



**Annual Report
2018-2019
Freedom Forum**

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1. Introduction

1.1 Brief Introduction to Organization:

Freedom Forum is an independent, non-governmental and not-for-profit civil society organization working for the cause of democracy and human rights focused on press freedom, freedom of expression, right to information and governance in Nepal. Incepted in 2005, FF has emerged as a prominent national organization in promoting access to information, freedom of expression and open development through dialogue, research, training, public advocacy and campaign and programme execution. The organization is also working on the issues of open governance/open data, public finance management, budget/aid transparency and political and parliamentary accountability and electoral reform based on its on-hand experience and learning. Adding new dimension to its regular activities, FF initiated Gender monitoring of nepali media contents since last year. The Forum has brought out numerous books, research journals, newsletters, periodic reports and policy papers on different dimensions of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), open development agenda and their effects, impacts and development.

This is a purely social organization registered with the District Administration Office of Kathmandu (Regd.127/062/063) and the Social Welfare Council (Affiliation No.18518) of Nepal. Its head office is in Kathmandu, Nepal. FF has different contact offices and representatives in provincial and district sites to coordinate programs at sub-national and local level. It has 11 member Board of Directors, 52 general members, 17 staffs. Annual General Meeting is the apex body of the organization and it takes place every year.

1.2 Major Objectives:

The key objectives of the organization are

- a) Protection and promotion of freedom expression and information
- b) Promotion and development of professional journalism
- c) Defending journalists, Right to Information activists and freedom of expression practitioners
- d) Promotion, protection and practice of the right to information
- e) Promotion of human rights and democratic norms and values
- f) Research/study, civic monitoring, oversight and education and advocacy for the guarantee of free and fair elections

- g) Promotion of the use of media, Right to Information, Open Data and Public Financial Management (PFM) tools to support the movement and campaign for social justice and development of disadvantaged people
- h) Contribution to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through exchange of ideas, experience and learning at national and international level being focused on attaining the targets of Goal 16
- i) Affiliation and participation in regional and global networks related to transparency, right to information, freedom of expression, free and professional press, civic engagement and Open Government Part
- j) Undertake action research and study to draw evidences for advocacy in its core areas of works.

1.3 About the Report:

This is an annual report containing major activities and achievements accomplished by FF during a year-long period spanning from **July 17, 2018 to July 16, 2019**. The primary objective of the report is to disclose overall core and partnership activities, learning, and outcomes of the organizational initiatives and demonstrate its track record and competence to execute ideas aligning the key themes of the organization. The report is expected to serve as a well-documentation of the key efforts of the organization to attain its objectives and a consolidated contribution FF made to the country's national development objective.

Information contained in this report have been widely extracted from the newsletters, project documents, project reports, press releases, website updates, meetings and discussion notes, media coverage and sharing on social media.

2. Major Activities and Accomplishments:

FF carried out several activities to promote its core values with support of funding partners. The partnership information and major activities undertaken by FF during the period are presented in following manner.

2.1 Partnership Projects executed :

Partnership program refers project and intervention executed in collaboration with different funding agencies. This year FF worked in partnership with following international organizations.

A. Open Budget Survey 2019

Duration: 1st December, 2018 to 30 September, 2020

Funding Agency: International Budget Partnership (IBP)

Project Site: National Budget System of the country

Project Nature: Research and Advocacy

Financial Grant: \$10,000

B. Enabling Conducive Atmosphere for Free, Safe and Inclusive Media (ECAFSIM) in Nepal

Duration: 1st January, 2018 to 31st December, 2018

Funding Agency: Free Press Unlimited (FPU)

Project Site: Seven Provinces

Financial Grant: 11,229,300

C. Contributing to the Atmosphere Conducive to FoE, Reduced Impunity and Inclusive Media (CACFRIM) in Nepal

Duration: 1st January, 2019 to December 31st, 2019

Funding Agency: Free Press Unlimited (FPU)

Project Site: Seven Provinces

Financial Grant: NRS 1,22,35,940/Euro 94391

D. Enable Environment for Media law Reforms and Improved RTI Practice (EEMIR) (CS:MAP)

Duration: 1st January 2017 to 30 September 2020

Funding Agency: Family Health International 360

Project Site: Kathmandu

Financial Grant: NRs. 2,25,84,850

E. Amendment to the Right to Information Act of Nepal

Duration: September 2018 to

Funding Agency: The Asia Foundation TAF

Project Site: Kathmandu

Financial Grant: NRs. 11,21,360

F. Sustainable use of Technology for Public Sector Accountability in Nepal (SUSASAN)

Duration: June 2017 to March 2021

Funding Agency: Global Affairs Canada/CECI

Project Site: Sindhupalchowk, Lalitpur, Dadeldhura, Achham, Kailali and Bajhang

Financial Grant: NRs. 59,80,426

G. Freedom of Expression Training for Lawyers and Legal Defense Fund

Duration: May 2019 to 31 st December

Funding Agency: Free Press Unlimited

Project Site: Kathmandu

Financial Grant: \$23000

H. Updating Nepal's Citizens' Climate Budget

Duration: 27th October 2018 to 15 February 2019

Funding Agency: United Nations Development Programme Bangkok Regional Hub

Project Site: Kathmandu

Financial Grant: \$12,750

I. Campaign and Advocacy on Impunity relating to Crime against Journalist

Duration: 1st November to 30th April, 2019

Funding Agency: IFEX

Project Site: Kathmandu

Funding Grant: \$13248

J. Seminar with Parliamentarian and CSO members

Duration: 1st December, 2018 to 31st December, 2018

Funding Agency: UNDP

Project Site: Kathmandu

Funding Grant: NRs.3,00,500

K. Promoting Open Parliament Initiative in Provinces

Duration: 1st July to 30th November, 2019

Funding Agency: UNDP

Project Site: Seven Provinces and Central level.

