FreeExpression
Issue 22 Sept-Dec. 2012
A NEWSLETTER OF FREEDOM FORUM

Campaign on for Transparency and Accountability

In order to free Nepal's public agencies from the traditional climate of slow performance and secret dealing, their transparency is a must. Once the agencies are made responsive and accountable, the delivery of public services is better ensured in light of the changing needs of the service recipients. So, the slow performance in the public agency has been a hindrance. Importantly, the people are deprived of most of the information which are of tremendous use and importance both to the service provider (public agency) and the recipients. But such information on diverse issues is gathering dust in the government offices. Bearing these very issues in mind, Freedom Forum (FF) has continued its campaign to make public agencies transparent, responsive and accountable to the public. Different public agencies have been demanded diverse information. The untiring FF's vibrant campaign for information has set up precedents how the public agencies can be changed thereby bringing them to the people's favour. The campaign has exposed well how the public agencies or the administrators which/who formulate rule and laws are themselves dominant to deprive the people of the information (rules) or are obstinate to hide information thereby indulging in corruption and financial and administrative irregularities. The FF has aptly used the Right to Information (RTI) Act 2007 for empowering public with information of their concern limited in different public agencies. Here, some of the major parts of the information seeking campaign have been elucidated.

FF Moves to NIC against Chief Secretary's Stand on Hiding Information

After Chief Secretary of Nepal Government Leela Mani Poudel denied information the Freedom Forum sought about the report of a judicial commission led by then Supreme Court Justice Bhairav Prasad Lamsal to probe into the properties of senior government officials, the FF appealed in the National Information Commission (NIC) on December 26, 2012 demanding NIC's directive to the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers (OPMCM) to give information.

The FF moved to the NIC in line with clause 10 (3) of the RTI Act. Also, the FF has sought action on the defendants as per Clause 32 (1, 2, 3 and 5).

Chief Secretary Mr Poudel denied information reasoning that giving information about the report



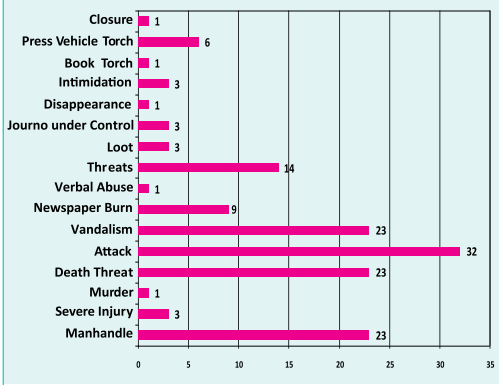
Singha Durbar, Central Administrative Office of Nepal Government

Adamant OPMCM, IRD

would breach right to privacy leading to security threat on life, property and health which the Information Officer at the OPMCM had argued earlier.

In the appeal, the FF has argued that Chief Secretary's response has flatly breached citizen's right to information which is guaranteed fully by the Interim Constitution of Nepal 2006 and RTI Act 2007. The reasons Chief Secretary Mr Poudel are invalid, FF concludes.

Press Freedom Violation during 2012



Major Highlights in Page 5

Earlier, Information Officer and Under Secretary at the OPMCM Shankar KC had informed the information seekers that the report could not be made public reasoning it would jeopardize personal privacy, life, property, health and security.

Senior journalist Taranath Dahal and Sanjib Ghimire, on October 11, 2012 had sought information with OPMCM on behalf of the RTI Support Centre of Freedom Forum in line with clause 3 Right to Information Act 2007.

In line with Clause 3 of the RTI Act 2007 and on behalf of the RTI Support Centre of Freedom Forum, Taranath Dahal and Sanjib Ghimire had applied in the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers on October 11, 2012 seeking the following information:

I. Details of all annexes of a report submitted to the Office of the Prime minister by a property judicial probe commission led by then Supreme Court justice Bhairav Prasad Lamsal in 2058 BS.
II. Who were accused and filed cases by the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority for amassing properties with undisclosed sources, and details of the charge.

After the denial of the information, the information seekers have appealed to Chief Secretary of Nepal Government on November 6, 2012 about the report reasoning they have rights to get the information.

The information seekers Dahal and Ghimire have

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Message from Chairperson

The year 2012 bade adieu to us amidst almost fluid politics. As political determinations turned shaky one after another in the transition throughout the year, media was obviously at the receiving end. Rather, this year witnessed surge in the violation of media freedom and freedom of expression in the country. Although the right to media freedom and freedom of expression guaranteed by the constitution as the citizens' fundamental right, media persons were bound to work in the hostile atmosphere. The media and media workers faced unprecedented attacks and atrocities from both state and non-state sides as government officials, teacher, Nepal army, Nepal police, minister's aides, unknown gang, and others involved in terrorizing journalists and frustrating atmosphere for free and fair practice of journalism.



Threats and attacks on media outlets and journalists grew significantly with the emergence of some new trends mainly effect of party split in media, media merger, and pressure of sectarian/communal interests on media. The gruesome murder of journalist Yadav Poudel, a reporter with the Rajdhani daily and Avenues Television from Jhapa district spread shock wave in the national and international media, showcasing precarious condition of media freedom in Nepal.

Freedom Forum recorded a total of 147 incidents of press freedom violation this year against 96 in 2011. Compared to 2011, it is a sharp rise as situation grew remarkably adverse during the months on the eve of the collapse of Constituent Assembly that was supposed to promulgate new constitution in May 27, 2012. The burst of communal, ethnic, regional, religious interests during the months on the eve of the May 27, made ill efforts to control media. Three days- May 20-22, of 2012 remained 'black days' in Nepali media. It was worrying that government remained mum on the perpetrators of media freedom during these days.

Religious, ethnic, regional, and political fundamentalism has emerged as new threat to Nepali media. Similarly, split in the ruling UCPN-Maoist party jeopardized media freedom in Nepal. The merger of media owing to financial crunch was another new trend. Three newspapers in a city in the southern plain of Nepal were merged due to this.

On a broad day light, a religiously fundamental group attacked the Republic Media in the heart of the capital city. Similarly, most of the journalists in Nepal remained underpaid this year too. However, they have now begun raising voices to their employers and stakeholders to adhere to the Minimum Remuneration Fixation Committee's rule. The government led by the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), demonstrated authoritarian character and controlled the state-run media, funded the partisan and region-based media union and organizations- a new trend in Nepali media. The government funding to the partisan and region-based media union has badly politicized the media which is detrimental to free and professional journalism.

Impunity remained unchecked this year too. No attacker on media during the months on the eve of the fall of CA was held by the police.. Importantly, dillydally on the cases of journalist Dekendra Thapa and Prakash Thakuri who were abducted and killed subsequently continued this year.

The government's plan to enforce new media policy without broader consensus and all-sector participation is wrong timed. It has lacked the international standard.

Similarly, with the formation of a non-partisan organization- the Union of Media Employees- in Nepal, the need of media trade union has been realized and internalized.

Two journalists after legal battles with their employer media have been reinstated. It is another positive case to share. These have set the record by establishing the rights of working journalists. Ram Prasad Dahal, sacked illegally from the Rajdhani daily in 2005 was finally restored and compensated after untiring legal battle of seven years. Freedom Forum had provided legal support to Dahal. Similarly, Bikash Thapa sacked from the Kantipur daily has been restored recently.

