

Training /Workshop on “Civic Education Reporting for Mid-career Journalists”

A Report

Date: 15-16 May 2010 (1-2 Jestha 2067)

Venue: Hetauda, Makwanpur

Organized By: National Media Development Center (NMDC)

Supported by: FES Nepal

Summary

National Media Development Center (NMDC), in coordination with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Nepal—a German Foundation, organized a training/workshop on “*Civic Education Reporting for mid-career journalists of Nepal*” on 15-16 March, 2010 at Hetauda, Makwanpur. FES Nepal has vigorously supported at strengthening the awareness level of the citizens through civic education. It is supporting peripheral journalists by providing skill on civic education reporting. In the year 2010 alone, it provided training in Baitadi and Makwanpur. The main objective of the training is to enhance the capacity of local journalists on civic education reporting. After the training, the journalists became able to report on civic issues raising civic sense. Civic journalism is an effort to reach out to the people more assertively in the reporting process, to listen how citizens frame their problems and what citizens see as solutions to those problems. A reporter then skillfully uses that information to make real interesting story.

Unlike capital, all district journalists need to report on all issues. Though local journalists are aware of fair reporting, they accept that reporting of Nepali media is primarily dominated by politics. District media are entitled to work more on political pressure, so that civic issues are less prioritized. However, during the discussion, it was revealed that local journalists raise civic issues and some of their impacts are also noticed by concerned authorities.

Many of them participating from different media and districts shared their experienced that they lack the knowledge on which civic issues they needed to raise, and the way of its reporting.

There were 28 mid-career journalists-including 10 women, working both in print, FM Radio and TV channels. Participant journalists were from Nawalparasi, Chitwan, Makwanpur, Bara, Parsa, Rautahat and Sarlahi districts.

The two day program supported by FES Nepal was organized by National Media Development Center. The workshop had both practical and theoretical sessions. This program encouraged mid-career journalists in raising the most important stories of the people that happen in the daily life. Many participants, mostly the young journalists expressed that this type of training was quite fruitful for them as it provided them guidance to pick up several civic issues by exploring civic sense. Senior media trainer R.K. Regmee presented several techniques and methods that can raise civic

issues in different angles. Journalists learned the importance of civic education and the role of media to educate local citizen by providing civic sense in media reporting.

Regional Administrator Mr. Rudra Kumar Shrestha inaugurating the two day workshop and said, '*The civic issues that are around us may not have been raised, this training will support media people to identify and recognize them.*'

Highlighting on the power of the citizen and asking the citizens to be aware on their rights and duties, FES Chief Dev Raj Dahal said, '*Media plays a significant role in defending and sustaining democracy and inculcating its values to the personal life of every citizen. If the members of the political party are stronger, the party becomes powerful and responsible. Similarly, if the citizens become fully aware of their rights and duties, state becomes stronger. Therefore, citizens needed to be active and that makes state people friendly.*' Stressing on the need of civic education to make the citizens sovereign, Mr. Dahal added, '*it is painful to be the citizen of a fragile state, in such a situation, outsiders penetrate on power mechanism and weaken state even more.*'

'There is nobody above the citizens. The base of the media is also the citizen. Leaders, Constituent Assembly are not higher than the citizens. Therefore, Nepali media should be citizen centric rather than political ideology driven, FES chief Dahal said. We will only be able to introduce ourselves as Nepali citizens, if we can protect the values and principles of democracy.'

Highlighting on civic education he said, '*Civic education is based on principle and practice. Dahal further said that Civic education bridges the gap and for that mass media should be based on mass not in class.*'

Addressing at the inaugural session constitutional expert Kashi Raj Dahal said, '*The CA first should submit the progress report of the draft constitution, then only, they should extend the tenure of the CA.*' Explaining about the weaknesses of the government he said, '*Power should be exercised standing on the bases of universal principles and that are inherited to the people. To save the nation from failure, media should play an important role being impartial. In a weak state, leaders become weak and foreigners rule the nation in the name of the people which is detrimental.*' Chief District Officer Rudra Prasad Poudel, Executive Officer of Hetauda Municipality B.K. Maharjan had also addressed at the session. NMDC President Bishnu Prasad Sharma spoke during the inaugural session and emphasized that '*People need information and journalists should provide that information.*' President of FNJ Makwanpur branch Ram Mani Dahal had chaired the inaugural session.

Key resource person of the training were Mr. R.K. Regmee, Mr. Kashi Raj Dahal, Dev Raj Dahal, and Chandra Dev Bhatta.

