

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-25



Freedom Forum Nepal

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Message from Chairperson

I am pleased to present the Annual Progress Report 2024/25 of Freedom Forum (FF), which reflects our continued commitment to defending freedom of expression, press freedom, and human rights in Nepal.

During this fiscal year, Nepal witnessed growing challenges to democracy, freedom of expression, press freedom, the right to information, and the values of an open and liberal society supported by accountable governance. The safety of journalists, which had gradually improved over the past decade, has once again become a serious concern. The tragic deaths of two journalists have raised alarming questions about the safety and security of media professionals. Journalists reporting investigative stories, particularly on the activities of local governments, are increasingly being targeted. Many have faced harassment and legal actions for reporting on corruption and irregularities.

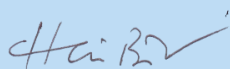


In response, Freedom Forum remained dedicated to supporting journalists and safeguarding press freedom. Throughout the year, we continued our regular monitoring of press freedom violations, maintained detailed documentation of such incidents, and closely coordinated with various mechanisms of the National Human Rights Commission. These efforts have been crucial in promoting press freedom and strengthening the protection of journalists.

This year the Parliament approved long awaited Public Service Broadcasting Bill. This marks a positive step toward strengthening public broadcasting institutions to serve the public interest. Similarly, Freedom Forum made significant interventions in advancing open and collaborative budgeting initiatives. We formed a 'Working Group' on Public Finance Management to actively engage in monitoring public service delivery and remain vigilant regarding budget implementation at the subnational level.

The impact of our advocacy is reflected in our strategic interventions, litigation efforts, and policy recommendations. Looking ahead, Freedom Forum remains committed to expanding its reach, strengthening partnerships, monitoring policy developments and adapting to evolving media and governance landscape.

Lastly, I extend my sincere gratitude to our team, board members, partners, donors, and supporters whose unwavering dedication has made this work possible.



Hari Binod Adhikari
Chairperson

About the Report

This is an annual report containing major activities and achievements accomplished by Freedom Forum (FF) during a fiscal year, spanning from July 17, 2024 to July 16, 2025. The primary objective of the report is to disclose overall 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. It is expected to serve as a solid documentation of key efforts of the organization to attain its objectives, projects executed and a consolidated contribution FF made to the country's national development.

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 social media updates.

Who We Are:

Freedom Forum (FF) is an independent, non-government, not-for-profit and non-partisan purely social organization established on September 1, 2005 and registered with the District Administration Office of Kathmandu, Nepal (Regd.127/062/063) and the Social Welfare Council, Nepal (Affiliation No.18518). It has 13-membered Board of Directors, 50 general members and five staffs. Its office is located in Kathmandu, Bagmati Province, Nepal. It has seven provincial offices and representatives in regional and district sites to coordinate programs at the local levels. FF has eight policies to regulate organization's internal governance (<https://freedomforum.org.np/policy/>).

FF is a collaborative partner of the National Human Rights Commission, Nepal (NHRC) and National Information Commission (NIC). It is also a member of steering committee of Office of Auditor General, Nepal (OAG). Internationally, it is a member of International Freedom of Exchange (IFEX), Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD), CIVICUS, Trust for Law, Open Data in Developing Countries (ODDC), Freedom of Information Advocates on Internet (FoIANet).

Freedom Forum, has been established as an acclaimed institution in Nepal working in the sector of freedom of expression, right to information, policy and legislative reform, journalists' rights safety, public financial management and open budget, internet freedoms and open data, electoral reform and democracy, governance and accountability etc. In its 20 years of experience, it is enriched with knowledge resources on freedom of expression, press freedom, right to information, open government, open budget and open data.

Moreover, its websites www.freedomforum.org.np, www.nepalpressfreedom.org and RTI Nepal application have been knowledge hub for researchers and activists.

