

Report

Workshop on

“Civic Education Reporting for Mid-career Journalists,” Mangalsen, Achham on 16 -17 June 2012, organized by National Media Development Center (NMDC) in coordination with FNJ Achham Branch with the cooperation of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Nepal

Summary

Post-conflict peace and order require bringing the connectors of society and fostering reconciliation and peace building. Only constitutional state can foster civic culture which is tolerant to Nepal's myriad of diverse worldviews, social and political diversities. Social pluralism of Nepal can be seen in its media pluralism. Still, remote and geographically isolated regions are deprived of the opportunities of modern life and communication. With a view to bridge knowledge gap between the urban and rural and remote areas, FES supported the training of vernacular journalists of far-west on civic education and reporting and build an interface between its heritage of tolerance and modern spirit based on democracy, human rights, social justice and peace.

Many participants found that along with substantive political achievements, Nepal is losing its highly valued and recognized civic culture and practices. Nepal's historical civilized culture, social values and norms which once were studied and internalized by Western scholars are abandoned and neglected at its own home. Morality, ethics and in-born civic sense are washed away. It, therefore, has become essential to revive our traditional civic sense and culture and their values in the society, at least by some institutions attuned to scientific and communication development of modern times.

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 mass media—FM, television and print journalism. To protect the nation's highly valued civic property through local media outlets, NMDC has started its drive by empowering local working journalists in civic reporting. Carefully assessing the real situation of civic education and media's role in bringing the message in the door of the general people, National Media Development Center (NMDC) in cooperation with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Nepal—a German Foundation is working for the development of reporting skills of the journalists working in the districts for last five years. The impact of the two –day workshop organized in various remote districts of Nepal has been found fruitful both to the journalists and government officials as well as to the local citizens. Our program helped to build an interface between the state institutions and civil society as well as encouraged them to work for the social and political reforms.



The two-day workshop on: "**Civic Education Reporting**" to the working and fresh journalists of Achham and other neighboring districts in Far West Nepal from 16 -17 June 2012, at **Mangalsen**,

Achham was locally coordinated by Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) Achham district branch in which many government officials had also participated.

There were 30 participants including 4 government officials. Acting Chief District officer organized two and half hour program on “Good governance, Right to Information and Grievance Handling” to all the office heads of the district using our two resource persons. The participant journalists were from Dadeldhura, Doti and Achham districts. Among 26 working journalists 4 were women. Out of them 16 were from print media, 6 from FM radio stations and 4 from TV channels. The number of women participants was less because in the remote area like this, the number of women as well as male reporters is less than other urban areas and here local tradition still discourage the public role of women in journalism.

The participants had utilized the two working days fruitfully. Evaluating the workshop content and presentation, they had recommended that taking into the importance of civic sense, the time had to be extended to three days. And, the workshop had helped them to understand on different aspects of *Civic Education* including rule of law, media law, right to information and several tools for reporting. The principles of civic education contained in FES prepared “Handouts on Democracy,” were debated with life-cases. This helped them to illuminate about value and context-sensitivity.

The modality of the two-day workshop was presentation by the experts and participant's involvement in different assignments associated with news writing, news presentation, note taking and news writing based on civic education, interaction and case studies.



A brief opening and wrap-up session had also been organized at the beginning and end of the workshop. The FNJ Secretary of Achham district Pahal Saud had chaired the inaugural sessions. Acting Chief District Officer Dharma Raj Rokaya had inaugurated the workshop. At the session, NMDC President, Bishnu P. Sharma had highlighted the objectives of the program. At the session, FES Chief Dev Raj Dahal, key resource person Prof. Ram Krishna Regmee and Chief of Administrative Court Kashi Raj Dahal had also highlighted on the importance of the civic education to rebuild Nepali state and society along modern lines without losing its rational heritage of cooperation.

Inaugural Session



Chief Guest, Mr. Dharma Raj Rokaya, Acting Chief District Officer of Achham had inaugurated the training program. Briefly informing about the objective and activities of the FES, Nepal Office Chief Mr. Dahal said, ' Lord Buddha initiated peace in Nepal. Modern Nepal is getting backward in the sense of morality and ethics. The culture of self-respect is deteriorating. The country cannot move forward without internal vigilance. Journalists working in different media outlets should understand the principles of democracy, human rights, good governance, public morality and ethics to get this nation back to normalcy.' He remarked that civic journalist differs from other kind of journalism in the sense that it is mission-driven to make passive people into active citizens awakened by the ideals of enlightenment, democracy, social justice and peace.