Funding Grant: NRS.45,01,350

2.2. Thematic Activities accomplished:

2.2.1 Democracy/Governance:

Our activities are focused on promoting democratic principles, norms, values and standards and strengthening democratic structures and institutions to foster democratic culture in Nepal. Activities carried out during this year under this theme are as follows:

A. Democracy Dialogue (Accept New Actor of Democracy)

Freedom Forum organized a talk program titled “Contemporary Challenges of Nepali Democracy” on the occasion of the International Day of Democracy in Kathmandu on September 14, 2018.

The main speaker of the program was Professor Krishna Khanal who said that among various challenges of democracy in the national and global context at present, the difference in the understanding of democracy between the ruler and people is the pressing one.

For more detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/accept-new-actors-of-democracy/>

B. Workshop on Open Government Partnership

Freedom Forum along with Accountability Lab organized a workshop on Open Government Partnership(OGP) on September 9, 2018. The workshop had brought together different civil society leaders and Open Government Champions to discuss the areas of interest, contributions and reinforce collective voices towards adoption of OGP.

The main objective of the event was to deepen CSOs' understanding on OGP, identify potential champions within and outside governments for knowledge building and prepare baseline for commitment and action plan from CSO's perspective.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/nepal-eligible-for-open-government-partnership/>

C. Engagement in “Fake news, Disinformation and Social Media” Session

The program was hosted by Internet Governance Forum (IGF) National organizing committee including government and Internet Society Nepal Chapter on 3rd November, 2018 in Kathmandu. Several discussions were held by plenary session on thematic issues such as Infrastructure of the Internet and its access, a leap towards cyber security, safer internet for children and young people etc.

The session was moderated by Freedom Forum’s vice president and Internet Rights and Principle Collation steering committee member Sahaj Man Shrestha. The panelists for the session were FF’s Executive Chief Taranath Dahal, Lecturer of Mass Communication and Journalism, Yam Bahadur Dura, Media Researcher Meera Raj Bhandari, Cyber Law Advocate Surendra Tiwari and Online Journalist Association President Shiva Satyal.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/second-internet-governance-forum-nepal-ffs-engagement-in-fake-news-disinformation-and-social-media-session/>

D. CSOs Readiness for Open Government Partnership

Freedom Forum organized a dialogue on ‘Collaborative Advocacy and CSO Readiness for Open Government Partnership’ in Kathmandu on December 30, 2018. The objective of this initiative were to bring together different civil society leaders and Open Government advocates to review the efforts made so far on Open Government Partnership (OGP) and reinvigorating the OGP agenda in Nepal.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/csos-readiness-for-open-government-partnership/>

E. Collaborative Dialogue 'OGP for Effective Governance'

Freedom Forum organized collaborative dialogue on ‘Open Government and Open Parliament’ with support of Parliament Support Programme of UNDP in Kathmandu on December 13, 2018.

In a bid to ensure improved transparency, accountability and citizen engagement in governance process, the members of the House of Representatives and National Assembly

had highlighted the need to join the Open Government Partnership (OGP) — a global movement in the program.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/ff-submits-rti-draft-amendment-for-legislating-open-data-provisions/>

F. National Advocacy for amplifying WMG voice in decision making

Freedom Forum organized a National Advocacy Campaign under the Sustainable Use of Technology for Public Sector Accountability in Nepal (SUSASAN) project in Kathmandu on February 18, 2019 in a bid to amplify voice for better participation of Women and Marginalized Groups (WMGs) in the decision-making process and systems in the local government.

The national advocacy event had brought together total 49 people including a Member of Parliament (member of state affairs and good governance committee), public policy-makers and shapers, experts, media professionals, participants from project districts, representatives from SUSASAN project partners and staffs and practitioners whose role will be imperative to position WMG in decision-making systems.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/national-advocacy-recommends-measures-for-improved-wmg-participation-in-decision-making-systems/>

G. Talk Program 'Open Govt for Securing Investment Atmosphere'

Freedom Forum in collaboration with Accountability Lab organized an interaction program on 'OGP and Climate Investment' in the capital on March 28, 2019. CSO leaders called for the government to opt OGP for securing better investment climate and pave way for economic progress.

Speakers were Country Representative of Accountability Lab, Narayan Adhikari Freedom Forum Executive Chief, Taranath Dahal, Researcher Sanjeeb Ghimire Chairperson of CAHURAST Nepal, Bishnu Pukar Shrestha, NGO Federation's General Secretary Ram Prasad Subedi, SAP Nepal's Executive Director Narendra Joshi, and Posta KC of GOGO Foundation.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/open-govt-for-securing-investment-atmosphere/>

H. Sharing of findings of ODI and KAP Survey

Freedom Forum (FF) organized a half day event to share key findings and recommendations of two separate studies entitled 'Mapping and Analysis of Existing Open Data Initiatives (ODI) at the Federal and Local Government level in Nepal' and 'Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) Survey of Citizen-State Engagement at Local Level using Technological Interfaces' in the capital on June 30, 2019.

The studies were undertaken by FF as part of the 'Sustainable Use of Technology for Public Sector Accountability in Nepal (SUSASAN)' – a project implemented in 12 local governments of Nepal with funding from Global affairs Canada (GAC).

The sharing event had brought together total 42 people including a CSOs, researchers, public policy-makers and shapers, experts, media professionals, participants from project districts, representatives from SUSASAN project partners, journalists, thematic experts international development partners.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/3760-2/>

2.2.2 Freedom of Expression:

Among the major accomplishments made by FF for the consolidation and strengthening of freedom of expression and of press are constant lobby and advocacy for policy reform on media sector, public awareness, drawing up Agenda for Change (AFC) as a long-term plan for the enhancement of freedom of expression in line with international standard.

Specific activities carried out under this theme are:-

A. Media Mission

FF conducted five-day media mission for this year from October 26 to October 31. During the mission, the members met with wider stakeholders- media organizations and officials, human rights activists, security persons and commoners and sought their views on the current media landscape in the province. The issues such as journalists' rights and impunity relating to crimes against journalists were focused during the interaction.

