



# FreeExpression

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A NEWSLETTER OF FREEDOM FORUM

## Media Faces Hostile Atmosphere

*Annual Press Freedom Report 2017*

**F**reedom Forum recorded a total of 66 press freedom violations during this passing year 2017, which is a sharp rise compared to the previous year, 2016. Only 25 incidents were recorded in 2016.

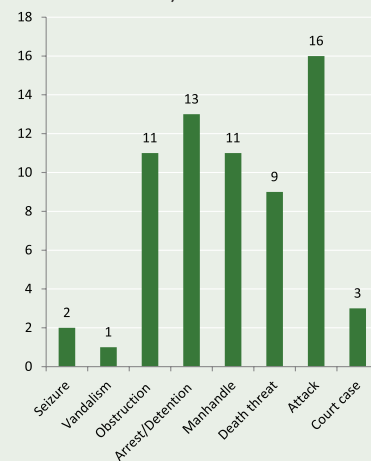
A total of 230 media persons were affected directly with 66 incidents of violations across the country. As this year witnessed three-tiers of elections- local, and provincial and federal parliaments, the political activities grew alarmingly where the atmosphere for press freedom got less priority. Despite the country making paradigm shift with the exercise of franchise, the election campaigning and activities failed to show due respect to freedom of expression and press freedom, thereby witnessing huge surge in the number of press freedom violation.

Although 2017 is also regarded as the law making year, there were no significant laws and policies that created better atmosphere to respect FoE and press freedom. Bringing of two important acts replacing the half-century plus old Muliki Ain (Civil Code) was a positive step, but lack of FoE-friendly provisions and lackadaisical efforts from State side to bring reforms on other media related policies is another area drawing attention.

### Key Points

- Kathmandu district alone witnessed the highest number of violation- 22.
- Categorically mentioning, there were 16 incidents of attack, 9 threats and death threats combined, 11 manhandles and 13 arrest/detention and 11 obstruction along with two incidents of seizure and one of vandalism at the media house.
- As in the past, numerous incidents saw the involvement of police persons, government employees.
- Province No 1 which lies in the eastern part of the country witnessed two incidents of press freedom violation which is the

### PRESS FREEDOM VIOLATIONS DURING 2017

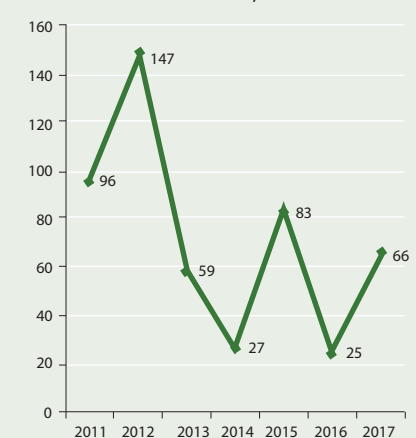


Total Violations: 66; No of affected journalists: 230

lowest compared to Province No 3 which witnessed 34 incidents of violation. Province No 5 and 6 had 3 incidents each along with 6 in Province No 4 and 8 violations in Province No 7.

- Internet penetration has reached to 62.89% where it was 52.7% last year. Although there is a significant growth of internet penetration propelling the flow of information, the accessibility is waiting due attention to bring on board the marginalized people to bridge the digital divide.
- Many journalists were detained without sufficient ground of their anti-law activities.
- The families of the journalists who became conflict victims are desperately waiting for justice. No noticeable efforts have been made from State side to this regard.
- As internet is becoming increasingly pervasive in Nepal, it has also become an easy medium (especially through Facebook) to harass journalists. Out of 66 incidents, 5 cases of threat were recorded during the year.

### PRESS FREEDOM VIOLATIONS FROM 2011 TO 2017



*A local Padam Bhandari issued death threat and spoke foul on reporters at Dadeldhura based Radio Amargadhi 97.4 MHz on August 30. Immediately after the news story 'Locals bound to risky travel' was published on [www.radioamargadhi.org](http://www.radioamargadhi.org), Bhandari reached the radio's office, issued death threat and spoke foul on the reporters. He even wrote abusive words on his Facebook status addressing all the journalists in the district.*

### Women presence in print media sees slow growth

Giving continuity to the new dimension of its regular monitoring of Press Freedom, FF scanned news of major Nepali print media, studied it. The study found gradual improvement in the women's presence. During the initial phase of the monitoring, women's presence was meager which saw gradual rise.

The newspaper having less than 3 female bylines in three months in the initial months of the year has raised up to 7 female byline in the recent

*Continue in page 18...*

## Message from Executive Chief

# No Intimidation on Civic Space!

In line with the constitutional provision, Nepal held all three levels of elections- local, and provincial and federal parliaments, thereby creating a solid foundation to implement the federal set up. The successful conduct of the historic elections is indeed a paradigm shift- a matter of happiness- that has paved way to end political transition in Nepal. Irrespective of the selection of candidacies guided by nepotism and favouritism, the free and fair elections have created hope for change and good governance eluded for long in the country. Other areas that drew equal concern are gross misuse of money, huge number of invalid votes, arrests of journalists on the run up to the elections and sporadic incidents of explosions.



Owing to the explosions, the media persons' mobility for news coverage was limited and the self censorship ingrained. The political activities for election campaigning and publicity reached the local levels which were obviously of news worthy. But the undue influence of political cadres and local leaders for the media to disseminate the news of their favor was a sheer intimidation and egregiously against press freedom. Moreover, the number of violations against press freedom grew alarmingly this year, which is a clear indication that the more the political programs and campaigns, the more the intimidation on free press and media persons. Nearly three-fold rise in the number of press freedom violation this year has affected 300 journalists across the country. It has resulted in the growing self censorship among the journalists.

The detention and harassment of journalists without cogent ground of wrongdoing was condemnable. With the democratic forces subsided by the leftist alliance in the elections, the rising political polarization with the creation of indoctrinated sister organizations is likely to take toll on Nepali media. The politics of negation would grow more that jeopardizes the free and independent role of media. Political culture, attitude and speech of some leaders of leftist leaders are intended to ignite hatred not only among political parties but also create vertical division among journalists. Although one is free to adopt any of the political ideology he/ she likes, the intimidation on fellow journalists is gross behavior arousing clash and conflict.

Once such attitude is to continue in the days ahead, the democracy, liberalism, civil rights, independence would face hard times. These hard earned values are the integral part of Nepal's democracy. It is doubted that 'socialism' gets proper interpretation and the activities follows the suit. The misinterpretation of socialism undoubtedly makes democracy dysfunctional. The stupor of the election victory can be linked somewhere to this end. As a civil society organization, Freedom Forum is aware that the human rights institutions must not be put under vigilance. For the correction of the government affairs, for partnership with the government for people's cause and good governance, for the protection of citizens' rights including freedom of expression and information, press freedom, for the promotion of participatory governance, for the creation of informed citizenry, Freedom Forum works untiringly.

The recent activities that are trying to shrink the civic space in Nepal must come to an end. The campaign of building open and transparent society must not be hindered from any sector. For the country to achieve the goal of building good governance, the protection and promotion of freedom of expression and information is prerequisite. Only free and fear-free media can contribute to propelling the democratic values. Intimidation on media with politically indoctrinated values, and surveillance on human rights institutions does not suit the democracy. Finally, Freedom Forum wishes every citizen, CSOs, national and international friends and rights activists and campaigners. **HAPPY NEW YEAR 2018!** 🌱

**Taranath Dahal**

# 'Moral Courage for Journalism'



Photo: FPU

Free Press Unlimited (FPU), a Netherlands-based organization working for freedom of expression in various countries, gathered hundreds of people ranging from freedom of expression fighters and practitioners, rights activists and defenders, media staffs, embassy representatives from across the globe and marked the November 2: International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalist in a grand manner. Freedom Forum had also got opportunity to attend the august gathering.

The function, organized in the world capital of peace and justice, Hague, featured not only the encouraging voices of Danie Foley, mother of slain conflict journalist, James Foley, but also shared information about the situation of the journalists facing hard times in different parts of the world.

Mother Foley, who is also the President of the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation advocating on safety for journalists and humanitarians, encouraged journalists to have moral passion. While addressing the gathering, she said, "Journalists should have moral passion, and dare to challenge hatred and fear terrorizing the world."

James was an independent conflict reporter from the US. It was informed that he was abducted in 2012 by the militants and publicly beheaded in 2014 after two years' captivity in Syria.

"James inspire you to have moral courage," she told the

audience, underscoring the need of creating a culture of safety, and safety curriculum in school.

On the occasion, mentioning about the detention, torture, harassment, and attack resulting in murder, and some cases of progress on the impunity relating to the crimes against journalist, FPU Director Mr Leon Willems said, "Journalists should be courageous, persistent and deliberate."

He expressed worries about the discouraging situation of press freedom across the globe, saying, "How discouraging it is- silence war is going on against journalism."

Director Leon also mentioned during the speech that Mr Taranath Dahal from Freedom Forum Nepal actively works for monitoring the situation of freedom of expression and journalists' safety in Nepal. He also thanked FF for the untiring follow up of the anti-press incidents that have helped bring the murder convicts to justice including that of Uma Singh.

The FPU also conferred on various awards to journalists from different continents as, Most Resilient Journalist, Newcomer of the Year, Best Report Award. The awards were to honour journalists who risk everything to bring the news; media pioneers who pave the way for equality and justice and those who persevere under the most difficult circumstances. 🌱

# Press Freedom Violations

## Arrest without Wrongdoing: Shahi

At a time when the political parties had reiterated their commitments to freedom of expression and press freedom, and the government working for democracy, eight journalists associated with various media were arrested on the run up to the elections to the House of Representatives and provincial parliament held in two phases- first on November 26, and second on December 6.

Journalist Dipesh Shahi, reporter with ratopati.com news portal is one among those who was detained and released after the election on December 12. On November 19, Shahi was arrested from Norvic Hospital where he was covering the news about the demise of Prakash Dahal, son of former Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

"Some people abruptly seized my bag, mobile and purse and asked me to go under the bridge" he said to Freedom Forum's Province No 3 stringer, Ashok Dahal, while sharing about the arrest. Until then, Shahi was unaware about the arrest. He came to know about their identity only after seeing police officer inside the police van parked under the bridge. "I asked about the reason why I was in detention but they just said they were ordered to arrest," he recalled.

Moreover, as the Stringer mentioned, journalist Shahi said, "They tried to distort my statement and asked me to admit that I was involved in making disturbance relating to election." After he declined the accusation, he was asked to record statement for three to four times a day. "They indirectly threatened me to implicate in any cases. I faced lots of mental torture in the custody but they didn't resort to physical torture," Shahi said.

Moreover, during the detention, Shahi was forced to share his passwords of social media account to the police but he declined it. The police inquired about his contact with Chand-led party leaders. In a question how he took his detention, journalist Shahi mentioned, "It was quite strange for me to be detained because I was not involved in any activities of offence and I was not a member of the party led by Chand either. They just detained me without any reason."

Police released Shahi on December 12, in a condition to appear within 10 days to the police and within a month at Kathmandu District



Administration Office. Though the police had prepared all documents for filing case of public offence against the arrested journalists including Shahi the police backtracked from its plan following the public pressure. Freedom Forum had been keenly watching the intimidation on media persons.

