

A Report on Training for Women Journalists on Civic Education

Gorkha
Aug 19-20, 2015



Organized by- Media Advocacy Group
Supported by – Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Nepal (FES)

Introduction:

Civic Education is an education process where the citizens learn about their rights, duties and responsibilities which empowers and motivates them to identify the areas of the political and governance processes that they can participate and they can do to influence political outcomes, thereby improving the quality of governance at both local and national levels. It is considered as one of the indispensable part for a democratic practice in any country. It makes citizen accountable towards their duties and responsibilities as a citizen. Citizen knows about pursuing the particular values and norms while performing their social life responsibilities through civic education. The core learning of civic education is values and principles of transparency, participation, responsiveness, accountability, empowerment and equity; and communication and access to information being one of its integral aspects of learning.

Similarly, Civic journalism (also known as public journalism) is the idea of integrating journalism into the democratic process. The media not only informs the public, but it also works towards engaging citizens and creating public debate. The civic journalism movement is an attempt to abandon the notion that journalists and their audiences are spectators in political and social processes. In its place, the civic journalism movement seeks to treat readers and community members as participants. In Civic journalism, reporting is done with considering the way the people present and resolve their problems.

Media and Journalism plays a vital role in determining the proper functioning of laws, rules & regulations, practices and norms of a state. Both strengthen individual and community to participate in policy development processes and its implementation. Any form of media can act as a bridge between the government and a citizen.

Considering the importance of civic education and its direct relation with media, Media Advocacy Group (MAG) with the support of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Nepal, organized the two-day training on civic education for women journalists in Gorkha Bazaar, Gorkha on August 19-20, 2015. There were 19 participants from 5 districts (Gorkha, Lamjung, Kaski, Tanahu and Dhading). The training was provided to women journalists to encourage them to practice civic journalism by making them understand its importance in the present context.

(Please find the name list of participants in annex 1)

Objectives of the training:

The main objective of the training was to increase the participation of women journalists in the sector of civic journalism. Other objectives were:

- Conceptual clarity on civic education for women journalists
- Creating the wider scope and usage of civic education.
- Making every form of media accountable and responsible towards the civic education.

Day 1

Opening and Welcome Notes:

- *Welcome note by Ms. Babita Basnet, MAG*

Ms. Babita Basnet, President of MAG, welcomed all the participants in the training. She thanked all the participants for attending the program in Gorkha despite Gorkha being one of devastated districts by the earthquake. She introduced the resource persons for the training – **Mr. Kashiraj Dahal** (RTI and

Constitution Expert) and **Mr. Prakash Giri** (News Chief of Sagarmatha Television and Media Expert). Ms. Basnet gave a brief introduction of MAG as a nonprofit organization working in the sector of Right To Information (RTI), Media and Gender. Further, she highlighted the objectives of the training were to build the capacity of the participants on civic journalism, and help them emerge as working and potential women journalists. She believed that after the training, the participants will be gain clear insight on the topic and gain expertise in it.



Pic 1: Ms. Babita Basnet welcoming the participants

- Welcome note by Ms. Samira Poudel, FES
Ms. Samira Poudel, representative of FES Nepal welcomed all the participants and the resource persons. She gave a brief introduction of FES as a Germany based non-profit political organization named after the first democratically elected President of Germany Friedrich Ebert that works in more than 100 countries in the world. She also informed that FES celebrated its 90 years of service in March 2015 worldwide. In Nepal, FES has been



Pic 2: Ms. Samira Poudel welcoming the participants

working since 1994 after the government of Nepal and Germany entered into agreement for promoting freedom, unity, social justice, and peace and media development in Nepal.

Further, Ms. Poudel stated that civic education is a practical education and it is very important to journalists as it provides enlightenment. She urged the participants to make use of training period and learn about the civic education and its application in journalism.

Welcome note by Hon. Kashiraj Dahal

Hon. Kashiraj Dahal welcomed all the participants and thanked MAG and FES for organizing the program and having him as one of the resource persons. He believed that the media person should know about the subject while reporting and highlighted the importance of civic education in media and journalism. He explained that civic education teaches the journalists three major things as follows:



Pic 3: Hon. Kashiraj Dahal welcoming the participants

1. Loyalty towards state - Unless the citizens are loyal towards the state, the country can never develop.

2. Accountability- The citizens should be accountable towards their duty and the state. The citizen should perform its duty before claiming rights.
3. Flexibility / Adaptable- The citizen should change according to time. It makes the media person know about the importance of time.