For full report:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/download/media-mission-2-2018/?wpdmdl=3412&refresh=5d773f728a6dd1568096114>

B. Orientation Workshop for Stringers

Freedom Forum held a 2- day Review and Orientation Workshop on Freedom of Expression and Gender Content Monitoring on March 22-23, 2019 in Kathmandu. The workshop was

organized with an aim to orient its representative from seven provinces on monitoring of media contents through gender perspectives and sensitize them on broader areas of Freedom of Expression, Right to information, Internet Freedom, Human Rights Protection and impunity for crimes against journalists.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/review-and-orientation-workshop-to-provincial-representatives/>

C. World Press Freedom Day Celebration

Freedom Forum marked World Press Freedom Day 2019 by organizing a program on May 2, 2019 in Kathmandu. The program organized with an objective to create a favorable atmosphere for press freedom as well as to make collective commitment to end the impunity and hostility to media witnessed participation of approximately 100 participants from diverse sectors.

Participants were representatives of political parties, human rights defenders, human rights institution, lawmakers, senior media persons, freedom of expression advocates and activists, government officials, researchers and media. On the occasion, as usual this year too. Also, FF unveiled the report of press freedom violations in the program.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/nepali-press-faces-mounting-hostility-alarms-rights-defenders/>

D. End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists

Freedom Forum observed the international Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists among stakeholders in Kathmandu on November 2, 2018. Two journalists working on the investigative and courageous theme were honored amid the program. The award for the investigative journalists were given to Ramesh Kumar working at Himal Khabar and Ram Bikash Chaudhary.

The event brought together 93 persons working in diverse sector. Mr. Anup Raj Sharma, Chairperson at National Human Rights Commission was the chief guest for the program along with the special guests such as Ramesh Bista, General Secretary, Federation of Nepali Journalists, Harihar Birahi, Ex-President, Federation of Nepali Journalists, Ex-Chair, Press Council & Coordinator of Prize Selection Committee, Manchala Jha, member of Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Subodh Raj Pyakurel of Informal Sector Service Center and Department head of Journalism and Mass Communication, Chiranjivi Khanal.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/3382-2/>

E. Interaction program on Post-Earthquake Reconstruction Works

Freedom Forum organized an interaction program on 'Contemporary Issues of Reconstruction Works' on October 9, 2018 with the presence of Chief Executive Officer of the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA), Sushil Gyawali, as the chief guest.

The program was conducted to share the experiences of the journalists from 14 earthquake affected districts to whom FF had given training on Public Interest Reporting (PIR).

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/contemporary-issues-of-reconstruction-works/>

F. Training on Public Interest Reporting

FF had conducted the 5-day 'Public Interest Reporting (PIR)' training to 33 mid-career journalists from the 14 earthquakes affected districts. The training was focused on the issue of public concern on post- quake reconstruction and the rehabilitation.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/reporters-understanding-up-on-public-interest-issues/>

G. Fellowship to public interest reporters

Freedom Forum (FF) awarded one of the fellowship stories on public interest reporting 'Best Feature Award to Province 3' on 19 February, 2019. The story was written by Mr. Aditya Dahal, one of the fellows to which FF had provided fellowship for the investigative reports on reconstruction issues.

Mr. Dahal is associated with the National News Agency (RSS) and was also awarded by the RSS on its 58th anniversary for the same story.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/freedom-forums-fellowship-story-awarded/>

H. Review and Orientation Workshop to Provincial Representatives

Freedom Forum held a 2- day Review and Orientation Workshop on Freedom of Expression and Gender Content Monitoring on March 22-23, 2019 in Kathmandu. The workshop was organized with an aim to orient its representative from seven provinces on monitoring of media contents through gender perspectives and sensitize them on broader areas of

Freedom of Expression, Right to information, Internet Freedom, Human Rights Protection and impunity for crimes against journalists.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/review-and-orientation-workshop-to-provincial-representatives/>

2.2.3 Right to Information and Open data:-

FF organized various campaigns, trainings and discussion programs under this theme during this year.

A. RTI trainings to PIOs

FF had organized training for public information officers in Kapilvastu from 26 to 28 July, 2018. A total of 19 PIOs along with two female participants were trained on the importance of RTI Act and policies.

In the training, more than 60% participants were from local levels and others were from the District Administrative Office, District Treasury Controller Office, District Health Office and various local government offices and CS:MAP head (Health, Education, Agriculture and Disaster) related offices from Pyuthan, Gulmi, Arghakhanchhi, Palpa and Kapilvastu districts.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/rti-to-pios/>

B. RTI Nepal App:

Freedom Forum is running (RTI) Nepal Mobile App which was launched last year. The android app, an integrated package on several dimensions of RTI- from principles to practice-, is aimed at making public and the media persons aware on use of RTI and its benefit for contributing to the good governance endeavor in the country.

The application can be downloaded in any android mobile from play store. The link is <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.rtinepal&hl=en>

C. Policy Stakeholder Dialogue on RTI Bill of State-3

Freedom Forum organized a policy stakeholder discussion on “Right to Information (RTI) Bill- State 3” on 24th April 2019 in Kathmandu. Various State Assembly Members of State-3, lawyers, policy stakeholders, RTI activist and campaigner, media fraternities and other concerned stakeholders participated the policy dialogue event on the proposed bill which is under consideration in State Affairs Committee of State Assembly.

Speakers were Former Secretary of National Information Commission (NIC), Shree Ram Panta , Chief Executive of Freedom Forum Taranath Dahal , Legal and Policy Advisor of FHI360, Tanka Aryal, Assembly member of state 3 Ramesh Paudyal, Rajendraman Shrestha Radha Ghale, Bijaya KC Shrestha, Jeevan Dangol and Tsering D. Lama, and FF's Chairperson Hari Binod Adhikari.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/policy-stakeholder-dialogue-on-rti-bill-of-state-3/>

D. Orientation on RTI Nepal App at Karnali Province

Freedom Forum's representative for Karnali Province Laxmi Bhandari conducted an orientation on Right to Information and its mobile application RTI Nepal developed by Freedom Forum with women and youth group. The program was conducted in Surkhet on April 5 and April 12 separately among 20 women and 60 students.