Executive Board Members:

Chairperson	Hari Binod Adhikari
Vice- Chairperson	Rajesh Ghimire
General Secretary	Sanjeev Ghimire
Secretary	Bin Kumar Bishwakarma
Treasurer	Shiva Maya Dahal
Members	Bishnu Sharma
	Ram Maya Lamichhane
	Kedar Dahal
	Ramesh Paudel
	Rajendra Dhital
	Ram Bikash Chaudhary
	Deek Ghimire
	Jay Narayan Sah

Objectives

The key objectives of the organization are:

- Protection and promotion of freedom expression and information
- Promotion and development of professional journalism
- Defending journalists, Right to Information activists and freedom of expression practitioners
- Promotion, protection and practice of the right to information
- Promotion of human rights and democratic norms and values
- Research/study, civic monitoring, oversight, education and advocacy for the guarantee of free and fair elections
- 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
- 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
- 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
- Undertake action research and study to draw evidences for advocacy in its core areas of works.
- Monitor, research and lobby for gender inclusive media.

Our Mission

To make sincere and collective effort towards resolution of conflict, establishment of sustainable peace, pluralistic and 'inclusive' democracy in Nepal where freedom of expression, human rights, fiscal transparency, accountability and civil liberty will be respected, protected and promoted.

Our Vision

Establishment of peace and 'inclusive' democracy in Nepal by focusing on press freedom, human rights and civil liberty.

Key initiatives:

Freedom Forum advances its mission through multiple initiatives:

- Press Freedom and Media Development
- Right to Information Campaign
- Open Data Campaign
- Freedom of Expression Monitoring
- Media Policies and Law
- Governance and Public Finance Management
- Digital Rights
- Open Government
- Democracy

Strategic Priorities (2022–2026)

Endorsed by the organization’s general assembly on February 8, 2022, Freedom Forum’s five-year strategic plan (2022–2026) outlines the following priorities:

- Protection and promotion of press freedom and freedom of expression.
- Development of professional journalism.
- Defense of journalists, Right to Information (RTI) activists, and freedom of expression practitioners.
- Evidence-based policy and legal research for media reforms.
- Promotion and practice of the right to information.
- Proactive civic oversight for good governance.
- Research and advocacy for Open Data.
- Research and advocacy for Open Budget initiatives.
- Advocacy for Internet freedom.
- Policy studies in Public Financial Management.
- Advocacy for citizen participation in audits.
- Research and advocacy for audit accountability, focusing on recommendations from Nepal’s Office of Auditor General.
- Advancement of social accountability and responsibility.
- Promotion of human rights and democratic norms.
- Civic monitoring and advocacy for free and fair elections.
- Use of media, RTI, Open Data, and Public Financial Management tools to support social justice and development for disadvantaged communities.
- Advocacy for Public Service Broadcasting.
- Research and advocacy for parliamentary transparency and political accountability.
- Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 16, through national and international collaboration.
- Participation in regional and global networks for transparency, RTI, freedom of expression, and civic engagement.

Strategic Approaches

To achieve these priorities, Freedom Forum employs the following strategies:

1. Knowledge construction, management, and dissemination through research and studies.
2. Training and mentoring programs.
3. Policy advocacy, lobbying, and campaigns.
4. Collaboration with civil society organizations, government, academic institutions, media, and international networks.
5. Media mobilization to amplify its initiatives.
6. Institutional capacity development and knowledge transfer.
7. Facilitation of dialogue and networking at local, national, and international levels.
8. Ensuring organizational sustainability through funding from national and international donors, excluding government aid for institutional operations.
9. Commitment to institutional governance, transparency, civic freedom, gender equity, and anti-discrimination principles.
10. Establishing Freedom Forum as an academic and knowledge center for sustained impact.

Governance structure:



Year in review:

1. Projects:

These are the programs implemented during the reporting period with support from national and international organizations. FF executed total seven projects in this fiscal year.

SN	Name of project	Funding agency	Duration	Project Site	Financial grant
2.	COAB Initiative (Collaboration for Open and Accountable Budgeting)/ Open Budget Survey/	International Budget Partnership	Jan 1, 2024 to December 31, 2025	Kathmandu	\$ 14000
3.	Enabling Safety of Journalist (ESAJ)	UNESCO (Global Media Defense Fund)	May 7, 2024 to May 6, 2025	Seven provinces of Nepal	\$32,678
4.	Status of Freedom of Expression and Press Freedom and Way Forward	Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MOCIT) Nepal	June 17, 2025 to July 10, 2025	Kathmandu	NPR 2,00,000
5	National Workshop on “The Governance of Digital Platforms: Emerging Trends and Best Practices”	UNESCO Kathmandu	September 2024	Kathmandu	506110
7	Multi-stakeholders’ discussion on Social Network Management and Operation Bill 2081	UNESCO Kathmandu	December 2024	Kathmandu	173340

2. Success stories / Case studies:

a. Passage of Public Service Broadcasting Bill: President of Nepal approved the Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) bill on October 8, 2024. The Bill was passed by the federal parliaments, thereby paving way to transform the State-owned media- the Radio Nepal and the Nepal Television into the PSB on September 10. The bill was under consideration at the parliament for four years.