Shahi is involved in professional journalism for the last five years. He has also worked at internet-based news portals- khabardabali.com, Pahilopost.com, Nepalkhabar.com and Madhyanha daily. This incident shows the journalist was arrested without sufficient ground of 'disruptive activities targeting election' as alleged by the security. According to the Police sources, as many as eight journalists were arrested from their home and field for their alleged involvement in anti-election activities.

Among the journalists arrested in different dates are Prakash Dumre (Garjan Post Weekly, Rupandehi), Jagdishnath Yogi and Kali Bahadur Mahatara (Janaprabhat Weekly, Kalikot), Dipesh Shahi (Madhyana Daily, Kathmandu), Khem Thapaliya (Jaljala Monthly, Kathmandu), Jitendra Maharjan (Nhigu Jwojolappa, Kathmandu), Jayeshwor Acharya and Padam Prasad Pokharel (Pyuthan Vision Monthly, Pyuthan).

Talking to Freedom Forum, Editor at Muldhar Weekly News Ramesh Bista said, "Most of the journalists were nabbed while reporting news. Though the Nepal Police noted that journalists were involved in the anti-election activities, they have not made public any evidence substantiate the claims". The information of arrests was collected by Freedom Forum's Legal Desk while following the cases with Nepal Police offices in different districts.

## Released After Fine of Rs 1,000

A news story of journalist's arrest had come from Province No 2 of Nepal. Freedom Forum's Stringer at Province No 2, Ajay Saha, informed that Sudarshan Pande, editor of Utthan weekly and reporter of Rato Khabar weekly, was arrested from his home in the night of December 4, three days before the second round of election to the House of Representatives and provincial parliament.

After the detainment, the police had initiated a charge of public offense. "It was held without arrest warrant. While reaching the police office, I was handed the arrest warrant mentioning that I was a cadre of the Maoist party led by Biplav," Pande shared the plight with reporter Saha.

Later, he was released on December 24, imposing the fine of Rs 1,000. He was held reasoning that he involved in the activities against election. Such harassment of journalists continued during the election. Several journalists were held without sufficient ground that they acted against election.

## Arrest

A. Freedom Forum's stringer for Province 4 Rajan Upadhyay reported that an online portal [www.janasanchar.com](http://www.janasanchar.com)'s editor and reporter Om Hamal and Ramakant Bastola were arrested on November 28 by Nepal Police in Pokhara. Pokhara lies in Province 4 of Nepal.

Stringer Upadhyay said, "They were arrested for their alleged contact with Netra Bikram 'Biplav' led Maoist group. They were held from the office. However, they were released after 2 hours detention."

Quoting editor Hamal, stringer Upadhyay further said, "He had to face the torture due to weak mechanism of the State's communication. I wish other journalists not victimized this way."



## Arrest...

**B.** Freedom Forum's stringer for Province 4 Rajan Upadhyay reported that an online portal [www.janasanchar.com](http://www.janasanchar.com)'s editor and reporter Om Hamal and Ramakant Bastola were arrested on November 28 by Nepal Police in Pokhara. Pokhara lies in Province 4 of Nepal.

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**C.** Correspondent with TV Today, broadcast from the capital city, Kanta Giri, and her camera person were misbehaved by a college

administration while reporting on November 12.

Talking to Freedom Forum, Reporter Giri said, "With the pre information, we reached Institute of Management Studies at 1:00 pm for reporting on its educational programs. We requested administration to help us giving information. But, the administrative staffs not only refused to provide information but spoke foul on us and called police. The Police officers then, took us to the Singha Durbar station and released us after four hours." 🌿

## Attack / Manhandle

**A.** With the elections to the House of Representative and Provincial parliament round the corner, the incidents against free reporting and peaceful gathering and campaigning increased across the country.

Manang- based reporter with the National News Agency (RSS), Janata Television, and [www.hamrakura.com](http://www.hamrakura.com), an online news portal, Nabin Lamichhane was manhandled while reporting on November 17 in Manang district. Manang is the smallest district situated in Province 4 of Nepal.

Talking to Freedom Forum, Reporter Lamichhane shared, "While I was video-reporting of a political rally and campaigning for election at around 5 pm; the political cadres suddenly approached me, manhandled and snatched my camera. However, few women saved me and my camera from getting assaulted. Later, I informed Chief District Officer about the incident.

Reporter Lamichhane added that he remained under the threat of attack for some days.

**B.** Similarly Freedom Forum's stringer for Province 7, DR Panta reported that reporter with Kailali- based Bardagoriya weekly and Janata Television Laxmi Jaisi was attacked by unknown person at mid-night of November 19.

Quoting reporter Jaisi, Panta said that he was attacked at his home while sleeping. He received severe injuries on head and forehead.

Reporter Jaisi had to undergo treatment at Nepalgunj Medical College, Banke.

The motive of attack is unknown for long. And investigation was ongoing, according to Police.

**C.** Reporter with Samadhan daily and Machhapuchhre FM, Suresh Raj Adhikari, was manhandled by a local over the news in Pokhara on October 15. Pokhara lies in Province 4 of Nepal.

Reporter Adhikari informed, "For the follow up reporting, I had reached the protests made by the earthquake victims after they were displaced by the municipal administration. The news on displacement of victims was published on October 14. While reporting, one of the victims Bikash Gurung slapped me."

He also threatened me to leave the place without reporting but I continued reporting. Then, police officers on duty arrested him, added reporter Adhikari.

Later, supporters of Gurung insisted me to sort out the matter with mutual understanding.

Reporter Adhikari filed an FIR against Bikash Gurung at District Police Office, Kaski. Later, Gurung was detained and investigation continued, according to the District Police Office.

**D.** Editor of the Malika Post daily, Arjun Prasad Bhattarai, was attacked by an unknown gang on 6 October in Kalikot. Kalikot district lies in Province 6 of Nepal.



*Reporter Jaisi during treatment*

In a conversation with Freedom Forum, Bhattarai said, "While I was returning home after meeting locals in the village, all of a sudden a group of people came to me obstructing my way and started debating with me. When I tried to resolve the discussion, the unknown gang attacked me. Although I tried to escape, I couldn't. The attackers hit on my head and other parts of the body."

He received injury on head and had to get admitted in the Nepalgunj Medical College. He was discharged on October 8.

According to Bhattarai, he was not aware of the any person involved in the attack and was unable to guess why he was attacked.

Afterwards, he had even lodged a complaint at the District Police Office, Kalikot, informing about the incident but nothing has been done related to this matter. 🌿

# Police Asks Editors to Disclose News Source

Nepal Police wrote letter to online media houses asking them to disclose the source of news published on December 21 in the capital city. The online news portals [www.susashannews.com](http://www.susashannews.com), [www.suvadin.com](http://www.suvadin.com) and [www.muldharnews.com](http://www.muldharnews.com) were asked to provide the copies of two different performance evaluation reports of the police officer Nawaraj Silwal and its source through the letter sent by Metropolitan Police Range Office. The journalists in respective media received the letters on December 24.

“It is requested to you to provide the reportedly original and fake performance evaluation reports disclosing source from where it was



Although it is normal that journalist must mention the sources of the news, the protection or the confidentiality of the sources of news is equally important for ethical and professional journalism. As the journalists are front-line information providers and human rights defenders, protection and promotion of free press is imperative.”



obtained,” reads the letter sent by Deputy Superintendent of Police Bel Bahadur Pandey.

Freedom Forum’s stringer for Province 3, Ashok Dahal, reported that the online media have declined publishing the copies of performance evaluation report in their news and claimed that they had published the news based on court verdict.

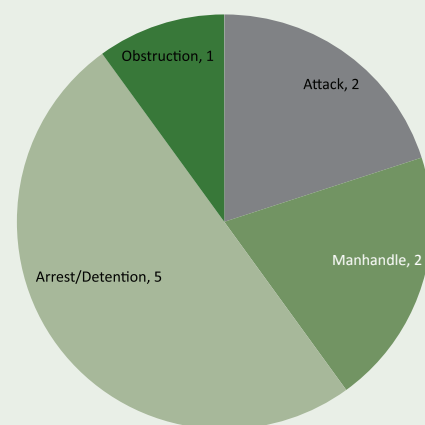
Quoting Roshan Khadka, Executive Editor of [www.muldharnews.com](http://www.muldharnews.com), stringer Dahal said, “The court had clearly stated in its verdict that Silwal was ahead in performance evaluation and had questioned about the evaluation report submitted by the government. They had never published any copies of such reports as asked in the police letter to them”.

The incident took place after the Apex Court asked government to prove fake performance appraisal report submitted to the judiciary.

“Many media houses had published such performance evaluation report but the police have written to only three media breaching its jurisdiction,” Khadka claimed, adding, “It’s not our offense at all to publish news about the court verdict. If any evidence of our activities beyond journalistic work is proved, we are ready to assist the legal investigation.”

Upon FF’s contact with Metropolitan Police Office, they informed that investigation on “Document Scrutiny” case of former Deputy Inspector General of Nepal Police Nabraj Silwal and collecting the proof from various sources was going on. However, above mentioned online media had published the copies of the performance evaluation documents in their news earlier and they just wanted to confirm the source of the news.

## PRESS FREEDOM VIOLATIONS FROM OCTOBER-DECEMBER



“According to the journalists, the police have also collected call details of five journalists including the editors of the three online media,” stringer Dahal claimed.

Following this, two online news portals [sushannews.com](http://sushannews.com) and [muldharnews.com](http://muldharnews.com) have filed a writ petition against Metropolitan Police Range of Nepal Police at Patan High Court on December 26. Editors duo Madan Bhandari and Ravi Singh Dhami filed the petition claiming Nepal Police intimidation ‘a kind of attack on media’.

Although it is normal that journalist must mention the sources of the news, the protection or the confidentiality of the sources of news is equally important for ethical and professional journalism. As the journalists are front-line information providers and human rights defenders, protection and promotion of free press is imperative.

The journalists are put in risk if they are pressed to disclose the confidentiality of the news sources. 🌱

# 34 Journalists for Public Interest Reporting

Freedom Forum trained 34 journalists on public interest reporting by organizing 5-day training in two phases- first in Sindhupalchowk from November 17 to 21, and second in Nuwakot from December 16 to 20 2017.

The training on public interest reporting focused on the issues relating to reconstruction and rehabilitation activities; whether due process and mechanism is in place including flow of money, and accountability, and whether public concern on these activities have come to broader visibility through media or not. With this training, the journalists were expected to bring the stories from 14 districts that suffered worst during 2015 earthquake.

Right to Information, data journalism, and public expenditure tracking survey were underscored as the public interest reporting tools.

FF's Executive Chief Taranath Dahal, General Secretary Dharmendra Jha and senior investigative journalist Hasta Gurung provided the training to the journalists.

Senior journalists and RTI experts, Mr. Dahal and Jha oriented the participants on various dimension of RTI by linking it to the public interest reporting.



*Trainer Dharmendra Jha facilitating during the field reporting in Nuwakot district.*

Similarly, noted investigative journalist Hasta Gurung mentioned how the investigative training could serve the purpose of public interest reporting.

Both in Nuwakot and Sindhupalchowk trainings, guest facilitator Dr. Bhisma Kumar Bhusal, Under-Secretary and Assistant Spokesperson at Nepal Reconstruction Authority, presented a paper on Post-earthquake relief and rehabilitation and reconstruction in Nepal.