The activity was carried out as part of the project – Contributing to the Atmosphere Conducive to FoE, Reduced Impunity and Inclusive Media (CACFRIIM). The main objective of the program was to inform women and youth groups about Right to Information and use of RTI Nepal app to request information of public concern at local levels.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/orientation-on-rti-nepal-app-at-karnali-province/>

E. International Right to Know Day Celebration:

FF marked this year's International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI), making observation on Nepal's RTI practices, laws and policies and discussing the international practices.

Speakers in the program were Associate Professor at Kathmandu University Dr Sudhamshu Dahal Executive Chief at FF, Taranath Dahal FF Chairperson Haribinod Adhikari Executive member at FF, Bin Kumar Bishwokarma who focused on the importance of RTI.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/time-to-reform-rti-expansion-strategy-in-nepal/>

2.2.4 Gender Justice in Media:

FF continues monitoring Nepali media contents through gender perspectives. This year monitoring was conducted at central and provincial level, monitoring nine national dailies and six online news portal in central and 21 major provincial dailies from seven provinces.

Specific activities carried out are as follows:

A. Reports on Gender Content Monitoring Published:

Freedom Forum published the report of monitoring through out a year on quarterly basis. The first report of the year was published from July to September, 2nd, 3rd and 4th from October to December, January to March and April to June respectively.

The report is prepared after analyzing the data recorded from main news contents and op-eds of all selected media outlets.

For detail report:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/publications/reports/media-monitoring-reports/>

B. March 8: Advocacy for more Women in Media for Inclusive Media

Freedom Forum, a frontline CSO in Nepal, along with various other organizations, including NEFEJ, organized a program gathering more than 150 people from diverse organization.

With the theme of gender equality in Nepal media, a rally was organized from a local Exhibition Road to the Kathmandu Durbar Square. In the rally named 'Move for Women', the participants carried placards, reading: Respect Women; Let's Think for Women's Rights; Protect Women's Right; More Female in Media, Inclusive Media etc.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/march-8-advocacy-for-more-women-in-media-for-inclusive-media/>

C. Interface 'Women's Presence in Nepali Media'

Freedom Forum organized an interface to discuss women's presence in Nepali media in Kathmandu on November 28, 2018

The data generated after monitoring a total of 3,666 news stories from nine national dailies and six online media from January to September 2018 was presented at the program to show the comparative study on presence of women in the media.

Compared to the male's presence, women's presence is obviously low e.g. among article writers in the national dailies monitored the women's presence is 22% against 78% male.

The report concluded that news from online media are more inclusive than print media in terms of byline, and news source.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/women-journalists-to-urge-media-to-make-social-issues-main-news/>

D. Interaction with editors and journalists on women presence in Nepali media

FF organized the interaction among editors and journalists representing the major three dailies from each province- Gandaki Province, Province 5, Karnali Province and Far West Province in Dang on May 27, 2019.

Journalists during the program were made aware that the project was implemented to monitor the presence of women in province dailies- in news byline, news source and the presentation of stories on women. The program was attended by total 22 participants with 10 females.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/province-editors-welcome-ff-study-commit-to-making-media-women-friendly/>

E. Strategic meeting on enhancing women representation in Nepali Media

FF organized formal gathering of 30 editors from major media of the country at Godawari of Lalitpur on December 28. At the gathering, editors from major media had appreciated the monitoring of women representation in Nepali media the FF has been carrying out for two years.

They not only shared their views on various aspects of freedom of expression and press freedom in the country but also lauded the activities Freedom Forum has prioritized as the study on women's presence in media.

The editors were provided the fact sheets the charts and graphs reflecting the percentage of women byline in media, women as news source and the news beat women reporters are allocated.

F. Visit to Media Houses

FF's Monitoring and Evaluation Officer visited all 9 newspapers and 6 online media houses, handed over the report. After this visit in media outlets, Freedom Forum concludes that media houses were gradually making headway to gender inclusive newsroom by increasing the number of female reporters, giving them favorable atmosphere. On this way, it has led to make female journalists visible through bylines.

Overall, some editors realized and committed to making newsroom gender inclusive and some media houses were found already adopting the approach.

2.2.5 Policy Reviews/Program:

FF also reviews national policies through FoE perspectives with its background on advocacy on issues of freedom of expression and information. This year FF reviewed and disseminated the papers on various policies brought forth in Nepal under the project EEMIR- CS:MAP.

A. Review on Broadcasting Bill of Province 5 submitted

Freedom Forum submitted the review report on Broadcasting Bill of Province 5 to the Office of the Chief Minister and Ministry of Internal Affairs and Law. The draft bill was also distributed to the Assembly members of different political parties in the province on December and to the media and FoE stakeholders. The Assembly Members of Province 5 were distributed the review FF made with the objective of facilitating them to give final shape to the bill.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/review-on-broadcasting-bill-of-province-5-submitted/>

B. Policy Stakeholder Dialogue on RTI Bill of State-3

Freedom Forum organized a policy stakeholder discussion on “Right to Information (RTI) Bill- State 3” on 24th April 2019 in Kathmandu. Various State Assembly Members of State-3, lawyers, policy stakeholders, RTI activist and campaigner, media fraternities and other concerned stakeholders participated the policy dialogue event on the proposed bill which is under consideration in State Affairs Committee of State Assembly.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/policy-stakeholder-dialogue-on-rti-bill-of-state-3/>

C. Dissemination and Sharing of Media Council Bill

Freedom Forum submitted the proposed amendments points and policy brief regarding Media Council Bill to influential lawmakers from ruling and opposition parties in both upper and lower house of the parliament, ministry officials and other concerned stakeholders on 23rd May, 2019. The documents were shared via parliamentarian pigeonhole, emails, social media platforms and other means as well.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/dissemination-and-sharing-of-media-council-bill/>

