

## Progress Report

### Workshop on

### “Civic Education Reporting for Journalists”

**Theme: Civic Education Reporting for Journalists of Terai Districts of Nepal**

**Date:** 24-25 September 2011 (7-8 Aswin 2068)

**Venue: Rajbiraj, Saptari**

**Organized By:** National Media Development Center (NMDC) in coordination with FNJ Saptari Branch

**Supported by: FES Nepal**

**Progress Report Presented by: National Media Development Center (NMDC)**

#### Summary

National Media Development Center (NMDC) is continuously organizing civic reporting skill enhancement workshops to district reporters since last five years with the support provided by FES Nepal. The program has supported to enhance the reporting capacity of district reporters in developing and promoting civic sense across the country.

Media plays dynamic and creative role to awaken citizens by providing theme -based in-depth knowledge from different media outlets. To protect the nation from becoming a failed state, and reawaken the fading civic culture in the society, it is utmost essential to start a debate on the essence of civic sense. The most important medium and tool to deliver the key elements and power of civic sense in a comprehensive way and strengthen people to safeguard democracy is media.



Participants of 2 day workshop

NMDC in cooperation with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Nepal—a German Foundation has provided civic reporting education and skill to 257 journalists from 32 districts in 10 places in last five years. In this connection, giving priority to Terai based journalists, NMDC recently organized a two-day workshop on: *“Civic Education Reporting”* to the working and fresh journalists of *five terai districts* on 24-25 September 2011, at Rajbiraj, Saptari. Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) Saptari district branch had coordinated to provide

logistic support to organize the workshop.

The old and rich civic culture of Terai region is gradually disappearing and dismantling. The political instability and armed struggle has put the citizen's security at edge and eradicated the old and rich civic senses. Though the history of journalism in Terai is old but in a matter of professionalism it is still weak. The skill development activities are also not carried on regular basis in these districts due to the uncertain strides and movements. This compelled them to be behind from the scenes. The several armed groups engaged in terai have also discouraged to bring such activities. Programs, even if carried are centralized in

big towns such as Biratnagar and Nepalgunj. Therefore, NMDC in association with FES Nepal has decided to organize this two-day civic education reporting workshop at Rajbiraj where rarely such programs are organized. In the workshop, journalists from Sarlahi, Siraha, Dhanusha, Udayapur and Saptari had been invited. Its main objective was to make the local journalists aware on civic sense and civic reporting.

There were 34 working journalists including 9 women from five districts. It was first of this type of Terai district focused workshop. Out of them there were 10 from FM radio stations, 19 from vernacular newspapers and 5 from TV channels. Similarly, in terms of community representation participants represented from 17 different communities.

Most of the participants expressed that the two day workshop was beneficial for them to learn about civic sense, role of local journalists in picking up local civic issues, barriers in constitution making process and roles and responsibilities of the journalists to make better society.

The modality of the two-day workshop was presentation, discussion, news reading, news writing, issue identification, question and answer session. The topics had covered on civic education, civic journalism, importance and objective of journalism, collecting news and writing modalities, issue identification, elements and importance of civic journalism, reading reading techniques, code of ethics, principles of democracy, and rights to information.



Participants in discussion

A brief opening and closing session had also been organized. The FNJ President of Saptari district Dharendra Prasad Shah had chaired both sessions. Prof. R.K. Regmee had inaugurated the workshop. Constitutional expert Kashi Raj Dahal, Chief District Officer, Lekhnath Pokharel, senior journalists had wished for the success of the two day workshop. NMDC President, Bishnu P. Sharma had informed the guests and participants about the objective of the program. Local newspapers and FM radio stations had given prime space and time of the workshop. A sample copy of one newspaper is given at the end of the report.

## Inaugural Session

There were 34 participant journalists- including 9 women representing different media including print, FM radio stations and TV channels in the workshop. The detail of the participant is given in the table below: Table: 1

S.N.	District	Male	Female	Total
1.	Saptari	19	6	25
2.	Udaypur	1	1	2
3.	Sarlahi	1	2	3
4.	Dhanusha	2	-	2
5.	Siraha	2	-	2
Total	5	25	9	34

Similarly the media representation of participants is given as below:

Table: 2

S.N.	Media	Number
1	Newspaper	19
2	FM Radio Station	10
3	TV Channel	5
		34

NMDC President Bishnu Prasad Sharma had briefly highlighted on the objective, modality and contents of the workshop. He had mentioned about the responsibility of the local reporters in safeguarding the social values, culture and civic sense.



Inaugural session

Constitutional expert Kashi Raj Dahal, Chief District Officer of Saptari District Lekh Nath Pokhrel, FES representative C.D. Bhatta, senior journalist Shiva Hari Bhattarai had also addressed in the inaugural session. Media trainer and chief guest of the inaugural session Prof. R. K. Regmee inaugurating the two day workshop said,

*"The nation moves ahead if pen runs well. Journalism should move forward internalizing the spirit of the society. There is never full stop*

*in journalism."* There were more than 56 participants including government officials, senior journalists, FM radio station manager and editors of local vernacular weeklies and dailies in the opening session. Guest speakers had highlighted on the importance of the civic journalism, responsible journalism, their role in democracy building. Speakers had also mentioned on the need of such programs in other terai districts.

