

# Media in Nepal

## Opportunities for Peacebuilding

Exploring the linkages between  
public security and media security



International Alert  
Federation of Nepali Journalists  
Equal Access Nepal

**MARCH 2013**

# About the project

SAFE Media Nepal: A Safe, Able, Free and Empowered Media for the Promotion of Human Rights, Democracy and Peace in Nepal is a project which aims to strengthen the professionalism of the media sector and promote a policy environment that supports freedom of expression, independence of the media and safety of journalists. The project seeks to create an understanding amongst journalists, policy makers and the public about the links between public insecurity and increasing insecurity in the media sector. The project also promotes increased coordination and dialogue between media and key stakeholders in order to ensure their increased willingness to address blockages to a safer, freer and more independent media.

Funded by the European Union, the project is jointly implemented by International Alert, the Federation of Nepali Journalists and Equal Access Nepal. The focus areas of the project are Eastern Hilly districts of Nepal, namely Panchthar, Illam and Dhankuta and Central Terai districts, namely Bara, Parsa and Rautahat.

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# Preface

This paper was developed by International Alert, with inputs from Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) and Equal Access Nepal (EAN), under its Safe, Able, Free and Empowered (SAFE) Media project funded by the European Union.

The district assessment that informed this publication aimed to understand the inter-linkages between media security and public security, and identify opportunities for strengthening the media's positive role in promotion of human rights, democracy and peace in Nepal. The consortium partners envisioned this assessment to be a valuable resource to guide current and future initiatives to strengthen media capacity for enhanced professionalism and improve the external environment for a safer, freer, responsible and empowered media in Nepal. This summary report is based on the findings and analyses of a full assessment report, which will remain in draft form.

International Alert's Rabindra Gurung and Rabina Shrestha provided technical support in designing the assessment methodology, conducting the research, and analysing and editing findings. The research was carried out from July to September 2012 and the first draft of the report was written by researchers Sirjana Subba and Umesh Prasad Pokharel. Dominic de Ville and Ramji Neupane of International Alert provided feedback and comments on the earlier draft version of the report. The data collection in the districts was carried out with support from Binaya Guragain, Madhavi Karna and Prakash Lamichhane of EAN and Avima Upreti of FNJ.

The consortium is grateful to Hannah Gaertner of International Alert and Binod Bhattarai for providing technical assistance in analysing the findings and recommendations. The consortium would also like to thank FNJ central committee members Balkrishna Basnet, Rajesh Mishra and Sangita Khadka for their contribution in designing and conducting the district assessment and FNJ district chapters of Kathmandu, Panchthar and Parsa for their support in on-the-ground facilitation and coordination.

This publication has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of International Alert, FNJ and EAN and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.

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# Acronyms and abbreviations

ANIJ	Association of Nepalese Indigenous Nationalities Journalists
APF	Armed Police Force
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
EAN	Equal Access Nepal
FGD	Focus group discussion
FM	Frequency Modulation
KII	Key informant interview
NEFIN	Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities
FNJ	Federation of Nepali Journalists
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NID	National Investigation Division
PCN	Press Council Nepal
VDC	Village Development Committee

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The media can play an important role in supporting peace by providing accurate information in post-conflict environments. Accurate and impartial information can assist in mitigating conflict, while rumours and partisan reporting can trigger cycles of fear, uncertainty and prejudice, and even instigate violence. Examining how the media functions in such environments can help to identify useful approaches and guidance on creating conditions for collaborations among key stakeholders for ensuring a media environment that is conducive to promoting human rights, democracy and peace.

Nepal's (print, broadcasting and Internet-based) mass media has played a crucial role in promoting the respect for human rights and safeguarding democratic space and the rule of law. It has also contributed significantly to raising awareness among the public on issues that matter to them. As a watchdog, the media has made information available widely to ensure accountability and transparency in governance and end impunity in the longer term. However, accusations of fuelling conflict, uncertainty and instability have undermined this positive role of the news media, resulting generally from the lack of professionalism among journalists in their reporting and modes of operation, growing insecurity targeting journalists, the subsequent self-censorship, and lack of effective, independent and professional regulation.

In the transitional context of Nepal, this district assessment study seeks to:

1. Understand the role of the media in contributing to and/or in mitigating insecurity; and
2. Identify opportunities for creating and strengthening the role of the media in contributing to peace.

This district assessment functions as an overall baseline assessment and context analysis that can inform current and future programming in this field. It was carried out by International Alert, the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) and Equal Access Nepal (EAN) in the three districts of Panchthar, Parsa and Kathmandu as part of a project working on media and public security, funded by the European Union. The sample districts were selected for the following reasons: Panchthar due to increased insecurity and regional politics, particularly around issues of federalism; Parsa due to its position as a regional financial hub with a major export–import customs point and post-peace agreement insecurity; and Kathmandu due to the high volume of media presence and political and economic decision-making.

The study collected primary data through a survey, key informant interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and case studies. A content analysis was used to verify information obtained from FGDs and key informant interviews. Journalists, lawyers, human rights defenders, political party leaders, police and



government officials were interviewed in order to understand the security situation, the role played by the media and factors affecting how the media functions. The FGDs were held with a range of participant groups – journalists, political party leaders, civil society and media users/consumers, or the general public. The content study covered daily and weekly newspapers in the districts, and focused on the coverage of public security issues, follow-up stories and editorials. Forty questionnaires were used for the survey in each district.

The study approach and assessment methodology/tools were developed in a series of meetings between Alert, FNJ and EAN, and through discussions with key stakeholders. In addition, all assessment team members were trained in research methodology design and conflict-sensitive research practices. All respondents and interviewees were assured confidentiality and their names have therefore been kept out of this report.

This is a summary report on the findings of the study and its key recommendations. It is based on a full assessment report, which will remain in draft form.

## 1.2 Overview of the study districts

### 1.2.1 Panchthar

At the time of the assessment, Panchthar had no daily newspaper but received all national dailies published from Kathmandu. The district had one weekly newspaper, *Phidim Post*, and three news sites on the Internet though these were not updated regularly. There were three radio stations in the district: Sumathlung, a community radio, and Eagle and Singhalila, two commercial ventures. Audiences in the district also received radio signals from Taplejung, Terathum and Ilam districts, and had access to satellite television, relying on Nepali stations for news and the international channels for entertainment.

#### Panchthar district at a glance

**District headquarters** Phidim VDC  
**No. of VDCs** 41  
**Total population** 191,817  
     **Male** 90,186  
     **Female** 101,631  
**Ecological region** Hill  
**District borders** Taplejung, Terathum, Ilam, Dhankuta and India

*Source: Nepal Census 2011, available at [www.cbs.gov.np](http://www.cbs.gov.np)*

In 1996, Ilam and Panchthar districts made up one FNJ committee; in 1999, Ilam formed an independent committee, after which the Panchthar committee was merged with Taplejung. A separate FNJ committee was established in Panchthar district as an independent unit in 2001. At the time of the assessment study, the FNJ district committee had 47 members, including an executive committee of seven male and three female journalists. The committee had representatives from indigenous peoples/nationalities and journalists from Chhetri, Brahman and Newar groups. One seat reserved for a Dalit was vacant as there had been no candidate for the position.<sup>1</sup> Most female journalists in the district worked at radio stations.

<sup>1</sup> Telephone conversation, Laxmi Gautam, Chairperson, FNJ Panchthar District Committee, 21 October 2012.



### 1.2.2 Parsa

At the time of the assessment study, Parsa had 18 daily newspapers, 23 weeklies,<sup>2</sup> 10 radio stations and one television station.<sup>3</sup> Respondents informed the assessment team that there was also a bi-weekly Hindi-language newspaper in the district. Many of the local dailies were distributed free of charge.<sup>4</sup> According to key informants and journalists, FM radios were popular in the villages and also had audiences across the border in India. The stations also carried advertisements of businesses in markets across the border. According to some informants, Indian television channels were more popular in the district compared to Nepali stations, which people watched mainly for news.

