



FREEDOM FORUM

"A Nepali CSO (civil society organization) dedicated to democracy, human rights and governance"

2016-2017

ANNUAL REPORT

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Message from the Chairperson

Freedom Forum has completed over a decade long journey since its inception in the year 2006. It was the time when the country was under autocratic regime led by the then monarch, and most of the civic and political rights of the people were curtailed. Against the backdrop, the organization was established to create a common forum, where a group of like-minded people advocating for press freedom and freedom of expression and opinion would come together to discuss the issues and preserve the fundamental civic rights of the people. Freedom Forum has been focusing its efforts to explore people's potential, and create liberal democratic institution through its policies, plans and programmes.

During the operation of the organization, we have been able to attain landmark achievements in the area of Right to Information (RTI), and its legal reforms. Freedom Forum today has established its good name in national and international arena among the organizations working on for the promotion and advancement of RTI. Similarly, FF took lead in reforming media policy and practice through policy monitoring, review and advocacy. Besides, FF's is also focused on building transparent, accountable and good governance system. Within the core themes of the organization, our working areas have been expanded to public financial management, open data, internet freedom and ombudsmen for accountability. We were able to achieve what we had aimed for the fiscal year 2073/74.

Freedom Forum is committed towards ensuring open government and responsive democracy. We are open for creative and constructive collaboration with various national CSO"s and agencies. FF has firm conviction that promotion of freedom of expression, easy access to information, and professional development of journalism will only foster robust and deepening democratic system.

I take this an opportunity to thank all the board members, staffs, partners and well-wishers for their continuous cooperation and good will and hope for the same in the upcoming years too.

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Hari Binod Adhikari

President

Freedom Forum

Acronyms

FF	Freedom Forum
FPU	Free Press Unlimited
FHI 360	Family Health International
CS: MAP	Civil Society: Mutual Accountability Project
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
CECI	Centre for International Studies and Cooperation
SUSASAN	Sustainable use of Technology for Public Sector Accountability in Nepal
SEFAS	Support to Enable Environment for Free, Accountable and Sustainable Media in Nepal
FNJ	Federation of Nepali Journalists
EEMIR	Enable Environment for Media law Reforms and Improved RTI Practice
CSO	Civil Society Organization
OGP	Open Government Partnership
FoE	Freedom of Expression
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
RTI	Right to Information
SEFEN	Support to Enable environment for Freedom of Expression in Nepal
OMOD	Online Media Operation Directive

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1. Introduction

1.1 Brief Introduction to Organization:

Freedom Forum is an independent, non-governmental and not-for-profit civil society organization working for the cause of democracy and human rights focused on press freedom, freedom of expression and right to information in Nepal. Incepted in 2005, FF has emerged as a prominent national organization in promoting access to information, freedom of expression and open development through dialogue, research, training, public advocacy and campaign and programme execution. The organization is also working on the issues of open governance/open data, public finance management, budget/aid transparency and political and parliamentary accountability and electoral reform based on its on-hand experience and learning. Adding new dimension to its regular activities, FF initiated Gender monitoring of nepali media activity this year. The Forum has brought out numerous books, research journals, newsletters, periodic reports and policy papers on different dimensions of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), open development agenda and their effects, impacts and development.

This is a purely social organization registered with the District Administration Office of Kathmandu (Regd.127/062/063) and the Social Welfare Council (Affiliation No.18518) of Nepal. Its head office is in Kathmandu, Nepal. FF has different contact offices in regional and district sites to coordinate programs at local level. It has 13-member Board of Directors, 30 general members, 14 staffs. FF's General Assembly is held every year.

1.2 Major Objectives:

The key objectives of the organization are

- a) Protection and promotion of freedom expression and information
- b) Promotion and development of professional journalism
- c) Defending journalists, Right to Information activists and freedom of expression practitioners
- d) Promotion, protection and practice of the right to information
- e) Promotion of human rights and democratic norms and values
- f) Research/study, civic monitoring, oversight and education and advocacy for the guarantee of free and fair elections

- g) Promotion of the use of media, Right to Information, Open Data and Public Financial Management (PFM) tools to support the movement and campaign for social justice and development of disadvantaged people
- h) Contribution to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through exchange of ideas, experience and learning at national and international level being focused on attaining the targets of Goal 16
- i) Affiliation and participation in regional and global networks related to transparency, right to information, freedom of expression, free and professional press, civic engagement and Open Government Part
- j) Undertake action research and study to draw evidences for advocacy in its core areas of works.