He reiterated that civic education is a practical education. Speaking of current situation in the country, he said change in country is not only brought by Constitution, but it is the positive attitude and behavior of the people that lead to the development of any country. The positive change in attitude and behavior of people is possible only through civic education as it creates an environment/culture of mutual love and respect among the citizens of the country. Media is a powerful tool in promoting civic education.

Introduction of Participants

After the welcome notes, the program proceeded further with the introduction of the participants and their expectation from the program. The participants' expectations from the training were to learn about the civic education and its use in journalism and media, as the topic was new for most of them.

Ms. Babita Basnet then requested Mr. Prakash Giri to start the training program and urged the participants for their active participation during the training, so that they can enhance their capability and learning process.

All the 19 participants were provided books on Civic education & Democracy provided by FES Nepal.

Civic Journalism: Principles, Practices and Ethics

Mr. Prakash Giri

Mr. Giri started the session by questioning the participants about the difference between listening and understanding. Since most of the participants were radio journalists, he said that voice is very important in case of radio journalism and they should to control voice and speak clearly so that audience can comprehend the message easily. He clarified that news reporting in case of radio is different than that of print and paper media. Further, speaking about the subject of news, he said the reporter should focus on the subject relevant to public, and since people are more interested in politics, political news are covered more in media.



Pic 4: Mr. Prakash Giri explaining about civic education

Talking about the basic qualities of the journalist, he mentioned that:

- Journalist should have prior knowledge about the language, caste and culture of local community as their work to broadcast news relevant to local people.
- Journalist should not disseminate vague information.
- Journalist should focus on general people and use simple language as possible.
- Journalist should know how to present news and make it appealing to people.

He then highlighted the importance of Civic education in journalism and media and said media involves giving information to people and journalists should always represent the voices of voiceless people. Journalists/reporters are merely porters that carry load of information and pass on those information to people. Journalists can have their own opinion but cannot change the information on the basis of their own information.

Speaking about the credibility of news, he said news should be based on truth and false news that creates delusion should be avoided. He also shared an incident to explain how false news had created havoc in one of the hard-hit districts of Nepal after earthquake.

He further added that citizen journalism is done for citizen that is now taken as an alternative journalism. Alternative journalism mainly broadcast news not included or considered in the mainstream journalism like newspaper, television, and radio. Alternative journalism includes social media such as facebook, twitter, youtube, blog, online news and so on. The news on electricity, water, food and resources that are relevant to citizens are presented easily and quickly using alternative journalism. These forms of media not only inform the public but also engage citizens into the democratic process.

Right To Information and its cross-cutting linkage with Media and other legal issues

Hon. Kashiraj Dahal

In next session, Hon. Kashiraj Dahal informed the participants about Right To Information (RTI) and its Act 2007. He informed that under this Act any citizen has the right to ask, get, study, inspect and confirm the general and national information related to public importance and social concern from the public system bodies, political party, NGO/INGO, public organizations, development committees etc.

The basic objective of the Right to Information Act is to empower the citizens, promote transparency and accountability in the working of the Government, control corruption, and make our democracy work for the people in real sense. It goes without saying that an informed citizen is better equipped to keep necessary vigil on the instruments of governance and make the government more accountable to govern. The Act is a big step towards making the citizens informed about the activities of the Government.

After explaining about Right to Information, he explained about the process of acquiring information. He said that a Nepali Citizen, who is interested to obtain any information under this Act, shall submit an application before concerned Information Officer by stating reason to receive such information. Then, he explained the participants how to write the application letter, and told the participants to prepare the draft application, after which he gave feedback.

Further, he stated that upon receiving the application, Information Officer should provide the information immediately if the information could be provided immediately and has to provide within fifteen days from the date of application if the information by its nature could not be provided immediately. If information cannot be provided immediately, Information Officer should instantly give a notice with reason to the applicant. If the requested information is related to the security of life of person, the information officer should provide such information within Twenty Four hours of such request.