As such except for the amendment of the national broadcasting regulation thereby opening an avenue for local televisions, reinstatement of two working journalists to their job by the courts and human rights body's bid to constitute freedom of expression protection taskforce, the government has not taken any substantial steps to improve freedom of expression situation in the country

With these, the year 2012 elapsed, but Freedom Forum's campaign and advocacy for media freedom, promotion and protection of freedom of expression and right to information is continuous to build better democracy and protect democratic values and culture. Enabling environment for free and fair journalism has one of the top priorities as it is a fundamental to build a robust democracy, which is now widely realized need in Nepal. Let's hope better future, better media, better governance, and better democracy in the New Year. Happy New Year 2013!



FF in CIVICUS

We are pleased to share that Freedom Forum has been awarded a membership of CIVICUS. CIVICUS- a World Alliance for Citizen Participation is an international alliance established in 1993 to nurture the foundation, growth and protection of citizen action throughout the world, especially in areas where participatory democracy and citizens' freedom of association are threatened. It is an international alliance of members and partners which constitute an influential network of organisations at the local, national, regional and international levels, and span the spectrum of civil society. CIVICUS' programs and organisational structure take into account the diversity that exists between countries and cultures, as well as the realities of continual change with three main pillars as follows:

1. Protecting the rights of civil society actors
2. Strengthening good practice within civil society
3. Strengthening civil society's ability to influence the policies and practices of governments, international institutions and the private sector

It acts as an advocate for citizen participation as an essential component of governance and democracy worldwide. CIVICUS seeks to amplify the voices and opinions of ordinary people and it gives expression to the enormous creative energy of the burgeoning sector of civil society.

FF Joins IMF CSO Network

In yet another greater achievement, the Forum has become a part of network of civil society organizations that are educated about the IMF, monitor its actions and advocate to change its behavior. The network namely 'New Rules for Global Finance Colaition' has a strength of civil society organizations representing more than 60 countries of the globe.

The New Rules for Global Finance Coalition headquartered in Washington DC was incorporated in 2006 as a non-governmental organization, with the aim to promote reforms in the rules and institutions governing international finance and resource mobilization, in order to support just, inclusive and economically sustainable global development. New Rules convenes activists and policymakers from developed and developing countries to identify and advocate politically feasible and technically sound solutions to systemic issues of international finance and resource mobilization which impede inclusive development.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER'S CADRES BURN NEWSPAPER

The cadres of the Madhesi Students' Forum (Democratic), a student wing of the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (Democratic), a party led by Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister, Bijay Kumar Gachchhadar, burnt the national and local dailies at Bhanu Chowk of Janakpur city, reasoning the newspapers did not publish the news about students' district convention. It occurred on November 6, 2012. According to Briz Kumar Yadav, Chief Editor at the local Janakpur Today daily said, "The Minister's cadres burnt the copies of the Kantipur daily, Annpurna Post daily, and local dailies as Janakpur Today, Jagaran Nepal, Mithila Dot Com, Daily Express, and Tahalka Dot Com."



The Students' Forum had not informed any media about its convention but suddenly burnt the newspapers. The incident demonstrates a gross violation of press freedom. It was so ridiculous that Chairman of the party, Gachchhadar, who is holding the responsible ministries remained mum about the incident. And, no action was taken against those burning newspapers.Despite the government says it honours freedom of expression, the cadres of the ruling leaders repeatedly turn violent towards media. It is also the indication that the political party of Deputy Prime Minister wants to keep media under its control.

Security Persons Against Free Reporting

Police, despite being a government body responsible for providing security to the people and society, time and again turn violent not only to the general public but also to the journalists, the torch bearers of press freedom. In contrary to their duty to keep intact peace and stability, they have been panicking journalists with threat, attack and intimidations thereby violating citizen's right to information and journalists' right to report in the free and fair atmosphere. Such incidents are responsible to creating self-censorship among the journalists. Here are some incidents during the concluding four months of 2012 in this regard:

SP Issues Death Threat

Reporter with the Kantipur Television from Bara district, Upendra Thakur, was threatened of life by a senior police officer while making news on human rights violation. It occurred in the southern plain of Nepal on 10 December 2012.

Reporter Thakur said he was threatened of death by Superintendent of Police (SP), Dansing Bohara, while he was making news and follow up about the recent incidents of human rights violations in the district.

"Your news has tarnished police administration. I'm tired of giving justifications after your news. Why do you boast of becoming a journalist? I'm a police person. You will take your life very soon," reporter Thakur quoting SP Bohara as threatening him at the Office of the Chief District Officer (CDO). According to Mr Thakur, he was taking interview with CDO about human rights violation, focusing on the recent abductions and subsequent murder in the district on the occasion of the International Human Rights Day.

Earlier, he had made the news about the abduction of two persons, extortions demanded by unknown gang thereafter and recent discovery of the murdered, decomposed bodies from different parts of the district.

District Police Takes FM Station In-Charge under Control

Suman Malla, Station In-Charge of the Radio Mugu, was taken under control by the district police over the news the FM aired. The incident took place in Mugu, a distant mountainous district in the Midwestern region of Nepal on December 14, 2012.

Station In-Charge Malla said, "We aired news about growing supply of illegal weapons and use of children in the smuggling in the district few days back. But the district police turned hostile to me. The district police office took me under control for five hours."

The police officers also threatened him of filing a legal case. "Why did you air the news without our consent," a police officer asked him in an intimidating manner. He was singled out from the group of colleagues and grilled merely on his fair journalism.

The government must investigate the case because the police intervention and harassment on a journalist, resembling the emergency period shows sheer lack of knowledge on government officials on free press and right to information. It has badly nipped in bud the practice of fair journalism in a remote district of Nepal.

Editor Injured in Police Attack

Shiva Dotel, an Editor of the Nepali Express daily, was attacked by a group of police led by Assistant Sub Inspector of Police Batti Kumar Pokhrel without an apparent reason while Editor Dotel was going to office. The incident occurred in Nepalgunj, a city in the southern plain of the Midwest Nepal on September 14, 2012. He was attacked indiscriminately. As a result, he had to have seven stitches on his head. Such incidents are responsible for creating terror among journalists which thereby impose self-censorship.

Political Leaders, Cadres Hostile to Free Press

Like an independent media, political parties are also an essential to any democracy. Harmonious relations between the political parties and free press result in cultured and flourished democracy. However, the double standard of Nepal's political parties in terms of press freedom has hindered the free and fair practice of journalism. Here are some to buttress the point:

Threat of Attack

Bikas Agrawal, a reporter with the local Bypass daily from Rautahat, a district in the southern plain of the country was threatened of physical action by a district level leader of Sadbhavana Party on October 9, 2012 over the publication of a news story about an obstruction and protest of a Minister. Shekh Jadsed, a district leader of the Sadbhavana Party, threatened reporter Agrawal, saying, "Why did you write news about Health Minister Rajendra Mahato? It is not good news. So, I'll attack you." The threat of attack came after Agrawal reported about waiving black flags to Minister Mahato by some youth organizations when Minister came to the district.

Death Threat

District reporter with the Annapurna Post daily, Jivan Sharma, was issued threat of physical action initially by Dipak Phuyal, District Chairperson of All Nepal National Free Student Union, a student wing of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML) over the news, 'extortion from students by threatening teachers' which was published in the daily on December 20. The incident occurred in Okhaldhunga, a hilly district in the eastern region of Nepal on December 22, 2012. Reporter Sharma said, "Also an unidentified person, on the night of December 23, threatened me of life saying- I will finish you within a day despite security you have demanded from the administration." The threat call came over the mobile number 9803545152.