1.3 About the Report:

This is an annual report containing major activities and achievements accomplished by FF during a year-long period spanning from **July 17, 2016 to July 16, 2017**. The primary objective of the report is to disclose overall core and partnership activities, learning, and outcomes of the organizational initiatives and demonstrate its track record and competence to execute ideas aligning the key themes of the organization. The report is expected to serve as a well-documentation of the key efforts of the organization to attain its objectives and a consolidated contribution FF made to the country's national development objective.

Information contained in this report have been widely extracted from the newsletters, project documents, project reports, press releases, website updates, meetings and discussion notes, media coverage and sharings on social media.

2. Major Activities and Accomplishments:

FF carried out several activities to promote its core values with support of funding partners. The partnership information and major activities undertaken by FF during the period are presented in a following manner.

2.1 Partnership Projects executed :

Partnership program refers project and intervention executed in collaboration with different funding agencies. This year FF worked in partnership with following international organizations.

A. Open Budget Survey 2017

Duration: June 2016 to June 2018

Funding Agency: International Budget Partnership (IBP)

Project's name: National Budget System of the country

Project Nature: Research and Advocacy

Financial Grant: NRs. 1000000/-

B. Support to Enable Environment for Freedom of Expression in Nepal (SEFEN) - No News Is Bad News

Duration: September- December 2016

Funding Agency: Free Press Unlimited (FPU)

Project Site: Kathmandu and Nawalparasi

Financial grant: NRs. 4236500/-

C. Enable Environment for Media law Reforms and Improved RTI Practice (EEMIR) (CS:MAP)

Duration: January 2017 to June 2019

Funding Agency: FHI 360

Project Site: Kathmandu

Financial grant: NRs. 14653286/-

D. Support to Enable Environment for Free, Accountable and Sustainable Media in Nepal (SEFAS)- No News Is Bad News

Duration: January 2017 to December 2017

Funding Agency: Free Press Unlimited (FPU)

Project Site: Kathmandu

Financial grant: NRs. 9816900/-

E. Sustainable use of Technology for Public Sector Accountability in Nepal (SUSASAN)

Duration: April 17, 2017 to March 30, 2020

Funding Agency: CECI

Project Site: Sindhupalchowk, Lalitpur, Dadeldhura, Achham, Kailali and Bajhang

Financial grant: NRs. 1390000/-

F. Test of Ombudsperson model and dissemination

workshops Duration: November 21 to December 20, 2016

Funding Agency: Save the Children

Project Site: Nawalparasi and Kathmandu

Financial grant: NRs. 17,55,000/-

2.2. Thematic Activities accomplished:

2.2.1 Democracy: Our activities are focused to promote democratic principles, norms, values and standards and to strengthen democratic structures and to foster democratic culture in Nepal. Activities carried out during this year under this theme are as follows:

A. FF marks National Democracy Day: A Dialogue relating the Democracy Day to the Right to freedom of expression and opinion was held in Kathmandu on 17 February 2017. The program was attended by total 30 participants from various sectors: legal authorities (Advocate, Attorney Office), representatives from Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), Nepal Press Council, academia, media experts, academicians, journalists and researchers. In the program, speakers stressed on the need to review media contents in accordance to freedom of expression and information.

The program was held as part of the activity of the project EEMIR CS:MAP supported by FHI 360.

(For details, please click [here](#))

B. Discussion on review of Nepal's status and progress on joining Open Government Partnership:- FF gathered the representatives of a section of relevant organizations working on the issues of transparency, accountability, citizen participation and innovation in Kathmandu on July 26, 2016. The gathering was organized to share CSO advocacy efforts to advance the OGP agenda in Nepal and make country a part of the movement- which was already joined by 70 plus countries including Sri Lanka from the South Asian Region.

2.2.2 Freedom of Expression: Among the major accomplishments made by FF for the consolidation and strengthening of freedom of expression and of press are constant lobby and advocacy for policy reform on media sector, public awareness, analysis of media-related laws and inputs for improvements, consolidating enforcement mechanism, drawing up Agenda for Change (AFC) as a long-term plan for the enhancement of freedom of expression in line with international standard.