Addressing at the session, Mr. Regmee gave emphasis on the need of citizen's issues that the journalists always should pick up and bring them in social forum for critical discussion. Explaining about 'citizen journalism', he said, "The responsibility of the journalist is to fill up the gap between society and state. If they fail to spot them, nothing moves steadily. Media should raise all civic issues from election on the top to sewerage and public toilet management at the bottom." General decency and cooperative attitude towards generate trust in society. It is a precondition for democracy and peace.

Addressing the session, Mr. Kashi Raj Dahal said, "There should be a very close relation between the citizen and state, otherwise, the nation becomes a desert. Citizen should value both their rights and duties." He explained that the right to information is included in Nepal's constitution to make governance both transparent and accountable. He added that there is no substitute of active citizenship for democracy consolidation. Media plays a role in transforming passive into active citizenship.

At the session, NMDC President Mr. Bishnu Sharma had informed the objective of the program and the activities that NMDC had carried in the remote districts. He said without the development of professional media in the districts, institutionalization of democracy is unrealistic and out of



reach. The FNJ Secretary of Achham district Pahal Saud had chaired the inaugural session. There were 26 journalists and 4 government officials in the program - including 4 women. They had represented different media including print, FM radio stations and TV channels. The detail of the participant is given in the table below: Table: 1

S.N.	District	Male	Female	Total
1.	Achham	21	4	25
2.	Doti	2		2
3.	Dadeldhura	3		3
Total	5	26	6	30

Out of 26 journalists, 16 were from print media, 6 from FM radio stations and 4 from TV channels. Four were from government officials. 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.

Day 1: 16 June 2012, Saturday:

Presentation Session-1

Media trainer and key resource person of the workshop Professor R.K. Regmee presented "*Civic Education and Journalism Theory and Practice: National and International Perspective.*" Explaining about the reporting techniques, he said, "*When civic issues appear in media, they become a matter of public discussion, so it is the duty and responsibility of the journalists that they bring all civic issues.*" Giving an example of a *donated ambulance*, he asked the journalists to raise several issues related with its use. There is a public value on the issue that comes in media. Journalists should raise public voice.

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 all the queries raised during discussion. Some of the key points he asked for journalists to remember:



- Raise public issues,
- Go to simple issue- e.g. such as *drinking water, waiting room in CDO's office, use of Ambulance, public toilet in public places, sewerage management, quality of education in local schools, x-ray machine in the district hospital*
- Media makes the issue public,
- Remember always resource, expert and people while raising civic issues,
- Define rights and duties,
- Be bold for authentic information,
- Never commit mistakes
- Never provide distorted information.

Assignment – I: Journalists were asked to write down two services that the local hospital is providing in the district. They had to write in 'lead writing format'.

Assignment-II: Presentation skill Development: Participants were asked to present by reading the slides in which several civic issues had been raised. Each participant had to present by reading the slides.

Presentation-2

In the second session, constitutional expert Mr. Kashi Raj Dahal presented on: *"Rule of Law, Right to Information, Citizens' Rights and Duties "*.

He explained about the principles of democracy, and rule of law. He also highlighted on several aspects of rights to information. Citizens can get information from concerned authorities without any obstruction except concerning the following five points, he explained:

- a. Sovereignty, international relations, relations between nations, and national security,
- b. Matters under investigation,
- c. Matters that affect the policies- financial, monetary policy, business, etc
- d. Matter related with the social harmony of people, caste and other sensitive issues,
- e. Privacy.

In the first day presentation, participants had also participated in discussion, they had asked questions to the resource persons on the topic or issue that was confusing for them. Experts had facilitated them in a friendly manner.

Day-2: 17 June 2012, Sunday

At the beginning of the second day, all participants were asked to memorize and recapitulate what they had learned in first day. Each participant memorized the points they had felt significant and important.

Presentation Session- 3

Mr. Regmee presented on - *civic sense on Nepali Hill cities and media's role in promoting the civic sense in the society*. He threw light on reporting for civic sense in newspaper, radio and TV. He gave some reporting tools and techniques to the reporters on following theme -

- news
- follow-up
- analysis

He introduced several examples and tools that are essential during the process of preparing news, follow-up news and news analysis and suggested journalists to become normative and act as medium of connection between the state and society. Giving an example of Sanfebagar Airport, which has been closed now, resource person said, they should prepare several follow-up news in different angles following journalistic principles and code of ethics. Journalists should follow the social principles, social values and respect the civic sense whereby citizens know about public affairs and participate in them. Some reporting tools he mentioned were:

- As the ship captain should not run away leaving the passenger from a drowning ship, similarly, journalist should not leave presentation whether there may be an earthquake,
- Journalists should minutely check the civic issues- are the citizens getting services that they had to get from service providers,
- Think upon the position of public toilets, waiting room, drinking water etc.