If, Information Officer, does not provide information, denies to provide information, partially provides

information, provides wrong information or does not provide information by stating that the applicant is not a stakeholder, the concerned person shall make a complaint to the Chief within (7) days from the date of information denied or partially information received.

He also added that any individual can appeal before the Commission within Thirty Five (35) days when the information is not received on time.

Then, he shed light on the provision regarding Punishment and Compensation in case the information is not received on time as follows:

- (1) If the Commission finds that Chief of public Body or Information Officer has held back information without valid reason, refused to information or provided partial or wrong information or destroyed information; the Commission may impose a fine to such Chief or Information Officer from Rupees One Thousand Rupees to Twenty Five Thousand Rupees.
- (2) If the Commission writes to the concerned Body for Departmental action, the Public Body shall take Departmental action against that Chief or Information Officer within three months and notify the same to the Commission
- (3) If person incur losses and damages due to not providing information, denying to provide information, providing partial or wrong information or destroying the information by the Chief or Information Officer of Public Body, such person may file a petition before the Commission within three months from the date of not acquiring information, acquiring partial or wrong information or restriction of the information.
- (4) The Commission may impose a fine between Five Thousand Rupees to Twenty Five Thousand Rupees considering that seriousness of misuse of information if any person is found misusing the information acquired from public Body instead of using it for purpose it was obtained for.

He further stated that information on following five matters cannot be disseminated-

- (1) the information which seriously jeopardizes the sovereignty, integrity, national security, public peace, stability and international relations of Nepal.
- (2) the information which directly affects the investigation, inquiry and prosecution of a crime.
- (3) the information or matter that seriously affects on the protection of economic, trade or monetary interest or intellectual property or banking or trade privacy.
- (4) the information that directly jeopardizes the harmonious relationship subsisted among various cast or communities.
- (5) the information which interferes on individual privacy and security of body, life, property or health of a person.

Mr. Dahal concluded his session stating that every citizen has their rights despite of their identity and differences and it should be respected, maintained and protected. In process of making news, any journalists should not ignore the rights of a person. The issues related to rights are sensitive and important. Hence, journalists should be cautious at the time of news/report making and practicing civic journalism.

Citizen Journalism: Principles, Practices and Ethics

Mr. Prakash Giri

Mr. Giri informed the participants that civic journalism focuses on citizen. It involves citizen in reporting process. If reporting is done with considering the way the people present their problem and the way they resolve it then the news, feature or report prepared is civic journalism. Today, civic journalism is practiced in many countries such as USA, UK, India and also developing countries. It is

being practiced in Nepal too.

Civic journalism is participatory journalism. It can be also termed as Open Journalism. It includes characteristics of both development journalism and rural journalism.

Civic journalism is also referred as Citizen Journalism, but there are some differences. In civic journalism, a profession journalist is involved in information and news collection, reporting, analysis, and news broadcast process while in citizen journalism, citizens are involved in all the processes. Editing is done in Civic journalism while editing is not done in citizen journalism hence it is used as democratic practice by the citizens.

Civic journalism is done using mainstream communication medium while citizen journalism is done using alternative communication media such as social media, online news etc.

Strong practice of democracy is ensured by civic education. The effective functioning and stability of democracy is important then its establishment. If a country and its citizen practice complete democracy then it can be said that civic education is intrinsic practice in the state.

Further, he said about news verification and journalists should never rely on only one source. RTI based Journalism is an important tool to control corruption by maintaining transparency. Every news should be factual. It should have proof, evidence and the journalists should be able to ensure this. They should also know the impact of the news that can come forth disregard of its nature.

Day 2

Recapitulation of Previous Day Work

Ms. Samira Paudel facilitated the beginning session. The second day began with a short recap of the day 1 training. The participants thanked the organizers and the resource persons for conducting the training on wider perspective of civic journalism. The participants' enthusiasm of acquisition in the second day was applauding. Ms. Samira Journalists added that the journalist should always deliver the right news and information to the people.



Pic 5: Participants at the program

Coverage of Civic Issues in Local Media: Challenges and Opportunities

Mr. Prakash Giri

Mr. Giri started the session by questioning participants on how they can know more about the new place and they answered through reading local newspapers. So, local newspaper provides information related to local issues. Then, he read out the main headlines to demonstrate how much local issues are given importance in the local papers. He informed that news could be anything related to public issues.