C. Stakeholders Meeting on Information Technology Bill

Freedom Forum organized policy IT Bill's stakeholder discussion on 30th June 2019 in Kathmandu. The program was conducted on presence of members from the Development and Technology Committee of the House of Representatives (HoR), Legislation Management Committee of National Assembly (NA), parliamentarians, lawyers and concerned stakeholders in order to develop common understanding over conflicting issues and define the strategy and way forward on the IT Bill.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/stakeholders-meeting-on-information-technology-bill/>

D. Submission of review report of the proposed Communication Policy to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Law

Freedom Forum submitted review report on Province 5 proposed Communication Policy and submitted it to the Office of the Chief Minister and Ministry of Internal Affairs and Law on 26th September, 2018. It was submitted with the objective of facilitating the Ministry in making policy decisions in the field of information, communication and freedom of expression in the changed context.

FF's representative for Province 5 Ram Bikash Chaudhari handover the review report to the Chief Minister and Ministry of Internal Affairs and Law. Out of 68 points provision of the policy FF had recommended amendment for 44 points and identified gap and suggested other 8 points for accommodating newly formulated proposed policy.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/freedom-forumsubmits-review-on-province-5-proposed-communication-policy-to-the-ministry-of-internal-affairs-and-law/>

E. Discussion on draft Bill on Privacy

With the objective of collecting views about newly drafted proposed Privacy Bill from diverse stakeholders, a discussion program was held in Kathmandu on August 5, 2018.

The program witnessed the presence of lawyers, media experts, representatives from civil society organizations where they discussed on the draft bill in order to identify its strengths and weaknesses so that it would be helpful for further review and amendment of the bill.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/draft-bill-on-privacy-receives-many-suggestions-comments/>

F. Dialogue 'Open Data, Right to Information and Role of Parliament'

Freedom Forum along with Journalists' Society for Parliamentary Affairs organized a program, 'Open Data, Right to Information and Role of Parliament' on July 5, 2019 in Kathmandu . In the program, various stakeholders had insisted the need of open data for parliamentarians to boost up their performance in law and policy making.

Total 35 participants representing parliamentary committees, civil society organizations, media and advocates of openness took part in the deliberation calling for legislating open data in Nepal.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/open-data-booster-for-better-performance-of-lawmakers/>

2.3FF Publications:

Besides several programs implemented in partnership with funding agencies, FF's published several policy reviews, reports, books and drafts this year.

A. Nepal's Citizen Climate Budget:

The Nepal Citizens Climate Budget describes the steps the government is taking to manage climate-related financial resources and presents the 2018/19 climate budget. This document is designed to help citizens, CSOs and journalists, as well as people's representatives and parliamentarians and other policymakers, to understand how the government uses public finance to address climate change. Freedom Forum continued the publication of CCB with support from International Budget Partnership and funding support from UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub.

Citizens, civil society organizations (CSOs), people's representatives, parliamentarians and others must play an important part in: 1) ensuring that decisions about raising and spending money to address climate change are aligned to what people, natural systems and the economy need; 2) monitoring the implementation (how government actually collects and spends budgeted money on services and activities) of those choices; and 3) holding the government to account. To help ensure that relevant public funds are used effectively and as intended to address the potential impacts of climate change and support sustainable development, citizens and CSOs need access to budget information that they can understand and opportunities to engage in budget decision making and oversight

processes. To inform and encourage public understanding and engagement, Freedom Forum developed this Citizens Climate Budget (CCB) to present the government's budget plans to raise and spend public money to address climate change and its effects. The CCB presents information from 2013/14 through 2018/19. This document is designed to help citizens, CSOs and journalists, as well as people's representatives and parliamentarians and other policymakers, to understand how the government uses public finance to address climate change. The CCB can be used to facilitate dialogues about climate finance accountability at different levels of government, and it also provides evidence for stakeholders to use to engage in budgetary discussion and decisions.

Please find the link of the CCB for details:

http://www.np.undp.org/content/nepal/en/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/Nepal-Climate-Citizen-Budget.html

B. MAY 3 Report 2019

The report was prepared by Freedom Forum on World Press Freedom Day compiling cases of press freedom violations, freedom of expression, media policy and impunity watch over the period of a year (May 2018 to April 2019).

Major highlights:

- Number of press freedom violations witnessed continued rise nearly double this year.
- Violations directly affected a total of 158 journalists across the country this year. FF had recorded only 66 such violations in May 2018.
- Out of total violations this year, 31 are attack and manhandle combined, followed by 28 misbehavior; 19 threats, 15 arrests, 6 vandalism and obstruction combined, 1 suspension, 1 arson, and 3 court cases.
- Categorizing the data as per province, Province 3, which is also the home to the federal capital Kathmandu witnessed the highest number of violations (39), followed by Province 2 (25). Similarly, Province 1 and Province 6 shared equal number of violations (7). Gandaki Province and Province 5 witnessed equal number of violations (9) and Far-west Province recorded 8 violations.

- Most of the violations took place while journalists were covering stories regarding public interest/concern issues, crime, irregularities, corruption and political demonstrations.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/download/press-freedom-may-3-report-2019/?wpdmdl=3676&refresh=5d7621f21a2251568023026>

C. Gender Content Monitoring Report:

This report is prepared every three months on the basis of content monitoring of nine main Nepali broadsheets and 6 online news portal namely, Kantipur, The Kathmandu Post, The Himalayan Times, Nagarik, Republica, Gorkhapatra, The Rising Nepal, Naya patrika and Annapurna Post, Baarakhari, Lokantaar, Ratopati, Setopati, Onlinekhabar and Pahilopost.