Specific activities carried out under this theme are:-

A. FF launched a report on Freedom of Expression on Internet in Nepal:- The report, first of its kind in Nepal, was brought to build a foundation for further debate and discussion on this topic in the changed political and constitutional set ups in the country on August 2, 2017.

It is believed that it would help augment internet rights to make the democracy sustainable and more functional. It has tried its best to explore the legal hurdles and challenges on FoE practices in this new media along with the recommendations in different levels.

(Report available [here](#))

B. Digital safety training for FF staffs: - A daylong orientation was conducted to FF's staffs and board members focusing digital archiving and safety on November 11, 2016. The orientation was organized as part of the implementation of the project-Support to enable environment for freedom of expression in Nepal (SEFEN)- No News Is Bad News funded by the Free Press Unlimited, FF's office in Kathmandu. The orientation was provided in two sessions- the first focused the digital safety (technical part), while the second on security in the digital age (individual/journalists' security).

(For details, please click [here](#))

C. On December 30, FF released an Annual Media Monitoring Report featuring freedom of expression issues, including press freedom, and policy updates during 2016 where, FF observed relatively peaceful atmosphere for media this year (2016) with significant decline on number of press freedom violations. FF recorded only 25 incidents of press freedom violations during 2016 against 83 of 2015. With 25 incidents of violations, nearly 75 media persons were affected. Despite having much awaited constitution in place, political stability was threatened especially due to political parties' differences over provincial demarcation, which undoubtedly kept media under fear of intimidations.

(Report available [here](#))

D. Stakeholders discussion on National Mass Communication Policy:- On August 3, FF had held a meeting among the stakeholders on the recent National Mass Communications Policy bringing together the chairman of the high level committee which recommended the policy, its members, rights defenders, advocates, film producers, Online Media Association, INGO, academicians, researchers, and journalists.

All the participants were univocal that the Policy was in need of correction. The high level committee members revealed that the Policy was a kind of compromise document, so it was not complete one. The committee members also revealed that it was quite difficult to come to common point among the members as in the distribution of Radio frequency.

(For details, please click [here](#))

E. Second phase stakeholders' discussion on National Mass Communication Policy" review was held in Kathmandu on 15th December 2016. It was organized under the project "Support to enable environment for freedom of expression in Nepal (SEFEN) – No News Is Bad News" funded by Free Press Unlimited. At the program, FF Chief Executive Taranath Dahal and advocate Santosh Sigdel presented a paper on study of National Mass Communications Policy, showing various weaknesses in the policy as frequency distribution, license, role of State-owned media, efforts to suppress internet-based media and so on.

(For details, please click [here](#))

F. Report dissemination and discussion on impunity against journalists: - FF organized a discussion program on present legal status of the murdered and forcefully disappeared journalists from the year 1996 to 2016 in Kathmandu on 20 November 2016. It was organized under the project "Support to enable environment for freedom of expression in Nepal (SEFEN)- No News Is Bad News" funded by Free Press Unlimited on the occasion of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists 2016.

The program discussed on the study report which underscored that Nepali media faced worst situation in the recent two decades owing to the unabated impunity.

Main objective of the discussion was to prod concerned authorities to bring perpetrators into book thus, ending impunity against journalists. The program had participation of 45 participants from diverse sectors: Nepal Police, Armed Police, Legal Authorities (Court, Attorney Office), representatives from Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and from Disappearance Commission (DC), representatives from Nepal Press Council, academia, and freelance journalists and researchers.

(For details, please click [here](#))

G. FF marks World Press Freedom Day 2017: Press Freedom Day Report 2017 was released organizing a program on „Press Freedom in Nepal: Present Status and Challenges“ in the capital city Kathmandu on May 3. The highlights of the report were presented at the program attended by media experts, educators, journalists, lawyers, film directors and producers, media students and researchers.