He also gave an exercise to all participants to make news of the previous days training for radio program. The participants made the news and he gave necessary feedback. He told them the news should give information on 5 W and H.

He also informed about the main points that needed to be considered before writing news:

- News should be related to the people.
- Proximity is very important in journalism i.e., local news is important for local media. Local media should give more priority to local news.
- The journalist should know the audience or target and reach of the news.
- The journalists should know about the subject matter clearly.
- News presentation is different in local newspaper and radio

He then shared the history of civic journalism. The concept of civic journalism was first emerged in the 18th century. It was first practiced when the 35th President of the United States of America, John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Texas. The incident of his killing was captured in a video by amateur cameraman Abraham Zapruder. Life magazine bought the picture and its print rights. This can be taken as the first experience of Civic Journalism in the history.

Civic journalism was given much importance by CNN in 2006. Then all media channels adopted the strategy of civic journalism to broadcast news. CNN also launched online news service. However, in 2008 iReport, a user-generated content site run by CNN was criticized for posting fake news of Steve Job's heart attack that led to the fall of Apple's stock by 10 % in 10 minutes. After this incident, a concept of gate keeping / editing of news before broadcasting the news came into existence.

In 2009, the actual power of civic journalism was felt in Iran during its election when people had demonstrated in the street against President Mohammad Ahamdinejad who got only 33.75 % vote. Slowly the peaceful demonstration turned into an ugly violence, and the media were not allowed to take news. That time, the people took short videos secretly and posted in twitter that became viral within few minutes. Even BBC broadcast news took those photos and videos as source reference to broadcast news of undemocratic practice in Iraq. People had used flip camera to shot those videos. This can be taken as an example of civic journalism practiced by general people.

Mr Giri further added that Civic journalism empowers people and community as it is voice of helpless people. It connects marginalized community and backward people in the mainstream of development. It makes people not only consumer of instrument but also make them aware on central point of good governance. It enhances people's participation in democratic practices and processes by working as a bridge to connect government and people.

In Nepal also people has practiced the civic journalism. For example, the video recording of Turkey's airplane crashed in airport was captured by one of the army and later shown by many news television channels. Similarly the video footage of the crashed plane of Tara Airlines in Lukla airport where 21

people were killed was captured by the local people.

Speaking of the importance of Civic journalism, he said it creates awareness. It plays vital role in transformation. It increases people's direct participation in policy making and its implementation. It promotes democratic practices, good governance, human development and it is a medium that enhances accountability, transparency and empowerment. The civic journalism not only deals with the local issues and problems, but anything related to people.

Challenges of Civic journalism

The role of journalist is not limited to reporting news, but to manage and present news based on truth and evidence to the people as well. The civic journalism was practiced to do so. The main principle behind civic journalism is that the information became more evidence based, reliable and timely when people's participation is more. However, the people involved in civic journalism are not trained and skilled in journalism. Only few make career in civic journalism. Most of them have their own job but are active in civic journalism. Most of the civic journalists do not consider themselves as journalists. They consider themselves as activists and use civic journalism as a campaign to fulfill their mission. But they fail to follow the communication policy and ethics which do more harm than good. Therefore, one cannot expect reliable, valid and news based on evidence from these people.

Concept of today's Civic journalism and Practice

There may be different methods of Civic Journalism that differs according to place. Its style and format may differ according to the medium. Its priority is based on country, time and situation practices. However, it's based on a common concept that can be used as a guideline.

- Need to understand own community and civic life in order to present the news that reflect the actual subject.
- Need to focus on issues than event. More than information and data, the impact of news should be considered. News should be factual and based on evidence.
- While selecting subject, one should see if it is transformative and can create impact in society or not. The impact of the message that news carry should be analyzed.
- Journalist should not give negative opinions but can be critical.
- People participation is important in reporting processes. The reporting can be done in any issues related to education, health, and service delivery, distribution of source and resources, social justice, improvement in livelihood as the subject.
- Democracy, freedom and social justice are basis of civic journalism and hence, these cannot be neglected.
- Reporting should be solution oriented and should not always present problem. It should seek solution from community level.
- News presentation is very important in civic journalism.