## Presentation and Discussion Session

NMDC President briefly informed the trainees about the procedures, contents, presentation methodology, and code of ethics that they had to follow during the workshop period. To run the workshop smoothly, monitor, speaker, report writer and entertainer were also selected from among the participants. Before session started, participants had shared their own the news reporting experience and impact of their news reports.

### Day 1: 24 September 2011, Saturday:

#### Presentation Session-1

Media trainer and key resource person of the workshop Professor R.K. Regmee presented on: *'Civic sense and Importance of Civic journalism in the Transitional Political Context of Nepal'*. Contextualizing the

importance with terai districts, he said, " In autocratic regime media mostly cover government news, but in democracy, journalists should make citizen focal point while giving news".

Giving some reporting tools, he also highlighted on the topics such as: how to give information, why one should report and for whom, is the news presented true and verified, how to select the topic of the news. Addressing on the participant's question on 'Breaking News', he said, 'if it is a breaking news it should be breaking news in real sense but not just to compete other media.' He also had explained on different reporting methods and techniques for different media outlets while collecting and disseminating news and analyzing the events.



R.K. Regmee's presentation

Discussion had also taken place on media accountability, government accountability, duties and responsibilities of the authorities. In civic journalism, issues should be localized and they should be ended positively, he concluded giving several local examples contextual to reporters. Many participants had shared their reporting experience and the session had become lively. Regmee had addressed to all queries raised during discussion.

### Presentation Session-2 and 3

In the second session, constitutional expert Mr. Kashi Raj Dahal presented on: "**Constitution Making, Rights to Information and Role of Media**". During presentation, he broadly explained on the concept of constitution, federal system, benefits and challenges of federal system in the country like Nepal. He clearly mentioned about the impact of the federal system, experiences of the countries having federal system, and its principle. He also mentioned on the different government models practiced in major countries of the world. He highlighted on different aspects and modalities of presidential, parliamentary and mixed system.

At the end of the session, he explained about the rights to information, performance of Information Commission, citizen's awareness level on their own rights, media's role and their reporting status. He also gave the restricted points mentioned in the information act such as the matter related with national integrity and sovereignty, an undergoing research case, security, privacy etc. Except these few areas, citizens are authorized to get information, he clarified.

Mr. Dahal continued the third session on: "**Principles of Democracy, Nepali Democracy and Role of Local Media in Safeguarding Democracy**".

In this session, he mainly highlighted on the following topics:

- Principles of democracy,
- Nepali democracy and current political situation,
- Constitution making processes and achievements and weakness of the constituent assembly,
- Provision mentioned in the interim constitution for the well being of the citizen and implementation scene and
- Separation of power and its principles.



Participants in classroom

Enough time was allocated for discussion after presentation. Being the entire topic more contemporary and interesting, many journalist participants had asked questions for further clarification. Giving several

examples of the decision of Supreme Court, District Court and government, he had addressed upon the quarries of the journalists. Participants had understood on several key points of democracy, federalism, and role of media. Journalists benefited from the session.

#### **Presentation Session- 4**

In fourth session, C.D. Bhatta, Program Officer of FES Nepal presented on the topic: *Civic Education: Principles and Theories with Reference to Nepali Context*.

At the beginning, he informed the participants about the FES and its activities across the world. Then, he briefly mentioned on the concept and principles of civic education. Explaining on different aspects of civic education, he threw lights on democracy. 'The politics of Nepal is not taking right track', he explained. "In Nepali context, the most crucial role of media is to educate the citizen about democracy, nation building and developing common national identity", he concluded.



Participants from Siraha

#### **Presentation Session- 5**

Taking an inclusive approach while organizing the workshop, we had encouraged local person for presentation. As per the plan, Shivahari Prasad Bhattarai senior journalist of Rajbiraj presented on: *"Civic Journalism: Moving forward or backward local Experience"*

Sharing his experience, Bhattarai mainly focused on the local news presentation practice, the attitude of government officials on the news and follow up news by the journalists. He said the interest of local citizen towards media is increasing. Taking into account of the local news, he pointed out that they do not care upon follow up and investigative news. He also said they had to compromise while writing news sometime with government officials and sometime with politicians. Journalists still are not independent to write news independently following the journalistic principles. Though they had to work under several pressures, they enjoy the profession because it has a right and long term impact to bring positive change in the society. He also asked the organized to pay attention on Terai districts.