The report was unveiled both in English and Nepali languages by incorporating the number and types of press freedom violations, impunity relating to it, policy and directive relating to FoE and press freedom in the last monitoring year from 2016 May to 2017 April. The report showed sharp decline in the number of violations while pointed out the lack of friendly policies to create the atmosphere conducive for media freedom

(Report available [here](#))

H. Orientation on Monitoring of FoE Issues Held: FF organized an orientation program on “Monitoring of Freedom of Expression Issues” for seven media persons selected from each Province across the country. In the program organized in Kathmandu on May 21, FF made an intense presentation of FoE, its concept, philosophies and principles. The presentation focused on the FoE principle which has its base on seeking, receiving and imparting information. The orientation organized under the the SEFAS (Support to Enabled Environment for Free, Accountable, and Sustainable Media in Nepal)-No News Is Bad News project was attended by Bikram Niraula (Biratnagar, Province No-1), Ajay Shah (Janakpur, Province No 2), Ashok Dahal (Kathmandu, Province No 3), Rajan Upadhyay

(Tanahu, Province No 4), Sudeep Gautam (Dang, Province No 5), Laxmi Gautam (Surkhet, Province No 6), and DR Pant (Dhangadhi, Province No 7).

(For details, please click [here](#))

I. Report on Violation of FoE and Information in Local Election-I in Nepal: FF has published a media monitoring report on violation of freedom of expression on opinion during the first round of local level election held on May 14 in Nepal. The monitoring period is from May 1 to May 29.

(Report available [here](#))

J. FF conducted media mission in Far West: FF recently mobilized its media mission in the far western region of the country. During the mission, the FF team held interactions with the media persons, writer, professor, senior security officials and the local administrations on the overall issues of freedom of expression. It visited the office of the journalists- Khem Bhandari and G Batta- who were detained for a day by the local security over a news reporting and garnered information from both sides.

Separate meetings were held with the journalists, and security officials and local administration. In Kailali interaction, seven journalists from various media outlets participated in the interaction while Chief District Officer and Superintendent of Police had the interaction together. Even a noted book writer Ram Lal Joshi and a College Professor Dr. Badri Sharma were interacted together.

(For details, please click [here](#))

2.2.3 Right to Information and Open data:- FF organized various campaigns and discussion programs under this theme during this year.

A. Discussion program on "A decade of RTI Act in Nepal: Opportunities and Challenges":- FF organized a discussion program named „A Decade of RTI Act in Nepal: Opportunities and Challenges“ in Kathmandu on September 27 marking the First International Day of Universal Access to Information. During the program, the speakers from government bodies and civil society discussed multifarious issues of good governance linking it to the Right to Information (RTI) Act in Nepal on Tuesday.

The celebration of the First International Day to Universal Access to Information coincided with a decade of introduction of the RTI Act in Nepal. The RTI is taken as one of the most vibrant and effective tools to build good governance.

The program was attended by 40 persons including Information Officers from the Ministries, Director General of Department of Information, Chief Commissioner of the National Information Commission, Member of the National Human Rights Council, RTI activists and campaigners, RTI experts, journalism students, among others.

(For details, please click [here](#))

B. RTI applications at 60 colleges' all over Nepal: Total sixty colleges affiliated to Tribhuvan University across the nation were demanded information through RTI at once.

FF demanded information from sixty colleges across the nation including Kathmandu Valley. Through the applications, activists seek information from individual colleges regarding:

- the name lists of the team mobilized by Fiscal Administration Division, TU for internal audit of the college,
- certified copy of the letter received from the center,
- verified copy of internal audit report of Fiscal Year 2015/16 of the college,
- Dates on start and end of the internal audit of the college,
- Details on expenditure incurred under different headings during auditing period,
- Official copy of approval letter for above mentioned expenses,
- Name of Information Officer in according to RTI Act section (6),
- And, a certified copy including name, designation, working sector, contact number and his office room"s number.

Result: Though late, 35 colleges sent information requested with signatory from Campus chief except for Information officer's of Bhojpur Multiple Campus. However, major success of the campaign lies in the appointment of Information Officers in more than 30 colleges after RTI requests.

(For details, please click [here](#))

C. Five-day investigative journalism training: - FF conducted the 5-day Training on Investigative Journalism: RTI and Data as Tools in the capital city, Kathmandu, on November 26. A total of 16 journalists from various print and electronic media have participated in the training organized under the project “Support to enable environment for freedom of expression in Nepal (SEFEN)- No News Is Bad News” funded by Free Press Unlimited.