Journalism is a voice of voiceless. It is mirror of society, agent of change and voice of helpless people. Journalism is a medium to bring about democracy and organizational development. Media is the fourth estate of democracy. Media should present the exact message or information. Media should present news only after analyzing it critically and should convey message positively rather than in negative way. Journalist should be well informed about the rules and act of state and should always prepare before questions in order to get required answer.

Coverage of civic issues in Local Media: Experiences & commitments

Babita Basnet

Ms. Basnet began the session with explaining civic education. It is informal education. It makes the citizen accountable by giving necessary information. For civic education, it is not necessary to visit school, college. There is no age limit for gaining education, civic education varies according to country. It is implemented to all irrespective of social, economic, gender and political differences.

She shared many examples of other countries where people value and practice civic education more and briefly informed about the practice of civic education in African countries during election of the Constitution Assembly.

Ms. Basnet gave a brief history update regarding civic education by saying that it was started in Nepal 100 years back by King Jay Prithvi Bahadur Singh. He had drafted a document on civic education. Then after renowned poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota wrote a book on civic education, which was published lately by Ratna Pustak Bhandar. Ms. Basnet further state that the Nepalese citizen does have the feeling for country and government but they are unhappy towards the political instability. Civic education can help them to get involved in the policy making and government as it also makes the citizen asks themselves 'what has the country given me and what have I done for my country'.

She also added that media persons are special and should be well-informed as the people believe that journalists know everything. So, to keep updated the journalist should read books related to literature, politics and others, and have day-to-day information. Journalist should at least have basic journalism training.

Constitution and Rule of Law, Women's issues in the Constitution

Hon. Kashiraj Dahal

On participant's urge to know about the women's issues in constitution, Mr. Dahal explained about current women's issues in the constitution. He informed that previous constitution had ensured two major rights to women-

1. Right to divorce and
2. Right to claim the father of the child.

He added that the new constitution has granted more additional rights to women as follows:

1. Equal Right to paternal property
2. Right to descent
3. No physical and mental abuse
4. Right to reproduce
5. Equal participation in nation building process
6. Reservation for women

Mr. Dahal then explain about the Constitution and Rules of Law. A constitution is a set of fundamental principles or established precedents according to which a state or other organization is governed. Everything is not written. Constitution, structure of state and state's management constitute legal administration of the state. Constitution should be based on the principle. Constitution is a document with limited words that guide the country and it includes:

1. Structure of State

2. State's practice
3. Guarantee of people's rights

Rule of Law:

The rule of law is the legal principle that law should govern a nation, as opposed to being governed by arbitrary decisions of individual government officials. The law should be made through mutual agreement and should respect weak and elder people, not seek only rights but also be accountable.

Furthermore, he briefly explained the ethics of Journalism. He presented five acts that the journalists and media institution should never carry out-

- (1) Not undermine national integrity: Not publish, broadcast or produce-disseminate any news and opinion that may undermine the sovereignty.
- (2) Not publish, broadcast or disseminate such deformed and provocative material that may have adverse impact on nation's peace and safety.
- (3) Not publish news that has adverse impact on social justice and goodwill and integrity of multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-religious Nepal or jeopardize the harmonious relations subsisting among people of various castes, tribes or communities, or contains any act of defamation or contempt of court or is contrary to decent public behavior or morality.
- (4) Not publish news to undermine the dignity or defame the character of the person out of personal or institutional vested interests.
- (5) Not publish news that affect or infringe the person's privacy.
- (6) Not publish or broadcast any nudity or picture or depiction of carnage in such a manner to spread hatred, terror, provocation or the pornography in society.

Experience Sharing by Anika Knost (an Intern)

After the end of formal sessions, Ms. Anika Knost, an Intern in FES shared her learning experience with the participants. Ms. Anika is a student of Political Science (Bachelor level). She explained about relationship between different states, civil and political rights, theories of political science, democracy and rights, freedom of expression, movement and opinion.