Also, Nepal Red Cross Society Program Coordinator, Mr Anirudra Neupane talked in length on response, reconstruction and rehabilitation of post-earthquake.

In Sindhupalchowk, a total of 18 journalists from various print and electronic media participated in the training organized under the project "Civil Society Mutual Accountability Project (CS: MAP)", supported by USAID and implemented by FHI360. Journalists from Sindhupalchowk, Dolakha, Makwanpur, Ramechhap, Sindhuli, Kavre and Okhaldhunga attended the training. There were females out of the total participants.

Similarly, 16 journalists from various print and electronic media participated in the training in In Nuwakot. There were from Kathmandu, Nuwakot, Rasuwa, Dhading and Gorkha districts. Among 16, 3 were female journalists. 🌱

## RTI App

In the last week of December, Freedom Forum launched a 'Right to Information (RTI) Nepal Mobile App', first of its kind from the civil society organization in Nepal.

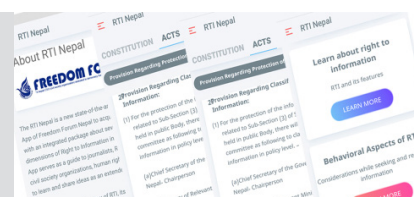
The android app, an integrated package on several dimensions of RTI- from principles to practice-, is aimed at making public and the media persons aware on use of RTI and its benefit for contributing to the good governance endeavour in the country.

The mobile app brought at a time when the country has adopted federal system transferring maximum rights to local levels to empower citizens is expected to augment

the regime of transparency and accountability in the public affairs. The use of RTI Nepal app is equally important for the journalists to hone their investigative journalism.

The key features of RTI Nepal App are:

- the basics of RTI,
- guide to practical use of RTI,
- facility of download and sharing options of common templates of RTI requests writing, complaints to the chief of public agencies and appeals to the National Information Commission,
- access to RTI laws, rules, RTI related publications, news and updates, success stories/case studies, and
- discussion forums for RTI activists and campaigners from across the country.



Similarly, the app is primarily focused at aiding journalists, RTI activists, CSOs, human rights defenders to learn and share ideas as an extended forum. It also guides its users how to exercise their right to information. One can seek and share the expert advices and circulate his/her own experiences among other users through a common discussion forum.

The link to download the app is- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.yipl.rtinpal&hl=en>

It can be downloaded directly from the Playstore of Android smart phones. 🌱



# End Impunity Campaign across Country

First of its kind in Nepal, Freedom Forum organized 10 programs- one each in three universities and one each in seven provinces- to mark the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists.

FF gathered over 350 persons, representing media, academia, victims' families, research, human rights defenders, legal practitioners, political representation, right to information campaign, attorneys, local administration and security agency. During the programs, the participants raised univocal voice that those involved in the crimes committed against journalists over times must be brought to book to address impunity relating to it.

In order to orient and sensitize the participants from diverse sectors, FF sent its representatives to each program where they made presentations on importance of the International Day to End Impunity, Nepal's situation of press freedom and freedom of expression and related impunity, and FF's campaign and advocacy for promotion and protection of freedom of expression and impunity related to crimes against journalists.

At a program in Biratnagar (Province No 1), Chief District Officer of Morang, Mr Ram Prasad Acharya, said media was at high risk due to prolonged transition in Nepal.

Similarly, at the same program, a leader of the Maoist Centre party, Ms Hari Maya Sharma, said political parties had important role for the protection of journalists' rights because media is the mirror of society.



*End Impunity Day program in Dhangadhi on November 1*



*End Impunity Day program in Kathmandu on November 2.*

At the program in Dhulikhel of Kavre district (Province No 3), Chief District Officer, Mr Shiva Prasad Shimkhada, said a thorough investigation was imperative on the slain and attacked journalists.

In Pokhara (Province No 4), noted investigative journalist, Mr Hasta Gurung said Nov 2 should be marked as the day to restore journalists' rights. Those attacking journalists are of criminal mindset, he argued.

Moreover, in Dang (Province No 5), central member of Amnesty International Nepal, Mr Bipin Budhathoki, said nine journalists were killed in Nepal after second people's movement of 2006. At the same program, Ms Pabitra Roka, daughter of journalist Dhan Bahadur Roka, complained, "My father is still out of contact. Many say he is killed. But we've not found his body. Either his body be made public or investigation continued." Roka is from neighbouring Rolpa district.

Similarly, the Province No 2 held the program on November 10 in coordination with Federation of Nepali Journalists, Mahottari Chapter and Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC). The program witnessed the presence of 35 participants, among them four were female. At the program, Nepal Police Senior Superintendent (SP) said that journalism is a sensitive profession so journalist are always under the threat. He requested the journalists to inform security agency if they are travelling to sensitive area to cover the news.

At a program organized by Tribhuvan University, Department of Journalism and Mass Communications, in Kathmandu, Department Head Mr Chiranjivi Khanal said, "In order to reduce impunity, we need to stand strong and improve security of journalists."

"Being a health reporter, I've experienced different kind of threat and harassments," shared Ms Fatima Banu, adding, "When visiting different hospitals, I found that patient is victimized by the doctor themselves. When I knew about all this and wrote a news story I was then mocked through social media saying, 'Get well soon'."

During the programs, the report FF prepared on legal status of the media persons killed and disappeared since 1996 to 2016 named 'Unabated Impunity' and the stickers with the slogan- Protection of FoE for Civilized Society were distributed among the participants.

Conclusively, the enthusiastic participation and active engagement from diverse sectors at the November 2 programs signaled that safety of journalists is a key issue in Nepal. The impunity relating to crimes against journalists as said by the daughter of disappeared journalist Roka is a pressing issue that needs due address, which seek roles from the FoE defenders, administration, security agency and political parties as well. The program helped to sensitize the stakeholders widely about the End Impunity Day. 🌱

# ‘Editorial Policy Needed to Media Houses to Mainstreaming Gender

**F**reedom Forum conducted the third round of interface on ‘Women’s presence in Nepali Print Media contents’ in Kathmandu on December 13. The program gathered 35 people including media persons, government officials, advocates, and representatives from CSOs.

At the program, FF made a presentation on monitoring of media contents- byline and news sources- to see women’s presence in nine major national dailies. The 11-month long monitoring report revealed that only 5.32 percent byline stories among the total of 3,965 news bylines during the reviewed period were of or on females, while women were quoted as sources in only 9.25 per cent news of the broadsheets. It was also found that males were quoted as news sources in 53.01 per cent news.

The report also says that majority of the news contents in the main pages were related to politics and government. Introducing the objective of program, FF’s Executive Chief Mr Taranath Dahal stated that the study and its results produced were aimed at sensitizing stakeholders about maintaining gender equality in their media and contents as well. Although the initial report had painted poor picture, it has gradually improved, he added. During the program, various speakers underscored the need of increasing women as news source in Nepali media. They also emphasized the need to augment the reporters in Nepali media industry.



The 11-month long monitoring report revealed that only 5.32 percent byline stories among the total of 3,965 news bylines were of or on females, while women were quoted as sources in only 9.25 per cent news stories.



*Participants at the interface in Kathmandu*

On the occasion, Director at Department of Information Ms Suman Bajracharya pointed out the need of adopting a policy to mandatorily appoint 33 per cent women in media as it has been already in practiced in government services. She further informed that among total 5,312 journalists given accreditation by Department of Information, there were only 593 (11.16%) females.

Federation of Nepali Journalist (FNJ) Vice-President Mr Bipul Pokharel, praised the study report, for bringing such analytical data on gender imbalance on major media. He suggested FF that it could expand such study to the local level media as well.

“It helps FNJ as a good reference for further planning to increase women’s participation in journalism,” he added. Senior Sub-Editor at Annapurna Post daily (which is also included in FF’s study report), Mr Prakash Timsena, argued that males were insensitive to women’s issues in most of the cases and so is in media. “However, Annapurna Post is committed to encouraging female reporters in its contents and media house too”, he underscored.

Senior business reporter at the same daily, Ms Menuka Karki, shared it was difficult to find female sources for business news and if found they were not able to speak on the contents. She also suggested FF to include business page, and business

related newspapers in the study, so that the number of women reporters could be found more.

Adding to Karki’s experience, Nagarik’s reporter Ms Bhasha Sharma argued that women journalists were not less capable than their male counterparts but the problem lies in bringing women to contact as a source of news. She further recommended studying the number of reporters on the basis of their reporting on the specified topics. Reasoning the reflection of patriarchal mindset in Nepali media, English Desk Editor at the National News Agency (RSS), Ms Pabitra Guragain, complained that women were not referred as experts yet in any field. Security threats are also more to females than males in Nepali media.

Information Officer at the National Women Commission, Mr Dhrubaraj Chhetri, said that women journalists needed more convenient and comfortable atmosphere than male ones to become reporters and editors. Antenna Foundation’s Executive Director Mr Binaya Guragain suggested FF adding more qualitative aspect to the study and supporting media houses to plan and formulate guidelines.

Concluding the program, FF Chairperson Hari Binod Adhikari urged the media houses to play constructive role to retain women journalists in the industry. The program held in Kathmandu this time witnessed more number of women participants- 20 females where there were 15 males. 🌱



# Student, School Education and Safe Use of Internet: Public Discourse

Freedom Forum organized a seminar on 'Freedom of Expression on Internet and Internet/Digital Safety' on November 16, 2017 in Kathmandu. The program gathered stakeholders from diverse sectors including media, academia, schools, law, Ministry of Education, Curriculum Development Center and other line agencies.

Shedding light upon objective of the program, Freedom Forum Executive Chief Mr Taranath Dahal explained internet has now become a mainstream medium to exercise FoE. In this light, FF has made study how formal education has incorporated issues of internet safety. Similarly, issues of digital safety and FoE practice online and challenges would make aware the participants, he added. The program was conducted in three different interactive sessions.

In the first session, FF's Chairperson and educationist Mr Hari Binod Adhikari presented a paper on 'Curriculum review through FoE and Internet safety lenses'. In his presentation, Chairperson Adhikari mentioned that information regarding internet safety was missing in the school textbooks. Suggesting that the school curriculum should be revised on time, he recommended that ICT, FoE and Internet safety be incorporated in the school curriculum so that the students would be able to make the safe use of internet, thereby augmenting healthy atmosphere for FoE online.

On the occasion Spokesperson at Ministry of Education, Dr. Hari Lamsal, commented Adhikari's presentation, saying Internet is always changing. It is in flux, so it is difficult to incorporate every aspect of Internet issues and safety into the curriculum, he said, adding that curriculum, however, can not be observed in isolation. Similarly, Executive Director at Curriculum Development Centre, Krishna Prasad Kapri, suggested the study of the implementation status of existing curriculum because the curriculum cannot be evaluated in isolation.

On the same occasion, FNJ Vice President Bipul Pokharel suggested that curriculum should reflect society and social change which is guided by ICT influence. Hence, teachers should be frequently given orientation on modern ICT issues.

In the second session, advocate Santosh Sigdel presented his paper on 'FoE on Internet: National and International Practices and National Challenges'. He stated FoE is an enabler of other rights and thus, every rights enjoyed offline should also be guaranteed online. He further stressed on need to include internet values in school curriculum.