#### Parsa district at a glance

**District headquarters** Birgunj Municipality  
**No. of VDCs** 82  
**No. of municipalities** 1  
**Total population** 601,017  
**Male** 312,358  
**Female** 288,659  
**Ecological region** Tarai (plain)  
**District borders** Chitwan, Makwanpur, Bara, and India

*Source: Nepal Census 2011, available at [www.cbs.gov.np](http://www.cbs.gov.np)*

Parsa FNJ district committee had 154 members from both the Madheshi (Plains) and Pahade (Hill) communities.<sup>5</sup> It had an 11-member Executive Committee, including one woman and a member from the indigenous peoples/nationalities community. It had no Dalit representative.

The study found that a large proportion of female journalists in the district worked at FM stations as newsreaders or presenters of entertainment programmes.<sup>6</sup> Fewer women worked in the print media. Female journalists faced a variety of challenges at work, including discriminatory treatment of women in the newsroom and during collection of information, and responsibilities at home, which may indicate why many women do not remain in journalism for long periods.<sup>7</sup> The district committee was facing a legal dispute among office holders at the time of the study.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Babita Basnet (2011). 'Shaptahik Patrikako Rajnitik, Arthik ra Byabashayek Pakchhya' [Political, Economic and Professional Aspects of Weekly Newspaper]. In: Devraj Humagain, Shekhar Parajuli, Pratyoush Onta and Harshaman Maharjan (Eds.) *Media Adhyayan 6* [Media Studies 6]. Kathmandu: Martin Chautari. pp.251–289.

<sup>3</sup> Terai TV was founded in Birgunj and it later moved to Kathmandu.

<sup>4</sup> FGD participants and some locals said that they do not buy local daily newspapers and get it free of charge.

<sup>5</sup> All names of key informants have been withheld because they were promised confidentiality. The telephone interview was held on 21 October 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Interviews, three female journalists (names withheld), 6 September 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Informants and FGD participants said that it was very difficult for women to remain in journalism for a long period. Some female journalists had left the district and joined media companies in Kathmandu, or had left the district and journalism after marriage. Female journalists who were interviewed said journalism was a 'field dominated by men' and strong patriarchal traditions made it difficult for them to go out on reporting assignments. One female journalist said her family wanted her to stop journalism, but she had managed to continue by not going out on reporting assignments.

<sup>8</sup> Anil Tiwari, the former president, had filed a case against President K.C. Lamichhane. Both claimed they were rightful president. The members of the assessment team were told that the FNJ election commission had declared a tie between the two, and an agreement had been reached where the two were to take turns to serve in the position, each serving for a half-term.

### 1.2.3 Kathmandu

At the time of the assessment, Kathmandu had 30 FM stations, 23 television stations, and 18 daily and 162 weekly newspapers.<sup>9</sup> It also had fortnightly and monthly publications and online news portals. Almost every major news outlet in Kathmandu had Internet presence. There were more than 1,100 journalists in Kathmandu Valley,<sup>10</sup> many of whom were working at the large media companies, and journalists in these media companies had multiple responsibilities.<sup>11</sup> FNJ's Kathmandu Executive Committee had 11 members and included representation of women, indigenous nationalities, Madheshi and Dalits.

#### Kathmandu district at a glance

**District headquarters** Kathmandu Metropolitan City  
**No. of VDCs** 57  
**No. of municipalities** 2  
**Total population** 1,744,240  
**Male** 913,001  
**Female** 831,239  
**Ecological region** Hill  
**District border** Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, Kavrepalanchok, Sindhupalchok, Nuwakot, Dhadhing and Makwanpur

*Source: Nepal Census 2011, available at [www.cbs.gov.np](http://www.cbs.gov.np)*

<sup>9</sup> FM radio stations registered and broadcasting from Kathmandu district only. Source: Ministry of Information and Communications at [www.moic.gov.np/pdf/fm-list-2069-10-25.pdf](http://www.moic.gov.np/pdf/fm-list-2069-10-25.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> FNJ records, March 2012. Number covers the three districts of Kathmandu Valley: Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur.

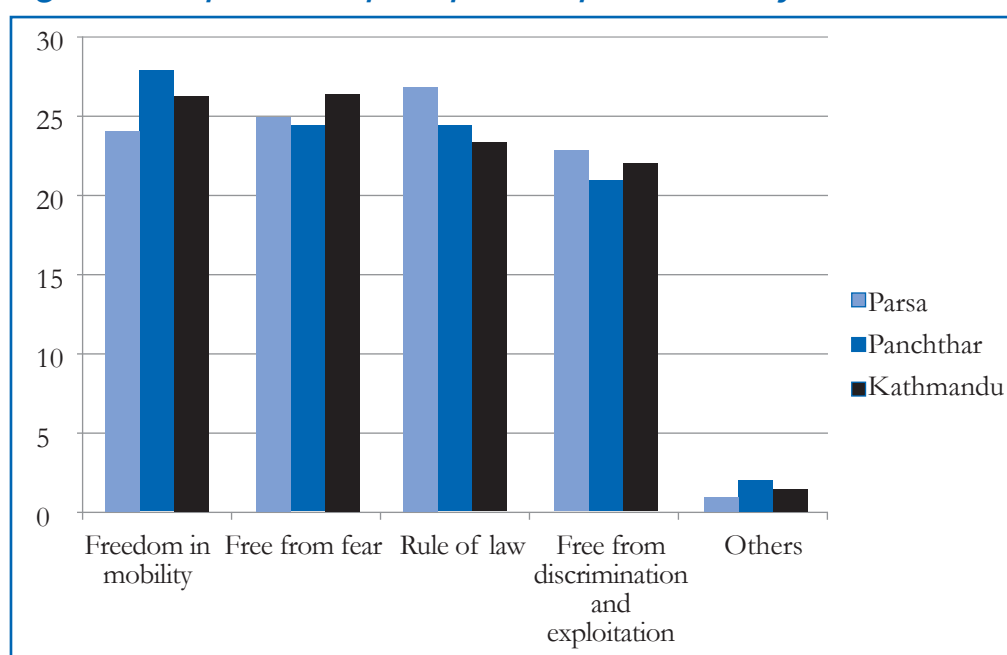
<sup>11</sup> This was true particularly for those who worked in companies with both print and broadcast outlets. Working in the news capital of Nepal, these reporters had more events to cover each day compared to their district counterparts.

## 2. Major findings

### 2.1 Understanding of public security and the security situation

**Public security:** Respondents commonly understood public security to mean the safety of the public, communities and/or self, and as the possibility of living without fear of any kind, and freedom to carry out the occupation of choice. They referred to killings, violence against women, thefts, illegal trade, abduction and cyber-crime as examples of public security threats. Some also added corruption, natural disasters, spread of diseases and food shortages as reasons that can lead to public insecurity. More than 20 per cent of the respondents considered freedom in mobility, freedom from fear, rule of law, freedom from discrimination and exploitation as public security issues. (Figure 1) In general, public security threats were believed to result from a range of different sources and not as only those related to crime and violence. Respondents were more concerned about threats coming from within their communities.