Major highlights from the recent report of June :

- Among total 873 news stories, 73% showed named byline with 13% female.
- Among 195 op-ed articles, 22% were written by female against 78% male authors.
- Likewise, 360 online news stories revealed 17% female in bylines.
- Women as news sources comprise 13% and 10% in print and online news stories respectively.
- Highest number of female in news and op-ed byline (41%) and as news sources (34%) are found in social news on print media but their maximum presence as sources (26%) is found in news about science and health on online media.
- Comparing individually, Gorkhapatra (state-owned) daily and Setopati online contained the highest number of news with female in byline while Kantipur containing maximum women authored op-ed articles.
- The Kathmandu Post and Onlinekhabar are found to quote the highest number of female as news sources in their main news contents.
- Comparing to the previous quarter, news from print media show increase in the number of female in news byline by 3% but decrease by 3% on online media.
- Number of women as news sources remain same on print news but decreases by 1% on online news.

D. Gender Content Monitoring of Provincial Media

Among total 1004 news stories scanned from the main pages of 21 province dailies, 24% showed named byline with 9% names of female and remaining 91% names of male journalists. While scanning the same news stories for sources quoted, 13% were found to be women with 87% men. This quarter's monitoring recorded majority of news on business issues (28%) on the main pages of selected broadsheets followed by news on social and legal issues (22%).

Irrespective of the above result, the highest number of female in news byline (33%) are found in social and legal news whereas, their maximum presence as news sources (30%) are found in business news.

Amongst the dailies monitored, Kayakairan (Pro 3), Butwal Today (Pro 5) and Hill Times (Far-west Province) dailies published the highest number of news with female byline. and contained the highest number of women as news sources in the news contents monitored. Udghosh daily (Pro 1) on the other hand, is found to quote the highest number of female as news sources as compared to other dailies. As compared to previous quarter (Jan-Mar), this quarter witnesses increase in the number of female in news byline by 2% with equal percentage of those as news sources.

E. SUSASAN Training manual

It is the training manual on the use of integrated technology to promote civic participation (including concept and approaches for open data, budget transparency, citizen reporting, grievance reporting). Its e-copy is disseminated to the partners and made public through SUSASAN web portal for its intended users. It is intended to be a dynamic document, revised annually based on the feedback of manual users (stakeholders) and published in hard copy in the final year of the project. The first updated version is finalized. The manual specifically targeted as a Training of Trainers (ToT) for facilitators and practitioners to organize sessions on four major thematic areas of the project: open data, budget transparency, citizen reporting and grievance reporting to promote civic participation in governance and accountability mechanism at local government level. This training manual is designed and all project partners started using in different training and awareness raising sessions.

For details:

https://susasan.org/api/sites/default/files/doc_resources/Final%20version-Training%20Manual%20layout%20%282%29.pdf

F. Mapping and analysis of existing Open Data initiatives

Freedom Forum is the lead for mapping and analysis of Open Data initiatives acquiring technical input from Center for Law and Democracy (CLD) in Canada. A mapping of existing Open Data initiatives on three different levels (government: key individuals and institutions in Federal and local governments; intermediaries: media, CSOs, researchers and technology companies and end-users: citizens, including WMGs) was initiated in the first year of the project (2017/2018). The final version of the report is ready to print and it is considered as an important guiding document for the project. The designed e-copy is available in FF's website.

The overall objective of the study was to understand and analyse the scope and shortcomings of current Open Data initiatives at Federal and local levels in Nepal to help focus project work on developing appropriate tools and mechanisms to address the shortcomings for enabling citizens, and in particular WMGs, to be able to access data and information they need for ensuring social accountability. The aim of this study is to map and analyse the availability of public data and information across three main vectors: accessibility (what, how); use/re-use and benefits; and gaps/barriers and capacity needs at the Federal and local levels.

For details: <http://freedomforum.org.np/download/open-data-initiative-mapping-report/?wpdmdl=3502&refresh=5da5a836f3edb1571137590>

G. Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) survey

Freedom Forum had initiated the survey in the first year of the project, but because of local context it was delayed and the survey report is now finalized. Significant input was obtained from Center for Law and Democracy (CLD) from the onset of the survey to ensure the survey methodology and quality of the report on the basis of its experience. The final version of the survey report is reviewed in this reporting period and now it is finalized. The e-copy is available in FF's website.

The main purpose of the survey was to collect information on the existing knowledge, attitude, and practice on:

- a) Citizen-state engagement in democratic decision-making processes at local governments
- b) The tools and mechanisms used to promote governance and social accountability, and
- c) The use of technology for engagement and promoting governance.

For details:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/download/kap-survey-report/?wpdmdl=3501&refresh=5da5a837022651571137591>

H. Newsletter

FF published total four issues of newsletters during this year. All the issues highlighted the activities carried out by the organization. It mainly covers media monitoring reports, policy/impunity watch, RTI campaigns and other collaborative approaches. Those issues were also uploaded on its website and made public.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/publications/newsletters/>

I. Legal Aid and Legal Help to Journalists

- **Press Council Bill, 2017**

Legal desk reviewed Press Council Bill 2017 and submitted to the review report and an attention letter to Ministry of Communication and Information Technology. Similarly, FF visited the Ministry and held meeting with the Ministry officials to draw attention in the matter. FF has identified some loopholes in the draft of Press Council Bill 2017:

Report at: <http://freedomforum.org.np/content/download/comments-on-press-council-draft-bill-2074/?wpdmdl=3289>

- **Privacy Bill-2018**

A preliminary report was made from the findings generated in a program that was organized for the discussion on the bill. Another three-column detail report was prepared by FF and it was submitted to the Nepal Law commission, Law Ministry and concerned parliamentary committees.

During this period, FF continued its lobby and advocacy efforts by disseminating the ideas extracted from reviewed document and engaging with different media outlets over

the privacy issues. More than 10 television and Radio interviews were given by FF Chief Executive Mr. Taranath Dahal in order to prod for the reform on draft bill.