Freedom Forum feels proud that its continuous advocacy since 2007 has been realized. Irrespective of the provisions that lack international standards, the passage of the PSB law is a milestone to transform the State-owned media.

For more: <https://freedomforum.org.np/news/detail/769>

b. MOU with Office of Auditor General on Performance Audit: Freedom Forum signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Office of the Auditor General (OAG)

Nepal on December 29, 2024 to participate in the performance audit for the fiscal year 2081/82. FF has been actively collaborating with OAG in performance audits as part of the OAG's Citizen Participation in Audit (CPA) initiative.

c. Executive Chief honored with 'Outstanding RTI Activist' award: FF Executive Chief Taranath Dahal was conferred on the First-ever 'Vinaya Kasajoo Outstanding Right to Information Activist Award 2082' by the National Information Commission on May 5, 2025.

d. Strengthening of NHRC mechanisms for protection of freedom of expression and journalists' safety: Seven province mechanisms, one central Directive/ Steering Committee and one Taskforce Committee of National Human Rights Commission formed under the Directive for protection of freedom of expression and journalists' safety were oriented on FoE standards and monitoring methodology.

e. Litigation support to journalists: Four journalists and one media house were provided litigation support under 'Global Media Defense Fund' project.

f. Death of two journalists: It was unfortunate that two incidents of journalist killings were reported in the fiscal year. Suresh Bhul, an aspiring journalist from Sudurpaschim Province, and Suresh Rajak, photojournalist at Avenues Television from Bagmati Province, lost their lives.

Activities:

1. Strengthening free and safe digital civic space for protection and promotion of freedom of expression:

Summary: Freedom Forum, in this project, plans to strengthen safe and free digital civic space adopting multi-stakeholders' approach with support from IFEX. The project aims at building provincial networks across seven provinces by engaging journalists, CSO representatives, lawyers, human rights defenders, human rights agencies. These networks will function as knowledge sharing and awareness-raising public places in each province of Nepal.

Project goal: To strengthen free and safe digital civic space for protection and promotion of freedom of expression

Project impact: Improved readiness of multiple stakeholders for protection of free and safe digital civic space.

Target groups: Journalists, media outlets, lawmakers, advocates, civil society groups, academia, and government officials.



Activities:

a. Discussion with lawmakers on Media Council Bill: Freedom Forum held a multi-stakeholder discussion on 'Media Council Bill' which was under consideration in the Legislative Management Committee of the National Assembly, the upper house of federal parliament. The event was held in the federal capital city on July 30. The discussion gathered around 40 persons from diverse sectors representing parliament, media, academia, civil society organizations and law. The discussion was held to highlight the faults in Bill and points to be amendment. The Bill was registered at the National Assembly on April 25, 2024.

2. Budget transparency and accountability interventions- International Budget Partnership (IBP): 1

Freedom Forum has been executing open budget survey in Nepal since 2008. The survey supported by International Budget Partnership adopts internationally accepted criteria to assess public access to central government budget information; formal opportunities for the public to participate in the national budget process; and the role of budget oversight institutions, such as legislatures and national audit offices, in the budget process. Survey report is published biannually.

The [OBS-2023 report](#) revealed that Nepal scored 50/100 in budget transparency, 31/100 in public participation and 46/100 in budget oversight.



Objectives:

- To ensure meaningful civic participation during the formulation, implementation and oversight of the budget,
- To build a community of CSOs who share an interest in building capacity for open budgeting, particularly to act at the subnational level.
- To advocate for more transparency in budget implementation thus, ensuring the quality of the data and resources available.

Target groups: Minister of Finance, National Planning Commission, Public Accounts Committee – PAC, Finance Committee, Office of Auditor General Nepal

Expected outcomes: Improved access to budget Information and inclusive public participation mechanisms. A network, which will be an important information sharing and capacity building platform for the CSOs on open budget.