**Figure 1: Respondents' perception of public security**



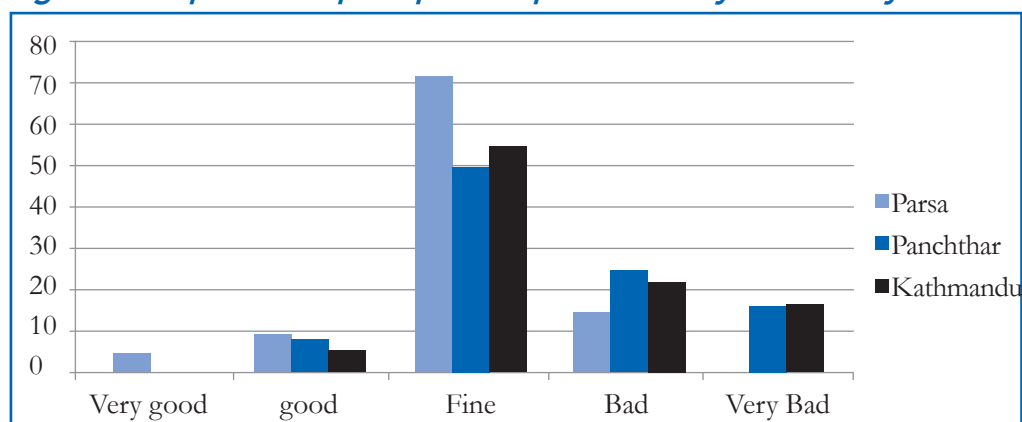
Source: Field Survey 2012

**Security situation in districts:** The majority of respondents in the three study districts claimed that the public security situation was fine (Figure 2), having improved in both Parsa and Panchthar over the past few years. The improvement in Parsa was explained by the completion of peace talks, agreements between the government and different armed groups that were operating in the plains,<sup>12</sup> commencement of peaceful political activities, and improved enforcement of law

<sup>12</sup> Key informant interviews, political leaders, journalists and representatives of civil society, 4–7 September 2012.

and order by police. Most informants attributed improved law enforcement in Parsa to the work of one police official,<sup>13</sup> and the continuation of his legacy after he was transferred.

**Figure 2: Respondents' perception of public security situation by districts**



Source: Field Survey 2012

In Panchthar, the improvement was attributed to the change in the pro-Limbuwan groups' ways of operating.<sup>14</sup> At the time of the study, informants explained that the security situation had remained unchanged or remained stable for some time.

None of the informants in Kathmandu said public security had improved or deteriorated. Respondents generally referred to the entire country when responding to the question. A few, however, claimed that the public security situation was deteriorating in Kathmandu and Parsa districts.

**Security of journalists and media:** According to the study findings, journalists are at risk of being threatened while investigating a subject and/or after they publish or broadcast their reports. Some journalists interviewed for this study, who mainly focus on security matters, said that they were more vulnerable than other colleagues because of the topics covered in their reporting.<sup>15</sup> FNJ's media monitoring report reported 271 attacks on media and journalists in 2012.<sup>16</sup> From interviews and FGDs in the three districts, the assessment team found two explanations for attacks against journalists: 1. content of news reports, and 2. journalists' involvement in activities other than journalism or not abiding by the codes of journalistic behaviour.

An informant from a specialised training and content production institute in Kathmandu and an editor in Birgunj explained that there are challenges in doing investigative journalism, which may undermine the quality of the reporting. They suggested that while it was unacceptable for those displeased with news reports

<sup>13</sup> Ramesh Kharel, Superintendent of Police.

<sup>14</sup> Limbuwan means Limbu state. These groups have been demanding ethnic federalism, hence the name. Key informant interviews in Phidim, 19–22 August 2012. The Limbuwan groups used to show black flags and try to disrupt meetings of other political parties. They also organised strikes almost every month. The groups did not disrupt a Nepali Congress meeting in Phidim, when the study team was there. They had also stopped organising frequent strikes.

<sup>15</sup> Interview, female journalist, Kathmandu, 9 August 2012, and another key informant from the media, and FGD at Kathmandu, 14 August 2012.

<sup>16</sup> FNJ, 'Nepal Media 2012 Round-up: Physical Security Still Key Challenge for Nepali Media', 31 December 2012. Available at [www.fnjnepal.org/media/?p=1108](http://www.fnjnepal.org/media/?p=1108).

to attack or kill journalists, journalists must take proper precautionary measures, such as ensuring accuracy and fairness, for avoiding attacks related to content.<sup>17</sup>

The assessment team found several political events in the past that sparked physical violence and mental pressures for journalists, in particular, during Madheshi or Adivasi Janajati movements,<sup>18</sup> and also by a fundamentalist Hindu group in 2012.<sup>19</sup> The groups responsible for the attacks accused the media of partisanship and not adequately portraying their groups' concerns, justifying the violence. Instances such as these may be explained by the failure of regulatory agencies adequately monitoring the professionalism in media reporting and independently regulating content, as well as past impunity for those responsible for attacking the media.

Professional support from the media houses can be a key factor in improving security for journalists, in particular the proper and timely issuance of appointment letters, insurance, and regular and appropriate compensation. At key informant interviews, participants claimed that, while media companies have insured their vehicles and equipment, they do not provide insurance for reporters and camera crew. They said the companies were more concerned about the security of equipment and physical assets than about the safety of journalists, leaving them vulnerable to external risks.

## 2.2 Media coverage of public security

**Accuracy, balance and credibility:** Respondents who were media users/consumers, such as ordinary people, members of civil society, political parties, and lawyers, claimed that most reports on public security were questionable in terms of accuracy, balance and credibility, perhaps due to lack of skills and knowledge and not necessarily intentional. According to one media educator, even though journalists want to practise accurate and fair journalism, they sometimes, unknowingly, fail to recheck facts and that affects the credibility of their reports.<sup>20</sup> However, while in Panchthar, interviewees claimed that accuracy, balance and credibility were often compromised by lack of knowledge and skills, in Parsa, some interviewees accused journalists of distorting facts intentionally, especially when writing about political parties, individuals involved in smuggling and other illegal activities, and business people.<sup>21</sup>

**Follow-up of public security news:** Follow-up reports can help the media describe how seemingly unconnected events can jointly explain an incident. It can also help place stories in context over a period of time and explain cause-and-effect.<sup>22</sup> However, for some informants, follow-ups did not seem to be a

<sup>17</sup> A key informant said preventive measures include denouncing the act not the person, being careful while choosing words and phrases, and doing journalism in the public interest to win public support for the work they do.

<sup>18</sup> During a three-day strike called by Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) on 20–22 May 2012, there were 98 attacks against journalists. Media and journalists had faced similar attacks in January 2007 during the Madhesh Andolan. For details, see Binaya Kumar Kasaju (2009). 'Mediako Loktrantikaranra Samajik Andolan' [Democratization of Media and Social Movement]. In: Shekhar Prarajuli, Pratyoush Onta and Devraj Humagai (Eds.) *Media Adhyayan 4* [Media Studies 4]. Kathmandu: Martin Chautari. pp.3–24.

<sup>19</sup> FNJ, 'Monthly Media Monitoring Report/December 2012', 3 January 2013. Available at <http://www.fnjnepal.org/media/?cat=4>.

<sup>20</sup> Interview, media educator, 13 August 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Interview, businessman, Parsa, 8 September 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Interviews, key informant, journalism trainer and specialised content production institute, 13 August 2012.

priority for news related to public security.<sup>23</sup> Although journalists interviewed agreed on the need for follow-up reports, they did not do so in practice. Despite some efforts to follow up more regularly in Parsa, some informants claimed that journalists were not actually motivated by the desire to tell the whole story but rather by other reasons, including corrupt practices, such as blackmail, extortion, requests for donations, etc.

**Coverage of public security events:** The sensational packaging or coverage of news on crime suggested that news stories on public security – or rather insecurity – could increase sales. Some informants claimed journalists often prepared investigative reports but did not publish or broadcast them following “negotiations” with the parties involved. In exchange, the media company/owner was rewarded with advertisements or other incentives.