Acknowledging the presentation, commentator advocate Baburam Aryal stressed on the need to scrap Section 47 of the Electronic Transaction Act or revise it. Another commentator Mr Prabesh Subedi, former President Online Journalists Association, shared that our problem lies in difficulty to understand internet. Internet is democracy but we are not democrat. Imposing traditional values to modern innovation is a real challenge in Nepal, he argued.

The third session started with Media researcher Ujjwal Acharya's presentation on 'Risks for children online'. On his paper, he mentioned Adhikari's curriculum review saying, computer and internet contents are merely technology oriented; they are not linked to social awareness. Quoting previous studies, he derived for factors – legal mechanism, practical help system, digital literacy/ education and awareness program lacking in Nepal on Internet safety. Hence there is urgent need of digital awareness, he underscored.

Commenting on Acharya's paper Deputy Inspector General of Nepal Police, Pushkar Karki, informed that security persons' hands are tied by Acts and rules. However, if the laws and acts are clear, security body does not play on gray area hence, gradual revision on acts and regulations is necessary, he argued. Also parents should have open conversation with their children, he opined. Another commentator, Mr Manoj Kandel, Chairperson of Child NGO Federation, suggested that parents' and children's education must be linked up in the digital use and sphere.

Adding to the researches, one of the participants Mr Govinda Pandey, and engineer from National Exam Board suggested that the study could have expanded on the right to access in addition to right to information and free



expression. He also stated that Right to Access should be incorporated in Nepal's law as well. Another participant, Mr Lekhnath Pandey, Assistant Lecturer stressed the need to augment balanced debate on both good and bad aspects internet and its safety.

Among the students group, Ms Purnima Pandey from Padmakanya Bidhya Mandir complained that merely changing curriculum is not the only solution because the problem lies in teaching methodologies and infrastructures as well. "What does revision of curriculum do while there are no infrastructures in rural Nepal?" She wondered. Similarly, Mr Loknath Bhattarai from ICT Department argued on the need to develop mechanism on the use of social media.

Appreciating the FF's conduct, Member of Computer Association's Nepal Federation, Mr Hempl Shrestha, commented that the study and discussion were more prescriptive; so let's be more retrospective on Internet issues. "There are several benefits of internet," he said, adding that first, bright sides of internet should be publicized. Listening the views and suggestions from participants, researcher Mr Acharya stressed on need for parents and teachers to know well whether it's the talent or misconduct of their children to hack password.

The program was organized under the project 'Increased Internet literacy for better protection of freedom of expression online' with the support of IFEX, the global network defending and promoting freedom of expression. The program was attended by a total of 76 participants including 20 females. 🌱

# FoE's Due Address, Space Sought in National Media Policies

**F**reedom Forum organized an interaction program on “Freedom of Expression and Media Policy and Law” on 16 October, gathering different stakeholders, including media fraternity, regarding different policy documents and laws relating to freedom of expression endorsed and passed by the government.

The main document FF brought to discussion comprises National Mass Communication Policy (NMCP) 2016, Online Media Operation Directive (OMOD) 2017, Bill on Civil & Criminal Code, and Section 47 of Electronic Transaction Act 2008.

Covering the background of different media policies, Legal and Policy Advisor of FHI 360/ CS: MAP, Tanka Raj Aryal, and Programme Manager of Freedom Forum for CS: MAP, Sanjeeb Ghimire, presented a brief introduction outline about the policies and laws and their positive and negative aspects/ impacts in relation to FoE and what needs to be done further to make it well acquainted with the practice of rights relating to FoE and Information.

A journalist from Radio Barahi Pokhara, Ramesh Poudyal, argued that people and journalist have wrong concept about FoE that FoE is only enjoyed by journalists, but not by the general public. He emphasized that it is one of the important rights of the citizen and even the citizens should have clear understanding about FoE.

Executive Chief of Freedom Forum Taranath Dahal stated that media institutions should practice self-regulation rather than being guided by any other law made by the government. “There should be discussions in regard to the practice of responsible journalism” he stressed.

On the other hand, editor of Krishna Dainik (Saptari), Murli Prasad Yadav, complained that laws and policies are made only for the people in the middle, while the State authority itself does not follow the laws. He was also of the need of self-regulation and media ethics to bolster journalism profession.

Showing strong concerns on the ongoing policies, Executive Director at Nepal Press Institute, Arun Poudyal, spoke of the bitter fact that none of the policies have included the pro-



vision regarding the safety of journalists which is an important issue to be included.

Journalist from Saptari district, Dharendra Prasad Saha, expressed deep dissatisfaction regarding the lack of provision on safety of media persons in the NMCP. He said that many journalists have suffered in the name of privacy, as they cannot publish the news explicitly. Although State is already set for the federal structure, there has not been enough development for journalism in this regard, according to him.

Media researcher Ujjwal Acharya admitted this kind of programme is not a new concept. He believes law itself is not vital yet intention of the lawmaker while making the law counts a lot in this matter as this directly affects the implementation part. He even suggested that we should look beyond the South Asian practice and starts visualizing in wider scope and should come up with the solution for the guidance of media law and FoE practice.

Senior advocate, Ram Krishna Nirala, highlighted that policies and act are affected by the existing political power. He thinks it takes time for the NMCP to be implemented. He questions the law maker about the stakeholder's engagement in law making process. He doubts the action of government if they consider taking reviews from expert group outside. He further stressed that excluding the prime stakeholders from the discussion in law making process would not be trustworthy. President of Online Journalist Association, Shiva Satyal, complained about the uneven treatment of online and offline content and thus both online and offline must be treated equally.

Senior Advocate, Ram Krishna Timalsina, suggested that there is essential need of review of

the laws in the legal sector such as Competition Law, Labour Law, Consumer Protection Law and Income Tax Law which is directly linked with the practice of journalism and freedom of expression. He stressed that practice must be focused more than discussion. Similarly, Criminal and Civil defamation is the issue of Tort law and more focus must be given on the compensation.

Former President of Federation of Nepali Journalist, Mahendra Bista regrets that media persons are more offended than being praised.

Taking inputs and suggestions, Chairperson of High Level Committee for Implementing NMCP, Kashiraj Dahal accepted the fact that media practice of FoE could only be directed and facilitated and could not be controlled by any laws and policies. As per the mandate passed by government his committee has been making various kinds of media related laws such as comprehensive Mass Communication Act, Act related to Advertisement Council, Public Service Broadcasting etc.

He has requested Freedom Forum as an expert organization on FoE and media law and policies for the review of those draft laws and policies before being passed by the parliament. He has assured FF and other stakeholders to give their input on the future laws that in process of enactment. Concluding the program, Chairperson of Freedom Forum, Hari Binod Adhikari, gave his remarks and thanked the participants and presenters of the program.

The event was organized as a part of “Civil Society Mutual Accountability Project (CS: MAP)”, supported by USAID and implemented by FHI360. It was attended by 54 participants, including 12 females. 🌱

# Citizen-State Engagement

Freedom Forum developed radio PSA under the Sustainable Use of Technology for Public Sector Accountability in Nepal (SUSASAN) project. The SUSASAN project aims at promoting leadership and democratic participation of women and marginalized groups in the local government. The radio PSA was broadcast through Radio Nepal this November/December.

In order to provide thematic inputs for various activities under the SUSASAN Project, Executive Director of Center for Law and Democracy, Canada, Toby Mendel, visited Nepal and met with team of Freedom Forum and Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI) Nepal in December.

Similarly, Knowledge Attitude and Practice (KAP) Survey was conducted in project locations Sindhupalchok, Lalitpur (Province No 3), Kailali, Dadeldhura, Achham and Bajhang districts (Province No 7) in order to identify Knowledge, Attitude and Practices on citizen-State engagement in democratic citizenry process, decision making and leadership at local government. The survey also examines the tools and mechanism being practiced with contributing factors/barriers used to promote governance and social accountability, and the possibility of technology interface.



*Enumerator of Lalitpur interviewing the respondent while collecting sample data from the field.*

FF is also conducting Open Data Initiative Mapping to map three types of Open Data initiative- a) government (line ministries and local government units at the rural municipality, municipality and sub-metropolitan levels) initiatives, b) CSOs initiatives as intermediaries, and c)

Individual initiatives (RTI activists, journalist, scholar, researchers etc.) in six districts of Nepal, with a focus on public sector data that can help promote responsive, inclusive and accountable governance as well as policies and procedures that facilitate open data practices at federal and local governments.

The final survey of KAP and Open Data Initiative Mapping is expected to be conducted by the end of February. 🌱

## FF in International Forum

Executive Chief, Mr Taranath Dahal, participated in the regional workshop on RTI organized by World Bank and South Asia Pacific from October 3 to 4. The program was attended by World Bank and South Asia Pacific representatives, information commissioners, RTI activists, experts and global RTI representatives. It was held in Bangkok, Thailand.

He also participated in the Regional Expert Meeting on RTI held in Bangladesh from October 25 to 27 along with NIC's Chief Information Commissioner, Krishna Hari Baskota. The program was organized by The Social Architects (TSA), Sri Lanka, Bangladesh Legal Aid, and Services Trust (BLAST) and Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) bringing together members and staffs of Information Commissions from

Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka and from South and East Africa.

Executive Chief Mr Dahal and Research Officer Mr Narayan Ghimire attended Free Press Live program organized by Free Press Unlimited (FPU) in Netherlands. The program was organized focusing the importance of November 2 (International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists). Policy Advisor Mr Krishna Sapkota participated in the program organized by International Budget Partnership (IBP). The program was held in Washington DC, USA, from October 31 to November 2. Executive Chief Mr Dahal and Policy Advisor Mr Sapkota participated in Audit Accountability Workshop organized in Washington DC, USA from November 28 to 30. It was also organized by IBP. 🌱

## Election Observation

Freedom Forum observed the election to the House of Representative and Provincial parliament held on December 7. Among them five mobilized from FF, three were national observers whereas two participated as district observer.

FF Chairperson Mr Hari Binod Adhikari participated as national observer for Bhaktapur district. He shared his experience that overall the atmosphere was satisfactory.

Board member Dr Sudhamshu Dahal also participated as national observer for Lalitpur district. Sharing his experience as national observer he pointed out that overall security arrangements inside and outside the booth was satisfactory but he felt that Election Commission did not focus its activity on voter education which is a serious problem.

Mr Sanjeeb Ghimire who works as a project manager for CS: MAP project, visited Ilam district and observed Constituency 2 of the district. As per his observation, Election Commission failed to perform well on the part of voters' education as many voters were confused how they could cast votes.

Freedom Forum staffs Ms Manju Dahal and Ms Bobbish Dhakal also took part as district observer in Kathmandu. Ms Dahal was for Sankharapur Municipality-3 and Bobbish Dhakal observed in Kathmandu constituency 7.

Ms Dahal said that although security arrangements were made to the mark, less number of people participated in the voting. 🌱





# 9.76% Women Sources in 1,080 News

Nepal held three tiers of election- federal, provincial and local levels- witnessing sizable number of females elected as people's representatives (around 40.55%). Nepali media too, played significant role on peaceful completion of polls except few untoward incidents. It is worth mentioning that the elections proved to be a solid ground for women empowerment. In this context, Freedom Forum's media monitoring report on gender contents- bylines and news sources of major nine national dailies for the months of October to December goes towards improvements.