Activities:

- a. [Multi-stakeholders' dialogue- 'Budget Transparency in Nepal: Issues for Reforms'](#): The dialogue was organized among various actors and stakeholders working in budgetary reforms. They emphasized the robust role of oversight agencies coupled with maximum disclosure of budget information and opportunities for citizen engagement in budget process. Freedom Forum received more than 100 reform agendas from the various participants & representatives in the discussion program for the improvement of transparency of budget and improving Nepal's public fiscal Management.
- b. [Three-day training on- Collaborating for Open and Accountable Budgeting](#): The three-day training organized by the [International Budget Partnership \(IBP\)](#) in collaboration with [Freedom Forum](#), was conducted in Kathmandu from July 7-9, 2025. The event gathered representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs), media, and experts to discuss critical aspects of public finance management (PFM), focusing significantly on budget implementation, transparency and accountability in Nepal. The training underscored the need for collective action to ensure that public budgets serve citizens effectively and contribute to the country's development.



Total 21 participants- 13 CSOs including 4 freelancers in PFM and Budget in Nepal from across the country were present in the training workshop.

- c. Formation of [CSOs' PFM working group](#): A significant step towards strengthening public

finance management (PFM) in Nepal was taken with the formation of a "CSOs' Working Group for Public Finance Management" with the conclusion of the three-day training. A total of 21 members from 13 organizations including freelancers are the part of the working group.

d. Coordination/ networking meetings:

Freedom Forum (FF), in collaboration with the International Budget Partnership (IBP), held several key meetings in Nepal to advance public financial management (PFM) reforms, citizen participation, transparency, and accountability.



FF and IBP joined a meeting with development partners (World Bank Nepal, European Union, Asian Development Bank, GIZ Nepal, and others) to discuss making the upcoming PFM Reform Strategy more citizen-inclusive and to strengthen collaboration between PFM-trained CSOs and partners for greater transparency and accountability.

Next, the team met with the Federal Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Chairperson and Secretary to explore allowing selected CSOs to observe PAC meetings and urged stronger follow-up on audit report recommendations to improve public finance transparency.

In a productive discussion with Ministry of Finance officials, FF and IBP advocated incorporating the [National Strategy for Citizen Engagement in Public Finance Management](#) into the forthcoming PFM Reform Strategy (2025–2030).

Both the teams also met with Office of the Auditor General (OAG) officials to highlight their work on citizen participation in audits and discuss opportunities to expand its scope in coming years. In-depth talks were also held with the European Union and Swiss Embassy representatives on PFM reforms, covering the current strategy's progress, improvement areas,

the need for a Parliamentary Budget Office, and integration of the National Citizen Engagement Strategy. Both partners praised FF's work with PFM-trained CSOs and expressed interest in future collaboration.

These engagements reflect a coordinated effort to build more inclusive and accountable public finance systems in Nepal.

3. Enabling safety of journalists:

The project is supported by Global Media Defense Fund (GMDF). The GMDF is a UNESCO Multi-Partner Trust Fund established within the framework of the Global Campaign for Media Freedom and under the overall umbrella of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. Under this project, FF intends to leverage its close collaboration with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to reinforce the national journalists' safety mechanism, taskforce committees and support its operationalization.

Objectives:

- Making functional the safety mechanism at NHRC thereby exerting pressure on the State agencies and non-state actors to be accountable towards citizen's freedom of expression, journalists' rights and safety
- Establishing peer support network in all of Nepal's seven provinces
- Legal support facility provides legal defense supports to at least 10 journalists and FoE practitioners, especially women journalists and journalists from minority communities

Project beneficiaries: Victim journalists, RTI campaigners and information seekers, FoE activists identified through Freedom of Expression violation incidents, human rights monitors, Nepali journalists all over the country, media fraternity, media lawyers, researchers, academia.

Outcomes:

- A fully functional and resourceful journalists' safety mechanism at NHRC.
- Operationalization of a province peer support network/ mechanisms, one in each of Nepal's seven provinces, to serve as eyes and ears of the NHRC mechanism and FF monitoring at the field level. The support group would also provide prompt support to journalists and freedom of expression advocates injured/attacked or threatened.

- FF legal desk capable of providing effective legal support to journalists and FOE advocates who are victimized in course of doing their jobs.