Newspaper Burnt

It is worth noting here that a student wing of the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (Loktantrik) led by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs Bijay Kumar Gachchhadar burnt the national and local dailies for not publishing its news in Janakpur city on November 6, 2012. They did it reasoning the dailies did not carry their news.

Death Threat

Hiranath Khatiwada, personal secretary to Post Bahadur Bogati, the Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, issued death threat on Nirajan Poudel, a reporter with the Karobar daily from Nuwakot, a hilly district near the capital city on December 17, 2012. Personal Secretary Khatiwada issued death threat over the news related to the misuse of minister's vehicle. According to the reporter Poudel, the Personal Secretary grabbed him by neck and said, "I'll finish you as you wrote news about me." These incidents demonstrate how political parties and leaders want to keep media under their control and use whatever way they like.

Award Winning Novel Seto Dharti Torched

The Seto Dharti, a novel penned by Amar Neupane and honoured with this year's prestigious literary award, Madan Puraskar, was burnt by the people belonging to Bhujel community in Pokhara, a western city of Nepal on October 19, 2012.

The incident has blatantly violated freedom of expression which the Interim Constitution has fully guaranteed as a fundamental right of the citizen.

Talking to Freedom Forum's Media Monitoring Desk, novelist Amar Neupane said, "The members of Bhujel Service Committee threatened me of physical action repeatedly with false accusation of 'humiliating their community' in my book, Seto Dharti. I wrote the book with extensive research and depicted the reality. But they misinterpreted it."

The members of the Committee asked the novelist to beg public pardon for allegedly humiliating their community in the book and also told the bookshops in Pokhara to remove the novel. The novel written with thorough study and research was awarded the Madan Puraskar after proper evaluation by the senior literary figures. It is shocking that true depiction of particular time, people and their profession has allegedly been the source of humiliation in the Bhujel people.

Most of the readers have said there was no matter of humiliation but the Bhujel people interpreted the words falsely. It is written in their favour, the writer also argued.

It is a new case in the recent time in Nepal that a book is burnt with the discontent over the content. However, the way of objecting content is abhorrent.

Meanwhile, speaking with the readers in Dang on December 15, novelist Neupane said, "We have already decided to drop out the word, which has drawn concerns of some communities, from the upcoming edition. It will make no difference to the novel." The writer also insisted that he had not used the word in any otherwise sense. "The word was not used in a sense that would humiliate the community. Rather, the use in my book has further strengthened their past history," Neupane added.

Ban on Film Violates Freedom of Expression

It is obvious that film is one of the strong means to articulate ideas and opinions and impart information. So, government's restriction to a film ATM from the screening means a brazen violation of freedom of expression.

The film was banned from screening in November, reasoning that it contained indecent scenes.

Although the classification of the film as an adult one was positive, it was against the international standard of freedom of expression because the government could only classify the film based on the suitability of minors but not prevent from screening.

Therefore, it was a fence in constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of expression and opinion.

Meanwhile, in October, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) led by Mohan Baidya launched a campaign to ban the use of Hindi films in Nepal thereby challenging people's right to freedom of expression and information.

Due to the ban, several film halls in the capital scity were closed and the FM stations and local televisions in various parts of the country halted their service.

As the film is also a medium of freedom of expression, it is a universal matter and never bound by any frontier. The Maoist party's ban on Indian/Hindi film in the name of nationalism is just an extremist thought and against human rights.

Article 19 of the UDHR says, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

The ban on Hindi films is therefore blatant violation of freedom of expression and information.

Teacher issues death threat to journo

In the evening of September 24, 2012, Madan Thakur, a reporter with the Ujjyalo FM from Rautahat, a district in the southern plain of the country was issued death threat by a local teacher in course of news making.

While Thakur was collecting facts about the mismanagement and irregularities in the local Buddha Secondary School for news reporting, teacher Prabin Pandey issued death threat on him.

Journalist Thakur confirmed the death threat in course of news reporting about school irregularities.

Attack on Nepal Republic Media

Some 30 persons belonging to the Shiva Sena Nepal stormed the Office of Nepal Republic Media at Sundhara of the capital city Kathmandu on 20 December 2012 and attacked editors, reporters and other staffs on a broad day light.

The Nepal Republic Media is the publisher of the Nagarik and Republica dailies, and the Sukrabar weekly.

They entered the office manhandling gatekeepers, misbehaved with receptionists; attacked Chief Editor of the Nagarik daily Kishor Nepal, and reporters Sudarshan Sapkota, Rupesh Acharya and Rajendra Gyawali and other staffs.

However, they escaped injuries as police came and took them under control after a while. They snapped the telephone wire and broke windows.

The incident was condemnable as it was against free media and journalists' right to professional security. It is responsible for growing self-censorship among journalists.

Party Split Disrupts FM Radio

Maoists need to respect independent media

Radio Paschimanchal in Palpa, a district in the western region of Nepal, has been disrupted time and again following the disputes among the owners triggered by the split in the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-Maoist).

The breakaway faction- Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-Maoist) and the UCPN-Maoist engaged in dispute over the division of the party properties which resulted in the disruption of the FM Radio. Even the Nawa Sambad weekly run by the UCPN-Maoist has stopped publication owing to the dispute in the two parties. News Chief at the FM, Bhojraj Bhattarai was exerted pressure by district secretary of the UCPN-Maoist Netra Prasad Pande not to operate the FM reasoning the CPN-Maoist activists took over the management.

The Radio Paschimanchal is disrupted time and again by the parties thereby breaching media freedom and violating people's right to information.

Journo Missing for 4 months, Whereabouts Still unknown

It has been four months, Madan Poudel, a journalist with the Radio Tamor of Taplejung, a district in the northern east of Nepal has gone missing but no news of his whereabouts till date.

Madan Poudel went missing since the evening of September 16, 2012 from Fulbari of the district where he had gone to attend a programme, 'Taplejung Dance Star 2012.'

Talking to Freedom Forum on September 27, 2012, district reporter to the Nepal Television from Taplejung, Tara Prasad Sitaula had said, "On the ninth day of Poudel's disappearance, the purse and mobile belonging to him were found on the bank of the Tamor River. It has made us guess that some persons must have killed him and thrown into the swollen River."

Similarly, FF contacted the Tamor FM Station, news chief Rabin Bhattarai on December 28. He said, "The journalists in the local level searched him but could not make any traces of finding. Lately, the regional level search and investigation has been launched by the Nepal police."

He added that the searches of journalists, and police administration have so far found nothing in connection with his disappearance.