The monitoring is aimed at collecting concrete evidence and quantitative results on the gender (male/female) participation in media contents and providing relevant recommendation to respective media houses so as to contribute towards inclusive Nepali media.

The activity is carried out with the financial support of the Free Press Unlimited (FPU), a foundation based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, working on freedom of expression issues across the world. The evidence-based

report which is prepared by following the tools and methodologies provided by FPU is published every three months.

In the previous report, FF observed among 653 working journalists from 8 mainstream broadsheets only 18.22% are females. The report somehow supported that data stating only 63 out of 1,079 bylines were by female on the main news stories.

The study, however, does not cover all the beats as op-eds, entertainment, economics, and technology of the national dailies. It has picked only 8 main news stories from each newspaper once in a week as representative ones.

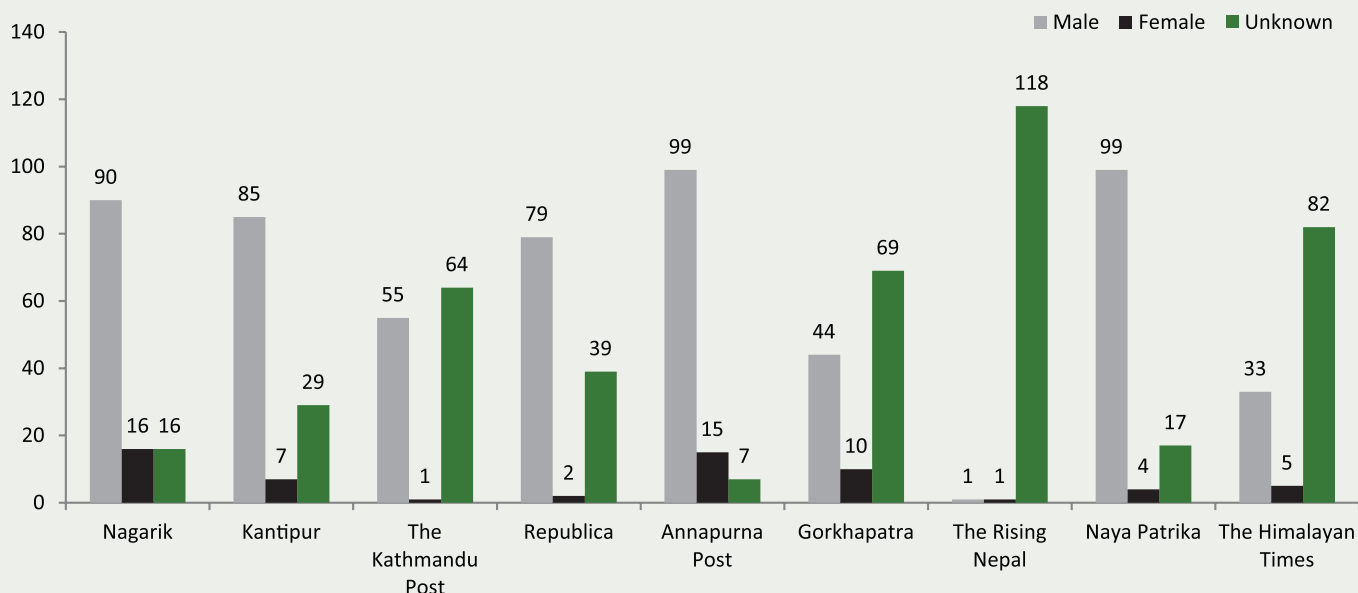
## Methodology

As done in the previous study and analyses, the contents are picked from the same nine national dailies: Kantipur (Kan), Nagarik (Nag), Annapurna Post (AP), Gorkhapatra (Gopa) and Naya Patrika (NP) of Nepali language and The Kathmandu Post (TKP), The Rising Nepal (TRN), The Himalayan Times (THT), and Republica (Rep) in English

### Key Points (Oct-Dec 2017)

- Male bylines (53.82%) outnumbered female (5.61%), while unknown (40.57%)
- Annapurna Post and Naya Patrika scored the highest (99) male bylines among others, while Nagarik daily contained 16 female bylines (highest of all).
- Among total 1,080 news monitored, 79.83% quoted men, 9.76% women and 10.41% secondary sources.
- Nagarik recorded maximum female bylines (16), while the Himalayan Times had maximum female sources (39).
- 60.28% news titles fall under Politics and Government followed by 20.83% social and legal news.
- 15 news stories with female bylines and 9 stories about women were recorded on the first pages of broadsheets.

## JOURNALISTS (WHO ARE TALKING IN THE MEDIA)



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

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

## Results

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

This time resulted in minor decrease in the female bylines with sharp rise in unknown bylines. Among the broadsheets monitored Nagarik contributed to the highest number (16) of female bylines followed by Annapurna

post (15) and Gorkhapatra (10). It is noticeable that coming to the last phase State owned media secured third position on female bylines.

Among the total 1,080 bylines monitored, Annapurna and Naya Patrika constituted maximum (99) male bylines, whereas The Rising Nepal again contributed to maximum (118) unknown bylines.

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

Annual trend shows English editions of the broadsheets contain less number of named bylines than their Nepali editions.

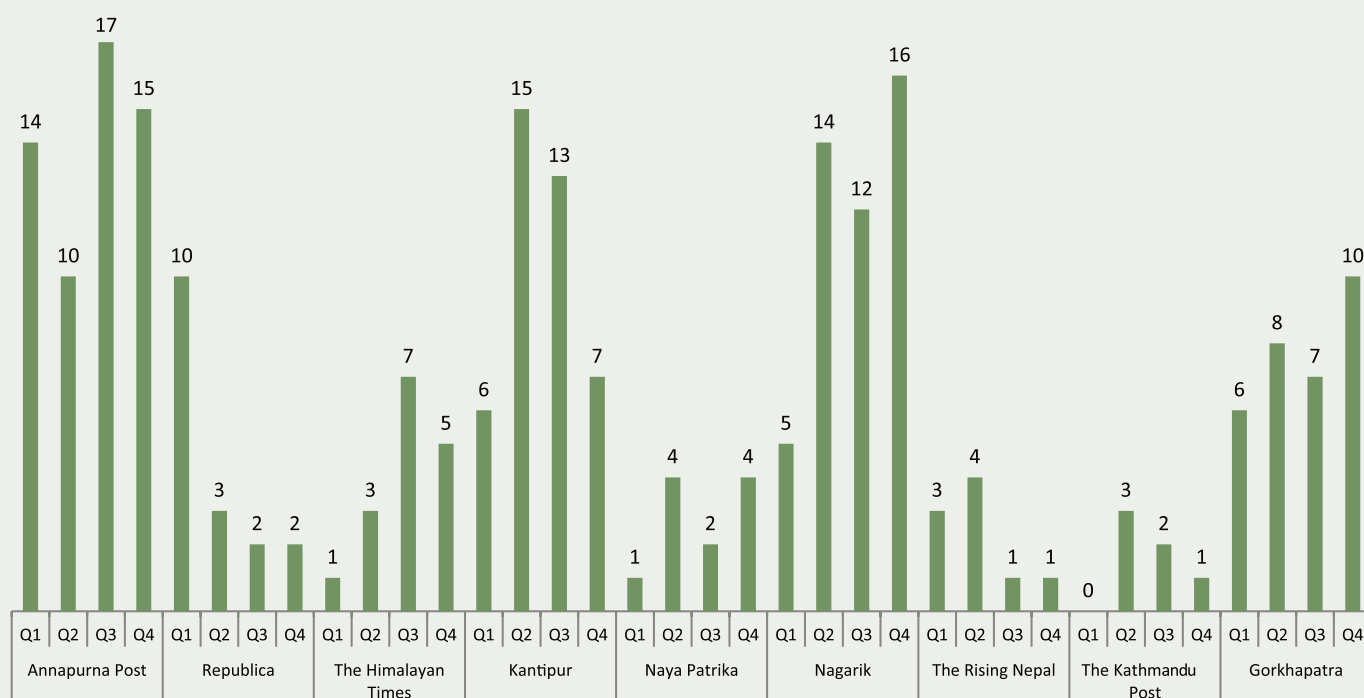
Overall data show clear gender disparity. However, substantial increase was observed during the study period. Gorkhapatra and Nagarik show increasing bar for female bylines (fig 1.2).

Similarly, annual data (fig 1.3) yet shows underrepresentation of women in all the monitored dailies contents. Among 4,330 bylines recorded over a year, 5.4% were by female.

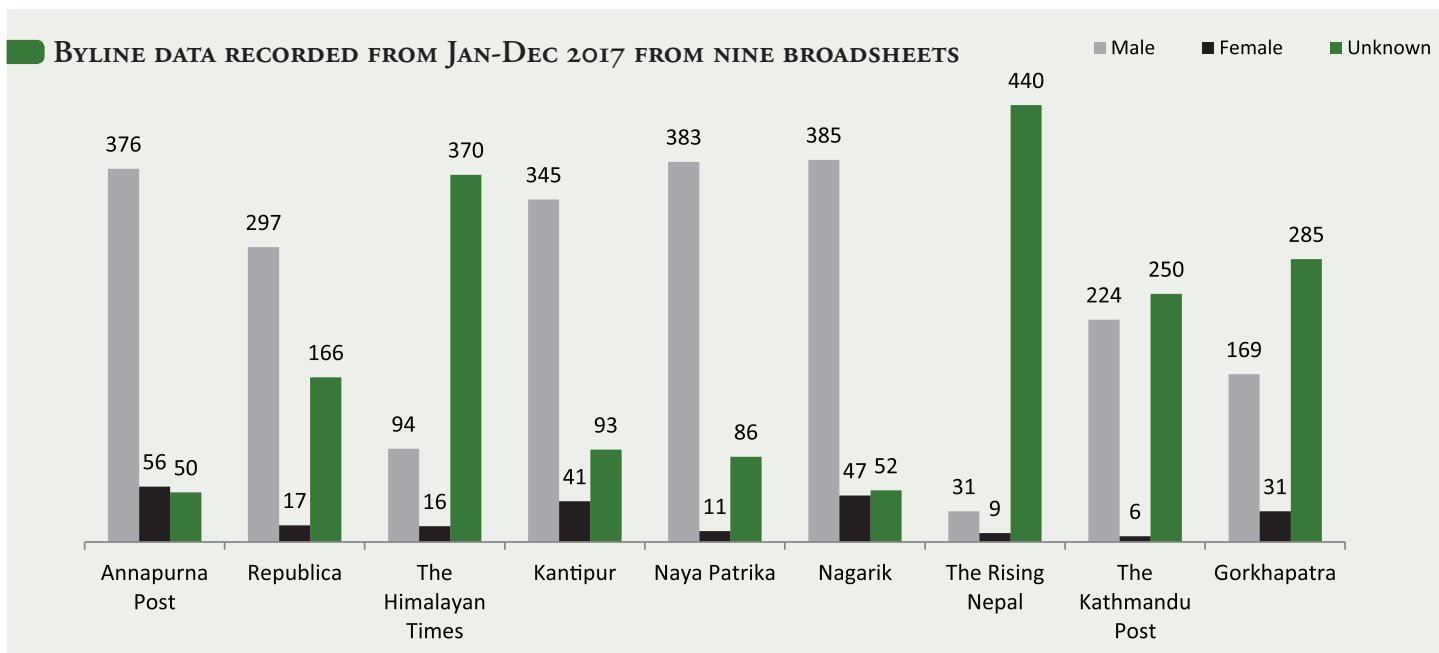
### *Glimpses from the previous report (July-Sept 2017):*

- Male bylines (53.94%) outnumbered female (5.84%), while unknown (40.22%).
- Nagarik daily scored the highest (101) male bylines among others, while Annapurna Post daily contained 17 female bylines (highest of all).
- Among total 1,076 news monitored, 79.75% contained men, 10.38% women and 9.88% secondary sources.
- Among total females, Annapurna Post and Kantipur contributed to the maximum reporters (26.98%) and quoted sources (20.08%) respectively.
- 53.06% news titles fall under Politics and Government followed by 27.32% social and legal news.
- Nine news stories with female bylines and stories about women (9) were published on the first pages of monitored broadsheets.