Activities:

a. [Taskforce meet on journalists' safety](#): A taskforce under the Journalists' Safety Mechanism (Directive on Formation of Safety Mechanism and Work Procedure for the Protection of Freedom of Expression) of the National Human Rights Council (NHRC) held a meeting on September 27-28, 2024. The meeting chaired by Acting Chief Secretary Dr Tikaram Pokhrel dwelt on the status of journalists focusing their safety and rights. The senior Joint Secretary at NHRC, Yagya Adhikari, who is also the coordinator of the task force under the Mechanism made presentation on the activities carried out by Directive Committee.

b. [Orientations to province mechanisms for FoE protection](#): The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) conducted orientations to the province mechanisms for protection of freedom of expression (FoE) and journalists' safety. The orientations were organized in all seven provinces in different sessions.

In [December 2024](#), orientations were organized in Koshi, Karnali and Sudurpaschim provinces. During orientations, two key persons one each from NHRC and Freedom Forum shared presentations on status of FoE, challenges, way forwards and national and international standards for FoE. The program explored possible collaboration with other government agencies at district level for immediate rescue and regular monitoring.

In [March 2025](#), the members of province mechanisms for protection and promotion of FoE and journalists' safety were provided orientations on FoE and roles and responsibilities of the

mechanism as part of the capacity building in Madhesh, Bagmati, Gandaki and Lumbini Provinces.



c. Facilitation meetings among NHRC Direction Committee members: FF conducted two meetings of NHRC's Direction Committee governing actions of the mechanism on June 14, 2024 and April 22, 2025. The meetings were conducted to devise upcoming strategies and program of the committee to mobilize province level safety mechanisms. These meetings gathered around 13 people in each including members of the committee. The committee comprises the representatives from Prime Minister's Office, Nepal Police, Nepal Bar Association, Federation of Nepali Journalists, NGO Federation, and CSOs working on FoE and journalists' rights decided to continue meetings to strengthen the safety mechanisms formed at province level as well.

d. Rapid response mechanisms at provinces: The safety mechanisms at provinces investigated and addressed few cases of FoE violations in their respective provinces. FF facilitated these mechanisms with the case updates and connecting with the victims. These mechanisms supported the cases of seven journalists- Suresh Bhul, Gopal Dahal, Kailash Sirohiya, Sanjita Dhamala, Radheshyam Bishwakarma and Mohan Singh.

e. Legal support to journalists: Legal support desk at FF provided legal support to journalists and media houses. Under this project, total four journalists (one female and three male) were provided litigation support. Four cases of Jiyalal Sah, One case of Sanjita Dhamala and one each case of Yubaraj Kandel and Nabin Dhungana.

Similarly, total 11 journalists were provided legal advice (counselling support). Of total 11 journalists, 4 were female and remaining 7 were male. Total 10 cases of 11 journalists were provided legal advice support within the project.



4. Status of Freedom of Expression and Press Freedom and Way Forward:

Only when the journalism profession is secure and professional can journalists play the watchdog role in the society. In this digital age, journalists need further capacity enhancement with more advanced skills. Journalists should be equipped with knowledge of media related laws and policies along with digital literacy and security to safeguard their professional interests and become capable of exposing social and economic irregularities. Likewise, an appropriate policy and legal environment is essential for strengthening journalism.

For this, meaningful discussion is essential in the law-making process. Keeping these issues in mind, this program was conducted with support from Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MOCIT).

Objectives of the program:

- To analyze the status of policies and laws related to freedom of expression and press freedom, examine the challenges in their implementation, and gather stakeholders' concerns and perceptions regarding professional practice.
- To facilitate discussions on these issues among subject experts and multi-stakeholder groups.
- To provide recommendations to the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and to Parliament to support policy and law-making on these matters.

Target groups: Representatives of government and non-government organizations and institutions related to the mass media sector, officials from the Parliament Secretariat, representatives of the National Human Rights Commission, legal professionals, journalists/media persons, human rights defenders, professors/academics, film professionals, as well as researchers and scholars.

Activity:

a. Half-day workshop: The workshop was aimed at analyzing whether the laws and policies governing freedom of expression align with the constitution and Nepal's commitments in the international arena. The program was attended by 48 participants including 18 female participants. The speakers observed that the laws and policies related to communication and media are often not fully implemented. Due to gaps in their implementation, journalists face challenges in performing their professional duties and in safeguarding their rights. Therefore, there is a need to enact a comprehensive “Framework Law” to address these issues effectively. Participants also commented on the proposed Film Act being repressive towards artistic freedom.