The study found that the media in Nepal tends to prioritise (and sensationalise) coverage of crime and violence because this increases readership and audiences.<sup>24</sup> During the Maoist insurgency, reports on attacks, murders, abductions and counter-insurgency operations were seen by large numbers of readers/audiences. While such coverage declined after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2006, it can now be seen in reports about other types of violent events, in particular criminal activities. Previously limited to print media, this approach now also seems to have been adopted by the broadcast media. This trend indicates a shift towards “tabloid-type” coverage of crime and violent events, an argument also made by Jane W. Gibson-Carpenter and James E. Carpenter (1994).<sup>25</sup>

**Local media, national content:** Based on the study’s content analysis, local print and broadcast media allocate more space and time for national news. Local print media houses are often under-resourced and resort to “cutting and pasting” news from online portals based in Kathmandu. Similarly, radio stations in the districts take information from online sources or carry content from Kathmandu-based broadcasters or production companies. Cost-effectiveness and breadth of coverage are the main reasons for this situation.<sup>26</sup> Notably, in Panchthar, radio stations regularly invite security and government officials to programmes and interactions on public security.<sup>27</sup> However, based on the content study and respondents’ feedback, local content tends to be limited to events around district headquarters; rural areas are largely under-reported – or even ignored.

**Coverage of women and marginalised groups:** A female key informant in Kathmandu claimed that public security-related information of marginalised communities and women has begun to increase in media.<sup>28</sup> However, this change is largely due to special programmes on radio and television, sponsored or paid for typically by associations representing these groups and often supported by donors. In the print media, issues relating to women and marginalised groups were discussed mostly on special occasions such as International Women’s Day, International Day against Racial Discrimination or International Indigenous Peoples’ Day. On a day-to-day basis, media houses allocate coverage space

<sup>23</sup> Interviews, key informant, reporter at a large newspaper in Kathmandu, who was also a Central Committee member at FNJ, and other informants, 10 August 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Interview, official at the Minimum Wage Fixation Committee, 14 August 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Jane W. Gibson-Carpenter and James E. Carpenter (1994). ‘Race, Poverty, and Justice: Looking Where the Streetlight Shines’, *Kansas Journal of Law and Public Policy*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp.105–106.

<sup>26</sup> Interview, FM radio station manager, Parsa, 6 September 2012

<sup>27</sup> Interviews, FM radio journalist, and Deputy Superintendent of Police, 18 and 19 August 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Interview, female journalist advocating greater access and representation and increased coverage of women’s issues in the media, 9 August 2012



and volume depending on the nature of the event, usually prioritising stories that describe women as victims over stories featuring successful women. Representatives of marginalised groups responding to the study felt that the coverage was not satisfactory.<sup>29</sup>

The content study suggested that issues of marginalised communities and their public security concerns are reported in both district and national media. However, stories on similar issues and of equal news value were, at times, reported differently. For example, analysis of the coverage of the murder of Manabir Sunwar of Kalikot District shows that the attention of national media was not balanced and some even reported it inaccurately; news reports on the incident that appeared during December 2011 and January 2012 contradicted each other. Some papers reported that he was murdered for “touching” and “violating” the kitchen of a so-called high-caste family, while two others claimed he was killed for a disagreement over liquor. Even newspapers that seemed sympathetic to the victim spelled his name as *Manabire* instead of *Manabir*, which is considered derogatory.

The analysis suggests that coverage depends upon who the perpetrators are and their power to influence the events. Key informants said that coverage of issues related to public security and marginalised communities was more sympathy-driven, rather than analysed from a rights perspective. In general, news reports featuring women, Adivasi Janajatis (indigenous peoples) and Dalits are viewed and largely reported through male, Bahun/Chhetri lenses. Issues were often misrepresented or not taken up seriously by the newsrooms where representatives of Bahun/Chhetri groups outnumber journalists from other social groups. Media monitoring reports show that Bahun/Chhetri men are the primary source of quotes in news reports. Of individuals quoted during a one-week monitoring period in 2011, only 7.3 per cent were women.<sup>30</sup>

Some participants suggested that making newsrooms more diverse is a solution,<sup>31</sup> a long-standing demand of groups not adequately represented in the media and one of 13 demands made by the Association of Nepalese Indigenous Nationalities Journalists (ANIJ) in July 2012.<sup>32</sup> A high-level government commission for making the media more inclusive was established in September 2012 and began its work in December.<sup>33</sup>

**Editorial comments on public security issues:** Newspapers use editorial positions to state where they stand on issues in the public interest and these often help in building public opinion. The study revealed very few editorial comments on public security issues. In Panchthar District, public security was a subject of a few editorial comments, while it was not the practice of many newspapers

<sup>29</sup> Interviews, Dalit journalist and activist for Dalit rights, Kathmandu, and leader of ethnic nationalities/indigenous peoples, 12 August 2012. Several leaders of Madheshi parties (5 September 2012) complained that the Information and Communications Minister’s visit to Birgunj (on 4 September 2012) was not covered by national newspapers and they believed that it was because the minister belonged to the Madheshi community.

<sup>30</sup> Watch for Social Justice Nepal, Equal Access Nepal ‘Media monitoring report 3,’ September 2011.

<sup>31</sup> Key informant interviews, female journalist at a radio station in Kathmandu and Dalit rights activist and journalist in Kathmandu.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Call for inclusive newsroom’, *Himalayan Times*, 8 July 2012, accessed on 2 December 2012. Available at <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Call+for+inclusive+newsroom&NewsID=342504>.

<sup>33</sup> ‘High level media commission starts work’, *Himalayan Times*, 17 December 2012, accessed on 17 December 2012. Available at <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=High+level+media+commission+starts+work+&NewsID=358139>.



in Parsa District to carry editorials. The latter is based on observation carried out between 7 and 8 September 2012. Of 11 daily newspapers available at the newsstand, only five had editorials.

## 2.3 Media in promoting public security

While the media in Nepal has been an important source of information on public security and other related events, it has the potential to do more.

Law enforcement agencies and courts often use information in the media to guide their work. Police have used information in the media for investigations, and television footage may be used as evidence in the courtroom. Human rights activists and lawyers that were interviewed as part of this study reported that the media has been supportive when they raise issues of justice and rights, such as consumer rights, issues of trafficking in children and women, etc. The assessment team also learnt of examples where the media has made government more accountable and where coverage of a certain story has instigated necessary actions, such as one case where media reporting helped expose and stop corporal punishment at a school in Parsa. Similarly, media reports prompted the government to take action against *Unity Life International*, a criminal network-marketing scheme that illegally collected over Rs. 6 billion from unsuspecting people. Notably, media reports uncovered the political protection provided to the main suspects involved in the network-marketing scam. In the same way, participants in discussions and in Kathmandu said that reports in the media played a key part in helping convict a senior officer of the Armed Police Force (APF) on charges of killing his wife in January 2012.

Information in the media has also alerted rights-based organisations that have carried out further investigations and worked to ensure justice for the victims. Sheikh Chandtara, Chair of the National Women's Commission, said her organisation has used reports in the media to investigate and follow up on incidents of violence against women and ensured protection and justice for the victims.

However, there are also multiple examples where the media has misled or misrepresented facts, affecting public security negatively. Media organisations lack policies for handling public security issues and, as a result, journalists do not pay adequate attention while reporting sensitive issues, particularly criminal investigations. In such cases, the public can be misled and the investigation may be adversely affected. Police informants explained that media reports on the force's strategies to capture those involved in the murder of media entrepreneur Jamim Shah in Kathmandu may have assisted the suspects to flee. Discussion participants in Kathmandu claimed that some media companies, particularly television stations, investigate issues but do not broadcast stories, due to negotiations with parties accused of wrong-doing.

**Media and social harmony:** The assessment team found that the media covers some stories with seemingly more interest, while ignoring others, and this has had repercussions on journalists and media companies. One example was the coverage of a movement for a united Far-Western Region in early 2012, which some groups found to be disproportionate compared to the reporting of another movement, around the same time, organised by the Tharuhat Rajya Parishad, which demanded a federal unit in the region. The perception of fairness in

coverage can vary from group to group, and can sometimes be misinformed, particularly so in countries with little or no research and analysis of media content, where the claims of one side or another are often construed as fact.