There were 28 journalists- including 10 women representing from Nawalparasi, Chitwan, Makwanpur, Bara, Parsa, Rautahat and Sarlahi. There were 12 from FM Radio, 2 from TV channels and 14 from print media.

Presentation and Discussion Session

The two-day workshop was divided into paper presentation session, local problem identification session, news reporting exercise session and discussion.

Day 1 (May 15, 2010)

First Session

At first, participant and resource persons introduced themselves to each other briefly sharing their working experience. Then, participants were divided into two groups, in which, they had to discuss and recommend solutions on the given two thematic areas. The areas were:

Group A

Topic: Challenges and Solutions of local media.

Group B

Topic: Problems and solutions in making constitution and peace building in Nepal.

The participants were divided into two groups and were asked to submit their findings after discussion. Bishnu Prasad Sharma and Kashi Raj Dahal jointly moderated the session.

Participant journalists from 7 districts actively participated at group discussion session. Each member had their say. They briefly collected problems, difficulties of peripheral journalists and also they picked-up the ways that could address the problems. Summary of the challenges of district journalists working at Nepal as they face are as following:

Problems of Local Media:

1. Ineffective implementation of working journalists regulations;
2. Threaten working journalist;
3. Few journalists taking journalism profession as a part-time job;
4. Unavailability of national and local advertisement to local media;
5. Lack of skill development training opportunities;
6. Pressure of political parties;
7. Lack of attention on news verification;
8. Investment and entrance of unprofessional in media industry;
9. No priority of local news in national broadsheet newspapers and TV channels;
10. Discrimination on the basis of sex in media profession;
11. Media houses found to be trapped in financial benefit;
12. Lack of resources and equipment;
13. Government providing license to unlimited media institutions without proper scrutiny;

photo: group exercise

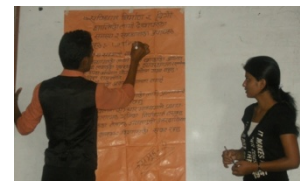


14. Violation of journalist's code of ethics;
15. Unfair competition among media houses;
16. Inclination to politics;
17. To be a life time journalist even after leaving journalism profession;
18. Ineffective implementation of right to information bill;
19. Weak language command.

Way of Solution to Overcome the Problems of Local Media:

1. Working journalist regulations should be implemented strictly;
2. End of impunity. Guarantee of journalist's security;
3. Provision of training to develop reporting skill;
4. Develop special mechanism to investigate investment on media industry;
5. End of transitional political situation as soon as possible.

photo: participants presenting findings



Problems in Constitution writing and sustainable peace building in Nepal

Major Problems in Peace Establishment

1. No consensus among the political leaders;
2. Lack of clear map of conflict management (i) Management, integration and rehabilitation of UCPN combatants, and (ii) Delayed in the establishment of truth commission and commission for missing citizens and state restructuring;
3. Power centered politics;
4. Dishonesty on the peace agreement;
5. Increase on impunity;
6. Inability of the civil society to give enough pressure for the establishment of peace;
7. Inability of mass media to play effective and positive role to create public pressure for peace establishment;
8. Irresponsible behavior of political parties and leaders toward citizens;
9. Crisis of trust among the political leaders, and
10. Foreign interest.

Key Elements for the establishment of Sustainable Peace

1. Obey honestly peace agreement;

2. Create an environment of consensus, co-work, and trust among the leaders of political parties;
3. Obey laws and end of impunity;
4. Prepare clear map for the management, rehabilitation and integration of combatant;
5. Establishment of an independent and fair commissions for truth finding and missing people;
6. Guarantee of press and freedom of expression.

Major Problems in Drafting Constitution

1. Lack of political consensus on the major principles of constitution;
2. Task of constitution drafting never given priority;
3. Politics centralized only to make the government;
4. Parties playing mathematical -game-politics, and
5. Cloudy and divided vision of political parties on state restructuring and federalism.

Key Solutions for Drafting Constitution

1. Obligatory coordination establishment on key agendas among the political parties;
2. To make immediate dialogue on major issues to eradicate the crisis of trust;
3. Establish political stability;
4. Formation of state restructuring commission and other commissions as agreed;
5. Give first priority to constitution rather than power sharing and
6. Finding legal or consensus bases to end constitutional crisis.

After group presentation, participant as well as resource persons had provided feed back on the given agendas. And, finally, they were again asked to rewrite the points incorporating the suggestions, so that they can also be published in their respective media.

Presentation Session- 1

Kashi Raj Dahal presented a paper on-"*Constitution, Right to Information and Civic Education*". His paper mainly highlighted on the constitution, principles of the constitution, principles and implementation situation of right to information bills, and the role of journalists in making the citizens informed. During presentation, he gave several cases that made journalists easier to understand situation clearly. Participants had also asked for clarification wherever necessary. Mr. Kashi Raj's paper is attached in the annex.