5. National Workshop on “The Governance of Digital Platforms: Emerging Trends and Best Practices”:



The increased penetration of the internet, availability of digital devices, and expansion of IT infrastructure across the country have fostered people’s activities on digital platforms. These

platforms have created tremendous opportunities, spanning from economic growth and advertising to social engagement, assembly, learning, and the exercise of freedom of expression. However, the challenges brought forth and amplified in the digital sphere cannot be ignored. Issues such as hate speech, misinformation, cyber harassment, and cybercrimes are prevalent.

Against this backdrop, Freedom Forum partnered with UNESCO, providing expertise and workforce to conduct the event at Gokarna, Kathmandu, from September 13-14, 2024.

Objective:

- To foster debate and discussions on Nepal's efforts in digital platform governance, a pressing need of the day, and
- To seek viable measures that ensure multi-stakeholder engagement, including lawmakers and CSOs.

Activity:

a. [Day 1: Closed workshop with Parliamentarians-](#)

On the first day, discussions were conducted among parliamentarians, representatives from Federal Parliament Secretariat, National Human Rights Commission and MOCIT officials. The sessions were focused upon FoE in the digital sphere and the application of UNESCO's guidelines for digital governance in Nepal's context. The lawmakers were also engaged in group exercise to identify gaps in law making process and way forward.

b. [Day 2: Multi-stakeholders' dialogue:](#) On the second day, representatives from diverse sectors participated in the workshop. The sessions followed by Q and A's and group exercise were useful to analyze current lawmaking process and gaps existing that need to be addressed. The participants suggested prioritizing capacity-building initiatives for lawmakers at both federal and provincial levels. These programs should focus on digital governance principles, international standards and best practices.

The program witnessed participation of total 27 Members of Parliament among which 17 were female. Similarly, 71 participants (18 female) from civil society, media, academia and human rights institutions participated in the event.

6. Multi-stakeholders' discussion on Social Network Management and Operation Bill :
UNESCO Kathmandu Office and Freedom Forum jointly organized a multi-stakeholders'

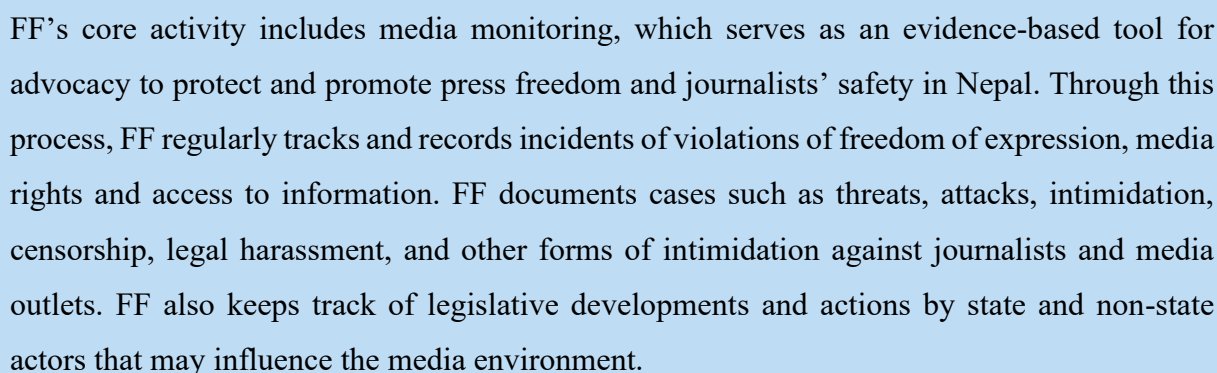
discussion on a draft bill on Social Network Management and Operation 2024 in Kathmandu on December 27, 2024. There were total 80 participants including 29 female participants.

Objective: To draw the stakeholders' perspectives on the draft bill and the major issues to be addressed for its amendment aligning it with the national legislation and international standards of freedom of expression.