## 2.4 Media and the police

The media can make security agencies more accountable by reporting on and exposing their failures and lapses in the system. It can also play an important role in informing the public about crime, and shaping public opinion about criminal activity, the police service and the criminal justice system, thus helping to build demand for more effective enforcement of law and order.

**Police as source of information:** Security agencies, particularly Nepal Police, are a major source of information on public security. However, it is challenging for the media to obtain information from police, specifically when it is about their own misdeeds, failures, corruption or lack of professionalism. During the study, journalists claimed that police officers were often not available for comments on such issues. Interviewees claimed that personal rather than professional relations with police had helped them obtain information. Generally, journalists from large media companies and those who socialise with police after work have greater access to information.

The reliance on personal contacts is often the reason for inaccurate information, especially in situations where journalists do not cross-check facts with independent sources. Furthermore, often the police do not provide news to the media within reporting deadlines, which forces journalists to resort to using unofficial sources, possibly explaining inaccurate reporting.

**Media from the perspective of police:** Nepal Police have a “Media Policy 2060”, which recognises media as a major platform for disseminating public information. The policy provides guidance to the force on how to deal with journalists, how to provide information, and how to decide what information can and cannot be shared with the media. The Central Police News Desk, Valley Police News Desk, Regional Police News Desk and District Police News Desk are all officially responsible for interacting with media.

Respondents discussed some conflicts between the media and police, usually when requested information was not readily available. Often, the lack of understanding of the sensitivity of security issues – particularly when information is not forthcoming – has caused the media to resort to other means to seek information. Such instances can affect the source–journalist relationship. Similarly, the low understanding by the police of media operating procedures may be the cause for delays in timely dissemination of information meant for public consumption.

**Civil society perspective of media–police relations:** Civil society representatives interviewed as part of this study claimed that the relationship between the media and police is not always purely professional. While it works fine when interests match, the relationship quickly sours when there is a clash of interests.

Civil society respondents claimed that some journalists were involved in protecting “criminals” and smugglers, and that sometimes journalists and police

have colluded to frame the innocent and let the guilty go. Some civil society respondents claimed that police often tipped off journalists before raids so the media could be there when they took place, ensuring media coverage. This arrangement could also entice journalists to warn criminals ahead of the event. Respondents explained that monetary incentives could be involved in such “deals” and added that media companies were largely unable to monitor such activities by their staff.

Respondents were also suspicious of the relationship between the media and informants and staff of the National Investigation Division (NID). They said NID was in a position to influence the Nepali media because some of its informants also work as journalists. This was a serious concern because such an arrangement could influence media content and compromise the safety of journalists.

## 2.5 Media and political parties

The study found that the media and political parties have both an adversarial and cooperative relationship. There have been instances where political parties have advocated for press freedom and the safety of journalists. Similarly, there have been numerous examples where the media has highlighted the activities of political parties and helped them in building positive public images. However, study respondents claimed that most attacks on journalists and media in Nepal have come from political parties, or their members and supporters. Typically, political parties seek to use the media for partisan messaging, despite the fact that the media is required to provide unbiased information.

Nepal’s journalist associations are organised along political party lines, which blurs the independence expected from journalists. Notably, when media content is seen to be biased, there is a higher risk for journalists and the media company concerned. The inability of journalists to be independent has often put them at risk of attacks from partisan interests, including people advocating for identity-related demands.

Despite this tension, respondents also cited instances of media reporting on corruption, financial irregularities, lack of intra-party democracy and poor governance within political parties, with the media playing the role of an effective watchdog. One example is the reporting that followed the government’s decision to support a mountaineering expedition led by the son of the leader of the Unified Maoist party. As a result of these reports in the media, the recipient decided not to accept the support.

**Identity movements and safety of journalists:** Key informant interviews and FGDs with political leaders, cadres and members of ethnic groups revealed that some groups do not find the media supportive of their causes. In fact, several respondents believed that ‘the more you threaten media, the more coverage you receive’, explaining that attacks would be noticed and reported resulting in the desired levels of publicity – both good and bad – and visibility. Responding to a focus group question on why political parties attack the media, a Madhesh-based party leader said her supporters had burned copies of a newspaper as it had failed to cover the Madheshi movement in the right spirit. She added that the paper changed its approach after the incident. Focus group participants from

political parties in Kathmandu said that the media creates its own risks by failing to be impartial and fair in coverage.

An interview with a correspondent for a Kathmandu-based newspaper and television company suggested that while coverage decisions are taken by news desk editors, they may put district-based journalists at risk, particularly when Kathmandu editors do not publish or broadcast what they send – which in itself is an infringement by those groups of independent editorial decision-making. Journalists in Parsa described a situation where one journalist was almost attacked for a similar reason – though violence was averted in the end after another journalist explained to activists the news production process. A leader of the indigenous peoples' movement in Kathmandu said activists had attacked the media because it 'did not understand the spirit of indigenous movement', and had misreported their movement. Many of those responsible for attacks against the media are never brought to justice.

**Influence of political parties on content:** Many respondents believed that political parties try to manipulate and influence news on public security. They said they do not fully trust the content of local media, particularly where members of political parties were accused of wrongdoing. As political parties have wide community networks, the violators of law and order are often also associated with a political party, and the parties tend to protect their own members. Similarly, in Nepal even journalists are aligned to partisan unions, a factor that also has the potential to influence content.

## 2.6 Professionalism

**Police:** It is the duty of police to protect the public from possible threats, and ensure justice by investigating crimes, detaining and presenting suspects in court. While there was a marked improvement in the performance of police in the study districts, respondents explained there was still room for improvement. The level of trust in the police was low among the respondents, and few of the focus group participants believed that law enforcement agencies could provide them with adequate security when needed. Some respondents claimed that one has to be responsible for one's own safety because the police cannot be trusted fully.

At times, even well-meaning acts by police are not well received by the public (and media) due to the ways in which the enforcement is conducted. For example, the sudden decision by police to strongly enforce a law against driving under the influence of alcohol did not receive the expected support from the public and media. Other respondents shared experiences of being at the receiving end of police actions, particularly their attitude and insensitivity towards suspects. Participants at the group discussion in Panchthar claimed that they have witnessed personnel from the APF misbehaving with women, affecting the public image of the institution. Senior police officers explained that such behaviour has been noticed in junior ranks and is due largely to low education and awareness. According to senior personnel, it is the police officers of the lower ranks that interact with the public on a daily basis and their behaviour influences public perceptions.

**Media companies:** Media companies and journalists coexist and need each other to remain in business. Respondents in this study expressed serious concerns

about outstanding issues in the industry. Journalists in the districts complained that some media companies do not provide salaries for months at a stretch, do not abide by the minimum wage rules, and some even seek favours from journalists in exchange for jobs (especially in the case of television stations).<sup>34</sup> According to journalists, a large number of media companies do not have sound finances to abide by minimum wage rules for regular staff/journalists. In the case of district newspapers, one person can be responsible for multiple functions: such as publisher, editor and reporter, while there may be another person handling layout and design. In the case of radio, the stations usually hire recent high-school graduates with no knowledge of journalism. For the graduates, these jobs become their entry point into the market. Hiring fresh hands is also convenient for media companies because they do not have to pay minimum wages and this helps to keep operation costs low. Low quality and low pay of staff, however, have strong implications for content quality.

**Journalists:** Respondents to the survey and participants in FGDs and interviews appreciated the efforts made by journalists to raise the concerns and grievances of the public. However, they also questioned the behaviour of journalists, particularly in relation to upholding the Code of Journalistic Ethics. Some discussants and interviewees said journalists were “*ati-jannē*” or know-alls, especially journalists working at the big newspaper companies in Parsa and Panchthar districts. At the time of the study, in Panchthar, journalism was still in its formative stages and there were no major concerns about journalists and their behaviour. However, in Parsa, which has a longer history of journalism than Panchthar, even journalists among the respondents said that the district was a bad example of the practice in the profession.