Presentation Session- 2

Mr. C.D. Bhatta civic education expert from FES Nepal had presented a paper entitled as- '*Civic Education: Principles, Theories and Media*'. He briefly stated about the media coverage on civic education. The coverage of local news in national media is only 20 percent, he had mentioned.

Explaining about civic education he said, "*Civic education seeks to introduce citizens to the basic concepts of democracy, and provide them knowledge about democratic rights and practices.*"

He further said, "*heads are counted in democracy whereas hands are not cut-off.*" In Nepal, pointing to the leaders he said, '*leader themselves do not follow the constitutional attitude. Due to this, there is a gap between people and leaders*'.

"Media should be open to all people regardless of their position in the society, he said. Mass media is now becoming an integral part of the society as family and religion whereas schools are becoming weak", he mentioned. His paper is attached in annex.

Presentation Session- 3

Senior media trainer and journalist R.K. Regmee took the third session of the first day. His session was mixed with presentation, discussion, question-answer session. The journalists actively participated in the session. photo: participants presenting the outcome of discussion



Regmee started his session by introducing journalism” as a profession and challenges attached with this. He informed those journalists are citizens. As a duty of a citizen, journalists should provide information through citizen's angle. Journalists should view the citizens through citizen's angle. And, that is civic journalism. What is the consequence of the closure of a Hospital? If, Nepali media had seriously taken the concept of citizen journalism during reporting- the Teaching Hospital that was closed for several days would not have been closed. Giving an example, he reminded the strike cases and frequent closure of the highways and health centers. Timely information of the possible human injury, educates the citizens. Citizen who might once suffer from ignorance or lack of proper information, could be saved another citizen being suffered from similar cases the other day. Media belongs to people not to journalists. The duty of the journalists is to go to the places where there is information, they should bring that information then, they should provide it to the citizen with verifications.

He also explained about the press freedom, need of independent press, democracy, principles of democracy, role of media etc before concluding the session.

Day-2 (16 May 2010)

Group Presentation

NMDC President started the second day asking questions of the content of the previous day’s learning. He had summarized about the previous day class. Three journalists were asked to share their experiences of first day. After wrap-up, the incorporated group discussion report of the previous day was presented. Mr. Kashi Raj provided elaboration on the questions journalist raised.



photo: R. K. Regmee, presenting at the class

Presentation Session- 4

Kashi Raj Dahal presented another paper on "*Principles of Democracy, Nepali Democracy and Role of Media in safeguarding democracy*". Mr. Dahal explained in detail on the principles, practice and the role of media in democracy building. He highlighted on democracy, human rights, rule of law, separation of power, pluralism, local government, periodic election, parties and their political culture based on the hand book on democracy. During discussion, FES Nepal chief, Dev Raj Dahal threw light on the different aspects of Nepali democracy and current political instability. At the end of the session, it was reminded by saying that Nepali media should never forget to raise the citizen's issue.

Presentation Session- 5

R.K. Regmee had developed different teaching model. He had asked all participants the previous day a question related to the civic journalism reporting. On the basis of their answer and concept, he had developed several reporting issues. This teaching and learning method had benefited directly to individual journalists. They clearly understood on the possibilities of several civic issues that could be takes focusing on single and multiple angles.

He also explained briefly on news, sources of news and news preparation on civic sense. At the end of the session, he asked the journalists to make a calendar of operation, so that they will be able to write at least one or two news on civic journalism on regular intervals.

Training Evaluation/Recommendation

Training evaluation forms containing 16 questionnaires were distributed to the participants to collect their views about the training/workshop. Most of them have expressed that this training was fruitful. They gained knowledge on the principles of democracy, civic education, civic journalism, role of media and reporting techniques. They have suggested increasing training days and training areas as it is very important area.

All participants had expressed their happiness on training opportunity and commitment to start writing on civic issues.

Key Recommendations/Commitments:

- Training days should be increased,
- Training should be organized in different parts of the country,
- Women journalist focused training should be organized,
- Calender of operation on civic education reporting will be prepared and implemented.

Closing Session



Press is the force of change. Change is possible, but it takes time and practice to bring changes on attitude. Media can bring changes faster than others means.

So, civic journalism support in nation building which itself is a long process. The media should mediate and should link with the word power of people.

photo: KRD addressing at the closing session

May 30, 2010 Presented by: Bishnu Prasad Sharma, NMDC

End