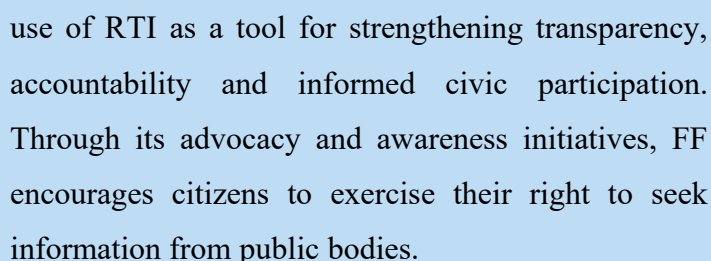


In the event, Nepali Congress Parliamentary Party Whip Sushila Thing, along with House of Representatives (HoR) members Ishwori Ghartimagar and Laxmi Tiwari, pledged to facilitate broader discussions on the document, taking into account the concerns raised during the event. The participants called for the draft bill to be rewritten or improved so that it would be aligned with national laws including constitution and internationally guaranteed rights to freedom of expression on digital platforms. They were univocal that citizens and journalists' rights should not be compromised.

1. Media Monitoring:



2. Right to Information (RTI) Campaign: FF continues its campaign to promote effective



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both android and iOS system, provides guidance on how to file information requests, raises awareness about citizens' rights to information and shares news updates.

As part of advocacy efforts, violation incidents are also recorded and victims are provided support through legal help desk.



3. Digital Rights Festival 2024: Digital Freedom Coalition, a consortium of organizations working in the area of digital freedom, cyber security, digital resilience and Internet governance in Nepal, organized the first Digital Rights Festival in Kathmandu on December 1-3, 2024. Internet Governance Institute, Internet Society Nepal Chapter, Freedom Forum, Digital Media Foundation, Media Action Nepal, Forum for Digital Equality, Antenna Foundation Nepal, Women's Group for Disability Rights and Media Lawyers Association are the members of the Digital Freedom Coalition. The festival was hosted by Internet Governance Forum in collaboration with associate partners and the coalition partners. Net

4. Day Celebrations:

a. *Int'l Day for Universal Access to Information 2023* observed:

Freedom Forum observed the day through social media campaigns and participating in the public forums on September 28, 2024. The IDUAI was proclaimed by UNESCO's General Conference in 2015 and it was formally recognized by United Nations General Assembly in 2019.

Throughout the day FF engaged in a social media campaign to raise awareness on the importance of RTI and its application in our daily lives.

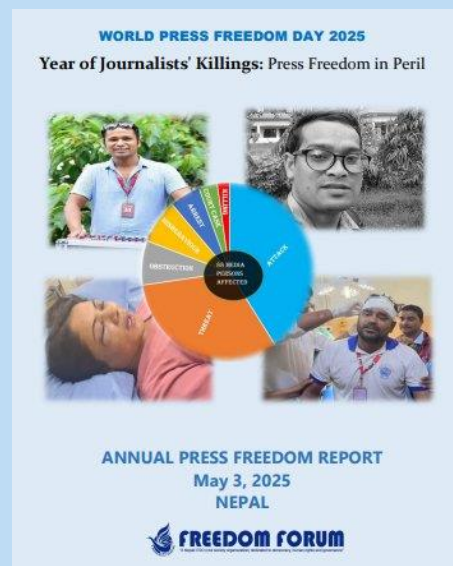
b. *International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists*: On November 2, FF marked this day with social media updates and messages urging the concerned authorities to address long pending cases of impunity for crimes against journalists. Cases of journalists murdered and forcefully disappeared during the conflict period and after are still pending and the journalists' families are desperately waiting for justice. Ten cases of slain journalists are in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission while, six cases are awaiting investigation, prosecution and adjudication.

c. *International Women's Day*: This year's theme for the day celebration is "Invest in women: Accelerate progress". FF too, celebrated the day on March 8 marking national slogan "Investment in women: The beginning of a civilized and advanced society". FF celebrates the day cherishing courageous work of female journalists in Nepal to bring forth the voice of voiceless.

d. **Celebration of World Press Freedom Day 2025:**

FF released a report- [Year of Journalists' Killings: Press Freedom in Peril](#) on the occasion of press freedom day.