The labels used by respondents to refer to journalism practised in the district were ‘*Chhapamari Patrakarita*’ (raid journalism or appearing at warehouses at night, flashing their identity cards and demanding financial benefits for not reporting irregularities); ‘*Thekka Patrakarita*’ (contract journalism or the misuse of identity cards to obtain government contracts); ‘*Phone Patrakarita*’ (phone journalism or journalism where journalists do not go out reporting but rely only on the phone to gather information from “sources”); ‘*Jhanda Patrakarita*’ (flag journalism or journalism aligned to one political party or another); ‘*Prabakta Patrakarita*’ (spokesperson journalism or journalism where journalists portray themselves as spokespersons of political parties and underground groups and try to mediate on behalf of such groups); and ‘*Suddha Patrakarita*’ (real or pure journalism or those who practise the trade professionally). The labels used to refer to journalists provide an indication of the state of Nepali journalism in the districts.

The discussants and respondents also pointed out that anyone could obtain an identity card and claim to be a journalist. There were references to instances where such identities were misused, while there was little or no monitoring of who holds such cards and how they use them. These claims were also in reference to the membership criteria of FNJ, whose leaders have publicly admitted that not all of its members are necessarily practising journalists.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> During the focus group in Parsa, one participant said he had received an appointment letter from a television station but was fired within 15 days. The station told him that it wanted to hire another person because the other candidate did not have to be paid for work, and, instead, he would provide Rs. 30,000 per month to the station. Another informant in Parsa shared a similar experience. During the discussions, participants also said there were no basic qualifications needed to become a journalist in Parsa – all that was needed was a mobile phone, camera, motorbike and some money for fuel.

<sup>35</sup> The previous leadership of FNJ before the present incumbents had also announced an effort to “clean up” membership.



### 3. Discussion of findings

The findings discussed in this paper suggest that journalism in Nepal has a range of strengths and weaknesses. While the strengths are laudable, the weaknesses provide an indication of the type of efforts that may be needed to make the profession comparable to that in other democracies. Such interventions need to take a holistic approach to address the different facets that interface with policy and laws, professional conduct and working conditions, and skills and knowledge of journalists. Some of the major issues identified in the findings are discussed in the following paragraphs.

**Competition and factual coverage:** There is a race among journalists to be the first to “break” news. In the study districts, the assessment team found that journalists competed aggressively for “breaking news”, particularly on radio and television. However, in the quest to be the first, they often fail to prioritise the accuracy of their reporting, which is vital for responsible journalism, especially in post-conflict societies. Not enough attention is given to investigating the validity of sources before passing on the information. Interviews with informants suggested that many journalists relied on unverified information, including information appearing on the Internet. Their explanation for the lapse was that ‘people tend to forget what they hear on broadcast outlets and that the [incorrect] news could be corrected in the next bulletin’. Such an approach does not assist the development of professionalism in the media, and can misinform and cause harm to readers and audiences.

**Accuracy and interpretation:** Journalists need to compete to be correct first, rather than to be the first to break the news. The primary role of the media is to provide accurate information and analyses to enable readers/audiences to make informed decisions. Generally, the discussants and informants said the media did have information but that accuracy was suspect and therefore decision-making based on it was not easy.

**Use of language:** Journalists often use loaded, even discriminatory language that not only propagates stereotypes and hate but also endangers them. Victimising the victims is common in cases involving violence against women. Women are typically portrayed as weak, and are often blamed for the violence that takes place against them. Group discussions in all three districts suggested that most journalists were not gender sensitive in their use of language, due to low capacity and understanding of society and social relationships. There is a strong case for capacity-building programmes that go beyond skills but also focus on instruction in the social sciences.

**Political coverage:** There was a general impression among respondents that the news media over-emphasises political coverage and tends to focus on personalities rather than issues. The result has been reporting based on hearsay and public statements often of little relevance to the factual needs of the public. When combined with partisan coverage, such journalism tends to border on propaganda. Respondents suggested that the media should prioritise social and developmental issues and ensure that political coverage is both accurate and impartial.

**Portrayal of security agencies:** The portrayal of security agencies, mainly the police, is mostly negative where security personnel are depicted as “stupid”, “corrupt” and useless, mainly in television serials. Even news coverage, at times, has depicted the role of police negatively, particularly in instances when journalists were not getting the information they needed. To play the role of a watchdog of the public, the media needs to focus more on impartial analyses of both the achievements and lapses of security agencies. The media can play a supporting role in bridging the gap between police and the public and foster trust only when the coverage is balanced, fair and impartial.

**Consistency and follow-up:** Both print and broadcast media frequently covered news related to public security, particularly violence and crime. However, the coverage was largely event-based, with little or no follow-up. Some respondents said that the lack of adequate follow up could be the reason for impunity because people were not informed whether offenders were ever punished, and therefore there was no deterrent effect. There was general agreement on the need for more coverage, follow-up and in-depth analyses of such events.

**Coverage of marginalised communities:** Most awareness-raising programmes on social inclusion on radio and television were sponsored by different organisations, particularly non-governmental organisations (NGOs). In print, not much space was allotted to awareness-raising columns/write-ups, except during special occasions. News media needs to think beyond special occasions to support awareness-raising and educational materials related to women, Adivasi Janajatis, Dalit, Madheshi and other marginalised groups. Journalists also need more knowledge of social composition (caste, ethnic and regional disparities) and the claims and demands of these groups. Key informants from excluded groups claimed the media is not inclusive and does not cover their concerns adequately due to the low representation of journalists from these groups in the media, which is also a result of these groups’ low capacity and other obstacles faced in entry. Language used is another factor, as it is difficult for journalists to be proficient in Nepali when it is not their mother tongue.

**Representation and working environment for women:** Many female journalists who participated in the study explained that the current work environment prevented them from continuing or advancing in their profession. This is largely due to difficult gender dynamics in Nepali society as well as the lack of commitment from newsrooms to create a women-friendly environment; this includes not only the use of derogatory language and discriminatory behaviour by male news reporters and newsmakers, but also the tendency by editors to assign female journalists only to “soft” issues, including cosmetics, cooking, cultural events, etc. In addition, social/family pressures for girls either to get married or to take jobs that are more secure and do not require them to go out into society to collect information discourages more female journalists. Respondents said greater awareness of gender relations and women-friendly workplaces could assist in keeping women interested in journalism over longer periods.

**Social responsibility:** While media houses in Nepal are businesses, they also have a social role as “businesses on behalf of the public” – as independent channels of information or as watchdogs. Many respondents and interviewees criticised the media for being profit-oriented, especially in Kathmandu and



Parsa districts.<sup>36</sup> Respondents said the media is overwhelmingly profit-oriented, and the intense competition in the sector often causes media organisations to overlook their social responsibility. The understanding that media are businesses themselves was low or ignored, while expectations for the media to do business more professionally and responsibly were high. The assessment findings may have resulted both from low media literacy and from the failure of media companies to adequately perform their social responsibilities.

**Investment in media:** The lack of adequate policies on investment in media was blamed for their poor finances and also for the excessive profit orientation. There was general agreement among journalists that government should play a greater role in regulating media investments, including the terms of employment and salaries, which have a direct impact on poor performance in the media. There were also concerns that investment in media was not transparent and could involve funds mobilised illegally. Respondents said the government must develop a mechanism to investigate and regulate investment in the media in order to lay the foundation for the growth of a viable sector.