She stated that Journalist should see whether rights are violated or not. Women's rights and women's violence are more sensitive issues and need to be dealt with more sensitivity. Journalists can be a role model to root out violence particularly women's violence from society. She highlighted the importance of Human rights, Good Governance, Independent Judiciary in democracy. The role of journalist is very important in informing citizens and creating well informed society.



Pic 6: Anika Knost sharing her learning with the participants

Feedback Collection:

After training sessions, the participants' feedbacks were collected.

Kaski participants

"We realized that we have ignored civic education before but after participating in the training, we came to know about the importance of civic education. The training is very effective and practical. We

thank MAG and FES for conducting the training and resource person for explaining the subject clearly."

Tanahu Participants

"We have learned many new things and the training has helped us in developing positive attitude. It is very effective. We got the opportunity to learn about constitution, civic education, RTI- about RTI application process, and we thank MAG and FES for this."

Dhading participants

"We will try to implement the learning in practice. We will work on issues of civic rights and women's rights."

Lamjung participants

"The training was very effective and eye opener for us. We have not heard of civic journalism before, but we assure you all that we will practice civic journalism from now onwards."

Gorkha participants

"We are grateful that program was held in Gorkha. We learned about civic journalism and civic education."

Certificate Distribution and Conclusion

Certificate of participation was distributed to each participant by Hon. Kashi raj Dhahal and Babita Basnet. Finally, Ms. Babita announced the closing of the program and thanked all the participants for their active involvement in the interaction. She also extended her gratitude towards the resource persons and the logistics management on the successful completion of the training. She requested the participants to broaden their knowledge and skills in journalism and stated that MAG, FES Nepal will always be ready to extend their assistance to the participants in future.



Pic 7: Certificate distribution ceremony



Pic 8: Group photo including participants, resource persons and organizers

Annex 1: Participants lists

S.N	Name	Organization	Email
1	Anisha Shrestha	Radio Chautari, Lamjung/ News Assistant	anishachautari@gmail.com
2	Khusi Gurung	Radio Lamjung/ News Reader	-
3	Sirjana Poudel	Lamjung TV/ News Reporter	sirjanafuchhe@gmail.com
4	Anju Rimal	Radio Marsyangdi/ Reporter	lamjung.anju@gmail.com
5	Gyanee Maya Gurung	Dhading Exprozer, Media House	sajulama@gmail.com
6	Anita Shakya	Radio Bihani 97.6 MHz	anitaluku11@gmail.com
7	Deepa Adhikari	Radio Dhading	deepa.adhikarigo@gmail.com
8	Umma BK	Radio Bihani 99.2 MHz	carnation_hibiscus@yahoo.com
9	Apsara Pokhreal	Radio Bandipur	apsarabc10@yahoo.com
10	Shree Maya Rana Magar	Radio Dhorbarahi, Tanahun	rjsrijurana@gmail.com
11	Bal Kumari Paudel	www.citypokhara.com/ Big FM	paudelsanu404@gmail.com
12	Pramila Baral	Radio Safalta 103.4 MHz (Pokhara)	pramilabaral12@gmail.com
13	Sarita Timsina Pageni	Radio Annapurna	newssarita@gmail.com
14	Binu Magar	Gandaki TV	mgrbinu01@gmail.com
15	Mamata Gurung	Radio Tanahun/ Program presenter	mamtagurung.11@gmail.com
16	Manish Poudel	Madiseti FM/ Reporter	poudelmanisha111@gmail.com
17	Asmeeta Thapa Magar	Radio Matribhumi	ashmitathapa76@gmail.com
18	Amrita Lamichanne	Radio Manasalu	newsmansalu@gmail.com
19	Garisha Gurung	Radio Manasalu	-

Annex 2: Name list of resource persons and organizer team members

Resource Persons

- Hon'ble . Kashi Raj Dahal Constitutional and RTI Expert
- Ms. Babita Basnet, Journalist- President MAG

- Mr. Prakash Giri, Trainer (Media Journalist and Program Presenter at Sagarmatha Television)

FES team

- Ms. Samira Paudel, Office Manager and Gender Coordinator
- Ms. Anika Knust, Intern

MAG team

- Ms. Sushmita Lama, Rapporteur
- Mr. Prabin Basnet, Logistic Management Coordinator
- Mr. Baikuntha Silwal, Driver