The journalists are from the Kathmandu Valley (Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur districts) and Kavre, Sindhupalchok, and Dolakha districts.

During 5 days training, participants were provided orientation on various issues as national and international evolution of Right to Information (RTI), its practices and importance, RTI as a tool of investigative journalism, principles of investigative journalism, its scope, investigative stories on domestic violence and gender discrimination, data for producing stories, data visualization and reporting in the digital age.

(For details please click [here](#))

D. Second Lot of Investigative Journalism Training in Nawalparasi : - Similarly, FF began the 5-day Training on Investigative Journalism: RTI and Data as Tools in the Gaidakot, Nawalparasi on 18th December, Sunday with same objectives as above.

A total of 18 journalists from various print and electronic media have participated in the training organized under the project “**Support to Enable environment for freedom of Expression in Nepal (SEFEN)- No News Is Bad News**” funded by Free Press Unlimited. The second phase of training held outskirts of Kathmandu involves journalists from the different parts of Nepal (Nawalparasi, Chitwan, Kapilvastu and Rupandehi).

(For details, please click [here](#))

E. RTI Applications prodding public agencies:- Executive Chief and RTI campaigner of FF requested information from various 30 ministries and 15 other governmental organization on September 28. All total 45 applications were filed on

the day in line with Article 27 of the Constitution of Nepal 2015, and Section 3 and 7 (a) of RTI Act 2007. The application demanded following information:

- Total number of vehicles owned by the office (motorcycle, car, jeep, truck/ container, etc.) and the vehicle numbers.
- The vehicle out of use, their condition and parking
- Number of drivers for the vehicles and their status (temporary, permanent, contract or others)
- The fuel expenses incurred with the operation of these vehicles in the past two fiscal years and till today (date of the information sought) of the current fiscal year and the details of total expenses on it.
- Total maintenance cost of the vehicles in the past two fiscal years and the categorical expense details of each vehicle.
- Details of the vehicles waiting immediate auction.

Result: Among 30 ministeries , 29 sent information demanded through Information Officer but Ministry of Defence didnot repond to the request even after filing the case at National Information Commission.

F. Testing ombudsperson model in Nawalparasi: The major tasks under this activity were: conducting consultation with Multi Sector Nutrition Plan (MNSP) stakeholders, design and test ombudsperson model in Nawalparasi, and organize a national level dissemination and knowledge sharing workshop.

The project was executed with an objective to track and monitor the progress in implementation of nutrition plans including budgetary issues and monitor donor and government commitment/accountability for the nutrition. This model is also expected to help citizens by providing an opportunity to lodge their complaints and to settle their dispute with executing agencies about the MSNP. A booklet was also published incorporating all major aspect of ombudsperson model and service.

G. Workshop on Nutrition Ombudsperson: Lessons learned and prospects for Nepal: The program conducted under the activity of project supported by Save the Children in Kathmandu on December 27, 2016 was a learning, sharing and dissemination workshop. The program was organized to share the experience of piloting ombudsperson model in Nawalparasi district. Using the concept of

Ombudsperson, FF's chief as a Lead Consultant presented his paper amid an event to show the prospects of ombudsperson in the field of nutrition advocacy. Later, the participants discussed and shared their experience of working as ombudsperson in Nawalparasi district.

2.2.4 Public Finance Management: Under this theme, FF conducts two activities contributing to the transparent budgeting processes with civic engagement.

A. Open Budget Survey: FF has been undertaking the biennial Open Budget Survey (OBS) since 2010. The OBS assesses the degree to which the government provides opportunities for the public to engage in budget process. The OBS examines mainly three aspects of how governments are managing public finances. It is the world's only independent, comparable measures of budget transparency, participation and oversight. It examines the extent to which legislature and Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI) are able to provide effective oversight of the budget.

The 2017 BS is currently going on the survey carried out based on the information and data available in the government websites and interview in some cases. The survey comes up with finding and recommendations as well as evidences for further advocacy for reforms.

B. Climate Finance: Freedom Forum undertook the dissemination of Nepal's Citizens Climate Budget (CCB) and Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) through our website. The works were carried out by a FF representative. The organization virtually took the ownership of the work.

2.2.5 Gender Justice in Media: This year FF added an activity to its regular activities in line with SDG 5. Under this theme, FF monitors Nepali media contents through gender perspectives and contributes to the gender equality in media.