Status of Nepal's Media Freedom 2012

Major Highlights

- A total of 147 incidents of press freedom violation occurred in Nepal during this year. There were 96 incidents of press freedom violation in 2011.
- Nepali media and media workers faced unprecedented attacks and atrocities from various sides including the government officials, teacher, Nepal army, Nepal police, minister's aides and unknown gang thereby terrorizing journalists and frustrating atmosphere for free and fair practice of journalism.
- Party split, media merger, pressure of sectarian/communal interests on media grew alarmingly which limited space of freedom of expression
- The gruesome murder of journalist Yadav Poudel spread shock wave in the national and international media, showcasing precarious condition of media freedom in Nepal. He was killed on the night of April 3, 2012 in Jhapa. He was reporter with the Rajdhani daily and Avenues TV from Jhapa district. Media workers in Jhapa are still agitated and agonized with fear psychology with no assurance of security from the government side.
- Compared to the last year, press freedom violation increased sharply mainly because the situation grew remarkably hostile during the months on the eve of the collapse of Constituent Assembly that was supposed to promulgate new constitution in May 27, 2012. In order to have their issues met by the political parties through the CA on new constitution, the burst of communal, ethnic, regional, religious interests during the months on the eve of the May 27, tried to control media.
- Three days- May 20-22, of 2012 remained 'black days' in Nepali media. It was worrying that government remained mum on the perpetrators of media freedom during these days.
- Religious, ethnic, regional, and political fundamentalism has emerged as new threat to Nepali media. People and groups asserting their rights and identity in terms of religion, ethnicity, region, and politics have ignored the media freedom.
- Split in the political party especially the UCN-Maoist has jeopardized media freedom in Nepal. It is a new media trend observed by the Freedom Forum this year. It clearly impacted the media run by the party.
- Merger of media is another new trend this year. Owing to financial crunch, three newspapers in Butwal, a city in the southern plain of Nepal, were merged. The Dainik, Janasangharsha and Swadhin dailies merged reasoning the sustainability.
- Unlike past years, 2012 witnessed organized attack in media outlet. On a broad day light, a religiously fundamental group consisting more than 30 persons attacked Republic media on 20 December.
- Most of the journalists in Nepal remained underpaid this year too. Journalists in different parts have now begun raising voices to their employers and stakeholders to adhere to the Minimum Remuneration Fixation Committee's rule.
- To a gross violation of media freedom, the government led by Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), despite concerns rife over its step to control state-run media, demoted Acting General Manager of Nepal Television (NTV), Deepak Mani Dhital, on June 18, 2012, for broadcasting live the mass gathering of 27 opposition parties from Khulamanch in the capital city on June 8, 2012.
- The role of the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), an umbrella organization of the journalists across the country, was realized slack. Financial irregularities within the FNJ tainted the institution thereby challenging the credibility and legitimacy.
- The ruling government of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the Madhes-centric political parties has funded the partisan and region-based media union and organizations- a new trend in Nepali media. The government funding to the partisan and region-based media union has badly politicized the media which is detrimental to free and professional journalism.
- Unchecked Impunity: The government remained mum on numerous incidents of press freedom violation across the country. Police were mute spectators on the demonstrations during the months on the eve of the fall of CA. None was held by the police. Similarly, the government spoke nothing about the coordinated attack on Republic media. The government was fully reluctant to expedite the cases of journalists Dekendra Thapa and Prakash Thakuri abducted and killed subsequently long back. The killers of the journalists were still walking scot free.
- With the growing number of media, the credibility of media content is eroding to some extent. So, Press Council Nepal, is in need of becoming more active in propelling decent journalism.
- The caretaker government is learnt to be enforcing the media policy but without broader consensus. It is hazardous because it was prepared without all-sector participation. Also, it has lacked the international standard.
- However, the movement of right to information is gradually gaining ground because the youths and civil society representatives are interested and engaged in sensitizing the people from the local to central level on citizens' access to information.
- Towards positive development- the government has amended the national broadcasting regulation recently thereby opening an avenue for local televisions. It has come as a slightly liberal policy, a one step progress in media policy of the government. It obviously will encourage investment in media in local level.
- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has decided to form a freedom of expression protection taskforce which is a progressive step to protect and uphold the rights of freedom of expression practitioners.
- With the formation of a non-partisan organization- the Union of Media Employees- in Nepal, the need of media trade union has been realized and internalized. It would now help promote collective bargaining for media rights.
- Two journalists after legal battles with their employer media have been reinstated. These have set the record by establishing the rights of working journalists. Ram Prasad Dahal, sacked illegally from the Rajdhani daily in 2005 was finally restored and compensated after untiring legal battle of seven years. Similarly, Bikash Thapa sacked from the Kantipur daily has been restored recently.
- In conclusion, Nepali journalists are bound to work amidst a spate of attacks, threats, harassment and obstructions without physical safety and professional security. As long as the instability continues in political sector, media would be at the receiving end.

UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity

The International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) of the UNESCO has brought forth the UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

The Action Plan, as the UNESC writes, is brought by taking into account the disquieting evidence of the scale and number of attacks against the physical safety of journalists and media workers as well as of incidents affecting their ability to exercise freedom of expression by threats of prosecution, arrest, imprisonment, denial of journalistic access, and failures to investigate and prosecute crimes against them.

In this light, the UN has adopted a number of measures to strengthen legal frameworks and enforcement mechanism designed to ensure the safety of journalists in both conflict and non-conflict areas.

The objective of the Action Plan is- working toward the creation of a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers in both conflict and non-conflict situations, with a view to strengthening peace, democracy and development worldwide.

The Action Plan has categorized the proposed actions as- Strengthening UN Mechanisms, Cooperating with Member States, Partnering with Other Organizations and Institutions, Raising Awareness and Fostering Safety Initiatives.

It is worth noting here that Freedom Forum had also provided inputs from its side to develop the Action Plan.

It, the Freedom Forum thinks, is a comprehensive document which helps to protect and promote the rights of journalists ensuring them professional safety and checking impunity side by side.

For Complete Document please visit: http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/WPFD/UN%20Plan%20of%20Action_Safety%20of%20Journalists.pdf

(Note: for more information, see our report visiting website: http://www.freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/reports/other-reports.html)

Public agencies prodded to Fully internalize RTI

Freedom Forum has been continuously campaigning, lobbying and advocating for the Right to Information (RTI) since the promulgation of the RTI Act 2007. In a bid to make the public agencies accountable and transparent in the making of informed citizenry, FF has repeatedly urged the public agencies to effectively implement and internalize the RTI.

In this connection, an RTI Implementation Directives has been drafted by the FF and submitted to the Chief Secretary of Nepal Government on December 25, drawing the government's attention to this regard. The draft was developed taking into account the following fact:

- Recommendation of the first National Convention on Right to Information 2011 to establish Nodal Agency at the office of Prime Minister for effective implementation of RTI law.
- Recommendation of the National Information Commission to Nepal government for the establishment of Nodal Agency which has been stated in former's annual report 2011/12.
- The emphasis given on the establishment of Nodal Agency in the recently developed 5-Year Plan of Action by NIC for implementation of RTI and
- Establishment of Nodal Agency being one of the priority agendas of Nepal government as stated in latter's Immediate Action Plan on Economic Development and Prosperity 2012.

Moreover, the Ministry of Local Development and major donors were drawn attention on induction of RTI tool in the second phase of the Local Governance and Community Development Program (LGCDP).

In order to make the program further effective and result-oriented, sides concerned were urged to include the RTI tool in the Program. The Ministry was made aware about:

- The RTI will help solve the problems in the areas of fiscal management, civic engagement in development process, citizens monitoring at a time there was no election in sight and local bodies facing difficulty to effectively diver the public service.
- In order to meet the goals as to increase people's participation, exact accountability and to enhance capacity of the local bodies in the development activities under the LGCDP, strict adherence to and implementation of RTI laws could be a surest tool to bring about improvements in this sector.
- The RTI Act enacted in 2007 and its Regulation in 2008 have clearly mentioned that every government body is kept under the public agency and according to which the public agency needs to proactively disclose 16 types of information relating to its performances every three month in a routine manner. This mandatory provision cannot be ignored at all. It needs to be implemented.
- Only the internalization and implementation of the RTI laws can strengthen both demand and supply sides of the development and create atmosphere to keep the stakeholders alert to foil corruption efforts.

