl child (Kantipur, Kapilbastu, July 30)*: The story is about a woman who was expelled from home after she gave birth to a girl child. 22-year old Sabina Khatun was beaten to death by her husband and mother-in-law. Even though the victim and her father filed a case, no any investigation was carried out. This describes how irresponsible is the State mechanism upon case of violence against women. The story clearly perpetuated stereotype both for male and female.
- d. *Poverty faces women into migration: Report (The Kathmandu Post, Kathmandu, July 12)*: The news reads that a report prepared after a survey conducted among 1,210 non-migrant and returnee from foreign employment in Jhapa, Sindhupalchok, Nawalparasi, Kaski and Kailali presented poverty, lack of respectable and well-paying jobs and stigma associated with menial jobs were main reasons behind forcing women to leave the country for foreign jobs. Such data even from the districts adjoining the capital city draws concern over poor

status of women; and at the same time challenges stereotype where women work as breadwinner of the family.

- e. *Allo making many Rolpa women entrepreneurs (Republica, Rolpa, August 27)*: The news describes women from far-flung district Rolpa who were earlier engaged in tailoring and household works have shifted to small-scale business works. Women manufacture various *allo* products. The story not only challenges stereotype about woman but also describes how motivated and empowered are these rural women.
- f. *Teenage girl says: Is Chhau a sin? (Annapurna Post, Dailekh, July 18)*: The news story is about menstrual taboo practiced in remote districts of Nepal. The story is also about the lamentation of women forced to stay in small and unsafe shed and outhouse in the name of appeasing God. Hence, the story perpetuates stereotype and also highlights inequality where men of the family forbid the women in period entry into kitchen and house during.
- g. *Newly elected Dalit leaders vow to end caste discrimination (The Rising Nepal, Kathmandu, August 5)*: The news includes commitments made by newly elected Dalit women leaders at local level. Themselves being the community have expressed their commitments towards working for caste based discrimination, which still persists in Nepali community. The story clearly perpetuates stereotype about women elected as local leaders.
- h. *'Don't remind earthquake, it makes me cry' (Gorkhapatra, Nuwakot, July 30)*: The news describes poor health facility in the district adjoining the capital city where women could not receive healthy delivery facility due to damage caused by earthquake. They had to travel farther at harsh condition for delivery. However, the health centers are under renovation, women at the place express their happiness on getting good service. Hence, the story is about difficulties faced by women during pregnancy.

## CONCLUSION

The three monthly studies of the contents revealed gradual improvement on representation of women in Nepali media contents. However, overall data on women's presence in byline is similar to the previous report. Women journalists and sources comprise 5.84% and 10.38% respectively. During this quarter, the Annapurna Post showed highest number of female bylines, whereas the Nagarik daily constituted the highest number of male bylines. Overall, news stories on politics and government were found dominant. Compared to the previous reports, percentage of women as news sources has increased by 1.38%. News contents from Kantipur contained highest

number of both male and female sources quoted, while the THT contained maximum number of secondary sources among others. Almost 43% female journalists reported on political and governmental issues, whereas only 27% reported on social and legal issues. Conclusively, in comparison to the previous report, the increase of female news sources is a positive improvement.

### Change/Effect

- *One of the major highlights of the study is that THT, which was known to have zero female bylines in the first report, now contains 7 female bylines. It is indeed a change- effect of the report- realized during the study in this media.*
- *Compared to the last report, total number of women as news sources shows increasing trend. It is also the change realized.*
- *Meagre number of bylines in the State-owned media, The Rising Nepal, is worrying fact because it is the manifestation of non-implementation of inclusive policy government often advocates.*

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Government can conduct monitoring of the media it has run to see whether they have balanced news contents,
- Proper security/safety and retaining plans should be brought by the media houses to ensure dedication and enthusiasm of female staffs to work even at odd hours,
- Fair competition among co-workers and formation of a pressure group of female journalists in media house can make their voices heard,
- Incorporation of female bylines not only encourages female journalists but also helps widen media visibility,
- Editors' verbal commitment on increasing women's participation in their media should be materialized.