Under this theme, specific activities carried out are as follows:

A. An analytical report on “Media Content from Gender Perspective” with the monitoring of Nepal's five national dailies from October to December 2016 was released on January 2017.

This report presented an outcome of the assessment on women's participation in the Nepali print media as news source, news actors and news reporters. It also

encompasses topic wise distribution of main news, categories of news highlighting inequality and challenging stereotypes of women. The study revealed that only 13.4% female are news writers among total 247 journalists monitored during the period.

(Report available [here](#))

B. International Women's Day Marked with a theme „Men for Women: FF in collaboration with other partner organizations organized an event to mark International Women's Day 2017. The event „Walk for Change" was marked by a large number of men taking part in a procession entitled „M4W (Men for Women) march" in Lalitpur on March 8, 2017.

The march that began from Jawlakhel with around a hundred men participants carrying placards passed through Man Bhawan, Kumaripati, Lagankhel and concluded upon reaching Mangalbazaar, Patan. Each of the male participants were also provided with a hair band so that they would gift it to their better half or female members in their families after the event. The event was organized at the joint initiative of Nepal Forum of Environment Journalists, FF, Antenna foundation, CWIN, among other community and social organizations. The men for women campaign is being organized with the recognition that collaboration with men was a must to ensure women's rights.

For details, please click [here](#))

C. Interface meeting on women's presence in Nepali Media: FF organized an interface meeting on women's presence in Nepali media on June 9 in the capital city.

A monitoring report on gender contents in the selected news media from October 2016 to March 2017 was also presented in the program. The report based on monitoring of the contents of nine leading national dailies for bylines and news sources revealed that among the total news sources, 91% were males and only 9% were females. The program had 27 participants from diverse sectors.

(For details, please click [here](#))

D. Visit to media houses: FF also visited some media houses to know how they received the report (monitoring of media contents on women's representation) it produced and disseminated to them. Editors of the media houses, of which newspapers FF studied, were interacted for it. The separate meetings with the editors were fruitful not only to know whether their media had realized the little representation of women, but also to know how they have taken this issue and plan a change. Visits were made to Kantipur, Nagarik, Annapurna Post, Naya Patrika, and Gorkhapatra office.

(For details, please click [here](#))

2.2.6 Policy Reviews: FF also reviews national policies through FoE perspectives with its background on advocacy on issues of freedom of expression and information. This year FF reviewed and disseminated the papers on various policies brought forth in Nepal under the project EEMIR- CS:MAP.

A. Publication of National Mass Communication Review:- FF also published and disseminated the review of the National Mass Communications Policy 2016 to various concerned authorities. It has shown various weaknesses in the Policy including negative restrictions, no mention of foreign investment in Nepali media, failure to link policy with the citizen and social accountability of the policy, baseless allocation of the of radio frequency, non-accommodative nature of the policy as not mentioning well about film, editorial independence, relations between publisher and reporter in a print media, little mention of social media, need of registering internet-based media, and other multifarious issues.

(Report available [here](#))

B. FF Comments on Draft Bill of Criminal Code from FoE lenses: FF has commented on the draft bill of the Criminal Code from the angle of freedom of expression, and disseminated a report on it to almost 100 parliamentarians of the Development Committee under the Legislative Parliament.

The report was prepared being based on prudence of the proposed criminal code with its affiliation to international and constitutional standards. The provisions in the proposed bill which seem to give ground for vague interpretation, inconsistency with the international and constitutional standards need to be amended. Taking it into

account, the report is disseminated to lawmakers. Even a separate meeting would to be held with the parliamentarians regarding the report to exert pressure on them to think of change at the earliest.

(For details please click [here](#).)

C. Review of Online Media Operation Directive (OMOD-2017): The directive was reviewed and circulated among the concerned authorities. Nepal government had brought the directive claiming to make registration, renewal and operation of online media in a more systematic way. The new policy directive had come into effect by repealing the earlier one (Online Media Operation and Management Directive 2016) with its publication in the Government Gazette on 20th March, 2017. The review concluded that the directive, being introduced under the Good Governance (Management and Operation) Act-2007 considered the online media as a government entity rather than a vibrant medium of freedom of expression which is against the constitutional provision and has ratified international standards of FoE.