Even the Curriculum Development Centre, Sanothimi, Bhaktapur has been made aware about the importance of the RTI and urged to include its features in the school curriculum thereby helping to create informed citizenry from the very young level.

Right to Know Day Marked with Fanfare

Freedom Forum marked the 10th International Right to Know Day, organizing a morning rally in the capital city Kathmandu September 28, 2012.

The morning rally bringing together around 300 participants including RTI activists, National Information Commission's Acting Chief Commissioner, journalists, legal practitioners, human rights defenders/activists, civil society representatives, journalism students and media educators began from Babarmahal and converged into a corner meet in New Baneswor.

The morning rally was inaugurated by Acting Chief Information Commissioner Shree Acharya. The placard carried by the participants read- RTI for Democracy, What's your VDC budget? RTI for Good Governance, Our Information-Our Right.

Speaking on the occasion, Acting Chief Information Commissioner Mr Acharya said that the Right to Information (RTI) was an effective tool to promote citizens' rights. It must be reached out to every village, he said and thanked the FF for organizing the rally which would help create public awareness about right to know/information. The Commission morally supports every RTI campaigns across the country, he added.

Similarly, FF Chairman Taranath Dahal said the Right to Know was similar to the Right to Information which functions as a voice of the voiceless. He wished the Day would encourage all the people across the globe to be aware of their access to information.



Morning Rally organized on Right to Know Day

Senior journalist and former Chairperson of Press Council Nepal Harihar Birahi said that the International Right to Know Day would be important to protect and promote citizen's right to freedom of expression.

Former registrar at the Supreme Court and Chairperson of Association of Right to Information Dr Ram Krishna Timalsina said RTI is an important tool to control corruption and promote economic prosperity.

Also speaking on the occasion were noted human rights activist Charan Prasain, International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) Reserve Member and former President of FNJ Dharmendra Jha, Bishnu Pukar Shrestha of CAHURAST, Somnath Lamichhane of Nepal Press Institute, FF RTI Support Centre Facilitator Sanjeeb Ghimire, Tanka Aryal of CCRI, among others.

They shed light on the importance of Right to Know Day to promote people's participation in governance and hold the public authorities to account.

Meanwhile, the journalists and activists trained by the FF marked the Day organizing various programs as rally, interaction and talks programs in Bara and Kapilvastu districts of Nepal. FF has been marking the Day since 2006 to create awareness on right to information and empower citizens.

Continued from Page 1

Campaign on for Transparency...

argued that the probe report submitted to the concerned body a decade back has already been a matter of public concern. Such report could help make governance transparent, they added.

Meanwhile, the OPMCM, on 2 September 2012,was demanded the information as the details of the ordinances the government passed since the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly May 27, 2012 and certified copies of the ordinances.

After it failed to provide the information, the Office Chief was lodged complaint on 20 September 2012 while the NIC on 31 October 2012. As the OPMCM wrote a letter to the FF saying the information could not be shared, FF has decided to appeal in the NIC as per the RTI Act 2007 on January 28, 2013.

NIC moved for second time against IRD

In addition to this, the Inland Revenue Department (IRD) has denied information for a long time flouting the RTI Act 2007. First the Information Officer in the IRD was sought information on August 6, 2012. As he failed to provide complete information, the Chief in the IRD was moved on August 29, 2012 in line with clause 9 (1) of the RTI Act. Interestingly, the IRD Chief Tanka Mani Sharma too denied the information the FF Chairman Taranath Dahal sought leading the FF to move to the NIC on October 14, 2012 seeking its directive to the IRD Chief along with necessary action.

After not getting any information by the NIC even after 60 days of the appeal as mentioned by Clause 10 (4) of the RTI Act 2007, FF Chairman Dahal filed an application at the NIC on December 18, 2012 again. In the application filed, Mr Dahal has asked for immediate information on what it did to the IRD, if there were any information received from IRD and others in this regard.

FF Chairman Dahal had sought the following information:

- Amount of revenue generated from 518 firms which were found evading revenue making fake VAT bills/ invoices as per the report of a taskforce coordinated by Laxman Aryal two years back. Separate details of the amount collected as fine to the firms.
- About proprietors or share holders of the 518 firms which were brought to book,
- Crimes of the 518 firms,
- Auditors of the firms,

The FF is awaiting the information from the NIC regarding the IRD but the NIC too has been slack on it despite being a main body to cater justice that is respect to the citizens' right to information.

The obduracy of the public agencies as OPMCM and IRD to provide information has obviously demonstrated how rigid the Nepali bureaucracy and administration system is to become transparent and accountable to the people. Giving different reasons of proviso in the RTI Act and other legal provisions, they have flatly ignored the 'overriding principle' of the RTI Act.

Despite the obstruction and obstacles from the public agencies time and again, the FF has been more committed to seeking justice which is afterall a holy campaign of making governance transparent and accountable to people, the need of hour.

Achievement/Impact

In addition to the achievement of information, FF's initiative of seeking information has resulted in a simple awareness to RTI to wide range of change and reforms in the public agencies. It has clearly intensified the level of awareness about RTI in the concerned agencies, prodded for administrative reform pertaining to record keeping, documentation and dissemination of information by adhering to the legal provisions, made aware the civil servants about the value of information. The information seeking process itself demonstrated how rigid the public agencies and service providers are to provide information. The administrators knowingly or unknowingly flouted the existing laws and hassled information seekers making them running from pillar to post. It is in a way an old style of serving the public which needs to come to an end. Undoubtedly the Strategic Campaign of Information Seeking launched by the Freedom Forum has made many adamant to cower before the law- the complete implementation of the law-RTI Act- for good governance.

Interestingly, many public agencies lacked information officers, which is mandatory as per the RTI Act. Following the filing of applications seeking information, the concerned agencies became aware that they need to have an information officer.

NOC finally adheres to RTI Act

It is worth mentioning here that the FF's legal battle to receive information from Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) took almost nine months. During this, FF had to face odds despite having right to get information guaranteed by the Interim Constitution of Nepal and the RTI Act 2007. The officials in the NOC, owned by Nepal government, and having sole right to deal petroleum products in the country, were so ignorant about the RTI that they breached the its laws several times. Prodded by the NIC's directives, orders and action, the NOC finally surrendered before the RTI Act and divulged the information.

What came to light? The information received from the NOC revealed many weaknesses in the NOC in terms of administrative, managerial and others aspects. It was doing injustice to public by freely giving coupon for petroleum and hiking the prices frequently. The record keeping was very poor. There was no transparency maintained in terms of making any decision, or policy to distribute free coupon. It denudes the reasons of growing financial irregularities and corruption in the NOC. The common public who were hit hard with NOC's arbitrary decision on price hike came to know the inside story which was against their rights. The media coverage made the NOC's irregularities further clear to the consumers of oil. The debunked the institutionalized corruption. It became clear that the main reason behind the claim the NOC was in loss was the growing irregularities and corruption.

Towards Reform

As its impact, the NOC has now begun internalizing the importance of the information. It set up digital boards at different public places showcasing the updates on cost price and selling price of the petroleum products, total investment, and loss and profit. Similarly, it has recently begun publishing a bimonthly newsletter of its own publishing its updates. Also, an integrated online computer system is installed to update the information in the NOC. The NOC distributing free coupon for years has now stopped it as a reform initiative.

