

# A Report on Training for Women Journalists on Civic Education

*Hetauda*

*29-30, Oct. 2015 (12-13, Kartik-2072)*



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

## **Introduction:**

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

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

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

Considering the importance of civic education and its direct relation with media, Media Advocacy Group (MAG) with the support of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Nepal, organized the two-day training on professional journalism and civic education for women journalists in Hetauda, Makwanpur, on 29-30, Oct. 2015 (12-13, Kartik, 2072). 35 young journalists of print, radio and broadcast from three different districts ( Makwanpur, Chitwan and Bara districts) participated in the training. The training was provided to women journalists to encourage them to practice civic journalism by making them understand its importance in the present context.

## **Objectives of the training:**

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

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

## **Day 1**

## Opening and Welcome Notes:

- Welcome note by Ms. Babita Basnet, MAG

**Ms. Babita Basnet**, President of MAG, welcomed all the participants in the training. She thanked all the participants for attending the program despite fuel crisis due to blockade by India. She introduced the resource persons for the training –**Mr. Prakash Giri** (News Chief of Sagarmatha Television and Media Expert) and **Ms. Kalpana Acharya** (Lecturer and Program Presenter at Avenues TV). Ms. Basnet gave a brief introduction of MAG as a nonprofit organization working in the sector of Right To Information

(RTI), Media and Gender. Further, she highlighted the objectives of the training were to build the capacity of the participants on civic journalism, and help them emerge as working and potential women journalists. She believed that after the training, the participants will be gain clear insight on the topic and gain expertise in it.



*Pic 1: Ms. Babita Basnet welcoming the participants*

- Welcome note by Ms. Samira Poudel, FES

**Ms. Samira Poudel**, representative of FES Nepal welcomed all the participants and the resource persons. She gave a brief introduction of FES as a Germany based non-profit political organization named after the first democratically elected President of Germany Friedrich Ebert that works in more than 100 countries in the world. She also informed that FES celebrated its 90 years of service in March 2015 worldwide. In Nepal, FES has been working since 1994 after the government of Nepal and Germany entered into agreement for promoting freedom, unity, social justice, and peace and media development in Nepal.



*Pic 2: Ms. Samira Poudel welcoming the participants*

Further, Ms. Poudel explained that education can change the world because education and awareness is important for people to participate in policy making. Stating 'Change within is necessary before you change the world', she urged the participants to make use of training period and learn about the civic education and its application in journalism.

## **Introduction of Participants**

After the welcome notes, the program proceeded further with the introduction of the participants and their expectation from the program. The participants' expectations from the training were to learn about the professional journalism and civic education. For most of the participants, civic education was a new topic.

Ms. Babita Basnet then requested Ms. Kalpana Acharya to start the first session and urged the participants for their active participation during the training, so that they can enhance their capability and learning process.

### **Basic Journalism**

#### **Ms. Kalpana Acharya**

Ms. Acharya gave an intensive presentation on 'Basic Journalism' to enhance the capacity of young journalists by explaining them about basic principle of journalism and increasing their skills on news collection and news reporting. She explained, Journalism is gathering, processing, and dissemination of news, and information related to news, to an audience. The word applies to the method of inquiring for news, the literary style which is used to disseminate it, and the activity (professional or not) of journalism



*Pic 3: Ms. Kalpana Acharya giving presentation*

She shared good practice in journalism and highlighted the importance of journalism at the time of crisis in the country. She also asked the participants to share their experience as journalist. She stressed the importance of journalism and mentioned that the duty of journalist is to inform, to educate, to entertain and to motivate people.

She also discussed about different types of journalism, the ABC principle of journalism i.e., Accuracy, Balance and Credibility & new form of Journalism. At the end, she shared about the responsibility of journalists and safety of journalists.

### **Citizen Journalism: Principles, Practices and Ethics**

#### **Mr. Prakash Giri**

Mr. Giri informed the participants that civic journalism focuses on citizen. It involves citizen in reporting process. If reporting is done with considering the way the people present their problem and the way they resolve it then the news, feature or report prepared is civic journalism. Today,

civic journalism is practiced in many countries such as USA, UK, India and also developing countries. It is being



*Pic 4: Mr. Prakash delivering lecture*

practiced in Nepal too.

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

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

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

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

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

## **Coverage of Civic Issues in Local Media: Challenges and Opportunities**

### **Mr. Prakash Giri**

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

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

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

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

- News presentation is different in local newspaper and radio

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Challenges of Civic journalism**

The role of journalist is not limited to reporting news, but to mange and present news based on truth and evidence to the people as well. The civic journalism was practiced to do so. The main principle

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

### **Concept of today's Civic journalism and Practice**

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

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

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



*Pic 5: Participants at the program*

## Day 2

### **Recapitulation of Previous Day Work**

Ms. Babita Basnet facilitated the next day session as well. The second day began with a short recap of the day 1 training. The participants thanked the organizers and the resource persons for conducting the training on wider perspective of civic journalism. The participants' enthusiasm of acquisition in the second day was applauding.