Beside this, newspaper articles were published in Kantipur daily, Republica daily and others. Mr. Dahal is continuously raising the need of privacy bill since a decade. Mr. Dahal also wrote some articles in vernacular English daily pointing out the key problems with Privacy bill. Those media efforts finally helped to create an enabling environment to incorporate the recommended provisions in the bill during finalization.

Links to the privacy bill program and reports:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/content/draft-bill-on-privacy-receives-many-suggestions-comments/>

https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=http://freedomforum.org.np/content/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Comments-and-suggestions-on-Privacy-Bill-2018_Nepali.pdf

• **Province 5 Communication Policy**

FF also submitted review report on province 5's proposed Communication Policy and submitted it to the Office of the Chief Minister and Ministry of Internal Affairs and Law on 26 September with the objective of facilitating the Ministry in making policy decisions in the field of information, communication and freedom of expression in the changed context. The FF pointed out the weaknesses in the draft policy and recommended for corrections.

News on the policy: <http://freedomforum.org.np/content/freedom-forumsubmits-review-on-province-5-proposed-communication-policy-to-the-ministry-of-internal-affairs-and-law/>

Report at: <http://freedomforum.org.np/content/download/review-on-province-5-sanchar-niti/?wpdmdl=3356>

Legal Help to Journalists

In this period, FF continued providing legal aid to the journalists who had to fight legal cases with state agencies. FF has established legal desk for legal aides to journalist. Some legal aides were:

1. **Raju Basnet:** FF engaged in defending journalist Raju Basnet in the court proceedings. Journalist Basnet was arrested and detained for four days on charge of

Cyber Crime in the Kathmandu Valley. After four days follow up including the visits to detention and court litigation, FF was successful to release the journalist on ordinary bail. It is indeed one of the success stories. The 43rd issue of the quarterly newsletter of the FF has made the cover page story on it.

2. Legal Aid Visit to Dhangadhi:

With a purpose of providing legal assistance to journalist in far west Dhangadhi district, a team of legal desk visited Dhangadhi. Inquiry about the attack on journalist Nabaraj Dhanuk was made in the local police station. Also, security personnel's observation regarding the torched newspaper in the Dhangadhi was collected. FF legal team put pressure on police persons to immediately proceed with the legal process against the attackers on journalist Dhanuk. Later, the police proceeded with the legal action against the attackers.

3. Legal Aid visit to Dhading/Neelam Panta:

After the notice that a whistleblower are facing legal problem, a team from FF visited Dhading district where Neelam Panta, a whistleblower was arrested by the police for providing the news about the corruption of the local leaders and business persons. Later he was released by the court after a week. FF has taken these as the success stories.

Continuing the legal help desk in 2019, the desk has already helped 5 journalists who were put in trouble by the government and other actors because of their profession- media practice.

a. Ganesh B.K

A young journalist from remote Bajhang district was arrested and charged under Cyber Crime case for writing news on the online portal against the security officials of the district on January 3. He was brought to Kathmandu and was kept under custody for 14 days. Freedom Forum legal desk helped the journalist by representing his case in the court and was successful to release him. It is indeed an achievement.

b. Som Diyali

A journalist from Sarlahi district was attacked by an unknown gang on 12 February where he was severely injured by the attack. Although the journalist has given the name of the attackers to the police, police released one of the attackers and others involved are not arrested and searched. For this Freedom Forum submitted a **attention letter** to the police and administration office in the district to book the assailants as soon as possible and provide justice to the journalist. Also FF's representative for Province 2 Rajan Singh visited the victim journalist to know more about the case. FF is continuously following up the case seriously.

c. Karna Bishwokarma

Journalist Karna Bishwokarma associated with Naya Karnali FM station was arrested on March 21 from the FM station. The security officials argued that he was arrested and

detained for his alleged affiliation to Biplab-led Maoist party whose activities are banned by the Nepal Government. To this, FF took the stand that Karna was working as media persons when the security arrested him. After the tremendous pressure from the human right organizations and Freedom Forum, he was released from detention after seven days. Moreover, FF's representative for Province 6 Laxmi Bhandari visited the rural Karnali area to know more about the incident.

d. Arjun Giri

Arjun Giri, a journalist associated with www.tandavnews.com was arrested for cybercrime from Pokhara on April 15. He was released later on April 19 by the order of Kathmandu District Court. FF legal desk helped the journalist from the initial stage and represented the case in court.

e. Khem Bhandari

Khem Bhandari a journalist from far western region of Nepal was targeted for writing news about the controversial rape case in Nepal. He was charged with contempt of court case by the District Bar for writing news about the ongoing court case. As all the lawyers in the district are not supporting him on the case, FF Legal Officer helped him drafting the legal documents necessary to defend him. Again, FF hired a consultant to assist him prepare the additional documents such as Pleading Note/ Submission and submit in the court. FF is following up the case.

In addition to these, untiring advocacy for freedom of expression and journalists rights and watchfulness on the laws government makes is a focus. Opinion by Executive Chief to various media, articles and tweets against the harsh provisions in the Media Council Bill intended to curtail FoE atmosphere, creating panic on journalists, created pressure on the government to put on hold the bill for broader discussion.

The legal help desk is part of Freedom Forum, a social organisation based in Kathmandu, dedicated to press freedom and the right to information. Free Press Unlimited supported Freedom Forum with the setting up the help desk and increasing their capacity. Partly because of this, Ashmita can now commit full time to the safety of these Nepali journalists

J. Legal Support fund for media professional in Nepal (Legal Defense Fund):

A new project named ' Legal Support fund for media professional in Nepal ' was launched in this period. It is the project basically focused on lawyer/legal expert, assistance to detain media workers, initial family assistance for detained media workers and toll free no. for legal support to journalist.

K. RTI Support Desk :

Operationalization of RTI App and www.nepalpressfreedom.org website. FF is continuously operating RTI App developed by FF. RTI App is getting popular in Nepal as all the resources related to RTI is uploaded in the one platform. Also, news and events

related to the RTI are uploaded in the App. FF promotes RTI issues by using various platforms and twitter including the App itself.