The report analyses trends of increased violation of press freedom with growing physical attacks, widening economic pressure in media with retrenchment on rise, little progress in lawmaking and media reform, information disorder, horrible incident after a decade-killing of an on-duty journalist turning federal capital itself into the most hostile place for free press and journalist, impunity left ignored, underreporting of public concern for lack of effective media presence, and rising intolerance towards media with discredit checkered Nepal's media landscape in the one year period from May 1, 2024 to April 30, 2025.



e. **National Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Day:**

FF collaborated with the Bagmati Province Office of Communication Registrar to organize a discussion program- [Digital Bagmati: Opportunities, Priorities and Challenges](#) in collaboration with Freedom Forum on May 7 in Kathmandu. The program gathered 43 (including eight female) technology experts and enthusiasts from civil society, academia, government

authorities, and media. The program was a part of Digital Bagmati Campaign- an initiative by Bagmati Province Government to digitize service and advance technological innovations.



5. Podcasts:



Freedom Chautary is a podcast series of FF. This podcast features discussions, interviews, reports and updates related to press freedom, media rights, freedom of expression, access to information, digital rights and governance, open government, public finance management and human rights.

Till date, 143 episodes of podcasts have been produced and published on FF's official [website](#) in Nepali and English languages.

6. Social Media Updates:

FF has its official Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts through which it disseminates and publishes its publications, advocacy campaigns and important information.

Facebook id: [Freedom Forum Nepal](#)

Twitter id: [Freedom Forum \(@ForumFreedom\) / X](#)

LinkedIn id: Freedom Forum Nepal

7. Press Statements:

Total 18 [press statements](#) on the issues surrounding media rights, open budget, freedom of expression, journalists' safety and other contemporary issues were published on FF website during reporting period.

The most worrying update for this fiscal year was death of two journalists- Suresh Bhul in Sudurpaschim Province and Suresh Rajak in Bagmati Province. Both were killed because of their journalism profession.

FF was also engaged in international advocacy campaigns through signatures and solidarity statements. The Digital Freedom Coalition, comprising a diverse group of 11 civil society organizations including Freedom Forum urges the government, service providers, and the concerned stakeholders to respect laws protecting digital rights, develop inclusive and legitimate social media regulations, and avoid actions that undermine democracy and fundamental freedoms.



8. Collaborative Movements:

FF is a collaborative partner of Office of Auditor General (OAG), National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and National Information Commission in Nepal.

a. *Performance audit:*

FF has been involved in performance audit, advocacy of citizen participation in audit (CPA) and workshops on CPA developing trained citizen auditors across the country as a collaborative partner of OAG. FF also has representation in steering committee of Performance Audit Unit at the OAG. In this fiscal year, FF conducted performance audit survey on waste management in the industrial areas and handed over the findings and survey reports to the Performance Audit Directorate of the Office of the Auditor General Nepal (OAG) on March 5. The survey was conducted based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between FF and OAG on December 29, 2023, for participation in the performance audit for the fiscal year 2081/82 BS.

b. *Support to national and province level committees for protection and promotion of freedom of expression and journalists' safety:* FF works closely with the NHRC and its thematic

committees to strengthen their role in monitoring and addressing journalists' safety issues. FF is an invited member of the committees. These committees are formed as per NHRC's Directive on FoE and Journalists Safety and meetings are regularly held as per the provisions in the directive. These committees represent multiple stakeholders, including government officials, the media sector, Nepal Police, attorneys, and civil society organizations (CSOs).

9. Membership and Networks:

FF's national and international collaboration are its additional strengths to conduct advocacy campaigns on its thematic areas. FF is a collaborative partner with National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), National Information Commission, Office of Auditor General, Digital Freedom Coalition Nepal and a member of International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), Freedom of Information Advocates Network (FOIANET), CIVICUS, Open Data in Developing Countries, Trust Law and Global Forum for Media Development.

10. Publications:

All the publications of FF can be accessed and downloaded at: www.freedomforum.org.np



a. Newsletters: As its core activity, the newsletter- Free Expression- is published every three months. The newsletter covers updates on the thematic issues FF has been working on. Total four issues of newsletter were published this year. All the issues are published on the official website of Freedom Forum and can be accessed at: <https://freedomforum.org.np/publications/category/newsletter>

b. Annual reports : FF published two media monitoring reports- [Annual Media Report 2024](#) and [Annual Press Freedom report 2025](#) which present status of press freedom and freedom of expression in the country and also observe the trend of media freedom, impunity and access to information during the reporting period.

Moreover, annual progress report and audit report for the fiscal year 2021/22 were also published in this fiscal year, covering overall program and administrative details of Freedom Forum.