Assignment – III, IV, V and VI: Note Taking

As one of the most important tools of reporting participants were asked to write notes in different four models.

Assignment –VII and VII: Making sentences from scattered Words

Participants were asked to make meaningful sentences from given scattered words.

Presentation Session- 4



Constitutional expert Kashi Raj Dahal presented on: *'Interim Constitution, Vacuum Created by Dissolution of CA, the way to ensure freedom of press and rights of citizens'*. During his presentation, he shed light on the duties of the citizens in times of crisis. Then, he had presented on the current political instability emerged after the dissolution of Constituent Assembly without drafting a constitution. He had tried to make the participants clear explaining on different probable issues and areas that may play crucial role

during the period of political transition and vacuum created by CA dissolution. He mainly gave emphasis on the crucial points of liberal democracy. The points, he explained were- freedom, empowerment, rule of law, claim for rights, and citizen's responsibility to protect freedom.

Civic education is essential to protect the basic rights of the citizen for example – the necessity of safe drinking water. Education protects society, nation, and environment. It is the backbone of development. Media, therefore, should understand the essence of civic education, at first.

Presentation Session- 5

Chief of FES Nepal, Dev Raj Dahal presented on the topic: ***Civic Education Principles and Theory: Nepali Context'***. At the beginning of presentation, he explained the historical development of human society and its relation with peace. He highlighted on Lord Buddha's contribution in establishing peace in the country and later in the whole universe. He also briefly mentioned about the civilization of human beings that was matured in the eastern culture. In the east, the civic sense and civilized culture is being demolished rapidly. Why did it happen and why did we drown? 'It is because', he said, 'we forgot our responsibility. We became rights centric. And, finally, we forgot not others but ourselves'.

Self-awareness of who we are seeks to explore the concept of our association with many socializing agencies, such as family, society, civil society, political parties, government, political system and the state and the role of educational institutions in civilizing the people and transforming them into deliberative public. And a fleeing of we can resolve many of our problems peacefully. Nepal's media culture needs democratization so that they maintain autonomy from the dominant interest groups of society and report to the public unfettered by constraining conditions. True consciousness, not consent manufacturing, indoctrination and false consciousness, provides condition for opinion formation and link public opinion to public policy.

To protect the nation, media should very clearly understand the principles of democracy. He encouraged the journalists to utilize learned civic knowledge, skills and dispositions. Otherwise, learned knowledge will become a burden. At the end of his presentation, he reminded the saying of Amrita Sen, who said, 'In a democratic country, people will not die due to hunger because of the presence of intellectuals and media.' Both articulate to power and invite society and the state to respond.

Presentation Session- 6

In the last, civic issue reporting focused presentation, Regmee shed light on- ***Civic Sense: Responsibilities and Challenges in action editing, publishing and Broadcasting for civic sense, contribution to civic sense through media production including text, sound, and image.***

Are civic issues big issues? Do we need extra certificate and technique to raise civic issues? He raised the issues and explained them in detail. He said, civic issues are lying around us. He gave the examples. Some examples he gave that journalists should notice to bring in local media are as follows:

- ***is there a waiting place in the government office ?***
- ***is there a public toilet at CDO's office, is there water running in the water tap at the bath room?***

- *are the people travelling by bus sitting on a seat? how many seats are allocated and how many people are travelling?*
- *bring the people-concerned issues in civic reporting,*
- *make a journalistic justice to the innocent citizen who many not be aware of their rights and duties,*
- *media should be under citizen in civic/citizen journalism.*
- *why was the Sanfebagar Airport closed?*

He encouraged the journalists to dig out several civic issues lying around the citizen. Civic reporters should enter into citizen's issues, they have to find out its cause and impact to the people, and they should report findings using information collected from authentic sources.

Wrap-up and Evaluation:

NMDC President had facilitated in drawing the findings of the two day workshop at the end of the session. Summarizing the two day workshop, he expressed his hope that the program had helped the participants to familiarize on civic education through practical and theoretical perspectives. This workshop had justified the need of such programs in many parts of the country. Six participants had shared their experience of why it was important in the current context. On the basis of the participant's experience following outcomes have been noticed from the two day workshop.



Outcomes:

- Reporting confidence of the journalists increased and they became able to identify their mistakes at their daily work,*
- Encouraged the reporters to raise citizen's issues,*
- Commitment of the participants to raise civic issues in their respective media,*
- Clicked the mind of journalists to enable citizens exercise their right to information in all matters affecting them,*
- Sharpened journalist's reporting skill*
- Rural focused program posses high impact and high value*

Recommendation:

- Such program should be 3-day long,
- Remote district focused program is highly effective and should be continued in future.