### ■ FEMALE BYLINES TREND FOR A YEAR 2017



## GENDER CONTENT MONITORING REPORT

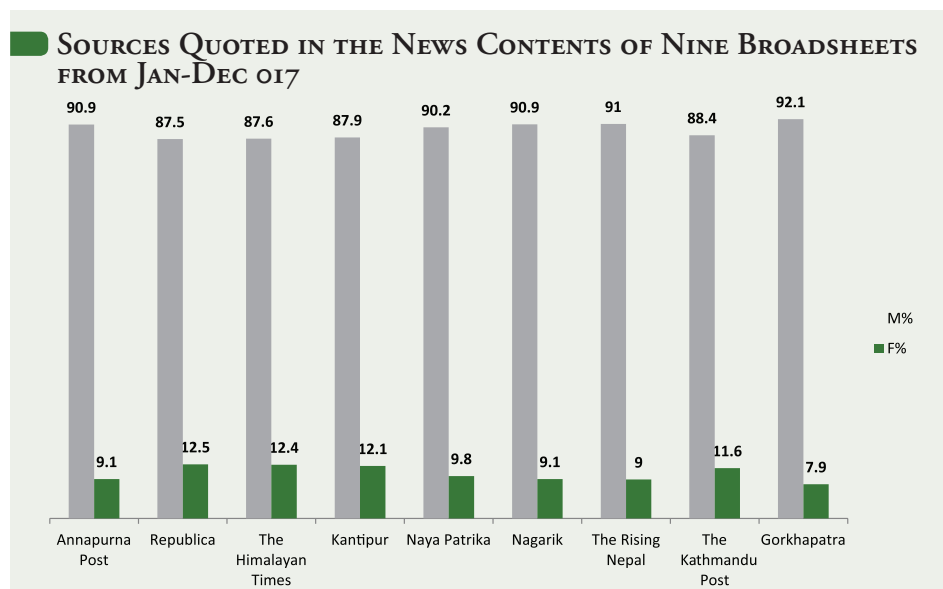


## 2. Sources (Who are talking in the stories)

Compared to bylines, women are visibly quoted as sources but still less than men.

Among 2,172 sources quoted in the news contents monitored from October to December, only 212 are women comprising 9.76%.

Those three months, THT topped the list for female sources (39) being followed by Kantipur (34) and AP (32) whereas, again Kantipur exceeds others for male bylines (248). Similarly, Nagarik and Republica both quoted the highest number of secondary sources (33).



“Increase in the participation of women in the news stories can be attributed to the increasing nominated/ elected women representatives during three phases of elections over the year.”

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

However, annual data records Kantipur quoted the highest number of both female (150) and male (1090) as sources in its main news contents.

Annual trend shows THT with ascending order of number of female sources from first to fourth quarter.

Annual data state 9.59% females were quoted as sources among total 9,024 news sources.

Increase in the participation of women in the news stories can be attributed to the increasing nominated/ elected women representatives during three phases of elections over the year.

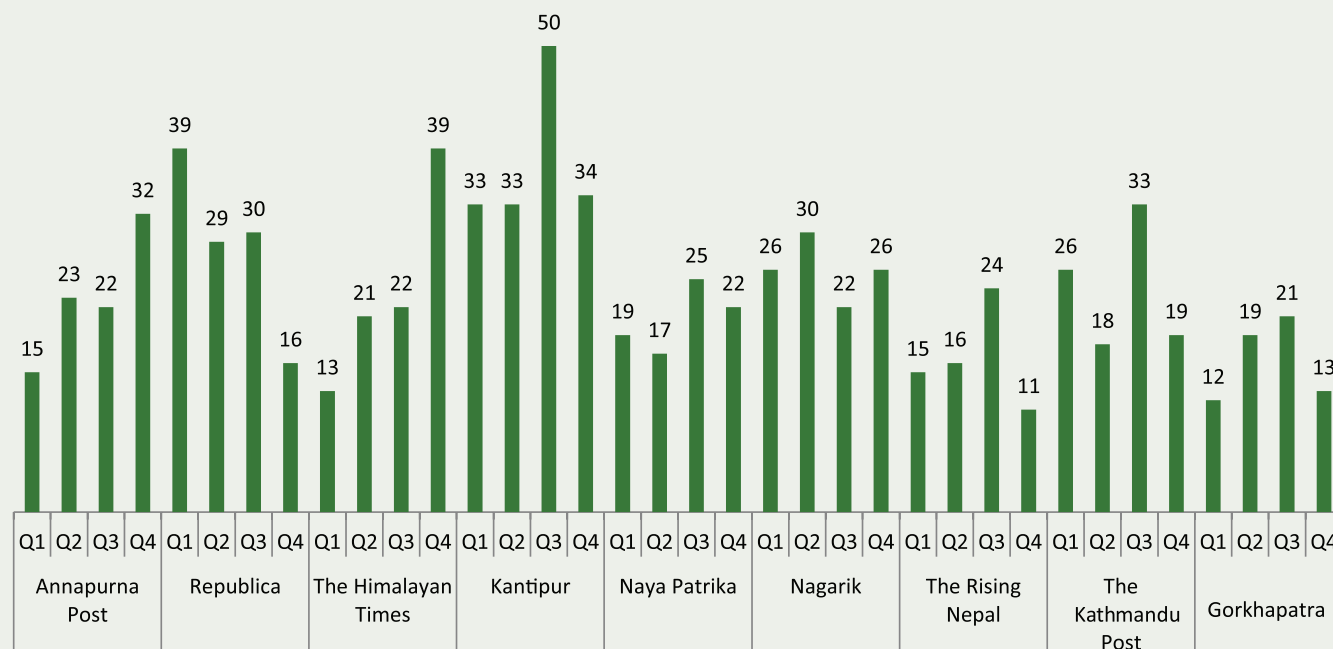
## 3. Topic-wise distribution of the news

With an aim to extract data for mainstream media, FF monitored news contents from main pages because those sections cover main news from any sectors. This three-month too, political news (60.28%) dominated the news contents monitored on the main pages. The result is obvious as the country held three-tiers of elections.

Amongst all, Nagarik (327) constituted maximum number of news under Politics and



## ANNUAL TREND OF WOMEN AS NEWS SOURCES DURING THE YEAR 2017



Government category, whereas THT (41) constituted maximum news under Social and legal issues.

Similarly, 23.2% news stories were on social and legal issues while 56.9% news on Politics and Government. The annual data show increasing trend of political news which is attributed to the historic elections of the country.

Linking with the news topics, FF also recorded 48.29% percentage of female bylines on the political and governmental news category followed by 25.21% social and legal news (fig 3.2).

The annual trend also shows increase in the number of female bylines on political news in the last quarter while decrease in social news bylines.

As the main pages of media outlets address major State affairs, those pages feature political news the most, stakeholders say.

### 4. Stories warranting further analysis

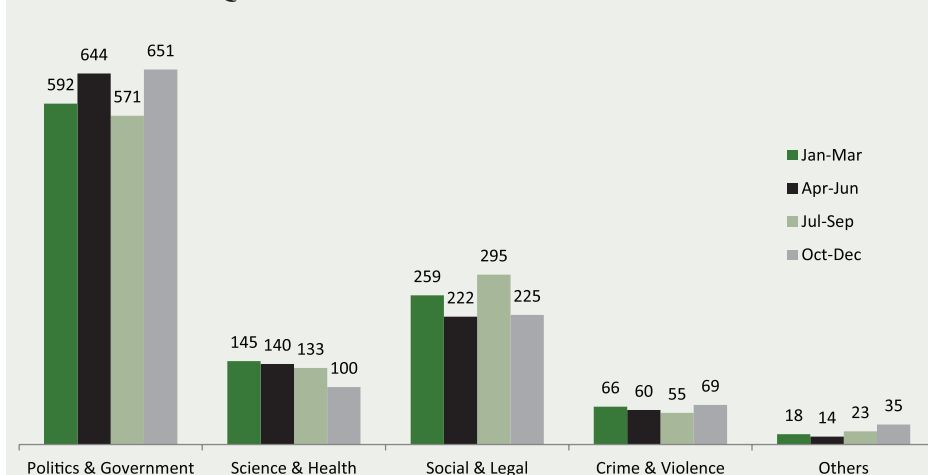
This section contains the news stories which show gender inequality in terms of news sources

and perpetuate or challenge gender stereotype.

Among 241 stories noted under this category, 29 stories were about women among which 9 were published in the first pages of the monitored media. Total 80 news stories monitored contained more than 3 male and 0 female sources whereas, 26 contained equal number of male and female as sources.

Annual data shows Republica daily has maximum number of stories about woman.

## TOPIC WISE QUARTERLY DISTRIBUTION OF NEWS



The annual trend also shows increase in the number of female bylines on political news in the last quarter while decrease in social news bylines.

## Conclusion

The monitoring report featured slight increase in the women representation in Nepali media as a whole. Maximum news stories (48.29%) were found under political category which depicts surged political activities of the country.

The study carried out from Jan-Dec 2017 concluded that main news pages of Nepali media were still dominated by news on politics and governmental affairs (56.9%) followed by social and legal news (23.2%).

Among total 4,317 news stories monitored from nine main national dailies, a total of 2,538 named (known) bylines were recorded; among which only 9.22% were females.

Again, out of 9,024 news sources (quoted in the contents monitored) 82.5% were male whereas, only 9.59% were female sources.

Female bylines and female sources during the year comprise 5.40% and 9.59% respectively. Annapurna Post recorded highest number of female bylines, whereas the Kantipur daily constituted the highest number of female as news sources.

Nepali media is still slow off the mark on gender mainstreaming in its contents. The yearly data revealed very poor representation of female compared to male- be it on bylines or as news sources.

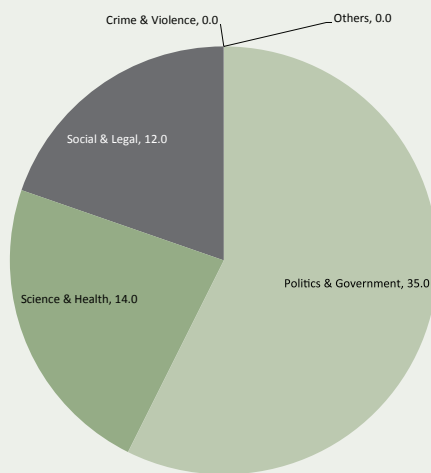
In addition, interface meetings held three times with media stakeholders during the last year produced factual concerns on why female were poorly represented in their contents.