**Professional capacity:** Many respondents agreed that the journalism profession in Nepal included anyone who could read, write and obtain an identity card, which has negatively affected professionalism in this sector. There were suggestions that individuals should be required to have certain educational qualifications and experience, and should be required to demonstrate certain skills and qualities before being accredited as journalists by an independent body.<sup>37</sup> The respondents also suggested the need for two types of capacity-building programmes: the first relates to basic and advance courses on journalism, including ethics, theories and practice; and the second to help increase their understanding of issues, such as gender equality and social inclusion, and training in in-depth writing, and peace and conflict-sensitive journalism.

**Professional conduct:** Many journalists in the districts were largely unaware of the provisions in the Code of Journalistic Ethics. Many respondents suggested that journalists were threatened and attacked because they did not abide by the Code of Ethics, which was exacerbated by the lack of an effective, independent mechanism for redress to those who felt they were harmed by media.

**Newsroom relationships:** Respondents and informants in the districts suggested that journalists often suffered from lapses in communication between news desk editors and reporters.<sup>38</sup> There was little or no discussion about the security issues in the districts between the editors and reporters, and this sometimes compromised the security of people on the ground. Professionalism in journalism is also related to workplace security and the work environment. As media companies are largely family businesses, job assignments, wages and

<sup>36</sup> FGD participants in Kathmandu said they would like to read news and not advertisements on the first page of newspapers. They said anybody with money could buy a media company irrespective of the source of funds and adequacy of investment. In Parsa, the respondents and interviewees said media personnel/journalists were involved in collecting "donations" and unfair competition for advertisements. Because of the unfair competition in advertisements, they said that some businesses gave money to the media but asked them not to print/broadcast the advertisements as it could cause other media companies to demand that they also be supported.

<sup>37</sup> Some respondents suggested having mechanisms for issuing identification cards to journalists such as those existing in other professional organisations that accredit doctors, engineers and lawyers.

<sup>38</sup> FGD participants in the district said that district reporters sent news but it was often not published and people in the district thought that it was the reporter who did not publish the report. When news of particular interest groups was not published, they became angry with the reporters, making them vulnerable to threats and attacks.

salaries often depend on the whim of the employer. Many journalists are not paid on time and are often also required to double as marketing agents, which create situations of conflict of interest. Furthermore, delays in payment of salary may cause journalists to seek alternative means to supplement their incomes and bargaining power, such as aligning themselves with partisan unions and associations that can bolster their financial and professional security, all of which affect the conduct of independent, professional journalism.

**Self-censorship:** Journalists in the districts claimed that the lack of adequate security provision and increasing impunity had led to increased self-censorship in their reporting. Reasons for self-censorship cited during the discussions included threats from interest groups, interests of owners in ensuring their own financial security and partisan interests among journalists.

**Media-police relationships:** The study suggested a need for more regular interaction between security personnel, journalists and media owners on matters relating to public security. Such interactions could go beyond press conferences and background briefings; trust-building exercises between these groups could also potentially help to improve understanding and eliminate misconceptions.

## 4. Key recommendations

1. **Support the development of professional journalism:** In order to ensure a more professional and independent media in Nepal, donors and NGOs, in coordination with Nepali journalist associations, must support comprehensive capacity development training programmes aimed at new entries, as well as those already in the profession, to ensure skilled and qualified human resources in journalism. Less represented groups must be encouraged and prioritised to ensure an inclusive newsroom in terms of staff representation and content. Such training must incorporate conflict-sensitive knowledge and practice and should not be one-off events; they need to be followed up with adequate post-training support, including placement and continuous monitoring of the progress by media houses or institutions working for journalists' welfare, such as FNJ. Media houses should set aside a certain percentage of their income for supporting capacity development of their employees. Likewise, government and organisations working for journalists' welfare must coordinate closely to ensure that such training programmes are designed in line with the needs and participation of beneficiaries, ensuring that imparted skills and knowledge are further shared and practised.
2. **Support the development of inclusive journalism:** There is an urgent need to establish inclusive newsrooms within all media houses in Nepal to ensure that the issues and agendas of all groups are appropriately raised and reported through the media. Media houses must create an inclusive working environment that encourages equal participation in reporting and opportunity for employment. Such efforts must pay special attention to the unique experience of female journalists in particular, who are currently exposed to unprofessional and discriminatory practices that exclude their full and equal participation in news reporting.
3. **Strengthen public understanding and awareness of the importance of a free, independent and safe media for peace, human rights and democracy:** Government and NGOs working for the welfare of the media must raise greater awareness among the public through radio, television, print or online media on the role of a free, independent and safe media for peace and security at the community level. Such messages should include information on the importance of public oversight of media content, mechanism and process for redressing grievances against the media, media-related laws and policies, etc.
4. **Strengthen measures and mechanisms for ending impunity and addressing security challenges faced by journalists:** There is an urgent need to set up a robust multi-stakeholder national mechanism to address the safety of journalists, comprising of government and media stakeholders, including police, Ministry of Information and Communications, FNJ and others. Such a mechanism must include both preventive and protective measures in order to provide much-needed security and justice in addressing security threats and challenges faced by the journalism sector.

5. **Enhance professional security of journalists:** Reforming, strengthening and implementing existing laws and policies, such as the Working Journalist Act, can support an improved workplace environment, promoting professional security and standards of journalism. This can be done through a review of existing media laws and policies to identify gaps and blockages that hinder creating a favourable media environment and opportunities to strengthen such laws and policies. This process would allow stakeholders to advocate for policies and mechanisms for stricter implementation and the resolution of key workplace-related issues, such as delays in, or at times complete lack of, payment of salaries, issuance of letters of appointment, provision of insurance, and others. Only joint efforts of employers, professional associations and unions of journalists will be able to address these problems, so this process needs to be consultative and participatory.
6. **Ensure transparency in media investments:** There must be a process and mechanisms in place to ensure that investments in the media sector are legal and transparent in order to guarantee a viable, free, secure media environment that protects the rights and welfare of journalists. The Nepal government should carry out an analysis of media ownership, which can help better understand the media environment, formulate policies that guide investment and strengthen existing laws and policies accordingly. The government should devise a clear policy on foreign investment in the media, as well as media concentration and monopoly in the media sector.
7. **Establish an independent professional institution for continuously monitoring and evaluating media content:** A monitoring and evaluation mechanism that is professional and independent can inform media literacy initiatives (discussed in recommendation 2 above) and also provide a basis for assessing progress in media development. Such a mechanism would also ensure that fair and responsible media practices are encouraged and that grievances against media content are properly addressed. Establishing such a body could involve simply strengthening the existing Press Council Nepal (PCN), which is currently responsible for regulating and ensuring that the Code of Conduct is implemented, by broadening its areas of responsibility. An alternative option is to create a new mechanism solely responsible for monitoring and evaluating media content. Such a mechanism should include all stakeholders, including the private sector, in any decision-making and needs to be managed independently and professionally in order to secure support of all stakeholders.

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# Annexes

## Annex I

### Survey Form<sup>39</sup>

This survey is undertaken to identify the role of media for the promotion of public security in Nepal. Your input, ideas, information and opinion will be most valuable in carrying out the assessment.

#### Personal Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Caste/ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_  
 Age: .....Years Gender: Female ☐ Male ☐ Others ☐  
 Religion: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Educational qualifications: \_\_\_\_\_ Profession/occupation: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Marital status: Married ☐ Unmarried ☐ Others ☐  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What do you understand by security?

.....  
 .....

What do you understand by public security?

- I) Being able to move freely
- II) Being free from threatening and fear
- III) Adhering to the rule of law
- IV) Being free from exploitation and discrimination
- V) Others

2. How do you evaluate the present security situation in your country and district?

- I) Very good
- II) Good
- III) Fair
- IV) Bad
- V) Very bad

3. Through which media do you obtain the news regarding public security?

- I) Radio
- II) Television
- III) Newspapers
- IV) Online
- V) Others (Please specify)

5. How do you evaluate the role of security agencies in maintaining public security?

- I) Very good
- II) Good

<sup>39</sup> The original survey was in the Nepali language. For the purpose of this report, the survey is presented in the English language.