To conclude, the FF's information seeking campaign has brought forth multiplier effects- from simple awareness to full assimilation of the RTI. Like the effects/impact on NOC, other public agencies where the information was sought, are for change towards transparency which the FF has aimed. But it is observed slowly. The vigorous role of demand side has not only made the supply side come under the RTI Act but also prodded the regulatory body, NIC, for active role. Similarly, the sensitization about the importance of RTI through media among civil society, civil servants, public service providers, administrators, and general public is a tremendous achievement of the FF's strategic campaign.

Next Places to move for information

Freedom Forum has now planned to file an application at the Ministry of Energy and Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers to seek information about government's decision to upgrade the capacity of the Upper Trishuli Hydropower III (A) from 60MW to 90MW. Information as what were the technical and economic reasons behind making this decision would be sought.

Election Commission is being sought the information as which was the most extravagant political party in terms of its expense in the election to the Constituent Assembly. What were the expense details of different political parties in the CA election was the next information to seek with the Commission.

NOC is again being sought the information about the audit reports of some past years and names of the dealers.

Similarly, the FF has decided to seek details of the minimum condition and performance measures (MCPM) adopted in all 75 districts and 58 municipalities.

40 Trained on Practical Use of RTI

Freedom Forum has completed the Training on Practical Use of RTI which was organized for five days in four rounds. The first organized from 5 to 9 September while the second from September 17 to 21. The third and fourth rounds were organized next month- third from December 5-9 while the fourth from December 4 to 8. All four rounds of trainings were held in the capital city, Kathmandu.

The training was organized as part of the strategic campaign to promote demand for information in order to create a group of RTI activists and to encourage its practices at local level in a sustainable manner.

In the training organized in four lots, a total of 40 vibrant activists from different parts of the country participated. They were selected taking into account the geographical region, gender and the districts with vulnerable governance. They were from Bajhang, Dolakha, Bara, Nawalparasi, Mahottari, Siraha, Jajarkot, Jumla, Kalikot and Kapilvastu districts.

The training was facilitated by senior journalists, RTI practitioner, government official, and good governance activist.

They were imparted theoretical session in the morning and thorough practical session in the afternoon. It was aimed at making them able to identify cases of RTI, filing application, demanding public and individual service related information, practice the entire processes involved in requesting information, follow-up of the request, complaint and appeal in the line with the RTI Act 2007 and Regulations-2008.

The participants described the training as "very effective - both theoretical and practical".

As one said in the conclusion of the fourth lot of training, the training was "really useful, practical and relevant to my work. It will definitely help to enhance my activism for good governance in local level."

On the concluding day of the second lot of training, Maya Devi Bhandari, trainee from Jumla, a distant mountainous district of Nepal, said she would utilize the knowledge she gained in the local level. "I begin the use of RTI from my home because my father is a chairman of the local school," she added.



Participants in the 4th Round of Training on Practical use of RTI

A trainee Munna Miya from Nawalparasi, a district in the southern plain of the country, thanked FF for providing a new opportunity to learn about burning issues of RTI which is an essential tool to democratic practice.

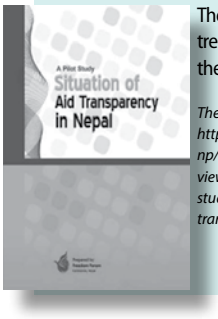
All in all, the trainees said they were very eager to make their local bodies and public agencies transparent and accountable by putting into practice the knowledge they acquired during the training.

New Publications

Freedom Forum has come up with two publications the latter four months of 2012. The one is a study report titled '*Situation of Aid Transparency in Nepal*' while the next is also a study report: '*Media Content Research on Aid Transparency*'.

Aid Transparency Situation Report

The report on Situation of Aid Transparency is about the exploration on the aid transparency in Nepal for which the FF conducted a survey among seven major donor agencies in Nepal, garnered the information and data, assembled and analyzed the data and found some significant facts. Based on the facts, FF has made recommendations to the stakeholders. According to the finding, aid transparency was slow off the mark in Nepal. The publication answers the questions as- what is donor agencies' reach out mechanism, how easily do the donors disclose budgetary information, and are there any discrepancies between the information provided in the project/district offices and beneficiaries, how far are they abiding by the RTI Act of Nepal? The report is considered of tremendous importance in the development sector.



The report is also available on http://www.freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/books/viewdownload/15-books/241-study-report-situation-of-aid-transparency-in-nepal-.html

Media Content Research on ATA

Foreign aid accounts for around 26 percent of Nepal's national budget and 60 percent of the development budget, making it a crucial issue for accountability in Nepal and, as such, for media attention. However Freedom Forum's recent report, "Media Content Research on Aid Transparency in Nepal' revealed that the mainstream media in Nepal have provided very limited space to content related to foreign aid. The media coverage concerning the issues of aid transparency, effectiveness and accountability is quite nominal despite the fact that free media is deemed a crucial means to inform people on the critical issues affecting their life and shape public opinion.

The report states that 'Journalists have failed to follow-up and consistently reveal the fact even of sensitive issues in regard to development assistance'. Over a period of six months, Freedom Forum critically assessed media content on aid related issues covered by 13 mainstream newspapers of Nepal and found that journalists lack technical knowledge about the issue causing meager investigative and in-depth reporting. 'Most of the contents except opinion articles and letters to editor published in the newspapers are mostly based on the information provided by donor agencies and government bodies lacking analytical content'. The report identified a a lack of critical analysis in Nepali media raising question on its role in building healthy public opinion on the pressing public concerns.



The study demonstrated that the newspapers surveyed had a total of 262 aid-related articles, including news, editorial and letter to editor, which represents 0.184 per cent of the total coverage. 'The media coverage on foreign aid includes 24 articles, five editorials, two letters to editor, 231 news and no single interview', reads the report.

The report concludes with a set of recommendations for Government, media houses, journalists and civil society organizations (CSOs), including a call for more support to build the capacity of journalists to access and use information on aid.

The report can be downloaded from http://www.freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/books.html

(Conclusion and Recommendation in Page 11)

Self Disclosure

Type and Nature of Organization:	NGO working for Democracy, Right to Information, Freedom of Expression, Human Rights and Governance
Legal Status:	Registered at District Administration Office Kathmandu. DAO Registration Number: 127/062/63, SWC Affiliation Number: 18518
Staffs and Roles:	**Krishna Sapkota:** Executive Director, Management head of the organization, coordinates overall organizational and project affairs (Development and Implementation) **Anirudra Neupane:** Manager of Finance, Office and Project Administration and Performs responsibilities as the Information Officer. **Narayan Ghimire:** Media Monitoring Officer, Documentation Officer to RTI Support Center **Dan Bahadur Karki:** Program Assistant, Right to Information Program **Manju Ojha:** Media Monitoring Assistant **Trishna Dhakal:** Admin Assistant / Public Relations **Basanti Thapa:** Office Assistant **Project Staffs:** Freedom Forum Hires Short Term Project Staffs based on the need of projects
Services Offered/ Activities Carried Out:	Research, Media Monitoring, Advocacy, Trainings, Meetings, Workshops, Seminars and other Campaigns to promote issues of Democracy, Right to Information, Freedom of Expression, Human Rights and Governance and Legal Support to Journalists.
Responsible Authority:	**Chairperson:** Taranath Dahal **Executive Director:** Krishna Sapkota
Decision Making Process:	**General Assembly :** Making policies, rules and regulations of organization **Executive committee:** Formulation and Action Plans as per constitution of organization, rules and regulation **Management team :** Running projects and daily operational affairs and reporting timely to the Executive Committee.
Past and Current Activities:	Please follow the link: http://freedomforum.org.np/content/activities/completed-activities.html http://freedomforum.org.np/content/activities/current-activities.html
Information officer	**Anirudra Neupane**
Financial Information:	Freedom Forum received Cash and Kind Grants Amounting NPR 11,873,055.15. Follow the link for detailed information: http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/reports/finacial-reports.html
Official Website	www.freedomforum.org.np
Publications of Freedom Forum:	Freedom Forum has about 50 Publications (Printed) Please Follow the Link: http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications.html
Activities Carried Out Last Year	The Annul report of F/Y 2011/12 depicts the information in this regard. Please, follow the link below: http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/reports/annual-reports.html
Mechanism for Information Dissemination:	**Websites:** www.freedomforum.org.np; www.nepalpressfreedom.org, www.nepalelectionchannel.org **Newsletter:** Free Expression