According to the editors, due to their interest, beat reporting and socio-economic construct, and retention of female journalists is the major concern. On the other hand, female journalists argued that they were ready to work during odd hours if the organizations ensured their safety and security issues. Also, lack of sustainable plans and policies for journalists especially female was learnt to be the major constraint on their longer stay in media.

To this concern, Director at Department of Information had pointed out the need of adopting a policy to mandatorily appoint 33% female in media as practiced already in the government service.

Regarding news sources, reporters claim that male sources are more easily available and expressive than females. However, concern for

### TOPIC-WISE FEMALE BYLINES



the mainstream news contents is that most of the state authorities have male spokespersons leaving no option at all to reach to female news source.

*Increase in the number of stories about women and female byline news stories on the first pages of media are positive improvements noted during the study besides minimal increase in women's presence in the media contents coming from January to December 2017.*

findings, following recommendations have been made to concerned sectors:-

#### 1. Government

- Encourage and facilitate media houses to create positive environment for meaningful participation of female journalists for producing gender balanced news contents,
- Take concrete steps to ensure safety and security of female journalists.

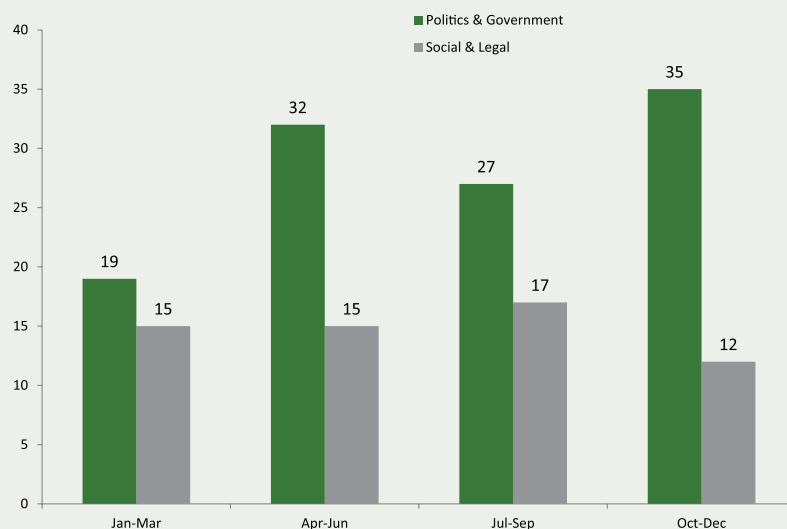
#### 2. Media houses

- Formulate and implement gender guidelines and policies,
- Ensure safety and security of female journalists and create gender friendly working environment

## Recommendations

Linking to year- long monitoring of news contents from nine national dailies and their

### QUARTERLY TREND OF FEMALE BYLINES UNDER TWO MAJOR NEWS TOPIC CATEGORIES





Nepali media is still slow off the mark on gender mainstreaming in its contents. The yearly data revealed poor representation of female compared to male- be it on bylines or as news sources.



### 3. Editors and Chief Reporters

- Promote gender friendly editorial initiatives by assigning female reporters to important beats and increasing their visibility through bylines in the news,
- Direct their reporters to quote possible female sources thus, making gender friendly news contents,
- Ensure at least 30% inclusion of female and marginalized groups as opinion writers/ columnists; this initiative increases their visibility as experts.

### 4. Female reporters

- Be proactive and confident to report on the mainstream beats like parliament court, foreign, political affairs, etc.

### 5. Other State agencies

- State agencies like Department of Information, National Women's Commission, National Human Rights Commission should take practical and encouraging initiatives to promote female journalists in Nepali media.

### 6. Development and Donor agencies

- Support capacity development activities like training, fellowships, scholarships and special safety and security training to female journalists for their sustainability in profession.

### 7. Civil Society Organizations

- Organizations working for media development should also conduct gender content monitoring activities to cover more Nepalese media.

### 8. Freedom Forum

- Expand content monitoring at local/ regional level newspapers, major online news portals and electronic media (Radio and Television) as well.
- Adopt more informal dialogues strategy with editors and media managers to convince their important role to promote visibility of female journalists and sources. 🌱

## Guest Column

# Let's Make the Internet Safe for All

By April Froncek\*

22 December, 2017 | Imagine you're at the starting line of a race, excited about the opportunity that awaits you when you complete the course. The starting pistol is fired and you try to take off, but instead of soaring with the other runners, you stumble. You look down to see that someone has slashed your shoelaces. As you crouch down to try to fix them, you see the others gain distance ahead of you.

This is the reality for many women who use the Internet. The technology is the same and its potential is the same for men and women. But when women go online, there are barriers to access and safety that men do not experience. While men might worry about identity theft or a virus, women – along with trans and non-binary users – are navigating a minefield of sexualized harassment, whether they're on a dating site, gaming, or using social media. The sexual violence women are exposed to in the physical world translates to the online space.

According to a 2017 survey from Pew Research Center, women and men experience and view online harassment very differently. The survey found that, while 41 percent of Americans have experienced online harassment, women experience sexualized harassment at much higher rates than men. Women are also more likely to report that the emotional impact of the harassment is more damaging, and to view online harassment as a serious issue. Seventy percent of women said they thought online harassment was a major problem while only 54 percent of men said the same.

Meanwhile, a 2016 study out of Australia found that harassment of women was becoming "an established norm in our digital society," especially for young women. Seventy-six percent of women under the age of 30 reported that they had experienced abuse online, with the harassment ranging from unwanted contact, trolling, cyberbullying, sexual harassment, and rape and death threats. This risk is increased for women and trans people of color, who are subject to racialized harassment on top of the genders abuse.

That reality is reflected in the way women are innovating online. One need only look at the Internet Society's 25 Under 25 awardees – young people who are using the Internet to make a positive impact on their communities and the world – to see that innovation. While many of the young men's projects tackle problems like fake news,

stampedes, or traffic accidents – worthy and important, for sure – many of the women's projects focus on making digital and physical spaces safe and equitable for people marginalized by gender. There are projects fighting revenge porn, teaching girls to code, providing sexual health information, and connecting women to healthcare.

"I was a victim of online harassment, receiving kidnapping and rape threats," says Linda Patiño, a 25 Under 25 awardee who uses information and communications technology to promote gender equality and Internet safety in Colombia. She began this work after her own experiences, when she realized that other women likely didn't have the tools or knowledge to respond to digital violence. "I entered this world so other girls know they are not alone. We are creating things to help them get through this," she says. Paula Côte Real, a 25 Under 25 awardee whose work in Brazil helps educate young people about the dangers of revenge porn and digital harassment, says that the responsibility for safety of users should be shared by the platforms themselves. "Terms of use are so huge that people are unable to comprehend them," she says. "We need to be teach users how they can protect themselves while they're online. We should empower the user."

The innovations women are making in digital spaces are often overlooked or downplayed in favor of flashier projects, but it's worth recognizing that many of these changemakers are using technology to solve the problems they face – often rooted in their marginalized gender – and that their work is just as important.

The Internet Futures Report touched on this reality, too. The Digital Divides are evident not only in the way women use the Internet, but in whether they're even granted access to it in certain places, and how safe they are to navigate it once they're online. "Boys have privilege more than girls," says Kate Ekanem, a 25 Under 25 awardee who provides online literacy to young girls in Nigeria. "I started talking to other girls, our brothers were preferred, we were less human. I was 18 and I started to teach girls how to code, I trained myself. When I sit at my computer, I feel so powerful."

Kate's story demonstrates something extraordinary: Access begets access. The girls who are learning to code from her will be the next generation's changemakers. When women have a voice at all stages – from policy to design to implementation to content creation – we can start to see a world in which the Internet is truly open to all.

\* Managing Editor, Internet Society  
Source: <https://www.internetsociety.org/blog/2017/12/lets-make-internet-safe/>



...Continued from page 1

three months. However, the main news pages of Nepali print media are still dominated by news on politics and governmental affairs by 56.9% being followed by social and legal news (23.2%). Among total 4,317 news stories monitored from nine main national dailies, only 2,538 news contained named (known) bylines; among which only 9.22% were females. Similarly, out of 9,024 news sources (as mentioned in the contents monitored) 82.5% were male whereas, only 9.59% were female sources.

### Policy Watch

FF reviewed four major laws to see whether these laws have ensured constitutional rights to freedom of expression and press freedom. One of the important media directive namely Online Media Operation Directive (OMOD) was promulgated on March 20, 2017. Though new directive was said to incorporate the suggestion from various quarters, it had no any fundamental difference from the earlier version which was intended to shrink FoE online.

The Criminal Code and Civil Code also incorporated some provision which could give ground for vague interpretation, inconsistency with the international and constitutional standards. Electronic Transaction Act 2008 is always of grave concern since its introduction, as its Section 47 is hostile to FoE online. Lack of efforts for transforming State owned Radio Nepal and Nepal Television into the public service broadcasting and reform in Press Council are of equal concern.

### Observation and Forecast

- The more the political movements, campaigns, programs and publicities, the more the incidents of press freedom violation.
- Address to impunity is a long pending issue.
- The officials in the public agencies saw dearth of respect to press freedom. It is similar in case of local political cadres.
- The media related policies are in need of reform to meet the changed media dimension.

- Sheer lack of attention to scrap hostile laws and policies as Electronic Transaction Act is likely to cost a lot to Nepali media.
- With the paradigm shift of the system and changed political set up after the conduct of the historic elections, constant observation on the activities of political parties is imperative.
- The political parties need to instruct their cadres on democratic values that protect and promote the press freedom.
- Digital safety and internet literacy are other sectors to focus for improved and decent FoE practice.
- Chances of threat to RTI activists and FoE online are likely to grow more as the political orientation is growing alarmingly pervasive thereby becoming hostile to them.
- With the local and provincial governments in place, constant watch from CSO on the government activities whether they adhere to FoE and journalists' rights to free reporting is imperative. 🌱