Similarly, press freedom violation collected from across the country are updated in www.nepalpressfreedom.org. In all 7 provinces, stringers track the cases and send it to centre office.

L. Podcast Production/IFEX:

In this period, ten episodes of podcasts were produced and uploaded in FF website under IFEX project.

Contents covered by podcast are: Impunity Continues Unabated, problems faced by Nepali Press during a decade insurgency period, conflict victim and activists experience of Nepali Press during insurgency period, responsible for unabated impunity, citizen's campaigner, Press and Freedom of Speech activists's experience, reporting experience during insurgency period at revolutionist maoist base camp. justice access to Dailekh Journalist Dekendra Thapa who was killed by then rebel Maoist got justice? What is doing by two commission which were formed to provide justice to conflict victims? Journalists's family agony who died during Madhes and Tharuhat protest, Challenges faced by Nepali press during insurgency period and after Comprehensive Peace Accord shared by Bishnu Nishturi, A daughter who lost her journalist Father. Solutions journalism is rigorous, evidence-based reporting on the responses to social problems.

For detail:

<http://freedomforum.org.np/podcast/>

2.4 Publication:

Impunity for crime against journalist report was published in English and Nepali under IFEX project.

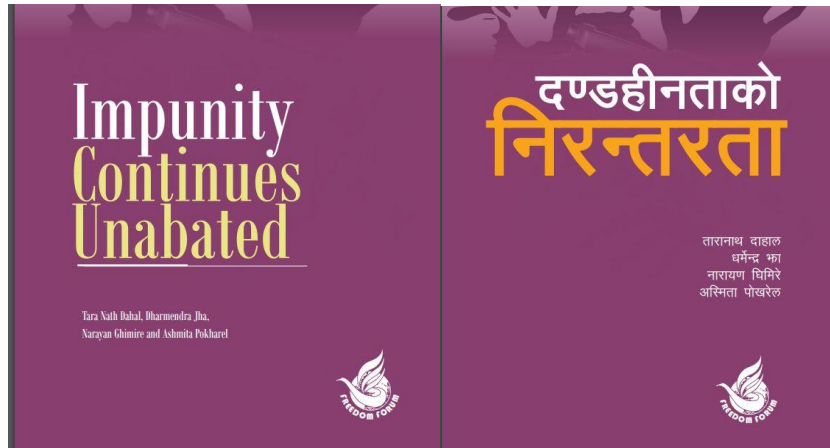
Report has included about 23 journalists/media persons who is listed as murdered from 1996 (2052BS) till date (March 2019) by this study, Dekendra Thapa, Gopal Giri, Krishna Sen, Ishwor Budhathoki, Kumar Ghimire, D Koudinnya, Raj Kumar KC, Kamal AC, Maheshwor Pahari, Khagendra Srestha, Ambika Timsina, Nabaraj Sharma Basant, Gyanendra Khadka and Ganesh Chaudhary totaling 14 were killed before the Comprehensive Peace Accord (November 21, 2006) or during the armed insurgency

waged by then Maoist party. Similarly, Uma Singh, Birendra Saha, Jamim Shah, Arun Singhaniya, JP Joshi, Rohan Chaudhary, Ganesh Chaudhary, Devi Prasad Dhital and Pushkar Bahadur Shrestha totaling 10 were murdered after the CPA- the post-insurgency period. It clearly suggests that journalists are killed even in the post-conflict period and hence perpetuates the impunity.

For detail :

<https://bit.ly/2Jg6NmH>

<https://bit.ly/31F7T1u>



2.5. Other public outreach mechanisms:

In order to reach out Freedom Forum's information related to thematic interventions, the organization has laid high emphasis on adopting diverse outreach mechanisms including websites (www.freedomforum.org.np, www.nepalpressfreedom.com), podcast (Freedom Chautari), social media (official facebook and twitter handle) and RTI App. The digital mechanisms are being widely used to impart the message and expand the reach of Freedom Forum's thematic content.

2.6. FF Celebration:

A. International Day for Universal Access to Information:

FF marked this year's International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI), making observation on Nepal's RTI practices, laws and policies and discussing the international practices.

B. International Women's Day:

FF celebrated Women's Day by participating in the M4W March event organized in collaboration with other FPU partners.

C. World Press Freedom Day:

FF marked the World Press Freedom Day-2019 by releasing the May 3 report amidst media persons and experts in a program in Kathmandu on May 2.

D. National Democracy Day: Challenges of Nepali Democracy

Freedom Forum celebrated International Day of Democracy by organizing a talk program titled “Contemporary Challenges of Nepali Democracy” in Kathmandu on September 14, 2018.

2.7.FF Participation:

- Executive Chief Mr. Taranath Dahal participated in the Open Government Partnership Summit 2018 held in Tbilisi, Georgia from 17 to 19 July.
- FF's policy advisor Krishna Prasad Sapkota participated in International Budget Partnership Audit Accountability Meeting held in Accra, Ghana from 26 and 27 September.
- Executive Chief Mr. Taranath Dahal participated in IBP Learning Network Partners Meeting (PM) which was held in Dakar, Senegal from 2nd to 4th April.
- Executive Chief Dahal participated in the opening of 2019 IPI World Congress at the UNOG in Geneva, Switzerland on June 4th and 5th.
- Executive Chief Dahal also participated in IFEX strategic conference and general meeting held in Berlin on 10th and 11th April, 2019.
- FF Policy Advisor Krishna Sapkota participated in the 6th Open Government Partnership Summit held in Ottawa, capital of Canada on May 28th to 31st, 2019.

2.8. FF's Visibility:

Activities of FF mostly have been covered by national media (broadcast, print and new media). Also, FF regularly updates its activities, press releases, press freedom violations cases on its website (www.freedomforum.org.np & www.nepalpressfreedom.org) and social media pages (facebook and twitter) and also through podcast (<http://freedomforum.org.np/podcast/>).

Annexes