FF in International Forum

- Freedom Forum Chairperson Taranath Dahal participated in the **2012 Annual Meetings of the Boards of Governors of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group**, and in the **Civil Society Program** held in Tokyo, Japan on October 8-14, 2012.
- Vice-Chairperson of the Freedom Forum, Hari Binod Adhikari, participated in the **Learning Visit on RTI Conference** held in New Delhi, India from 7-16 October 2012. The program was organized by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative.
- Executive Director at the Freedom Forum , Krishna Sapkota, participated in the **Open Budget Survey Finding Dissemination and Advocacy Training** in Bangkok, Thailand from October 17 to 19, 2012. The program was organized by International Budget Partnership.

Journalists Under Attack




Michael Spindelegger* Alison Bethel McKenzie*

Friday, November 23, 2012

GUEST COLUMN

Well over 100 journalists have been killed so far this year – the highest number since the International Press Institute (IPI) began keeping count of journalists' deaths in 1997. All across the world – from Africa, Asia and Europe, to the Middle East and Latin America – journalists continue to be systematically and brutally targeted because of their work. Some are caught in the crossfire while reporting on conflict, but most are targeted by criminal groups and individuals who want to prevent information from getting out, corruption and other crimes from being exposed and critical views from being disseminated.

In many countries, journalists stare death in the face every day. For them, receiving threats is part of a near-daily routine. Journalists are killed for telling a story, but also, ironically, sometimes they're killed for not telling one. Attacks against journalists are not confined to murder. Many reporters have been brutally beaten this year, or seriously injured by firearms or explosive devices. Just a few weeks ago, a Bolivian radio presenter was set on fire by assailants who poured petrol over him as he was live on air with his radio show. And all too often reporters' families are also caught up in the deadly spiral of violence.

Impunity for those responsible for attacks against journalists is rampant and constitutes one of the biggest obstacles to improving the safety of journalists.

Journalists play a special role in society as providers of information on matters of public interest. To preserve this important role is in the interest of society as a whole. The consequences of attacks against journalists are manifest. An absence of crucial information, a denial of the people's right to know and an inability of journalists to retain the independence that is so vital to their professional credibility.

The growing number of journalists killed around the world has prompted a call for action. In the past year, a number of international initiative milestones have been achieved which we feel will provide impetus in the quest to roll back the tide of 'violence with impunity' directed at reporters.

For the first time in its history, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on the safety of journalists last September. The new resolution – initiated by Austria in line with a commitment made when it became a member of the UN Human Rights Council in 2011 – represents a significant step forward in the promotion of the protection of journalists' safety. Driven forward in cooperation with a cross-regional core group comprising Brazil, Morocco, Tunisia and Switzerland, and with input from the IPI and other press freedom and professional organisations, the unique resolution makes a clear statement in condemning all forms of attacks against journalists and calls on states to end impunity and ensure accountability, by investigating attacks, bringing the perpetrators to justice and providing adequate remedies for victims.

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The resolution also underscores the responsibility of governments in ensuring the safety of journalists not only in clearly-identifiable conflict situations, but everywhere, and at all times. For let us make no mistake: Most of the journalists killed and physically harmed are targeted outside classic conflict zones. The fact that the resolution – in spite of its strong, uncompromising language – was supported by 66 co-sponsoring states and passed by consensus in the Human Rights Council lends it even greater impetus.

Parallel to the UN Human Rights Council, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) has also promoted discussions, and action, related to the need to reinforce international instruments for the protection of journalists. As a result, in another milestone, the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity was endorsed by the UN Chief Executives Board in April.

In the past couple of days, discussions have continued, as representatives of UN agencies, funds and programmes, intergovernmental organisations, member states, professional associations and NGOs have gathered in Vienna at a follow-up meeting hosted by Austria and focused on the implementation of the UN Plan, to ensure that it does actually result in "action" that will help limit violence against journalists.

Members of the global media community have been actively involved in the implementation phase debate. In fact, at a meeting in London a few weeks ago, editors and journalists issued a statement welcoming the UN Plan of Action, calling on the UN system and other relevant national and international bodies to operate effectively and in accountable ways in the implementation of the Plan and encouraging news media to monitor regularly the actions of their governments, judicial authorities and other institutions in implementing it and ending impunity.

Much has been achieved in 2012 to ensure greater protection for journalists in the future. Now it is up to UN agencies, civil society, media professionals and, most importantly, the numerous states that have endorsed the UN Human Rights Council resolution on the safety of journalists to actively show their commitment to this important cause.

Austria and the IPI stand ready and willing to continue their work to actively promote the now-existing broad mechanisms for the protection of journalists.

And the IPI will continue to support journalists in dangerous environments, call for justice when they are attacked and hold states accountable for their safety.

** (Michael Spindelegger is vice-chancellor and foreign minister of the Republic of Austria. Alison Bethel McKenzie is executive director of the International Press Institute.)*

Media Content Research on Aid Transparency

Conclusion

a) The coverage of foreign aid issue leaves much to be desired. Nepal's mainstream media provides extremely limited space to the content related to foreign aid. Furthermore, the coverage on foreign aid transparency, effectiveness and accountability is almost non-existent.
b) Almost all published content, other than articles, are based on the information provided by either donor agencies working in the country or by the government agencies responsible to oversee foreign aid issue
c) Journalists have failed to follow-up and reveal the facts of even sensitive and serious issues regarding foreign aid and development assistance
d) Investigative and in-depth reporting is not carried out by a single mainstream newspaper giving much space to carry out such issue in the future
e) Journalists also lack technical knowledge

Recommendations

To the government

a) Government should adopt the policy of proactive disclosure to ensure transparency and accountability of foreign aid and development assistance
b) Government should bring media-friendly policy and create separate platform targeting journalists
c) Government has to organize periodic conference to provide comprehensive information on foreign aid and development assistance to the public through media
d) Government should encourage / promote media outlets to cover content related to development assistance and foreign aid

To the media house

a) Media houses should increase investment to capacity enhancing programme for journalists
b) Newspapers should provide wider space for discussion on aid transparency
c) Editorial policy should encourage journalists to carry out in-depth and investigative news