### **Conceptual clarity on Civic Education**

#### **Babita Basnet**

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

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

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



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

### Group Work

The participants were divided into five groups and were asked to share how civic journalism had brought positive impact in the community. Each group discussed in their team and presented some of the major issues covered in the newspaper related to civic journalism. The group work gave them practical knowledge on how to do civic journalism, and the positive effect in the people's and community's lives.

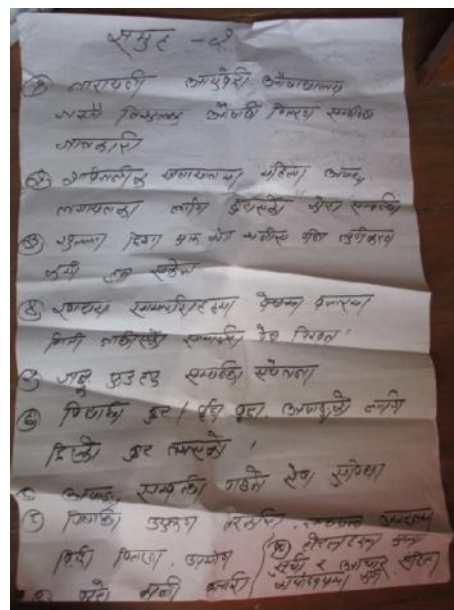
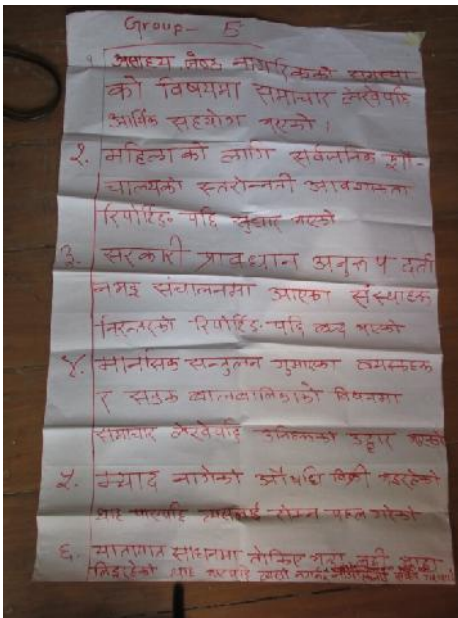


Photo: Group work presentation

### Experience Sharing by Ms. Marie Busse (an Intern)

After the end of formal sessions, Ms. Marie Busse, an Intern in FES shared her working experience with media. Ms. Anika is from Germany and she has lived in New York as well. She explained how media works in western countries. She was happy to see the active participation of young women journalists in the training. She urged the participants to continue the profession and practice civic journalism.

### Feedback Collection:

After completion of the training sessions, the participants' feedbacks were collected as follows;

#### Participants from Chitwan district

"The training is very effective. We learned about professional journalism and civic education. It would have been better if the training had included technical part of Journalism as well. We want to

participate in this type of training again in future and we want to join for Basic and Advance Journalism training. We thank MAG and FES for inviting us to be a part of this training."

### ***Participants from Bara district***

"We learned many new things about Journalism in this two days training. The training is very good and useful for us. Gender discrimination exists within media. We are happy that the training is focused to build capacity of women journalist and it has provided us the opportunity to learn about Journalism and Civic education, for which we thank MAG and FES team."

### ***Participants from Makwanpur***

"It is difficult to retain women journalists. Women are not much attracted to media professional. Many women take this as hobby not as profession. So, in order to make the women journalist profession, this type of training is very helpful. We would also like to request the organizer to conduct basic journalism training for women journalists. We thank the organizers for inviting us."

### **Recommendation from the participants**

At the end of the training, the participants have urged FES for the following trainings:

1. Basic Journalism training
2. Feature writing training for women journalists
3. Women journalists focus program by MAG and FES
4. Follow up training of this training.

### **Certificate Distribution and Conclusion**

Certificate of participation was distributed to each participant by Ms. Babita Basnet and Ms. Samira Paudel. Finally, Ms. Babita announced the closing of the program and thanked all the participants for their active participation in the training program. She also extended her gratitude towards the resource persons and the logistics management on the successful completion of the training. She requested the participants to expand their knowledge and skills in professional journalism and shared that MAG and FES Nepal will always extend their assistance to the participants when needed.



*Pic 6: Certificate distribution ceremony*



*Pic 7: Group photo including participants, resource persons and organizers*

*Annex 1: Name list of resource persons and organizer team members*

**Resource Persons**

- Mr. Prakash Giri, Trainer (Media Journalist and Program Presenter at Sagarmatha Television)
- Ms. Kalpana Acharya (Lecturer and Program Presenter at Avenues Television)

**FES team**

- Ms. Samira Paudel, Office Manager and Gender Coordinator
- Ms. Marie Busse, Intern

**MAG team**

- Ms. Babita Basnet, Journalist- President MAG
- Mr. Prabin Basnet, Logistic Management Coordinator
- Ms. Sushmita Lama, Rapporteur