- III) Fair
  - IV) Bad
  - V) Very bad
6. How do you assess the role of the media in the promotion of public security?
- I) Very good
  - II) Good
  - III) Fair
  - IV) Bad
  - V) Very bad
7. How often do local media disseminate information about the security situation in your locality?
- I) Regularly
  - II) On a weekly basis
  - III) Sometimes
  - IV) Never
  - V) Others (Please specify)
8. How reliable is the news related to public security broadcast from local media?
- I) Very reliable
  - II) Reliable
  - III) Fair
  - IV) Unreliable
  - V) Misleading
9. What is your observation regarding the impact of the public security news coming from the media?
- I) Yes, it has an impact on society
  - II) No, it doesn't have an impact on society
  - III) I don't know
10. If public security news has had an impact, please describe it briefly.
- .....
- .....
11. What do you think is the role of the media in making security agencies accountable?
- I) By acting as a watchdog
  - II) By encouraging the security agencies to be information friendly
  - III) By providing factual, true and balanced news
  - IV) By reporting regularly on activities of the security agencies
  - V) Others (Please specify)
12. What is the public's role in making the media accountable?
- I) By regularly tuning into and reading media content
  - II) By providing feedback on a regular basis
  - III) By providing the information
  - IV) By discouraging attacks on journalists
  - V) Others (Please specify)
13. How can the media be responsible to the public?
- I) By providing accurate, unbiased and factual information
  - II) By prioritising issues of communities
  - III) By addressing the queries of society over media content
  - IV) By acting out of political interest
  - V) By acting out of personal interest

14. What are the major problems that Nepali media houses are facing?
- I) Politicisation of Nepali media
  - II) Lack of law and order situation
  - III) Journalists not abiding by the Code of Conduct of Journalists
  - IV) Profit-oriented media
  - V) Others (Please specify)
15. How do you rate the relationship of media and security agencies in your district ?
- I) Very good
  - II) Good
  - III) Fair
  - IV) Bad
  - V) Very bad
16. What do you think is the ideal role of the media in the promotion of public security?
- .....
- .....
17. What do you think is the ideal role of security agencies in the promotion of public security?
- .....
- .....

A research report will be produced based on the answers you have given to the questionnaires. If need be, your name will be cited on the assessment report. If you want anonymity, we ask you to mention it by indicating as follows:

- I) You can cite my name ☐
- II) You cannot cite my name ☐

Signature of Surveyor:

Date:

## Annex II

### KII questions for journalists

1. How do you assess the current security situation? And why?
2. What challenges do you face in gathering security-related news?
3. How transparent are the security agencies, in terms of information dissemination?
4. What are the mechanisms and processes to disseminate security information?
5. How do you assess the role of the security sector in maintaining public security?
6. How do media in your district raise issues of public security?
7. How has media portrayed the security situation? Is the portrayal accurate, balanced and objective?
8. What could be the role of media in promoting accountability of security agencies?
9. How do you assess the role of Nepali media in promoting or discouraging impunity, and what has its impact been?
10. How professional are security personnel?
11. Do you know about the “Code of Conduct” of journalism? Do you think it is important?
12. What could be the reasons why the “Code of Conduct” is not being followed?
13. Are media and security agencies at a distance from each other? Do they have close relationship? Balanced relationship? No relationship?
14. What factors affect the dissemination of information and news of public security? Explain.

## Annex III

### FGD questions for journalists

1. What role has media played in the current public security situation?
2. How is media in your district raising issues of public security?
3. How has media portrayed the security situation? Is the portrayal accurate, balanced and objective?
4. What factors affect the dissemination of information and news of public security? Explain.
5. How do mass media portray the security situation to the public? How has that affected you or your community?
6. How do you assess the role of the security sector in maintaining public security?
7. Do you know about the “Code of Conduct” of journalism? Do you think it is important? (Journalist)
8. What could be the reasons why the “Code of Conduct” is not being followed? (Journalist)
9. Is the Code of Conduct applied in security-related news coverage? (Journalist)
10. What skills/training do you require for performing better in your job? (Journalist and security personnel)
11. What factors are holding you back from performing better in your job? (Journalist)
12. What could be the role of media in promoting accountability of security agencies?

## Annex IV

### KII questions for security officials

1. How do you assess the current security situation? And why?
2. Do you have access to security news? Through which media?
3. What role has media played in current public security situation?
4. How have local media been disseminating information and news related to public security?
5. How has the media portrayed the security situation? Is the portrayal accurate, balanced and objective? How has that affected you or your community?
6. How does mass media portray the security agencies?
7. What could be the role of media in promoting accountability of security agencies?
8. How do you assess the role of Nepali media in promoting and/or discouraging impunity, and what has been the outcome?
9. Has media played the role of “true watchdog”? Has it only been a critic?
10. What are the mechanisms and processes to disseminate security information?
11. Do you know about the “Code of Conduct” for journalists? Do you think it is important?
12. What could be the reasons for the “Code of Conduct” not being followed?
13. How professional are security personnel?
14. Are media and security agencies at a distance from each other? In a close relationship? Balanced relationship? No relationship?
15. What factors affect the dissemination of information and news on public security. Explain?

## Annex V

### FGD questions for civil society members

1. How do you assess the current security situation? Why?
2. Do you have access to security news? Through which media?
3. What role has media played in the current public security situation?
4. How has local media been disseminating information and news related to public security?
5. How has the media portrayed the security situation? Is the portrayal accurate, balanced and objective? How has that affected you or your community?
6. What could be the role of media in promoting accountability of security agencies?
7. How do you assess the role of Nepali media in promoting or discouraging impunity and what has been the impact?
8. How do you assess the role of the security sector in maintaining public security?
9. Has media played the role of “true watchdog”? Or has it only been a critic?
10. How transparent are the security agencies in terms of information dissemination?
11. What are the mechanisms and processes to disseminate security information?
12. How professional are security personnel?
13. Do you know about the “Code of Conduct” of journalists? Do you think it is important?
14. What could be the reasons for the “Code of Conduct” not being followed?
15. Are media and security agency in a distanced relationship? Close relationship? Balanced relationship? No relationship?
16. What are the factors that affect the dissemination of information and news of public security? Explain.

## Annex VI

### FGD questions for civil society members

1. What role has media played in the current public security situation?
2. How is media in your district raising issues of public security?
3. How has media portrayed the security situation? Is the portrayal accurate, balanced and objective?
4. How does mass media portray the security situation? How has that affected you or your community?
5. How do you assess the role of the security sector in maintaining public security?
6. What could be the role of media in promoting accountability of security agencies?

## Annex VII

### FGD questions for political party members

1. What role has media played in the current public security situation?
2. How is media in your district raising issues of public security?
3. How has media portrayed the security situation? Is the portrayal accurate, balanced and objective?

4. How does mass media portray the security situation? How has that affected you or your community?
5. How do you assess the role of security sector in maintaining public security?
6. What could be the role of media in promoting accountability of security agencies?

## Annex IX

### Observation checklist

- News on local FM radios
- Consumer's choice of magazines and newspapers
- Most talked-about news on peace/security
- Relationship of journalists and security personnel
- Journalists' relationship with members of the public
- Journalists'/security personnel's behaviour
- Use of the Internet for information dissemination or source of information (radio, print and TV)

## Annex X

### Case studies checklist

- Personal relationship between journalist and security personnel and its impact on news making
- Recent cases (professionalism of media/journalist/security agency)
- Cases where security issues are reported in balanced light, which produced very good result
- Cases where, due to sensationalization of media, security situation has deteriorated. How was it handled later on?

## Annex XI

### Content analysis checklist

- National dailies in Kathmandu (as per need)
- District daily newspaper (as per need)





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