#### **Assignment-1**

Before closing the first day session, key resource person, Regmee briefly informed the participants about the local issues and how to present them in different media outlets. He gave some examples of local issues. They were: *bridge construction, shortage of food grain, disappearing local culture, hospital and its environment, equipment in the hospital*. He also informed them some key tools that the journalists should always take as major principles. He asked them to be updated with local information and each of them should have a district profile.

Key resource person, gave an assignment to the participants. He asked all reporters to bring five most important local issues to make news on the following day. NMDC President thanked all resource persons and trainees for their valuable presentation and attention. He also had thanked the participants for their participation in extra activities presenting local songs and poems during breaks.

#### **Day-2 : 25 September 2011, Sunday**

Both report writers presented a brief report of the first day activities. Evaluator selected from among the participants had also presented an evaluation report from their perspective. All of them had said that the



program was completely beneficial for working journalists. After their presentation and feedback second day's session had been started.

## **Presentation Session- 6**

### ***Assignment and Explanation***

The participants were asked to present their assignment. Though they had to present five local issues, they were asked to present only three issues. In this way, 34 participants presented 102 local important issues. Resource person Regmee explained them briefly how to reach in deep to collect information and present them effectively so that authorities are compelled to pay attention on the news. Few issues the participants presented in the class room are as follows:

- waiting room at public office,
- waiting place at bus stand,
- civic sense while in queue in hospital,
- public toilet,
- highway and its condition,
- facilities in highway to local people,
- highway strikes and its impact to public,
- how to control road accident

While reporting, they should follow the journalistic principles and code of ethics. Journalists should follow the social principles, social values and respect the social sense. Giving an example, he said, journalists should not take photographs of the patient in the hospital.

At Regmee's presentation, Chief District Officer of Saptari district Lekhnath Pokharel was also present as participant in the second day's first session. He asked how they can establish a good and cordial relation between administration and journalists.

Addressing to the question of the officer, Regmee said that in democracy there should be people centered rule, people are the officers therefore government officers should work like people. He also said that it is also duty of the CDO to inform the people even if the journalists do not come for information collection. The session became successful to make the journalists realize to write on civic issues regularly accepting that they needed to wait long to notice its impact.

## **Presentation Session- 7**

Anup Lal Shah, a senior government officer working in Rajbiraj presented on: ***Civic Sense: Responsibilities and challenges in action.***

Presenting at the session, Shah said that government's programs have become successful when they are disseminated through media. In democracy, he said, 'The role of media has been realized. We notice that people started to read newspaper, listen FM radio, and watch TV channels'. Government policy can only be successful if they recognize the role of media he concluded.



Anil Shah, Govt. Official

## **Presentation Session- 8**

Dhirendra Prasad Shah, President, FNJ, Saptari branch had also shared his reporting experience with the participants. He had presented on: '*Civic Journalism in local context*'. During his presentation, he briefly shed light on the history of terai region, cultural heritage of terai region, terai movement, situation of journalism in terai region and role of journalists to preserve the values and civic senses in the region.

In a critical presentation, he mentioned the weakness both of the media and government authorities. 'The duty of the journalists is to provide verified information to the people. We are lacking. We should be bold and professional in reporting', he said. At the end of his presentation, he told that skill development activities to the journalists working in terai region is lacking. He requested to the organizer to focus on terai region wherever possible.

### **Closing Session**

A brief closing session had been organized at the end of the session under the Chairmanship of FNJ President Dhirendra Prasad Shah.

At the session, Babita Pariyar from Udayapur sharing two day's workshop said that she has learned several useful tools during short period of time and will try to share this with fellow journalists at her district. It has added energy to carry journalism profession ahead, she said.



Figure 1 FNJ President D.P. Shah

Akhiyar Ali from Sarlahi thanking to the program requested for a similar program essential to organize in his district as it has been neglected by all organizations.

Vice-president of Dhanusha FNJ and participant of two day workshop sharing workshop experience said, " I have learned that we should be responsible toward society and we will use the learned skill in our daily work. Nepali journalism should be put aside from active politics."

Addressing at the closing session, resource person Regmee said that journalists should recognize and energize themselves to be professional. NMDC President had thanked all participants and FNJ branch for their active participation and coordination. Dhirendra Shah had chaired the closing session.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations:**

In totality, the two-day workshop concluded successfully and effectively. All 34 participants from 5 districts participated actively in the programs. The presentation of national and local resource persons was contextual, effective and useful to working journalists. Participant journalists gained both practical and theoretical knowledge from the workshop. They have identified several civic issues and promised to bring them on regular basis on their respective media which is a success indicator of the workshop. It is essential to note down that such programs should be brought in low prioritized terai districts such as Sarlahi, Rautahat, Bara, Siraha, Dhanusha, Nawalparasi, Kapilbastu and Bardiya in future.



Purbali Dristi weekly page 1 &2



Ugana Maithali Daily

Several daily, weeklies and FM radio stations had covered the program giving high priority. The sample of one newspaper Purbali Dristi Weekly and Ugana Maithili daily is given above.

**\*The End\***