(Report available [here](#))

D. Review on Transaction Act, (ETA- 2008): With the tremendous market access of electronic transaction, Electronic Transaction Act, 2008 has become the major legal document that the State has used frequently to harass the media persons and other citizens to restrict the practice of Freedom of Expression and Opinion in electronic and internet platform. The government has promulgated Electronic Transaction Act-2063 and Regulations, legalizing all electronic transactions and digital signatures but section 47 of this act is being used to restrict arrest and detain citizen and journalist by Nepal Police reasoning their social media posts and comments and news on media portals violated the ETA. FF's review states that the expression on electronic/online platform is treated different than offline which is extra constitutional act. It also recommends to enact different cyber law to treat electronic wrong doings.

The review also was disseminated to Ministeries and other concerned authorities.

2.3 FF Publications:

Besides several programs implemented in partnership with funding agencies, FF's published several policy reviews, reports, books and drafts this year.

A. ANNUAL MEDIA REPORT 2016

As a regular and core activity of the organization, FF produced an annual media report of media monitoring including press freedom violation cases and developing issues of internet as new media.

Some highlights of the report:

- Province No. 2 (which includes eight districts in the southern plains) and 3 (which houses the capital city Kathmandu) witnessed the highest number of violations- six and 12 respectively whereas Province No. 4 and 6 remained free of violations. Similarly, Province No. 5 witnessed four violations followed by Province No. 7 with two violations and the only one at Province No. 1.
- There were 11 incidents of attacks, while five threats and death threat combined, four manhandles, and five arrest/ detentions including attacks on two media houses.
- Police persons were involved in many incidents of violations, while local leaders and cadres of different political parties are the second most hostile to media persons. Threat was more to reporters writing on misuse of public money and unmanaged public service delivery.

(For details, please click [here](#))

B. MAY 3 REPORT 2017: This report is prepared by Freedom Forum on World Press Freedom Day encasing cases of press freedom violations, freedom of expression, media policy and impunity watch during the period of a year (May 2016 to April 2017).

Major highlights:

- Among all, Province No 3 having the capital city Kathmandu recorded highest number of violations (15), where Kathmandu Valley itself witnessed 13 incidents. Province No 3 is followed by Province No 2 with the violations numbering 9. It means the more the media concentration, the more the press freedom violations.
- This year, 4 cases were found related to Internet-based media, which includes online news portal blockade and journalists' issued threats through social media (Facebook).
- A total of 6 cases of violations occurred while journalists were covering protests carried out by the political cadres or their youth wings.
- Moreover, 9 out of the total cases recorded were caused due to the security and government bodies' hostility to media persons while, while political cadres involved in 4 violations.

C. GENDER CONTENT MONITORING REPORT: This report is prepared every three months on the basis of content monitoring of nine main nepali broadsheets namely, Kantipur, The Kathmandu Post, The Himalayan Times, Nagarik, Republica, Gorkhapatra, The Rising Nepal, Naya patrika and Annapurna Post. Major highlights from the recent report of June 2017:

- Male bylines (53%) outnumbered **female bylines (6%)** and the unknown bylines as well (41%)
- The Annapurna Post daily scored the highest- 82% male bylines among newspapers studied, while the Kantipur daily contained 13% female bylines (highest of all).
- Among total news monitored, 80% contained men, **9% female** and 11% the secondary sources.
- Among total females, the Kantipur contributed to the maximum **reporters (23%)** and **sources (16%)**.
- 60% of 1,080 news titles fall under Politics and Government followed by 20% social and legal news.
- **51% of females reported on Politics and government** whereas, only 25% of females reported on social and legal issues on the main news pages.
- Among the total, 47% news stories warranted further analysis thus, challenging stereotype and highlighting (in) equality.

D. NEWSLETTERS: FF published total four issues of newsletters during this year. All the issues highlighted the activities carried out by the organization. It mainly covers media monitoring reports, policy/ impunity watch, RTI campaigns and other collaborative approaches. Those issues were also uploaded on its website and made public.

For more information, please click [here](#) .

E. Policy Review Papers: Review reports on National Mass Communication Policy, Online Media Operation Directive, Draft bill of Criminal Code and Electronic Transaction Act 2008.