# Press Freedom Violation Factsheet

| S.No. | Date   | Place/ Province  | Incident   | No. of Journalists/<br>media workers<br>affected |            | Journalists/ Media house directly Affected   | Remarks  |
|-------|--------|--|--|--|------------|--|--|
|       |        |  |  | Directly   | Indirectly |  |  |
| 1     | 6-Oct  | Kalikot (6)  | Unknown gang attack reporter Bhattarai                 | 1  | 5          | Arjun Prasad Bhattarai (Editor of the Malika Post daily)   | He received injury on his head and had to get admitted in the hospital as well.  |
| 2     | 15-Oct | Pokhara (4)  | A local manhandles reporter                            | 1  | -          | Suresh Raj Adhikari (Reporter with Samadhan daily and Machhapuchre FM)   | Reporter Adhikari had filed an FIR against Bikash Gurung at District Police Office, Kaski, where Gurung was under arrest.  |
| 3     | 17-Nov | Manang (4)   | Political cadres manhandle reporter                    | 1  | -          | Nabin Lamichhane (RSS reporter)  | Reporter's camera was snatched.  |
| 4     | 19-Nov | Kailali (7)  | Unknown gang attack reporter                           | 1  | 1          | Laxmi Jaisi (Janata Television)  | Severe injuries on his head and forehead.  |
| 5     | 12-Nov | Kathmandu(3)   | Police took reporters under control                    | 2  |            | Kanti Giri and her Camera Person (TV Today)  | Detained at police station for 4 hours.  |
| 6     | 23-Nov | Rupandehi (5),<br>Kalikot (6), Pyuthan<br>(5) and Kathmandu<br>(3) | Reporters arrested for anti-election activities        | 8  | -          | Prakash Dumre (Garjan Post Weekly, Rupandehi), Jagdishnath Yogi and Kali Bahadur Mahatara (Janaprabhat Weekly, Kalikot), Dipesh Shahi (Madhyana Daily, Kathmandu), Khem Thapaliya (Jaljala Monthly, Kathmandu), Jitendra Maharjan (Nhygu Jwojolappa, Kathmandu), Jaayeshwor Acharya and Padam Prasad Pokharel (Pyuthan Vision Monthly, Pyuthan). | 7 Yet under detention where Prakash Dumre, accused of extortion and holding illegal arm and ammunition released after 26 days and Dipesh Shahi released after 23 days. |
| 7     | 28-Nov | Pokhara (4)  | Reporters detained for two hours                       | 2  |            | www.janasanchar.com's editor and reporter Om Hamal and Ramakant Bastola  | They were detained for alleged involvement in Biplov led maoist group.   |
| 8     | 14-Dec | Kathmandu(3)   | Student arrested for cybercrime                        | 1  |            | Bibek Baniya   | Charged under Section 47 of Electronic Transaction Act, 2063BS.  |
| 9     | 21-Dec | Kathmandu (3)  | Nepal Police asks journalists to disclose news sources | 3  | 20         | Ravi Singh Dhami (muldharnews.com), Madan Babu Bhandari (susashannews.com) and Khilanaath Dhakal (suvadin.com)   | Editors filed writ petition at Patan High Court on December 26 but the court issued verdict as Police can ask for sources in course of investigation.                  |
| 10.   | 4-Dec  | Birgunj (2)  | Journalist released after fine                         | 1  | -          | Sudarshan Pande (Utthan weekly and Rato Khabar weekly)   | He was released after fine of Rs. 1000   |

# Self Disclosure Update

|   |   |                            |                                     |
|---|---|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Type and Nature of Organization</b>          | NGO working for Democracy, Right to Information, Freedom of Expression, Fiscal Transparency and Open Data   |                            |                                     |
| <b>Legal Status</b>                             | Registered at District Administration Office Kathmandu. DAO Registration Number: 127/062/63, SWC Affiliation Number: 18518  |                            |                                     |
| <b>Location</b>                                 | Adarsa Marga, Prasuti Griha Road, Thapathali, Kathmandu   |                            |                                     |
| <b>Staffs and Roles</b>                         | <b>Taranath Dahal:</b> Executive Chief, coordinates overall organizational and administrative affairs   |                            |                                     |
|   | <b>Aruna Adhikari:</b> Finance and Administration Officer, looks after accounting and administrative affairs and performs responsibilities as the Information Officer.  |                            |                                     |
|   | <b>Nanu Maiya Khadka:</b> Gender Monitoring Officer, responsible for monitoring media content on gender perspectives  |                            |                                     |
|   | <b>Manju Ojha:</b> Front Desk Assistant   |                            |                                     |
|   | <b>Kamal Poudel:</b> Driver   |                            |                                     |
|   | <b>Ganga Kumari Gurung:</b> Office Assistant  |                            |                                     |
|   | <b>Project Staffs:</b><br><b>Krishna Sapkota-</b> Consultant, Governance Coordinator, SUSASAN<br><b>Narayan Ghimire-</b> Project Manager, SEFAS<br><b>Sanjeeb Ghimire-</b> Project Manager-EEMIR<br><b>Bishal Dahal-</b> Governance Coordinator - SUSASAN<br><b>Bhawana Poddar-</b> Program Officer-EEMIR<br><b>Bobbish Dhakal-</b> Associate Finance Officer-EEMIR<br><b>Ashmita Pokharel-</b> Legal Officer- SEFAS<br><b>Sabin Rimal-</b> M&E Officer- SEFAS<br><b>Kumar Chaulagain:</b> Program/Training Assistant EEMIR |                            |                                     |
| <b>Ongoing Project Information</b>              | <b>Project Name</b>   | <b>Supporting Agency</b>   | <b>Date of Signing the Contract</b> |
|   | Open Budget Survey 2017   | IBP                        | 7 June 2015                         |
|   | Enable Environment for Media Law Reforms and Improved RTI Practice (EEMIR) (CS-MAP)   | FHI 360                    | 30 Dec 2016                         |
|   | Support to Enable Environment for Free, Accountable and Sustainable Media in Nepal (SEFAS)-No News is Bad News.   | Free Press Unlimited (FPU) | 4th May 2017                        |
|   | Sustainable use of Technology for Public Sector Accountability in Nepal (SUSASAN)   | CECI                       | 17th April 2017                     |
|   | Increased internet literacy for better protection of FoE  | IFEX                       | July 15, 2017                       |
| <b>Services Offered/ Activities Carried Out</b> | Research, capacity development and policy advocacy including media monitoring, trainings on RTI and journalism, meetings, workshops, seminars and other campaigns to promote issues of democracy, RTI, FoE, fiscal transparency, human rights, local governance. It also provides legal aid to journalists, media and information seekers.  |                            |                                     |
| <b>Responsible Authority</b>                    | <b>Chairperson:</b> Hari Binod Adhikari, <b>Executive Chief:</b> Tara Nath Dahal  |                            |                                     |
| <b>Decision Making Process</b>                  | <b>General Assembly:</b> Making policies, rules and regulations of organization<br><b>Executive committee:</b> Formulation of action plans as per constitution of organization, rules and regulation<br><b>Management team:</b> Running projects and daily operational affairs and reporting timely to the Executive Committee.   |                            |                                     |
| <b>Past and Current Activities</b>              | Please follow the link: <a href="http://freedomforum.org.np/content/category/activities/">http://freedomforum.org.np/content/category/activities/</a>   |                            |                                     |
| <b>Information Officer</b>                      | Aruna Adhikari  |                            |                                     |
| <b>Financial Information</b>                    | Freedom Forum received grants amounting Rs. 1,211,484 (October to December 2017)  |                            |                                     |
| <b>Official Website</b>                         | <a href="http://www.freedomforum.org.np">www.freedomforum.org.np</a>  |                            |                                     |
| <b>Publications of Freedom Forum</b>            | Freedom Forum has over 50 Publications (printed) Please Follow the Link: <a href="http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/">http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/</a>  |                            |                                     |
| <b>Annual Report</b>                            | <a href="http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/reports/annual-reports/">http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/reports/annual-reports/</a>   |                            |                                     |
| <b>Mechanism for Information Dissemination</b>  | Websites- <a href="http://www.freedomforum.org.np/">http://www.freedomforum.org.np/</a> ; <a href="http://www.nepalpressfreedom.org">www.nepalpressfreedom.org</a> , and Newsletter-Free Expression   |                            |                                     |

# Media Freedom Lowest in 10 Years

## ARTICLE 19

4 December 2017

People take pictures at a square decorated with a giant world map in Lisbon, Portugal, 6 September 2017

This statement was originally published on [article19.org](http://article19.org) on 29 November 2017.

New ARTICLE 19 metric measures global threats to freedom of expression and information

- New metric measures the state of freedom of expression in 172 countries
- Turkey, Brazil, Bangladesh, Burundi and Macedonia show a significant decline in free speech over the last ten years
- Countries showing improvements include Tunisia, Kyrgyzstan, Romania and Sri Lanka
- Global trends include a decline in media freedom, which is at its lowest level for a decade

Freedom of expression organisation, ARTICLE 19 has joined with the social science database V-Dem to launch a unique, authoritative assessment of freedom of expression and information worldwide. The Expression Agenda (XpA) metric uses a range of indicators to measure freedom of expression in 172 countries. V-Dem have also used historic data to identify the major free speech trends of the last ten years.

## Key findings

- Global media freedom is at its lowest level for ten years. In 2016 alone, 259 journalists were imprisoned worldwide, and 79 were killed.
- Internet censorship has become more pervasive since 2006 (the year that Twitter was launched, and Facebook and YouTube

were still in their infancy). Algorithms are increasingly used to remove legal and illegal content with little transparency over the process or consideration of human rights.

- Much of the world's online content is now regulated by the community standards of a handful of internet companies, whose processes lack transparency and are not subject to the checks and balances of traditional governance.
- Private communications are being surveilled as never before, as states, including the UK, pass legislation to enable extensive digital surveillance.
- Governments are using unprecedented legal and other measures to silence dissenting voices and protest by individuals and civil society organisations. These tactics include labelling NGOs as 'foreign agents' and the illegal surveillance of NGOs and journalists.
- The call for greater transparency is one of the most significant positive shifts over the past decades, with right to information laws now in 119 countries.

Executive Director Thomas Hughes said: "For the first time, we have a comprehensive and holistic overview of the state of free of expression and information around the world. Unfortunately, our findings show that freedom of expression is under attack in democracies as well as authoritarian regimes.

"The XpA Metric is a tool for understanding where governments are succeeding and failing in their duty to promote and protect our rights. We hope that it will help journalists, activists and policymakers to monitor free speech, challenge the threats to it and hold governments and companies to account.

"But it also offers us a positive guide for how freedom of expression and information can be realised so that we can all participate in public life, enjoy a private life, and exercise our right to free speech."

## Global media freedom at lowest level for a decade

One of the most serious findings of the Expression Agenda (XpA) is that global media freedom is at its lowest level for a decade.

The rise of citizen journalists, bloggers and information activists has put more individuals and groups at risk than ever before. The threats they face include state repression, organised crime, business interests and religious fundamentalism. There has been an alarming rise in attacks on journalists, human rights defenders and activists who seek to expose corruption and abuse.

A decline of media pluralism has been accompanied by a parallel decline in democratic freedoms. Brazil, Turkey, Burundi, Egypt, Poland, Venezuela and Bangladesh have seen particularly disturbing drops in a diverse and independent media.

Shift in advertising revenues towards the internet has radically altered traditional media companies. Redundancies, cutbacks and the decline in salaried journalists are contributing to concerns about the future of accurate and reliable journalism in the 21st century. The control of information is increasingly in the hands of a few companies with search engines and algorithms now responsible for delivering news and information to digital audiences, and especially those using social media platforms. 🌱

(Sources: <https://www.ifex.org/international/2017/12/04/global-media-freedom-assessment/>)



Freedom Forum is an independent, non-governmental and not-for-profit civil society organization working for the cause of social accountability, democracy and human rights focused on press freedom, freedom of expression and right to information in Nepal. Incepted in 2005, Freedom Forum has emerged as a prominent national organization in promoting access to information and freedom of expression through dialogue, research, training, public advocacy and campaign and programme implementation. Currently, the organization is working on the issues of public finance management, budget transparency, open data and aid governance, political and parliamentary accountability, freedom of expression online and open government partnership (OGP) based on its on-hand experience and learning.

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