To the journalist

a) Journalists should whet their skills and knowledge on the related content/issue
b) Journalists should focus on in-depth reporting and cover comprehensive picture of aid transparency and accountability
c) They should show courage to avoid 'publicity stunt' and be true information hound
d) They should promote positive and success stories to enable environment pushing for the spending of development assistance in more effective manner

To the CSOs working on foreign aid transparency

a) CSOs should sensitize the issue
b) They should promote journalists in bringing the reality to limelight
c) CSOs should apply RTI Act to substantiate the movement of transparency and anti-corruption
d) Civil society organizations should generate and use alternative media products to bring the aid discourse to grassroots level
e) They should conduct trainings to provide skills to journalists while covering news on foreign aid and development assistance
f) They should support journalists morally and provide fellowship and other opportunities to encourage them for in-depth writing
g) They should play the role of watch-dog mechanism and dare to reveal wrongdoings
h) They should propel in formation of expert opinion and analysis

Newspaper-wise coverage of items on aid transparency/accountability

S. N.	Newspaper	news	Article	Interview	Editorial	LoE	Total
1	Gorkhapatra	22	1	0	1	0	24
2	The Rising Nepal	27	2	0	0	0	29
3	Kantipur	10	0	0	1	0	11
4	The Kathmandu Post	12	1	0	1	0	14
5	Nagarik	10	3	0	0	2	15
6	The Republica	14	1	0	0	0	15
7	AP	21	1	0	0	0	22
8	The Himalayan Times	29	5	0	0-	0	34
9	Karobar	36	4	0	2	0	42
10	Rajdhani	11	0	0	0	0	11
11	Samacharpatra	7	1	0	0	0	8
12	Naya Patrika	13	2	0	0-	0-	15
13	Himalaya Times	19	3	0	0-	0-	22
	Total	**231**	**24**	**0**	**5**	**2**	**262**

Situation of media coverage on aid transparency and effectiveness

S. N.	Newspaper	Transparency	Effectiveness	Donation	Total
1	Gorkhapatra	0	4	20	24
2	The Rising Nepal	1	1	27	29
3	Kantipur	2	1	8	11
4	The Kathmandu Post	1	2	11	14
5	Nagarik	3	3	9	15
6	The Republica	1	1	13	15
7	Annapurna Post	3	2	17	22
8	The Himalayan Times	4	3	27	34
9	Karobar	6	8	28	42
10	Rajdhani	2	1	8	11
11	Samacharpatra	2	0	6	8
12	Naya Patrika	5	2	8	15
13	Himalaya Times	6	4	12	22
	Total	**37**	**32**	**194**	**262**

67 Journalists killed by mid-December 2012 Across Globe: CPJ

Syria the deadliest country in 2012

New York, December 18, 2012: The number of journalists killed in the line of duty rose sharply in 2012, as the war in Syria, a record number of shootings in Somalia, continued violence in Pakistan, and a worrying increase in Brazilian murders contributed to a 42 percent increase in deaths from the previous year. Internet journalists were hit harder than ever, while the proportion of freelancers was again higher than the historical average, the Committee to Protect Journalists found in its yearly analysis.

Deadliest Countries in 2012

1. Syria: 28
2. Somalia: 12
3. Pakistan: 7
4. Brazil: 4
5. India: 2
6. Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory: 2

With 67 journalists killed in direct relation to their work by mid-December, 2012 is on track to become one of the deadliest years since CPJ began keeping detailed records in 1992. The worst year on record for journalist killings was 2009, when 74 individuals were confirmed dead because of their work—nearly half of them slain in a massacre in Maguindanao province, Philippines. CPJ is investigating the deaths of 30 more journalists in 2012 to establish whether they were work-related.

Syria was by far the deadliest country in 2012, with 28 journalists killed in combat or targeted for murder by government or opposition forces. In addition, a journalist covering the Syrian conflict was killed just over the border in Lebanon.

Paul Wood, a BBC Middle East correspondent who covered Iraq and numerous other wars, said the Syrian conflict "is the most difficult one we've done."

Worldwide, the vast majority of victims—94 percent—were local journalists covering events in their own countries, a proportion roughly in line with historical figures. Four international journalists were killed in 2012, all of them in Syria: American Marie Colvin, who wrote for the U.K.'s Sunday Times; French freelance photographer Rémi Ochlik; France 2 reporter Gilles Jacquier; and Japan Press journalist Mika Yamamoto.

Deaths attributed to combat represented a higher proportion of the toll than in past years. Combat-related crossfire was responsible for more than one-third of journalist fatalities worldwide in 2012, about twice the historical proportion.

Murder accounted for all 12 deaths in Somalia in 2012, the deadliest year on record for a country that has a long history of media killings. Not a single journalist murder has been prosecuted in Somalia over the past decade, CPJ research shows. Local journalists say this perfect record of impunity can be attributed to corrupt and weak institutions, a situation that encourages more killing.

Murder accounted for all 12 deaths in Somalia in 2012, the deadliest year on record for a country that has a long history of media killings. Not a single journalist murder has been prosecuted in Somalia over the past decade, CPJ research shows. Local journalists say this perfect record of impunity can be attributed to corrupt and weak institutions, a situation that encourages more killing.

Somalia's high death toll was due in part to a complicated and sensitive political transition and in part to Al-Shabaab militants, who were largely ousted from the capital, Mogadishu, in 2011, according to Mohamed Odowa, deputy director of the independent station Radio Kulmiye.

Journalists who worked online made up more than one-third of the 2012 toll, a sharp rise from the one-fifth proportion in 2011 and the largest segment CPJ has documented for online journalists.

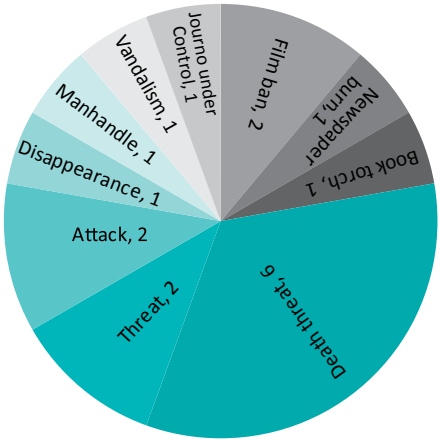
Twenty-eight percent of journalists killed in 2012 were freelance, in line with 2011 but twice the percentage that freelancers have represented over time.

Pakistan, the deadliest place for journalists in 2010 and 2011, dropped two notches this year, but the number of fatalities held steady at seven. Four of those killings took place in Baluchistan, Pakistan's poorest region and a scene of protracted violence between separatists, anti-separatists, various tribes and ethnic groups, Pakistani security forces and intelligence agencies, and groups aligned with the Taliban.

In Brazil, four journalists were killed in direct relation to their work, representing the country's highest annual toll in more than a decade and bringing the total number of fatalities over the past two years to seven.

(Source: A report made public by the CPJ on Mid December 2012)

Press Freedom Violation from Sept. to Dec. 2012 in Nepal



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, aid governance, political and parliamentary accountability and electoral reform based on its on-hand experience and learning.

Editors: Krishna Sapkota, Narayan Ghimire

Freedom Forum
P.O. Box: 24292
Block No. 22, Adarsha Marg
Thapathali, Kathmandu, Nepal

Telephone: 977-1-4102022, 4102030
Fax: 977-1-4226099
Email: info@freedomforum.org.np
freedomforum@enet.com.np
Web: www.freedomforum.org.np
www.nepalpressfreedom.org