F. Ombudsperson model: The book contains detailed information on its concept, opportunities, challenges and its integration on multisectoral nutrition plan.



2.4. FF celebration:

i. FF marked First International Day of Universal Access

to Information organizing a discussion program inviting speakers from government bodies and civil societies on September 27. Also, FF demanded information on expenses incurred and status of vehicles in the 30 ministries including office of Prime Minister and council of ministers and other public institutions. The UN Assembly in 2015 had approved September 28 as the International Day.

ii. International Day to End Impunity, this year was celebrated by organizing a report presentation and discussion on legal status of murdered and disappeared journalists from the year 1996 to 2016 on November 20, 2016.

iii. International Women's Day: FF celebrated Women's Day by participating in the M4W March event organized in collaboration with other FPU partners.

iv. World Press Freedom Day - FF marked the World Press Freedom Day-2016 by releasing the May 3 report amidst media persons and experts in a program in Kathmandu on May 3.

v. National Democracy Day: FF celebrated the day by organizing a Dialogue relating the Democracy Day to the Right to freedom of expression and opinion in Kathmandu on 17 February 2017. The program was attended by total 30 participants from various sectors: legal authorities (Advocate, Attorney Office), representatives from Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), Nepal Press Council, academia, media experts, academicians, journalists and researchers.

2.5 FF Participation:

- Executive Chief Taranath Dahal participated in the Open Budget Survey Resources training workshop organized by International Budget Partnership in Bangkok Thailand, from August 30 to September 1, 2016.

- Executive Chief and Planning and Policy Advisor Krishna Sapkota participated in The Legal Framework for Civil Society and the Media: Challenges and Opportunities conference organized by International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) held in Kathmandu on 28-29 September 2016.
- Gender Monitoring Officer Nanu Maiya Khadka attended a 3-day long training on Aid Monitoring and Effective Development Cooperation and National Seminar on CSO Accountability organized by NGO Federation of Nepal on 28-30 September 2016 in Dhulikhel, Kavre.
- Executive Chief participated in the Global Summit of Open Government Partnership held in Paris from December 7-9, 2016.
- Vice Chairperson Sahajman Shrestha attended the 11th Internet Governance Forum held in Guadalajara city of Mexico from December 6-9, 2016. He has also been elected the Steering Committee Member of Internet Rights and Principles Coalition (IPRC).
- Executive Chief participated in the IFEX Strategy Congress 2017 held in Montreal, Canada from June 12-15, 2017.
- Treasurer Kedar Dahal participated in the IPI World Congress held in Hamburg, Germany from May 18-20, 2017.
- Media Monitoring Officer Narayan Ghimire attended a workshop named Internet Policy and Advocacy: Research Methods Workshop from South and Southeast Asia Actors organized jointly by the Centre for Communications Governance under the National Law University, Annenberg School for Communication's Internet Policy Observatory, US and Centre for Internet and Society. It was held in New Delhi, India from April 10-14, 2017.
- FF congratulated and welcomed new staff members appointed under the EEMIR project as part of USAID funded and FHI360 led CS: MAP. In the project, Sanjeeb Ghimire and Bobbish Dhakal have been appointed as Project Manager and Associate Finance Officer respectively, effective from January 15, 2017.

2.6. FF's visibility: Most of the activities of FF have been covered in national media through print and online news channels. FF also regularly updates its activities, press releases on its website (www.freedomforum.org.np & www.nepalpressfreedom.org) and social media pages (facebook and twitter). List of the online coverages have been included in the **annex**.

One of the **major achievements** was that UNESCO's Director General Anne Game wrote letter to Nepal Government enquiring about the status of impunity related to

crimes perpetrated against media persons in Nepal where, she requested the Government to refer FF's report in impunity against journalists and media persons.

3. Institutional Development:

During the activities under various projects, capacity of the organizational staffs was also enhanced through several orientations, field activities and their immense participation in the programs. Staffs were also sensitized on the issues of digital safety and archiving. Similarly, financial staff was also strengthened through orientation and application of newly developed and advanced accounting software and methodologies during interaction with donor organizations

Annexes: Annexes of the report are as specified below:

1. Five-year strategic priorities, plans and program areas of FF
2. Consolidated Audit Report 2016-17
3. Media coverage on FF activities.
4. Photographs.